

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing today to submit my testimony as a third generation resident of West Linn. I am a business owner, a wife and mother, a proud life-long community member and an unwavering lover of my city and community. Our business is located on Willamette Falls Drive, one of the main areas that will be affected by this tolling project. I don't need to tell any of you about the staffing shortage the hospitality industry has faced since the pandemic, I am sure you are familiar. What you probably aren't familiar with is the construction that took place on Willamette Falls drive (another project forced on the residents of the area against their will) that nearly crippled businesses that were lucky enough to survive the pandemic.

The street construction created horrible traffic issues as well as a nightmare parking situation in an already limited-parking area. During the high traffic times our business was completely dead. People do not pull over and park to "wait out traffic". The traffic killed our daytime business and made patrons re-think entering our area for evening business as well. The slow times made staff re-think working at our restaurant, as they not only were not making the money they needed to be making, they were struggling to fight traffic to get to work and find parking in general. Our employees who took public transportation had no reliable way to arrive to work on time, costing them valuable money-making hours. At the beginning and end of school days, Willamette Elementary school children were put in danger by frustrated drivers who were unfamiliar with the presence of a school. Emergency vehicles trying to exit the fire station on Willamette Falls drive were often physically blocked by traffic and unable to respond as quickly as they should have. Willamette is a dense residential area, much of the parking we do have is on the neighboring streets in front of houses. Traffic congestion made residents lives more difficult by blocking access to their homes and neighborhoods. Traveling the length of only two short blocks on Willamette Falls Drive could take about 5-7 minutes during this time. Drivers attempted to cut off traffic by speeding through Willamette neighborhoods. Our staff heard first-hand the very candid responses of neighbors and patrons to this traffic congestion. It was very, very difficult for everyone involved, but our community made it through together.

The proposed tolling project is undeniably going to bring back traffic to our area that will affect all of us, just like before. It is going to make the lives of business owners, residents, patrons, emergency responders, students, parents and business staff HARDER, not easier. Is the goal of public projects not to improve lives of the citizens paying for these projects? This is not hypothetical, we have lived through the effects of increased traffic before and are pleading with you, please do not make this a permanent struggle for the people of this community. It is with my beloved community and staff in mind that I beg you, please, say NO to the proposed tolling project.

Alexis Handris Bernal