



Mark Meek
State Senator
District 20

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Joint Committee on Transportation
Special Subcommittee on Transportation Planning
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs Frederick and Nathanson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my serious concerns with ODOT's current tolling plans. I appreciate the subcommittee's visit to Gladstone and hope that the public testimony you hear from our local area today is informative.

You've heard from local mayors, small businesses, and regular citizens who overwhelmingly oppose tolling because it will make life more expensive, increase congestion on local roads, and is not an equitable solution to our regionwide transportation needs.

But I want to highlight another fundamental reason for the opposition you're hearing today: Failure by ODOT and the Oregon Legislature to earn the trust of the people and engage in a public, democratic process on this issue.

In 2017 I entered the legislature as a new member of the House, eager for the opportunity to help make the investments in our state's transportation infrastructure that were badly needed. Throughout weeks of debate and public testimony, from March through the end of June that year, many issues were discussed. Tolling was not one of them.

[HB 2017 \(2017\)](#) does not include the words tolling, phrasing it instead as "value pricing". This "value pricing" was only added four days before the end of the legislative session, without any substantive debate on the massive impacts it would have on our citizens. I voted no. Since that day, my constituents have been told that tolling is coming whether they like it or not.

In 2023 I introduced [SB 933](#), which would have prohibited tolling on I-205. Despite the pleas from the majority of the committee demanding a public hearing, it was never scheduled. The other concepts proposed around tolling that session weren't scheduled, either.

This leads me to two points: 1) The issue of tolling I-205 has never had a true public debate in the Oregon Legislature, and 2) This lack of debate and public process is precisely why we have a state agency (ODOT) moving ahead with a plan that has so dramatically failed to earn the trust or support of the public.

The overwhelming opposition to tolling you see today is the result of this failure to engage in a reasonable public debate.

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I made a commitment to my constituents that I would fight to reduce their cost of living and make Oregon a more affordable place. Plans to toll I-205 will do the exact opposite. Tolling will make life harder and more expensive for Clackamas County families; it will increase traffic and congestion by causing diversion onto our local streets; and it will make our neighborhoods less safe.

Tolling is not just coming for my community or for Clackamas County. The Regional Mobility Pricing Project would bring tolling to parts of Multnomah and Washington Counties, and now there are even talks about [tolling U.S. 26 and Highway 217 \(KOIN, 12/27/23\)](#). The public disapproval you've witnessed in my community will be coming in the future to communities across the Portland metro area.

It is time for the Oregon Legislature to act urgently on this issue and set a new direction. If we fail to do so, then voters will have no choice but to take matters into their own hands at the ballot box and set a new direction for us.

I stand ready and eager to work with you on charting a new course that meets our state's transportation needs and earns the public's trust.

Respectfully,



Mark Meek

State Senator – Oregon Senate District 20