

Greetings,

My name is Dean Suhr. I am a West Linn resident, as well as author and chief petitioner, IP-4, the Vote Before Tolls initiative.

Thank you for inviting us to yet another one-way talking session - count me again as another successful "public input".

Earlier in this meeting Co-Chair Frederick said no tolling decisions have been made. I beg to differ – while the tolling gantry locations, toll rates, diversion mitigation, and many more dickson's have not been made public, we do know a decision has been made to toll the general public. We also know that many unshared models have been run inside ODOT. We also know that tolling will start January 1st, 2026.

ODOT has been directed and authorized by Salem to implement tolls across the state. Both our legislators in Salem and ODOT are responsible for the current tolling proposals and strategies. Neither organization has been transparent and interactive. Over a dozen tolling measures were not allowed hearing in the 2023 legislative session, and ODOT's dozens of meetings count only public contacts and do not provide a means for ODOT to interact, reply, or be held accountable.

At the January 6th town hall in Gladstone with 300+ people in the room, including many local elected officials, only one person half-heartedly raised this hand when the audience was asked if anyone supported tolls. At least 49 people plus nearly a dozen invited speakers shared testimony that opposed tolls.

ODOT and Salem are not actively and aggressively responding to citizen and local governmental concerns.

Two years ago when I got involved in tolling, I-205 was to be tolled, the Abernethy Bridge improvements were already paid for outside of tolling, and congestion tolling to "get us out of our cars" was the plan. The 3rd lane of I-205, ODOT's artificial congestion, was not in the plan.

Today, the Abernethy Bridge is being tolled because the federal requirements for tolling bridges are lower than they are for highways, congestion pricing is essentially just variable rate fundraising scheme without mention of congestion, and the I-205 congestion is not being dealt with (3rd lane is off the table).

ODOT is all about the cash grab, not about improving our highways ... and they are still not seeking federal matching funds for the I-205 project because matching funds won't let them toll all lanes. Just a few weeks ago, ODOT, with their \$6.4 billion dollar budget, demanded Salem send them an extra \$19M to plow snow from roads they have plowed for decades. We simply cannot trust ODOT.

Up on I-5 at the Columbia River Bridge replacement, \$2.4B of tolling revenue plus 100% of the billions in cost overruns will be placed on the backs of motorists through tolls.

The current ODOT proposal is not financial efficient. West Linn Mayor Bialostosky started the Jan 6th session with a presentation using ODOT numbers that demonstrated an 84% overhead on the Abernethy Bridge project. A motorist would have to drive over the bridge paying a toll 6 times to cover the overhead before the funds from their 7th trip actually went to the bridge project. Our neighbors to the north in WA and TX report 30-60% tolling collection overheads ... this is absurd. Half the money not getting to the actual projects is absurd, and if the overhead is actually 84% as the Mayor presented, tolling is all but fraud benefitting out of state contractors and a new administrative department at ODOT!

The public has had enough ... Salem is not helping – they are part of the problem – so we are taking back control of our wallets.

IP-4, the Vote Before Tolls initiative is a grass roots effort. Any new toll, including tolls on the Columbia River Bridge Replacement project, will require a regional vote of the people. This vote will force transparency from ODOT, PBOT, and our Salem legislators. Essentially it gives us, the taxpayers, a seat at the table so we can work together to do better – we know good roads require money ... but it's our money and we want it used efficiently.

*[spoken to the audience]:*

To everyone here:

- It's not too late to change the course of the ODOT/Salem tolling schemes
- please sign the petition
- take a packet to gather a few more signatures
- it's up to us to get this on the November ballot
- nothing can stop us except not getting 180K signatures!

It was mentioned that IP-4 is the “nuclear option”. When our legislators and ODOT are not working with us, not interacting and responding to the concerns of our local officials and the general public, and not being efficient with our personal hard earned money, we simply have no choice.

Over the past 2+ years I have been involved with IP-4, no legislator or ODOT representative has ever reached out to me to discuss some sort of alternative, compromise, or adjustment to IP-4. I presume that to mean that they think tolling is a done deal and it cannot be stopped. I guess we'll find out in 302 days on November 5, 2024.

Dean

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Dean Suhr

President, Vote Before Tolls Committee, Vote Before Tolls Foundation  
Author & Chief Petitioner of IP-4, the Vote Before Tolls initiative

Learn more, sign the petition, and/or sign up to be kept up to date: <https://VoteBeforeTolls.org>

**FaceBook:** <https://VoteBeforeTolls.org/FaceBook/>

**NextDoor** – No Toll Army group: <https://VoteBeforeTolls.org/NextDoor>