



TO: Joint Transportation Committee
FROM: Fiona Yau-Luu, UFCW 555 Political Liaison

Chairs Frederick and Nathanson, Vice Chairs Findley and Mannix, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the topic of ODOT's proposed tolling plan. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 is Oregon's largest private sector labor union, representing workers across the state. Our members come from a number of industries, including grocery, retail, food processing, manufacturing, and healthcare. We are a diverse group of workers who take pride in acting as a strong collective voice for working people.

As an organization representing low income workers and families, we have serious concerns about ODOT's proposed tolling plan. Our members have been priced out of living in the neighborhoods where they work, and have had to move farther and farther out of Portland to find affordable rent. As we pointed out during the COVID-19 pandemic, our members do not have the luxury of working from home. Many Oregonians are already living paycheck to paycheck, and our members simply can't afford another 10 dollars a day just to get to and from work.

ODOT stated in their presentation that the primary goal of this program is to generate revenue, yet they do not have the data to inform the legislature *who* that revenue will come from. This tolling plan is a regressive tax on all Oregonians, which means low income workers and their families will feel it the most. Our members must use I-5 and I-205 to get to work, and will have no choice but to pay the toll, no matter the time of day.

As for public transportation, many of our members in rural and suburban areas do not have reliable transit options— choosing the one bus route in town may add more than an hour of commute time each way on top of a ten hour shift. For workers who also have to consider childcare and other responsibilities outside the workplace, options become even more limited. For our members who do live closer to Portland, where transit options are more widely available, there are still considerations to be made around rising fares, lack of cleanliness, and fear of crime and violence. For many, having a personal vehicle offers independence, flexibility, and convenience.

We believe this tolling plan points to a larger problem here in Oregon: an inability or unwillingness to address the critical revenue and funding stream issues that have cut our agencies off at the knees. Our members have little to no services in their communities or from their statewide agencies, while their employers continue to make record profits and rake in tax breaks and exemptions from the Oregon legislature. In the last several years, critical projects

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and benefits have not successfully passed, like Essential Worker Pay, because of lack of agency capacity. The federal funding we've received for worker relief during COVID-19 has been used to backfill agency budgets. And the legislature has cut PERS benefits in order to meet budget needs. It is unconscionable and unsustainable for the state to continue to take from Oregon's working class to fix their budget shortfalls.

Our membership, and the people of Oregon, are tired of paying into a broken system and never seeing the returns. We are tired of having the State's financial shortfalls made up on our backs time after time. This state has critical infrastructure needs that must be addressed, but in a manner that is sustainable, equitable, and fair.

We challenge the legislature to take this opportunity to examine alternative revenue streams that are more effective and more equitable.

Thank you for your consideration,

Fiona Yau-Luu
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UFCW Local 555

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