

Dear Oregon State Joint Committee On Transportation,

Thank you for accepting these written comments ahead of your June 4th meeting. I am a Canadian clean-air and climate advocate with friends in Portland who also care about and advocate for clean air and a safe climate. I also don't drive or cycle - a personal choice - and rely on walking infrastructure and public transit to get around. As such, I respectfully ask that you prioritize funding active transportation instead of highway building and widening.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of driving through your state (mainly along the coast) and was amazed by its coastline and coastal mountains. Unfortunately, I was also recently blocked by the Oregon Department of Transportation on Facebook, and while I do not yet know the exact reason I believe it may be related to my criticism of their ongoing freeway-widening plans, which in fact is the reason why I am submitting these comments. I will note that all such criticism was constructive, polite, and science-based; there was no insulting or derogatory material in any of my comments whatsoever.

As you may know, we are in the middle of three major ecological crises: air pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change / global warming. Each one of these crises is made worse by our predominantly road-based transportation infrastructure. For example:

- Roads worsen air pollution directly (through emissions of volatile organic compounds / VOCs) and indirectly (through the exhaust, brake, and tire pollution emitted by the vehicles that drive on them). There is no safe / non-harmful level of air pollution, other than zero.
- Roads worsen biodiversity loss directly (by fragmenting and destroying habitats, noting that adverse modification and destruction of habitat - listing factor 'A' in the federal Endangered Species Act - is one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss) and indirectly (through vehicle strikes, such as the federally-threatened Humboldt Marten in southwest Oregon which is threatened in large part by vehicle strikes along US 101).
- Roads worsen climate change directly (through the emissions released in the production of the asphalt used to pave them) and indirectly (through compaction of the soil during the road-building process and the loss of carbon sequestration as vegetation is removed to make way for roads).

Oregon is a state blessed with majestic coastlines and mountains, but these are at risk as the Earth warms - the former is being impacted by sea-level rise and coastal erosion, whereas the latter is being harmed by snow loss and rising tree lines. Additionally, Multnomah County - which makes up a large part of Portland - suffers disproportionately from diesel exhaust, of which on-road transportation makes up a significant portion. Former state Representative Karin Power (D-41) introduced several bills to combat the issue, but much work remains to be done, and continuing to widen highways risks undoing all of that. Transportation also makes up a large part of Oregon's greenhouse-gas emissions - 40% as a matter of fact!

I am alarmed and baffled as to why your state recently spent \$110 million (USD) on planning the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion despite numerous other roads and bridges in your state being in need of urgent repairs. It is illogical to be wasting money trying to solve a problem that cannot be solved in this way (induced demand). Additionally, there are numerous other issues on which that money could be better spent.

I respectfully urge you to appropriate money for active transportation (walking, cycling, and public transit), affordable housing, climate adaptation and mitigation (especially wildfire preparedness and coastal protections) instead of continuing to fund "business as usual". In particular, I ask that you appropriate funds for a multi-modal tunnel (with an emphasis on active transportation) to replace the Interstate Bridge instead of giving into the Interstate Bridge Replacement's dubious and dangerous claims about and demands for a replacement bridge, as this would protect the riverbanks and aesthetics of both Vancouver WA and Portland and reduce shipping delays for maritime traffic.

With the trio of environmental crises we are facing, it is critical that we invest in the future, not the past. Please act accordingly to help keep Oregon beautiful and protect our shared planet.

Thank you,

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