

Good morning,

My name is Andrew Lindstrom, and I am an urban planning master's student at Portland State University and I am writing to express my concerns about the current trajectory of transportation funding in ODOT Region 1 as it pertains to our statewide land use goals.

[OAR 660-012-0000](#) highlights the purpose for our statewide transportation planning apparatus, and I want to highlight a few key points where I feel that ODOT is missing the mark. For background, I will be referencing the [2023-25 Legislatively Adopted Budget](#) for a rough understanding of how our current transportation resources are budgeted.

(a) Provide for safe transportation for all Oregonians;

- We are in the midst of a road safety crisis, and the major ODOT road near my apartment (Powell Blvd) is at the forefront of this. Despite this, every improvement plan I see for the road involves centering the uninterrupted flow of vehicles over the lives of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders who use the corridor on a daily basis. Projects like [the crossing at 79th](#), where the choice has been made to close one leg of the crosswalk highlight this philosophy: pedestrians have to travel out of direction so that a vehicular signal can be marginally more efficient. This is a consistent issue on Powell - something I feel bitterly when I walk to the grocery store and utilize the crossing at SE 21st. The choice to close the west leg of the crosswalk about 6 years ago means that I have to cross SE 21st twice to get between my apartment and the store. While this is fine for me (I'm an able bodied young man), there is a persistent danger I feel while doing this. It's not lost on me that people have died at similar intersections in crashes involving truck drivers (as the area around is a major industrial area). Would you feel comfortable with your parents or children walking in those conditions?

(c) Provide a transportation system that serves the mobility and access needs of those who cannot drive and other underserved populations;

- A brief look at the ODOT budget shows that 8% of statewide funds go to public transportation (funded primarily through the state 0.1% payroll tax). This is a paltry sum, and is certainly out of line with the purpose and spirit of this statement. In ODOT Region 1, about 18% of renter households do not have access to a private vehicle per the [US Census Bureau](#). Additionally, since most of ODOT Region 1 is within the TriMet service area, which is funded by a separate payroll tax, most of the 8% of funds go to other regions (which isn't a problem per se - everyone deserves to have public transit) it is likely that the state spends relatively *less* than 8% of the Region 1 budget on transit. Especially in the context of the very large capital projects looming in Region 1 (IBR, Rose Quarter) that are solely focused on automotive mobility this begs the question of "what are we even doing?". If our state goal is to serve underserved folks, we need to think more clearly about how our transportation system serves renters who can't or don't drive (who tend to be less wealthy and more racially diverse). It's laughable to imagine that spending 10 to 15 times more money on roads than transit serves the nearly one-fifth of Region 1 renters who do not drive.

(h) Facilitate the safe flow of freight, goods, and services within regions and throughout the state through a variety of modes including road, air, rail, and marine transportation;

- On this note, I want to call attention to the departure of container shipping from the Port of Portland. Shipping by sea/water is the most energy efficient way to move large amounts of goods, and every good that arrives by truck or rail rather than ship represents increased vehicular emissions. I don't have an easy answer to this, and I know there are many intersecting issues relating to the struggles of the Port in the past few decades, but I believe that the state has an obligation to take a more hands on approach to ensure that Oregon retains a competitive, globally-oriented port.

(f) Recognize and remedy impacts of past practices that have harmed underserved populations, such as redlining, displacement, exclusionary zoning, inaccessible design, and roadway and other public infrastructure siting;

- I would ask ODOT how expanding a highway through what remains one of the most racially and economically diverse parts of Portland fits in with this goal (I5 Rose Quarter Expansion). Additionally, while the IBR project touts itself as a bridge replacement there are also associated freeway ramp rebuilds and capacity additions which will bring more traffic to the further reaches of North Portland which are undoubtedly the places where underserved populations have relocated to as gentrification has taken hold in historic Albina. And I would like to remind ODOT of how they refused to simplify or alter the freeway ramps in North Portland when the road was built, and would like to personally invite all major ODOT stakeholders to attempt to walk from the corner of Albina and Lombard to the North Lombard Transit Center.

Additionally, I would like to raise my concerns about the Interstate Bridge Replacement program specifically. Surely you all do not need a full re-hash of the failed Columbia River Crossing project of 10-odd years ago, but I would like to point out that this current plan is essentially the same. If we are serious about replacing the bridge, I feel that our legislature needs to direct ODOT to seriously consider reducing the scope of the project. \$8 to \$10 billion is just not a reasonable pricetag for a bridge replacement project - at this rate, it would be one of the most expensive bridge projects ever, anywhere. Of course, it's more than *just* a bridge project - with some 10 interchanges also being prescribed for rebuilds in conjunction with the project. It's worth asking if this is really something that needs to be attached (from a practical standpoint), or if the goal is instead to shoehorn projects ODOT and WSDOT want to do with a project that the general public supports because they feel that the existing bridges are a bit past their prime. There are further issues to highlight as it pertains to tolling as well - since tolls will pay a large portion of this project. Tolling I5 while having no avenue to also toll I-205 will see traffic diverted to I-205 - further harming underserved folks in East Portland. It's also likely that tolling alone could relieve congestion - reducing the need for a massive 200 foot wide bridge.

And finally, it's not clear to me that any of the major ODOT capital projects in the Portland region comply with Portland's TSP or general statewide goals relating to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reduction. In every roadway expansion project, road builders promise that this extra lane is all we need to fix congestion. Things may improve mildly for a time, but eventually congestion returns as travel patterns change. ODOT is aware of this - everyone who knows anything about transportation planning is aware of this. Robert Moses famously built the Triborough Bridge to relieve congestion on the Queensboro Bridge, then the Bronx-Whitestone to relieve congestion on the Triborough, then the

Throgs Neck to relieve congestion on the Bronx-Whitestone only to find that each bridge ended up *more* congested after the next one was built. These projects massively increased the incentive and likelihood for New Yorkers to drive, and spurred the suburbanization of basically the entirety of Long Island. Oregon's commitment to save rural lands from suburbanization came in the wake of similar changes in travel patterns brought about by aggressive road building measures, and every time we as a state allow our freeways to be expanded we further encourage this.

If Oregon is serious about preserving our best in the world farm lands, our rich timber lands, and fighting the climate crisis we ought to be considering if *fully removing* freeways that helped destroy all three is a step worth taking. Instead, we seem to be content to light all three on fire (literally) by doing the opposite.

I have a modest proposal - direct ODOT to consider how much it would cost to build a truly regional scope express rail transit system. The MAX is lovely, but it's obviously not fast enough in the majority of the system to seriously compete with the automobile (in my neck of the woods, the nearly \$2 billion Orange line can hardly compete with the local bus). While there has been some chatter about high speed rail domestically, something I whole heartedly support, these sorts of intercity trips should be relatively lower priority for ODOT in Region 1. Instead, we should look to cities like [Guangzhou](#), [Montreal](#) or [London](#) who are building or have built high speed (up to 100 mph) regional express trains that are far faster than driving (even in the uncongested conditions) and which serve the denser nodes of their regions. A regional line like this could also serve as a high speed rail approach to Portland, and ought to follow our existing public right of way corridors (interstate highways). A first line could connect Vancouver, North Portland, the Moda Center, Old Town, Downtown, OHSU, and the SW suburbs roughly following I5 with travel times in the 10 minute range for Vancouver to Portland - something which would drastically alter the land use patterns in the region to be more compact and in line with regional and state goals.

Thank you,

Andrew Lindstrom