

From:

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Submitted written testimony to the Joint Committee on Transportation for the 6/4 Roadshow Hearing:

Dear legislators,

I'm writing to urge ODOT to prioritize public transit and safety infrastructure for walking and bicycling in the 2025 transportation package.

I've been a bike commuter in Portland for 12 years. Biking is a cheap, healthy, convenient way to get around the city. In an average week I might bike to Lents, Montavilla, the Pearl, and downtown. I have firsthand experience on how different it feels to exist outside of a car depending on what neighborhood you're in. I've experienced the gradual addition of pedestrian islands and traffic lights into my usual routes. There are several intersections that I used to dread because of frequent close calls with cars that are now just part of the ride. These infrastructure projects save lives, prevent injuries from cars, and enable people to experience the benefits of walking and cycling.

Unfortunately, ODOT's bike infrastructure isn't always safe. I've followed prescribed bike routes on ODOT roads where the "bike lane" is a spray-painted stencil on the shoulder. On two different occasions, the bike lane was bisected by a highway off-ramp with no signal and no protection. I had to choose between biking across a lane where cars and trucks were coming down from highway speeds, and turning around and biking the wrong way in a bike lane that wouldn't have room for me to get around another cyclist. I never took those routes again. This is what happens when bicycle infrastructure doesn't receive the funding and attention it deserves. At best, a dangerous intersection renders the rest of a bike lane useless. At worst, it gets someone killed.

I work at a theater near Pioneer Square, close to every bus and transit line. However, most of my coworkers and customers drive even though they're constantly stressing about traffic, finding a parking space, and paying for parking. To me, this suggests that transit options aren't meeting Portlanders' needs. One thing I hear from coworkers is that missing a bus transfer means being half an hour late to work. If transit were more frequent, more people could use it, which would lessen traffic and improve our air quality.

I've been hearing about the Rose Quarter project for years and I still don't understand how it's a good use of our money. I'm looking at the traffic report at 11am on a Wednesday. There's traffic near the Moda center. There's also traffic on 26 and three other segments of I5 right around downtown.

Addressing congestion near the Moda Center isn't going to address the underlying issue that roads get congested when more people drive. Worse, this project is going to drain the budget at the expense of walking, cycling, and transit: three things that do reduce congestion.

Lastly, we need to look to the future. I understand that many Oregonians currently use their car multiple times a day to get to work, transport their kids, and buy groceries. It's hard to picture life any other way. But a car-centric state is not a long-term option. Kids today have never experienced a summer in Oregon without 100-degree heat waves and wildfires. Experts say it's only going to get worse. Moving away from car dependency will serve everyone.

Thank you for reading,
Becky