

Dear Joint Committee on Transportation,

First of all, I'd like to express my gratitude to you for hearing our concerns and aspirations for the future of our transportation system. The ways we get around, and how we choose to fund them, fundamentally shapes our communities, and has far-reaching consequences for our society at large.

As an elementary school teacher, I can see firsthand how transformative walking to school is for students' academic, social, and behavioral development. Because of this - my highest priority is continued funding for safe routes to school. Improvements to the pedestrian environment are good for everyone, but especially benefit young people. All children should be given the opportunity to experience their neighborhoods on foot as living, breathing places.

Unfortunately, this opportunity is not afforded to students at the school where I teach, in East Portland. There are no sidewalks on the street facing the school, and only one marked crosswalk in poor repair. This is true for many schools around the metro area.

In addition to investing in walking and biking connections within neighborhoods, the state needs to invest in fast and reliable transit connections between neighborhoods, districts, and cities. Instead of trying to punish drivers out of their cars through tolling, the state should focus on funding alternatives to driving in the form of; top-tier bus rapid transit, light rail expansions and improvements, true, all-day regional rail, and frequent intercity rail service.

Fewer people choosing to drive means more room on our roadways for the movement of freight, emergency vehicles, and essential services. Oregonians deserve an environmentally sustainable, state-of-the art, and truly multi-modal transportation system.

Thank you,  
Doug Withrow  
Southeast Portland Resident