

Dear members of the Oregon Joint Committee on Transportation:

I was unable to attend your first listening tour on Tuesday, June 4, 2024 but wish to submit comments on transportation funding and infrastructure in Oregon in the 2025 session. I live in SW Portland and I am cc'ing my legislators, Senator Rob Wagner and Representative Daniel Nguyen, and my former Representative Dacia Grayber.

Here's a synopsis of my "don't" comments:

1. Do Not Fund Freeway Projects Through Tolling. The Oregon Dept. of Transportation has a number of major freeway projects underway despite uncertainty about how to pay for them. I am one of the many people that are opposed to tolling I-5 and I-205 just to pay for "congestion relief". Tolling will result in a significant diversion of traffic onto neighborhood streets, especially SW Barbur Blvd. in my neighborhood. Today, the toll revenue cannot be used for transit and other alternative modes according to the Oregon Constitution, and the term "congestion relief" is not defined in HB 2017.
2. Do not index ODOT fees to inflation. I am a senior on a fixed income and my PERS pension is not indexed to inflation (in fact my small PERS pension is capped at 2% which is way below the cost of living increases over the last 10 years). ODOT needs to manage its purchasing wish list just like I must do.
3. Do not consider tax increases that do not have a sunset. There are circumstances where tax increases may be necessary to pay for projects that benefit the community, but they need a timeline in the future for a formal re-evaluation of whether it's working. The Portland Clean Energy Fund is a classic example of a tax that is out-of-control, and elected officials are working really hard on inventive ways to spend these funds. Again, I am a senior on a fixed income and yet indirectly I pay PCEF through purchases I make. I can't afford to pay these and other taxes indefinitely into the future.

Here's a synopsis of my "do" comments:

1. Please fund the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project. It's shovel-ready and needed to support a transit SYSTEM throughout the Portland region.
2. Please fund the Station Access Projects in the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project. The station access projects will allow people to safely access light rail without depending on motor vehicle park-and-ride stations to achieve ridership goals.
3. Please fund graffiti and trash cleanup along our roadways. ODOT roadways have become an eyesore that both local residents and visitors have to endure. We need to find more lasting solutions to the proliferation of graffiti and trash along our roadways.
4. Please consider an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to address the restrictions on the use of gas taxes in Oregon.
5. Related to #4, please fund transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout Oregon so that people can safely walk, bike and take transit to meet their needs. This is a priority investment. It would be helpful to be able to use gas tax and (if approved) tolling funds to make it safer to walk, bike and take transit instead of driving a car.

Thanks for listening to Oregonians on our perspectives for transportation funding and needs.

Sincerely,

Marianne Fitzgerald

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