

Good evening,

My name is Michael Boyles. I'm a northeast Portland resident and a voting constituent of House District 45. I am a disabled veteran, and my spouse and thirteen-year-old stepson also live with disabilities, and we have another child due in July. I'd like to offer my public testimony about our state's transportation priorities and how they affect me, my family, and people like us all over the state of Oregon.

My family and I live in a house in a neighborhood that is hemmed in on three sides by dangerous highways that ODOT has built and maintained. To the east is Interstate 205, to the south is Interstate 84, and to the west is 82nd Ave, which was Oregon Highway 213 a little more than 2 years ago. These highways encourage thousands of motorists to drive their automobiles through our back yard every day. They bring with them deafening noise, choking exhaust and particulate pollution, and deadly speed and mass. Cut through traffic speeds dangerously down my small neighborhood street. Any trip by foot or bicycle requires thoughtful planning about how to cross the highways safely, and the crossings themselves are downright unpleasant, discouraging our patronage to the nearby commercial districts of Gateway, Montavilla, and Hollywood. Using the bus and MAX is not much better, as the stops are often dangerous or difficult to access in our neighborhood, and headways are infrequent and unreliable. The omnipresence of dangerous automobiles using high-speed thoroughfares has turned what is otherwise a lovely and charming corner of Portland into a loud and uninviting environment.

I say all of this as a motorist, myself. Indeed, I own and operate the very same piece of heavy machinery that threatens my and my family's lives and well-being, because the choices the Legislative Assembly and ODOT have made over the last century effectively force us to own a car in order to go about our daily lives. Let me be clear, this is not a point of personal preference for me. Driving a car aggravates my disabilities, and in the worst cases extended periods of driving can leave me laid up in bed with pain for hours or days on end. On the other hand, walking and bicycling give me much-needed exercise and invigorate me throughout my day, and at least on the bus or train I can more freely shift my position or even stand if I begin to grow uncomfortable. Financially, too, it is an awful choice, as I must devote thousands of dollars in savings on a down payment and hundreds more per month on financing, taxes, fees, fuel, and maintenance. But when the options for my stepson to attend the focus school in far southwest Portland are a 15 minute drive or an 80 minute transit ride it is no choice at all. When traveling between Portland and Salem for visitation with his father is a 55 minute drive or a four hour transit ride, it is no choice at all. Even just trying to get to my physical therapy appointments a mere four miles and 12 minutes away by car takes 36 minutes by bus and gets me there 20 minutes early, effectively nearly an hour, which is no choice at all.

And I consider myself among the lucky: I have a well-paying job that allows me to own my own home in a difficult housing market and a relatively late model used car that is safe and reliable without creating an existential financial burden on my family. My disabilities allow me to be ambulatory, so I can use my bicycle, instead of relying solely on the transit system. And I live in Portland, which has a relatively good transit system when compared to other mid-sized cities in the United States, let alone other cities and towns here in Oregon. My heart goes out to my fellow Oregonians who cannot match my income, or who cannot walk or bicycle, or who have no transit system to rely on at all, and how much worse the state's transportation system is for them, compared to me in my privileged position.

In this state it is far too easy drive and not nearly easy and convenient enough to use alternative modes of transportation. Indeed, in something of a vicious cycle, more personal automobile use makes those alternatives modes less attractive, as large highways and parking lots force homes, businesses, parks,

and other destinations to be farther apart and the traffic congestion traps buses and trams. The huge amounts of land dedicated to the automobile are also rendered useless for other purposes, driving up the rents of increasingly scarce housing and business space. And of course, the automobiles are dangerous for us and our children, not just because they kill and maim hundreds of people in Oregon every year, but also because they poison our air, water, and ground and are contributing to the existential danger of climate change. The only solution to the problem of car traffic is viable alternatives to driving. I'll say that again, in case you missed it:

THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF CAR TRAFFIC IS VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DRIVING

I ask the Joint Committee when they're considering a new transportation package in the upcoming legislative session to keep this idea in mind. Push back on ODOT when they claim that an expensive highway widening project is necessary. Provide no additional funding for inefficient and dangerous highway expansions, unless they are strictly for dedicated transit options. Provide funding to increase passenger rail frequency between Klamath Falls and Portland. Work with regional partners to build high speed rail service between Eugene and Vancouver, BC. Expand the frequency and coverage of the POINT system. Provide funding to local governments to invest in their local transit networks. I, my family, and my community are counting on you to do the right thing.