

June 4, 2024

TO: Joint Committee on Transportation

FROM: Jonathan Harker, AICP
Residing in SD 23 and HD 45

RE: Comments on the 2025 Transportation Legislative Package

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Gorsek and Representative McLain and Members of the Subcommittee,

My name is Jonathan Harker and I have lived in NE Portland for about 40 years. I am a retired City land use planner. I worked for the City of Gresham for about 30 years and at retirement was their Planning Director. In my retirement I have engaged in local and State advocacy on land use issues related to equitable participation, environmental justice, climate, housing and generational equity. Most recently I served on the advisory committee for LCDC's initial Climate Friendly & Equitable Communities rule making. I also enjoy caring for my 1-1/2 and 2-1/2 year old grandchildren a few days a week.

In the decisions that you make in putting together a 2025 transportation legislative package of projects and funding for ODOT I would ask that you keep what I consider as three interlocked principles in mind.

1. Invest in safe and complete streets and community paths that promote accessible and equitable walking, biking and rolling access to those places that meet everyday needs and to transit facilities. In my years of working for Gresham I was fortunate to be able to commute by Max as I live about 1 mile from the Hollywood station and Max stops at Gresham City Hall. The streets in my neighborhood have sidewalks and are safe to navigate. Not only can I easily walk to Max but there are at least 3 other bus lines in walking distance. As I age (I'll be 75 this July) I more than ever appreciate the opportunity to easily be able to access transit as I see my cohorts finding it more difficult or impossible to drive.

I know, however, from my work in Gresham (think especially west Gresham) and my local knowledge of east Portland that many neighborhoods don't have completed streets, safe connected sidewalks, or equitable access to transit. I would ask that you provide funding for building the facilities that I enjoy for those communities who lack walkable, safe streets and convenient transit options.

2. Invest in transportation infrastructure that promotes climate mitigation and resiliency. I know from my work experiences at Gresham implementing the Metro region 2040 Growth Concept Plan, in reading an extensive body of research and my own personal travel options that investing in transportation infrastructure that support compact, mixed-use, climate friendly neighborhoods does result in reduction in car trips and car trip lengths while providing more mode options for more people. Reducing VMT is critical to reducing GHG emissions.

Transportation systems are also vulnerable to the more intense weather that we are experiencing. I recall when riding the Max when it had to shut down when ice built up on the lines or had to slow down in intense heat. These events and interruption to travel options will only increase as we experience more days of extreme heat, ice and rain than occurred in the past. We know, for example, that road and bridges are susceptible to thermal stress and that transit corridors, trails and paths must be carefully placed to avoid areas subject to flooding

and land slides. Be deliberate in developing a package of project that will result in increased resiliency of our neighborhoods.

3. Be deliberate in prioritizing community-led engagement and decision-making, with specific attention to underserved populations. I know from my experience in leading public participation as a Gresham planner, in participating in local Portland planning projects, and in my deep understanding of Oregon's statewide Planning Program that the transportation and land use planning process does not require that the State or local jurisdictions utilize public participation practices to address historic and current marginalization of underserved populations.

In developing the 2025 Transportation Legislative Package, in deciding on new sources of revenue to ensure needed resources for ODOT and local implementation, and in providing direction to ODOT, local governments and transit agencies be deliberate in using an equitable participation and outcomes lens.

Underserved population include, but are not limited to: Black and African American people; Indigenous people (including Tribes, American Indian/Alaska Native and Hawaii Native); People of Color (including but not limited to Hispanic, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arabic or North African, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, and mixed-race or mixed-ethnicity populations); immigrants, including undocumented immigrants and refugees; people with limited English proficiency; people with disabilities; people experiencing homelessness; low-income and low-wealth community members; low- and moderate-income renters and homeowners; single parents; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or two-spirit community members; and youth and seniors,

I thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments for your consideration and you move forward on putting together this critical 2025 Transportation Legislative Package. I look forward to continuing to be engaged as the process moves forward.