

From:

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Location:

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

Dear Committee, my name is Kate Walker and I'm asking that you continue to prioritize safe walking, biking, and public transit in Oregon; and please do not expand the highways and road network.

A little bit about me: I was homeschooled up to age 14 – at which point my parents enrolled me in the local college. I eventually graduated with a degree in Computer Science and began a career as a software engineer. In 2004 I felt called to serve my country, so I enlisted in the US Army and deployed twice to Iraq, where my job was to locate Al-Qaeda bomb suppliers. After leaving the Army I returned to software engineering, working for various companies including AMD, Athenahealth, and Google.

One more thing about me: I don't drive. A few years ago I realized that I was increasingly unsafe behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, and made the responsible choice to go car-free. Unfortunately for me, I was living in Austin Texas at the time, and I struggled to get my basic needs met. When I was let go from my job I decided that it was finally time for my sabbatical. I spent a year repairing and maintaining the family homestead, a 1930's bungalow in the small town of Taylor, Texas. Moving to Taylor was better, but I still lacked independence – at least without driving a car.

Everything that you've heard about Texas roads is true – they're giant expanses of blacktop that are continually filled with traffic. The worst part is after they widen the highway then they have to widen the arterials – it's an endless cycle of paving. All of that blacktop has many costs. There's the direct cost to maintain it. There's also a hidden cost in lives destroyed by traffic violence. There's a hidden cost in climate change from co2 emissions. And not least there's the shockingly ignored cost for drivers who have to pay many thousands of dollars per year for basic transportation – an average of \$12k per year, according to AAA. These hidden and ignored costs are inequitable and regressive – they fall most heavily on the least privileged.

I spent several months analyzing US cities, and last week I left my car in Texas and moved here to Portland. I have not been disappointed – Portland is so much better than any city in Texas. I've rented a small apartment in the Buckman neighborhood just big enough for my dog and I, and we walk, bike, and take transit everywhere. Moving to Portland has given me back my independence. I know Portland is not perfect – no city is perfect – but it's so much better than what I'm used to. There are simply less lanes on the roads here, and as a result, people drive so slowly and carefully (from my perspective at least!).

I've spent the last few years being increasingly involved in civics & government, and I know that – given where you sit and the effort needed to get there – you are dedicated to making things better for Oregon. Y'all know far more about the decisions and tradeoffs you have to make, so I have no specific points of policy to argue. As a disabled veteran I would like to thank you for your efforts to make things better for those of us without a car, and for your efforts to lower co2 emissions and halt climate change. I ask that you continue to prioritize walking, biking, and public transportation – it may feel old-fashioned, but I promise you – these types of transportation **are** the future, and they are far more economically productive than most people realize.

Finally, if you pay attention to only one thing I have to say, I ask that you listen to the Sunrise movement. The young people are right, and we should be listening to them.

Thank you for your consideration.