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**Location:**

St. Johns, Portland

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

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Ryan Swofford and I am a resident of North Portland who strives to take transit as much as possible but I also own a car. I have lived in the Portland area my entire life and have friends and family scattered throughout the metro area. My parents live in Oregon City, my grandparents in Camas, I have friends in Portland, Gresham, Beaverton, and Vancouver. While I try to use transit as much as possible getting around Portland, it is incredibly difficult to justify for many of my trips, when I can use my car and get to my destinations much faster. I am willing to deal with much longer trip times in order to take transit but even I draw a line somewhere. In order to get more people out of their cars and onto transit, we have to make trips faster and easier and competitive with car trips so that the average person who has a car will be able to justify choosing transit over driving.

The first solution that ODOT must prioritize is the creation of a fast and frequent regional rail system to connect the region's population centers in a coherent and seamless system. Our region is full of freight rail corridors and right of ways that can improve regional connectivity, such as extending the WES corridor all the way to Salem and changing the service from a commuter focus to an all day all times focus. This change would allow people to connect between the two biggest metro areas in the state at any time without having to worry about their cars or worrying about a timetable. In addition, there are great corridor opportunities to connect Portland and the cities of Yamhill County, Portland and Clark County, Portland and the Columbia River Gorge, Portland and Columbia County, Albany and Corvallis, Corvallis and Eugene, and more. If we get creative with our vision of the future, it's easy to see that the solution to regional congestion doesn't have to be, and shouldn't be, expanding or building new freeways, rather it should be clean and efficient rail infrastructure that drives our economy and transforms our region. Expanding Amtrak Cascades trips between Portland and Eugene would allow more people to travel through the trunk of the Willamette Valley and, in addition to these other services, has the opportunity to take potentially millions of cars off of the road every year.

The other regionally transformative infrastructure investment the state must undertake is the construction of the downtown Portland MAX tunnel. Right now, Trimet MAX is hamstrung by all of their light rail lines bottlenecking at the Steel Bridge. The sharing of this part of the track means that each MAX line can only run at a frequency of every 15 minutes. This makes it hard to justify using public transportation if a transfer is required, if you have the ability to drive instead, if you are in a rush; it

generally just makes the transit experience unpleasant as it means you have to wait on the platform for a long time if you miss your train. With the construction of the MAX tunnel, red and blue line MAX trains would no longer use the steel bridge to get downtown and would instead use a tunnel between Lloyd Center and Goose Hollow. This massively speeds up the time to get between each side of downtown, but more importantly, it allows red and blue line trains to run at much higher frequencies, and allows yellow/orange and green line trains to see less congestion on the steel bridge allowing them to run higher frequencies as well. Higher frequency trains means more ridership as it allows riders to take faster trips and have a more reliable system, and it has been seen on systems throughout the country that higher frequencies equal higher ridership. This also allows our transportation system to become more resilient as the steel bridge is under threat in the event of an earthquake, whereas a deep bore tunnel would be perfectly safe during such an event. Also a downtown tunnel allows the MAX to avoid disruptions on ground level, such as the starlight parade, which caused my MAX train to take 51 minutes to get from Providence Park to the Rose Quarter, a trip that normally takes 15 minutes.

Our transportation system should be something that all Oregonians can be proud of, and the funding we put towards our transportation system should reflect the values that we have. Oregon should be a national leader in climate action and innovation and there is no better climate action than getting a massive amount of cars off the road, and there is no better spur for innovation than investing in your infrastructure to move millions more people on public transit every year than currently. Investing in these infrastructure improvements rather than highway expansions will set Oregonians up for success in the future with cleaner air, a more reliable transportation system, and a more equitable society.

Thank you,  
Ryan Swofford