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As we are all aware, vehicles pollute the atmosphere, contributing to climate change and posing health risks for those living near highways. They also contaminate our rivers with chemicals like 6PPD-quinone, which is highly toxic to salmon at concentrations as low as 1 microgram per liter and is widely used in tires. These chemicals and microplastics from tires are washed into our waterways each time it rains, poisoning our environment and, ultimately, ourselves.

Given this, why do we continue to incentivize personal vehicle use with lane expansion?

In Oregon, the average cost of automobile ownership was \$1,015 per month in 2023, totaling \$12,182 annually. Most of this budget supports infrastructure that requires vehicle ownership, which seems inequitable.

To fund this infrastructure and address the existing deficit, there are proposals to tax those who cause the least impact on the roads. These groups are often the same ones our city and regional policies aim to encourage. The justification for this is based on the Highway Cost Allocation study, which only considers direct infrastructure costs. As stated in the study's methodologies section:

“The Oregon studies allocate only direct governmental expenditures and exclude indirect or external costs such as those associated with congestion, pollution, noise, and the societal costs of traffic accidents.”

This exclusion represents an additional hidden cost that we all bear by continuing to invest in outdated car-centric infrastructure.

Let's redirect our efforts towards expanding mass transit, biking, and pedestrian infrastructure. Instead of expanding highways, which will never solve congestion, let's reduce or maintain our current road network. Let's prioritize moving people and goods in the most sustainable way possible.

Thank you.