

Dear Jt. Committee on Transportation Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek as well as committee members,

My name is Emily Polanshek. I live in Multnomah Village. Now that I'm retired from teaching, a member of OEA-Retired and an active grandmother, I'm involved in various volunteer efforts mainly focused on slowing the advancing climate crisis and its impacts.

I am looking forward to a 2025 transportation package that invests in safer, healthier day-to-day means of transportation to meet the needs (eventually) of all Oregonians, rather than continuing to invest principally in freeways and mega-projects.

Here are some of the things that I urge you to consider:

**1. Safety:**

My husband and I have one EV and two e-bikes. We need connected, and preferably protected, bike lanes to get around town safely. I'm aware that many Portlanders don't own any type of vehicle, including our adult daughter and my closest friend who is blind. They need safe bus lines, light rail and walking paths even more than those of us who get around on some type of privately-owned or rented wheels.

**2. Lower carbon emissions:**

I realize that transitioning away from cars and freeway expansions will require many years of planning, construction and budget allocations. That is precisely why we needed to have started "yesterday." So, please think about how vital our planning is now and start with a strongly forward-looking state transportation plan. Please consider the health benefits of lowering toxic emissions and particulate matter too.

**3. About cars and ODOT:**

I am privileged to co-own an EV, but view privately-owned electric cars as a transitional step, not a long-term solution. This is clearly both an equity issue and climate issue. ODOT must focus on moving people safely and equitably, not just building more lanes to move cars, the majority of which have just one person inside.

One of ODOT's metrics should be tracking and planning how to lower vehicle miles traveled to help meet our state's carbon emission reduction goals. One way could be progressive congestion pricing over bridges at peak hours, to incentivize travel at off-peak hours. I know this is contentious and complex, but believe that good planning and groundwork could help.

We must do better city planning such that more people live closer to their jobs, retailers and services, build low-income housing with the same goals, hold firm to our urban growth boundaries again to reduce the need to travel as often, and plan for more natural areas, parks and shade trees rather than more roads.

I hope to live long enough to see our state build more light rail. I want to see TRIMET buy only electric buses from now on as part of a much more extensive Portland Metro mass transit

system. If planned well, eventually buses and light rail, plus walking or rolling, can become more pleasant, affordable and convenient than driving. It's a tall order, I know. Still, I urge you to set realistic-but-ambitious goals to enable our state to meet our stated emission reduction goals to benefit everyone alive now and in the future.

#### **4. How can we fund ambitious transportation goals?**

I am ill-equipped to provide ideas about how to increase funding, but agree with what I have read: that a good start is to shift statewide transportation budget priorities and programs away from Metro-area freeway projects that most of the state won't use. Redistribute the funds we have more equitably.

Consider some kind of road-use fee for those of us who drive EVs or huge gas-powered passenger vehicles that are progressive, not regressive.

Here is a link about a much less expensive way to move people than building light rail. This video is less than 12 minutes long. if you prefer a source other than the NYT, there are many other links on YouTube about the Rapid Bus Transit system called Transmilenio in Bogota, Colombia. Perhaps this concept of dedicated bus lanes with raised stations where riders don't wait for the next bus more than about 5 minutes, could be adapted for use in our largest cities, especially Portland. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cU6ImWY4IBc> There are also numerous videos on YouTube about transit systems in U.S. cities, but the one I saw about Denver relied on building out light rail, taking decades to complete at an undoubtedly higher cost.

Plan and implement a public education campaign to make a good case for how we can improve human and environmental health while expanding ways to get ourselves from one place to another.

Finally, increase transparency about how our state transportation budget is used. Focus on the whole of Oregon's daily transportation needs: pave our many unpaved streets, connect sidewalks and bike lanes that some use daily, rather than filling budget gaps for Metro-area megaprojects like the I-5 crossing. Again, redistribute the funds we have so they benefit more Oregonians.

In summary, please craft a transportation plan that can lead to a healthier environment for all living things in our state, now and into the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I meet regularly with my own state Rep and Senator so very much appreciate your public service!

Sincerely,  
Emily Polanshek, Portland, Oregon