

To: Joint Transportation Committee

From: Debbie Kitchin, Candidate, Portland City Council District 2, North/Northeast Portland

Date: June 6, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on transportation priorities for Portland residents and businesses.

I have been a resident of Northeast Portland for more than forty years and have been a small business owner for more than 30 years. As I meet with residents throughout my district, one of the common concerns I hear about is emergency routes for North Portland in the event of a severe earthquake. 30,000 people and businesses on the north peninsula of Portland are at risk of being stranded and cut off from all emergency food, water, medical and other supplies in the event of a major earthquake. The officially designated emergency routes on Lombard and Columbia Boulevard will be severed unless we rebuild two bridges over the railroad cut and secure a tunnel section. Both of these routes are also key freight corridors for Portland and the region. We need help from the state to prioritize addressing these important risks to life and safety of a significant portion of our city.

A feasibility study of the Columbia Boulevard bridges over the cut has been conducted and PBOT is ready to apply for a grant as soon as they have the matching funds. We need assistance from the state for the next steps. It will take time and funds to address this risk to life and safety and we need to continue steady progress towards a solution.

Lombard is the other emergency route impacted by the bridge over the railroad cut and a tunnel underneath the road. Collaboration between PBOT, ODOT, and the railroad is required. Funding is needed for a feasibility study. We need to be prepared for an earthquake. This part of the community is at risk for life and safety.

The other initiative I would like to express support is for state funding to contribute to reconnecting the Albina community through capping I-5. This will reconnect upper and lower Albina, a vibrant black community severely impacted by the decision to build the I-5 freeway through the heart of the community. This effort is one step to repairing generations of damage done and restoring the residential fabric of the community. I support capping the freeway with a buildable, seismically-graded cover to support the development of multi-story buildings, green spaces and bike and pedestrian-friendly pathways. State transportation and other funding should be provided to the community-driven rebuilding of the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities harmed by our freeway system.

Finally, there are important environmental and health reasons to encourage people to use active transportation such as walking or biking or to use transit to replace some of their trips by car. Investments in infrastructure are needed to improve safety so that more people feel comfortable biking or walking. In the long term, these investments will save money and lives. I would also encourage exploring best practices to educate drivers and others using our public right-of-way so that we all learn how to navigate safely for everyone. Changes to infrastructure can be confusing to

drivers and users of the public right-of-way as we develop new systems and standards for public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

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