

Dear members of the Oregon Joint Committee on Transportation,

First, you write that you have already decided that this transportation package should focus on *maintaining* a safe, functional, efficient system.

I'm here to tell you that the current transportation system in Oregon is only safe, functional, and efficient for automobile and truck drivers. It is not safe, functional, or efficient for those of us who walk, ride a bicycle or other forms of active transportation, or take transit.

Our statewide transportation investment priorities have been skewed and corrupted by money and power, by the roadbuilding lobby, by the trucking lobby, and other who believe they have money to be made by perpetuating the existing inequitable system, rather than investing in the system we need for a post-carbon future, one where the whole state invests in and delivers on Vision Zero, of zero deaths or injuries on our transportation system.

Truly, I believe very few of you actually believe that human life should be of a higher value than the value of money, than the value of the campaign contributions you receive from petroleum companies, roadbuilding companies, from trucking companies and construction unions. You may not ever be willing to admit this in words, but you don't need to: your actions speak far louder than your words.

If you want to prove me wrong, here's what you need to do:

1. Do not invest another dime in widening roads, highways, or freeways in Oregon. You can already get to anywhere in the state, from anywhere in the nation, easily via our streets, roads, highways, and freeways. The network is complete.
2. Say the words: Congestion is not a bad thing. Congestion means success. Congestion means that customers are trying so hard to get to our businesses, it's creating a traffic jam. Fantastic. Let's provide alternative ways for people to get to our businesses.
3. Let's stop saying we want to "reduce traffic jams." When that is used as an excuse to widen freeways, highways, streets and roads, it is utter bullsh*t and you know it. You can't widen your way out of traffic jams.
4. If you really want to manage congestion, lean into pricing. Anywhere congestion exists, it's essentially due to a tragedy of the commons: we're giving away too much for free. If we charge more, such as through tolling, congestion pricing, cordon pricing, demand-based variable parking fees, gas taxes, and /or carbon taxes, we can actually SHRINK the capacity of the portion of our transportation system that is dedicated to cars and trucks, in order to make more room for healthy, thriving communities and the public space they need to succeed.
5. We need to build out the local sidewalk and bicycle networks in all of our local communities. This needs to happen with the same urgency that, in the past, we have treated road expansion projects. You didn't rely on local property owners to build I-5 as they improved their fronting parcels; don't rely on local property owners to build out the local sidewalk system, either. The State has an interest in ensuring that all local communities have safe, complete sidewalk and bicycle networks, ones that serve every property in the community safely and with comfortable infrastructure that you or I would enjoy walking or rolling on.

6. We need to construct a complete statewide trails system, to correct for the environmental racism that we have engaged in for so long that has denied the First Peoples not only of their lands and livelihoods, but even of their ability to walk safely from one part of our state to another. Most trails in our state are designed with the mentality that people will drive to them and they will be used for recreational purposes. We must lose this perspective, and instead plan for complete, connected statewide trails systems that allow people to walk or roll from anyplace in the state to any other place, without needing to use an automobile or travel on a road where they must mix with medium or high speed traffic (any traffic above 18 mph).

7. We must begin work on the new signature infrastructure projects for our time: the Coast to Gorge Trail. High Speed Rail from California to British Columbia (WE are the missing link). High Speed Rail from the Coast to the High Desert. Electrification of our entire stateway rail network. Electrification of our entire statewide transit network. THESE are the big investments we must be making.

8. Balance means we must correct for past over-emphasis on automobile infrastructure, by now investing in the missing modes. We've spent 70+ years spending nearly ALL of our public dollars on building roads for cars and freight. We should now spend the next 70+ years spending almost NOTHING on building roads for cars and freight; those roads are done, and now we actually have too many of them. We need to focus on building out our statewide pedestrian, bicycle, and transit systems; and on retrofitting our roads and highways to be safe for people and wildlife. We need to be building wildlife crossings every mile or so along every rural road, highway, and freeway in the state, for instance.

9. We know you won't forget to invest in repairing potholes, clearing snow, and performing the other basic maintenance that our existing system requires. You should probably raise the gas tax to \$1 a gallon this year, and add a dollar to that every year for the next ten years. The proceeds should be invested in building the system we need, on maintaining the existing system, and on cutting a rebate check to low income households so they can afford to purchase electric cars, electric bikes, solar panels, heat pumps, or whatever they need to transition off of fossil fuel dependency.

10. You should focus on passing meaningful campaign finance reform, to prevent yourselves from ever being corrupted by the influence of the money of the motordom lobby, the construction lobby, or any other lobby that distracts you from the work of serving the people. Oregon Leadership has lied to us, the people, about this repeatedly, including promising to enact meaningful campaign finance reforms, promises that have been broken time and again. You no longer have our trust. You must take the steps outlined in this letter to regain it, or suffer the consequences.

Cheers,
~Garlynn