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When I think about what I want legislators and staff to prioritize in the 2025 transportation package, it really comes down to thoughtfulness about the future. Rather than automatically continuing what we have done for decades, I want us to think deeply about what we need to do differently to change the trajectory of our transportation system. We are hearing that our system and our budget is in dire straits, so why would we stay on the same path that has gotten us here? That path is a prioritization of auto-based infrastructure above all else, even though it costs far more than it produces. Building new mega-projects that perpetuate that broken system is the definition of insanity, and doing so will destroy our cities, our budgets, and our climate.

Our transportation leaders need to engage in the land use planning of the cities and regions where our infrastructure exists and build safe, frequent, and reliable infrastructure – in the form of sidewalks, bike lanes, and mass transit – in conjunction with better development patterns of mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. We need intercity transit that can give people alternatives to highway travel. To make that practical, we cannot continue building cities and towns that effectively require automobile use to move around within them.

For our budgets (both governmental and personal), our climate, our children, our neighbors, we need to shift to a more economical, sane, safe, efficient system of transportation – and to complement it with land use that makes it work.