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Every news story about transportation mentions how underfunded the entire system is. And yet, the same types of projects continue to be proposed and built as if they are both inevitable and their cost is no object. We continually find ourselves scraping for pennies for safety while massive, wildly over-budget highway projects Hoover up millions or billions (!) of dollars. Focusing our transportation funds on transit, pedestrian, biking, and safety projects is the right thing to do for our health, safety, climate, and pocketbook.

There are many things we could improve or expand about our public transportation system — more routes, new facilities, and so on. But even within our current system, just funding more service — more frequent, earlier in the morning, and later at night — would be a sea-change for usability and attractiveness to riders. I recently had the pleasure of visiting some other US cities with transit service that ran more frequently and for more hours of the day, and there was no question that having transit at the ready made it the first choice over driving. (Markedly cheaper for users, too; if we're serious about focusing on equity, this can't be ignored.) But back home, my partner has to leave twice as early as necessary to get to her early morning shift downtown because transit service is so sparse in the mornings. Likewise, an attractively-priced bikeshare system (a cheap, flat monthly rate) made all kinds of trips possible that weren't easily served by walking or transit. Meanwhile here, successful and popular programs like Biketown For All are forced to scale back for lack of funds (hitting those hardest who need it the most). All of this while climate change-fueling projects like the Rose Quarter highway expansion are poised to siphon billions of dollars from current and future revenue, while also burdening us with more expensive assets to maintain in perpetuity.

I live in a neighborhood surrounded by dangerous state highways. These roads are always near the top of the high-crash network, and have sadly been the sites of numerous traffic deaths and serious injuries. ODOT has acknowledged the problems with those roads, but always says they need more funding to fix them. Let's get smart and use our funds to build safe, sustainable transportation options instead of funneling the vast majority of them into expensive, climate-change inducing facilities (that won't even solve congestion or serious safety issues, by ODOT's own admission).