

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

My name is Matthew Kremer, I'm writing to comment on state transportation funding.

I live in Corvallis and try to ride my bike as much as possible; it's something I enjoy, it's good for my health, and for the environment. I am a young, white, male -- a demographic well represented in bike commuters. The young, elderly, and women are less represented, often with concerns over safety. One of the most significant barriers for many would-be bike commuters is safety. (In Oregon, it's also the weather -- but rain gear has gotten quite good.) Just because I'm a demographic where fear for one's safety tends to be less of a barrier for doing an activity does not mean that fearing for my safety is not a regular aspect of my bike commute. It is a regular aspect. I simply enjoy riding my bike so much, and have evidently not had enough close calls yet, that I continue choosing to ride my bike. It is a choice, I can drive and sometimes I do.

Corvallis is not unique from many towns and cities across the state in having a dis-jointed lack of an active transit network that often requires careful route planning and still being unable to avoid riding along, or across, high speed and high traffic roads. In many cases the most hazardous areas are highways that bisect housing and services like shopping, food, and schools. This often makes the most safe route one that is also less direct and less convenient. It is a true disservice to lack safe and convenient transit options for those who are too young, too old, physically impaired, or financially unable to use a personal motor vehicle. My heart broke a little one day recently watching an elderly lady in a motorized wheelchair crossing five lanes of highway in a cracked and debris strewn crosswalk.

The default for decades has been prioritizing the convenience of the movement of cars through our communities. With ODOT's gas tax revenue shortfalls it is evident that it has become too expensive for this system to sustain itself. Please consider additional revenue sources such as tolls and weight based taxes on vehicles. If we prioritize infrastructure that makes all users feel safe then perhaps we can achieve the active transit mode shift needed. A robust transit network provides safe and convenient routes to access essential services in a community without using a car, this improves equity for people who are unable to drive for various reasons. Greenhouse gas and other harmful emissions are reduced in our most populated areas when fewer choose to drive. More people on foot and bike also decreases wear on roads and eases traffic congestion, reducing need for maintenance costs and projects to increase traffic volume. Above all, my hope is the safety of all road users is given the first priority in upcoming projects.

Thank you for your time,
Best Regards,
Matthew Kremer