

Hello,

The following are comments I would like to submit for the record in relation to the JCT visit of the Eugene area on 7/17.

My name is Jack Blashchishen and I am the Safe Routes to School Coordinator in Springfield. I speak on behalf of the students and their families who need safe ways to walk and roll to school and those in Springfield for whom using a personal automobile is not an option, who need safe mobility options to get around Springfield.

Top of mind:

The Safe Routes to School Construction and Education grants are extremely valuable sources of funding for making safety improvements across the state. It is doing a lot of good already and we need a lot more of it to truly make our routes safe. An important part of that is that many rural communities need help applying for this funding. They need a Safe Routes to School Coordinator who could help small towns across the state put in applications to build safety improvements to help kids get to school. We should strive for some sort of baseline coverage on top of the urban programs we already have, so that at the very least, every county in Oregon could have a Coordinator to do that life-saving work for smaller communities.

Going beyond just Safe Routes to School, I believe Oregon needs to prioritize relatively low-cost, high-benefit projects across the state that save the lives of people who are walking, biking and taking transit. We have too many people dying on our streets and rural roads in Oregon and I believe we are not spending enough money in the right places to interrupt that trend. We should identify our stretches of road that are most deadly for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users and quickly implement design changes to save their lives. Prioritizing safety for those modes will help us increase their mode share, while projects that aim to advance safety for automobiles often fail to do so, resulting in more forgiving road design that facilitates higher speeds and leads to more deadly outcomes for people outside of cars. Such projects are also expensive and lead to increased maintenance costs for which our state does not have adequate funding.

Regional Challenges:

In Lane County, I'd like to see priority given to completing projects on the Lane County Bicycle Master Plan and building safe, off-highway bike routes to connect our small cities and towns to the metro area. Currently, people are walking and biking on rural roads that were designed for the fast movement of cars, and the safety of those in them rather than out of them. Those facilities kill.

Funding

As far as financing, I welcome any solutions that the legislators could come up with. I would like to see solutions such as:

- Tolling congested interstates
- increasing the gas tax and indexing it to inflation (similarly to the minimum wage law, different rates for different zones to avoid disproportionately harming those who live rurally for whom there is no alternative to an automobile)
- introducing a vehicle weight-mile tax indexed to inflation
- Introducing a statewide delivery fee

- Vehicle registration fees that increase with additional vehicle height and weight, both of which do more damage to our roads and are much more likely to kill people walking and biking in the event of a crash
- Vehicle emissions tests/fees statewide
- Long term, our transportation funding should not come from the movement of cars. Our climate goals include modeshift targets which, if we meet them, will put us into a more precarious transportation funding situation given our existing transportation financing system. As such, we need a corporate profits tax and an income tax to provide sustainable long-term funding for the mobility solutions of the future.
- Regarding the kicker, given that we have had such a surplus in personal income tax revenue over the last couple years, could state economists perhaps more correctly estimate for future years, and could the legislature then budget for that amount of money to be spent to pay for all of these things? It seems like having a surplus one year should be a good enough reason to estimate that you will have the same the following year.

Thank you,

Jack Blashchishen (He/him)
(Pronounced "Bluh-SHE-shin") **Yo hablo español**
Safe Routes to School Coordinator