

To the Oregon Legislature Joint Committee on Transportation:

While studying Portland's rich and vibrant history, I learned there was a time when our region led the way nationally in alternative transportation and climate action. That wonderful era is long gone. We are no longer the transit pioneers we once proudly claimed to be, and the world--not to mention our own neighbors Seattle and Vancouver--has all but left us behind. Transit improvement and utilization in Portland has stagnated, even fallen, since 2015, and it is no longer valid to use COVID as a convenient excuse.

From the 1980s to 2015, we built a pretty good rail transit network. I say "pretty good", because it isn't great. In the pursuit of cost savings, we made decisions that resulted in the MAX system we have today: full of bottlenecks, chokepoints, and slowness. It's time we fix that.

MAX could be great if we finally address the very thing that keeps most of us away from it. We must build the MAX downtown tunnel. The tunnel is the single, most important investment we could make this generation that could drastically improve our region's transit network. The tunnel will turn a mediocre system into one that is actually useful.

From there, we must take a look at the existing MAX network and see how we can attract more riders without having to build new lines. If you look at most stations today, what do you see? That's right, mostly nothing. Our MAX stations have extremely poor land use. By now, our region should know what "TOD" means. Well, actually do it.

Sincerely,

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Matt Allen M. Dela Peña