

Comments for Joint Committee on Transportation:

I am a nominee for HD 33 representing downtown Portland, and I attempted to attend your Multnomah meeting; however, there was no room and because I work, I could not arrive early. Due to Trimet's schedule, it will not be possible for me to attend your Happy Valley meeting.

Regarding transportation funding in Oregon I have some thoughts:

1. The City of Portland's PCEF surplus should be leveraged for bipartisan infrastructure bill grants; specifically a downtown Max rail tunnel or the environmentally-cleared SW extension. We have had several local special taxes passed in low-turnout elections that have had misleading revenue projections. As part of tax reform, the state should demand excess revenue either be refunded, put into a state-controlled capital fund, or used to pay down pension debt.
2. The ban on the use of Statewide transportation tax revenue collected in the Trimet service area for Max Light rail expansion makes no sense and should be lifted. I recognize this was a concession made in order to pass the tax; however, the only way to relieve congestion is to offer drivers a competitive alternative, and that means Max capital improvements and expansion.
3. TriMet's board composition as all gubernatorial appointees makes no sense. Trimet taxes are paid by residents of the district who should choose the board. The Bay Area Rapid Transit District's board is elected, and the Los Angeles Metro board is appointed by city and county boards.
4. TriMet should re-visit the nonprofit exemption to the district's payroll tax. Over time, the number of employees at nominal nonprofits has increased substantially over time, and no such exemption exists for the statewide transit tax. In fact, it makes sense to flip the exemptions.
5. We need to recognize that the Westside Commuter Express is a costly failed experiment.
6. Long term planning for Cascadia High Speed rail means corridor identification and preservation. Recently California High Speed Rail certified an EIR for its Burbank to Los Angeles segment, and during the planning, the desired location for the Burbank Airport station area was developed as housing, meaning they will have to acquire the brand new housing under eminent domain in order to complete the project. Setting aside the needed parcels now with development limitations will pay off later.

Yours truly,
Tom Busse
bussefor33.com