

September 27, 2024

Dear JCT Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek, committee members,

I am Bill Meyer, a 40-year resident in the Hillsboro school district with a Cornelius zip code. After 30 years in high-tech engineering, & 3 years teaching high school algebra, I retired to substitute teach when needed. I volunteer with my Kiwanis club at an OFB food pantry, the Hillsboro Tuesday Marketplace, Free Bikes for Kids, Christmas baskets, etc.

I am also on the board of the Oregon EV Association (oeva.org), a car club for advocates of efficient transportation. We hold several brand-neutral ride & drive events each year to educate the public and promote electric vehicle ownership.

We are not expecting a free ride. Our family pays the gas tax for our second car. As EV drivers, we are happy to do our share – IF others are also doing their fair share.

Please make ODOT funding fair and equitable.

Categories like sedan, SUV, truck, fuel type, light, or heavy vehicle allow discrimination which could be illegal, immoral, or political favoritism. I am suspicious of any special treatment for different groups, so please eliminate all categories but one: “motor vehicle”.

Registration and licensing fees should be in proportion to vehicle value, as in other states. Some drivers will pay more, but most will pay less. Use a formula – not categories. (This will automatically follow rising prices.)

The road use fee should be based on weight-mile because heavy vehicles cause more wear. Simply use Gross Vehicle Weight Rating instead of weigh-stations. Big rigs carrying light loads are inefficient, so why encourage it? Simply use the odometer instead of GPS tracking. Out-of-state miles are handled by finance people in state-to-state reciprocity. We’ll collect for neighboring states & they’ll collect for us. I am concerned about lack of compliance to the heavy vehicle VMT, especially out-of-state truckers. The road use fee should be the same for light and heavy vehicles. Use a math formula instead of a ridiculous number of categories. (I can help with the algebra.) Index the fee to inflation.

The gas tax should be extended to all fossil fuel consumption. My EV will pay it indirectly as ratepayer of the electric utility that pays it. I will pay it for my boat and my tractor. If you burn it you must pay it. Eliminate red-dye (untaxed) fuel. Diesel exhaust harms the health of children in vulnerable communities, so diesel fuel especially should not be excused from paying for the externalized costs to the community. Stop calling it a “tax” and make it a “deposit-refund system”. Just like returnable beverage containers, payment is refunded when the carbon is returned. Index the “fuel deposit” to the crude oil price per barrel.

Please doubt the Highway Cost Allocation Study

ECNorthwest has selected a model favorable to truckers when balancing “fairness” between heavy & light vehicles required by Article IX, section 3a of the Oregon Constitution. Light vehicles are overcharged because they must pay for fictional bridges that will never be built. It’s like they built your new home - but charged you for a different house plan. Ludicrous! A fictional scenario is not fair -

depreciation of a physical asset is fair. (I can apply the Coffin-Manson Law to failure modes of various road & bridge materials.)

Please avoid increased diversion.

Tolls are a simple road use fee, but tolls that cause diversion are inequitable. Drivers are much safer on the freeway & increase risk to themselves and others when using alternative paths. Tolling river bridges can be OK if the same for both. The fee should increase with weight – not category.

Please enable at-home charging for low-income EV drivers

EVs are very cheap to drive – if you take advantage of lower electrical energy rates. Cost per mile can be half that of a gas car if you charge at home (80% of EV charging is done at home), but can be 3 to 5x higher using a commercial charging station. Those living in multifamily housing often lack a convenient charger and must use community chargers. It's another example of how being poor is expensive.

I remember the dot-com bubble of 20 years ago when every city street was dug up (twice!) to lay fiber optic communications cable. We were left with a lot of patched asphalt. The ZEV mandate will require new vehicles to plug in, but where will they find plugs? The fight for chargers will be worse than the water wars of our dry counties. Landlords that haven't prepared will scramble to catch up with the demand. Providing chargers in the parking lots will create patched asphalt and a boom business in directional drilling.

Whenever a hard surface is laid down for a sidewalk, driveway, or parking lot, building codes should require conduits for expected needs. Maybe the copper wires aren't needed today, but plastic pipe is cheap and pulling the wires later is much faster and cheaper with an EV-ready layout. Please fix building codes so a small expense today saves a big expense later.

www.energycodes.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/EV_Charging.pdf

I conclude with an old saw:

Don't tax you, and
don't tax me, but
tax those hiding
behind the tree."

Thank you,

- Bill

Dr. William K. Meyer, Ph.D.