

Good afternoon, members of the Joint Interim Committee on the i5 bridge.

I'm here today as a transit-dependent resident, advocate for active transportation and organizer with the Just Crossing Alliance. I rely on public transit to get around, and I want to talk to you about the findings in the IBR Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), particularly regarding the express bus services between Vancouver and Portland.

It is alarming that, despite the billions proposed to be spent on this project, express bus commute times will actually increase under the build scenario. As you saw in the previous presentation, by 2045, instead of the 48 minutes in the no-build scenario, express buses will take 59 minutes. That's over 10 minutes longer, and that's with the added benefit of shoulder running during congestion! Meanwhile, light rail—despite having 16 stops—makes the trip faster than buses at 47 minutes. This raises serious questions.

So, why is this happening? The problem isn't the bridge itself. Instead, the bottleneck moves further south to the I-5/I-405 split in North Portland. Traffic will back up there because smoothing out the flow on the bridge only pushes congestion to a new choke point. In fact, according to the SEIS, this backup could stretch all the way into Vancouver, nullifying any potential gains made by adding lanes or using tolling.

This isn't just a bus problem; commuters in cars would likely feel the effects too. This means we're spending \$5 to \$8 billion on a project that doesn't address the root problem of congestion but simply shifts it further south.

We need to ask ourselves: What are we really solving here? Instead of constantly chasing bottlenecks and throwing money at bigger highways, we should focus on managing the system intelligently. We need to rethink how we prioritize different modes of transportation, ensuring that public transit, especially express buses, aren't stuck in traffic caused by poor planning.

As a transit rider, I urge you to push for smarter, systemic solutions that prioritize sustainable transportation options. Let's not spend billions only to end up with more congestion, longer commutes, and diminished benefits not just for the people who rely on public transit, but for everyone.

Thank you for your time.