

PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

1120 SW Fifth Ave, Suite 1331, Portland OR 97204
Phone: 503-823-4000 Portland.gov/Transportation

Mingus Mapps Commissioner **Tara Wasiak** Interim Director

March 22, 2023

Senator Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is writing today in support of HB 3374, which would replace the word “vehicle accident” with “vehicle crash” in ORS.

The City of Portland’s Vision Zero goal is to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries. A multi-faceted approach is necessary to achieve this ambitious goal, including a transition in how we think about traffic safety. Safe systems thinking asserts that people are vulnerable, they make mistakes and that all travelers have a shared responsibility for keeping each other safe. In addition, safe systems put the onus on transportation agencies to build forgiving streets so that when mistakes do happen, they do not have deadly consequences.

Transitioning how we think about traffic safety includes changing the language we use to describe it. Traffic crashes are very commonly referred to as accidents. The word “accident” suggests a mistake, and more importantly suggests that what happened was unavoidable. A safe systems approach rejects the notion that deadly crashes are unavoidable. Instead, it asserts that there is a responsibility to investigate whether something could have prevented the crash, such as safer infrastructure, better vehicle safety features, or different transportation mode options. A traffic accident can be accepted as the unavoidable cost of mobility, whereas a traffic crash gives agency to investigate and change the system that led to the crash.

Using the words “vehicle crash” in place of “vehicle accident” is a symbolic but significant step toward embracing a safe systems mentality. The language change urges agencies like PBOT to look at crashes and ask what we can do to make sure they don’t happen again. PBOT urges you to pass HB 3374 with a do-pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,



Tara Wasiak, Interim Director
Portland Bureau of Transportation



It is the policy of the City of Portland that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any city program, service, or activity on the grounds of race, color, national origin, disability, or other protected class status. Adhering to Civil Rights Title VI and ADA Title II civil rights laws, the City of Portland ensures meaningful access to City programs, services, and activities by reasonably providing: translation and interpretation, modifications, accommodations, alternative formats, and auxiliary aids and services. To request these services, contact the Portland Bureau of Transportation at 311 (503-823-4000), for Relay Service & TTY: 711.