

Submitter: Steph Routh
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB2098

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Frederick, Co-Vice-Chairs Boshart Davis and Boquist, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

My name is Steph Routh, and I had the honor of serving on ODOT's Region 1 Area Commission on Transportation (R1ACT) for four years previously. I am a resident of East Portland and currently serve on Portland's Planning Commission, though I am submitting this testimony in a personal capacity.

I support replacing the I-5 bridge, but I oppose HB 2098 -2, because this legislation interferes with the ability to right-size a bridge replacement. I fervently support the -3 Amendment (and the policy recommendations offered by the Just Crossing Alliance) because it ensures a right-sized design and includes provisions that support labor, sets financial guardrails, and makes critical public transit investments.

We need a replacement bridge that is seismically sound and that achieves our goal to move people and goods in a way that advances our climate goals. I believe we can all agree here. Both Washington and Oregon's transportation-based greenhouse gas emissions toggle between 38-44% annually, and much of that is due to single-occupancy car use. We simply have to get out of the business of freeway widening in order to get serious about our climate goals.

Our livable future awaits us with a phased project grounded in financial safeguards and strong labor agreements, for all the reasons that 1000 Friends of Oregon details in their recent testimony. This region has thrived thanks to innovative, creative solutions to our transportation needs and courageous decisions by policymakers who could have built and expanded freeways but didn't. Friends, this is your moment.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Steph Routh

PS. The more I hear the term "auxiliary lanes" (and having served on the R1ACT, I have heard this phrase a lot!), the more skeptical I become when they are invoked, because AASHTO has no firm definition of auxiliary lane length. It's a term of art, and while I am a great fan of public art, this is not that.