

Submitter: Bharat Makadia
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or Topic: LC 2

My comments to ODOT are below:

Being an Oregonian for 47 years, I have commuted on most congested roads and freeways like Hwy 217 HWY 26, and I-5 for 41 years like my fellow commuters who are trying to make living, pay high gasoline & state taxes while raising our family. But there was never a systematic joint plan by the Washington and Multnomah counties plus ODOT/State to keep up with the population explosion in last 20 years while there was always support, plans and funding to develop the electric train MAX throughout Portland Metro area.

Currently all freeways in Portland Metro areas are so congested causing the noise and air pollution while not to mention it is Impossible for ambulance to get through the traffic for the life-threatening safety.

I fully agreed with your presentation of cost increases ended up as much higher now than the inflation rate. However, in the Portland metro area building the electric trains always took the highest priority for last 40 years while forgetting about the numbers of commuters keep creeping up year after year. There was lack of vision, planning and urgency to implement the highway projects with commitment. This was mainly due to the environmentalist groups and cyclists who have been lobbying to kill any highway expansion projects (Just one example: Governor Barbara Roberts killed the Hwy 217 bypass through Newberg) and Hillsboro). This resulted in a nightmare, worse daily traffic jams in nation and safety problems on Hwy 217 which would have been far cheaper to expand some 20 to 30 years ago.

Even now as ODOT is working on the long waited first expansion project to add auxiliary lanes on Hwy 217 since it was built 44 years ago, ODOT is not expanding the original two-lane freeway bridges over Hwy 8 and 10 in Beaverton, which are point of major congestion and safety problems going south when the 217-freeway lane goes from 4 lanes to 2 lanes because restriction by these bridges.

Other major issues we have in Oregon is public hearing and planning periods which seems to go on forever and missing the indented schedule to start the construction. This problem is a major source of cost adder (Examples: (1) Interstate I-5 Bridge planning and replanning which is making the architects and engineers rich. (2) Albina corridor expansion through north I-405/North I-5).

It is proven that the investments to build the electric train and busses have not paid off because they are mostly empty. Many studies have proven that. Rebuilding and expanding freeways would have been far better to reduce the air and noise pollution plus reduce carbon footprint which would definitely help in reducing global warming if ODOT would ever expand the freeways and merging lanes to reduce the traffic jams and idling cars on freeways.

Imagine our freeway congestion is a nightmare for the ambulance, which cannot travel fast enough to bring dying patient to hospitals.

Governor Tom McCall had the best plan which did NOT require any transportation expansion plan when he publicly said, "visit us but, don't stay in Oregon". Rest of all Oregon Governors in four decades were lost. They did not have the vision like WA or California, but they liked our heavy income and gasoline tax collection without timely plans. Now it has been too expensive to work on roads due to inflation, so the Oregonians are held hostage as usual while billions of taxpayers' money were wasted on Oregon Health Plan by Gov. John Kitzhaber and Homeless crisis by Tina Kotek.

Sincerely,

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