

Submitter: Joseph Stenger
On Behalf Of: A better transportation system
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Members of the Committee:

My name is Joseph Stenger. I am co-chair of MCAT's Transportation Committee.

Tough budget times! I don't envy your job.

Looking at the framework from my transportation lens, I see a 10% decrease in that category. We know that ODOT already predicts a significant deficit in funding. With the chaos in DC, these are tough transportation budget times.

We also are seeing an aging population, records deaths on the roads, and worsening climate disasters. How best to address these multiple issues?

We should focus first on operation and maintenance of streets and roads.

We should reduce traffic congestion by making transit, paratransit and active transportation more attractive and safer- programs like Safe Routes to School are areas where small investments can have significant impact.

When building housing, make sure transit and paths are nearby.

We should continue the build-out of the vehicle charging infrastructure and incentives for micromobility and electrification of light and heavy vehicles.

We should resist the push to keep spending billions on widening highways - this is a false and dangerous solution, especially damaging when it is funded by bonds backed by the General Fund.

Any more of our precious dollars spent on major highway projects needs to be funded by congestion pricing to avoid those bigger roads rapidly becoming just as congested as before those expenditures.

And increased emissions from bigger highways will accelerate the huge rise in costs we are incurring from wildfires and other disasters. We must reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Despite so many hours of hearing ODOT staff reporting on their work to you legislators, cost overruns continue to bedevil their major projects.

This department needs closer scrutiny of large expenditures; we can't just keep giving them more leeway every time the bills mount higher, for example, as they inevitably will with the next cost estimate for the IBR, delayed until after the close of this legislative session.

Focus on fix-it-first, addressing road congestion by mode-shift to transit and active transportation, and heightened fiscal oversight of ODOT - these are the actions that will allow us to thrive in spite of a limited transportation budget.

I am grateful that you are taking the time for this opportunity to listen to the people of Oregon.