



March 3, 2021

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Joint Committee on Transportation
State Capitol Building
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Re: Yes on Senate Bill 395 “Safe Routes for All”:
A 13-year-old boy on a bicycle, no bike lane, and a tragedy**

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

Is Oregon doing everything we can to provide safe routes for all?

Consider 13-year-old Wesley Meadows of Cottage Grove. He could be your son or grandson:



Wesley Michael “Wes” Meadows, Sept. 4, 2004 – Dec. 6, 2017 (GoFundMe)

According to his obituary, Wes was a 7th grade student at Lincoln Middle School in Cottage Grove. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and anything outdoors. He was a lover of all things. He was highly interested in bull riding. He loved to ride quads, bikes, and anything extreme.

In a tribute, Dalynn Downham wrote, “Wes was an amazing kid. He touched many lives and seemed to bring happiness to all he knew.”

On December 6, 2017, after dark around 6 p.m., Wes was bicycling from school to his grandparents’ home in the Saginaw Trailer Court. As the aerial photo below shows, the only way to get there was via Highway 99:

Building a successful community by bringing people together
to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

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Saginaw Trail Court on Highway 99 (Google Maps)

Here is a daytime photo of this section of highway:



Highway 99 between Cottage Grove and Creswell (KEZI)

As you can see, there are only a few inches between the white line and a soft gravel shoulder. Would you choose for your son or grandson to bicycle there, even during the day?

Tragically, Wes presumably had no choice. He was not old enough to drive. His parents or grandparents were not able to chauffeur him. There was no public bus service. And the distance was too far to walk. His only choice—the only choice the State of Oregon provided him with—was to bicycle to his grandparents' home in the dark, traveling precariously between highway traffic and soft gravel. His only choice was a tragedy waiting to happen.

Investments in safer bicycling along Highway 99 might have saved Wes' young life.

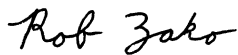
According to a KEZI news story, "residents of Highway 99 said this is a very dangerous road, and that there's no room on the sides for pedestrians or bicyclists. Marcie Pittman said she's only lived on the road about six months, and she's already seen way too many accidents. 'It's a very, very dangerous road without sides for people to get off on. And I wasn't surprised, it was very, very sad,' Pittman said."

Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST) is a broad coalition of local community leaders. In 2015 after a pickup driver ran a red light on Main Street (Business Highway 126) in Springfield, killing John Alysander Day, 8, McKenzie Mae Hudson, 5, and Tyler James Hudson, 4, we pushed for the Vision Zero goal of zero deaths or life-changing injuries. Thanks to our efforts, zero deaths is now the goal of the City of Eugene and Lane County. Similarly, the Oregon Department of Transportation has a goal of zero deaths by the year 2035.

To prevent future tragedies, which there are far too many of throughout Oregon, we need to invest to make Highway 99, Business Highway 126, and other routes around the state safe for everyone, including people walking or bicycling.

BEST strongly supports Senate Bill 395 as a way to ensure we are investing to protect lives.

For BEST,



Rob Zako, Executive Director

Resources: Oregon Highway 99

13-year-old on bicycle struck, killed by car on Hwy 99 near Cottage Grove, KVAL, 12/6/2017,

<https://kval.com/news/local/teen-on-bicycle-struck-killed-by-car-on-hwy-99-near-creswell>

'He was very nice and sweet': 13-year-old struck and killed in Cottage Grove accident, KVAL, 12/7/2017,

<https://kval.com/news/local/he-was-very-nice-and-sweet-13-year-old-struck-and-killed-in-cottage-grove-accident>

13-year-old boy killed by pickup near Cottage Grove, KEZI, 12/7/2017,

<https://www.kezi.com/content/news/Teenage-boy-killed-by-pickup-near-Cottage-Grove-462481943.html>

Neighbors say Highway 99 is prone to crashes after a 13-year-old was killed, KEZI, 12/7/2017,

<https://www.kezi.com/content/news/Neighbors-say-Highway-99-is-prone-to-crashes-after-a-13-year-old-dies-462663123.html>

Boy, 13, hit and killed by car while riding bike, Register-Guard, 12/8/2017,

<https://www.registerguard.com/article/20171208/NEWS/312089977>

Teen killed in collision a 'kind spirit,' Register-Guard, 12/9/2017,

<https://www.registerguard.com/article/20171209/NEWS/312099978>

Wesley Michael Meadows, Register-Guard, 12/13/2017,

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/registerguard/obituary.aspx?pid=187511389>

Wesley Michael "Wes" Meadows, Tribute Archive,

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/2778845/Wesley-Michael-Wes-Meadows>

Wesley Meadows Funeral Costs, GoFundMe,

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/funeral-costs-for-a-grieving-family>

Resources: Oregon Business Highway 126

3 brief lives honored: About 300 come out to remember siblings killed on Main Street, Register-Guard, 2/26/2015, <http://projects.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/32809483-75/crowd-remembers-3-children-killed-in-springfield-at-vigil.html.csp>