



March 4, 2021

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

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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”:
How much is it worth to save a human life?**

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

Senate Bill 395 could be viewed just in terms of dollars: Who pays how much into and who receives how much out of the State Highway Fund?

However, such a narrow approach tacitly assumes that the lives of 13-year-old Wesley Meadows of Cottage Grove and many others don’t matter in the analysis.



Wesley Meadows paid with his life. How much is he worth? / GoFundMe¹

In fact, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) publishes guidance on valuing the reduction of fatalities and injuries by regulations or investments for the purposes of economic analyses. The latest estimate is that the economic value of a statistical life (VSL) is \$9.6 million.²

Here is a summary of the value of recent fatalities, using USDOT guidance:³

2018 Oregon Traffic Fatalities

	Killed	Statistical Value of Life	%
Drivers	310	\$2,976 million	62%
Passengers	104	\$998 million	21%
Pedestrians	79	\$758 million	16%
Bicyclists / Pedalcyclists	9	\$86 million	2%
Total	502	\$4,819 million	100%

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

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info@best-oregon.org • www.best-oregon.org • www.facebook.com/BetterEugeneSpringfieldTransportation

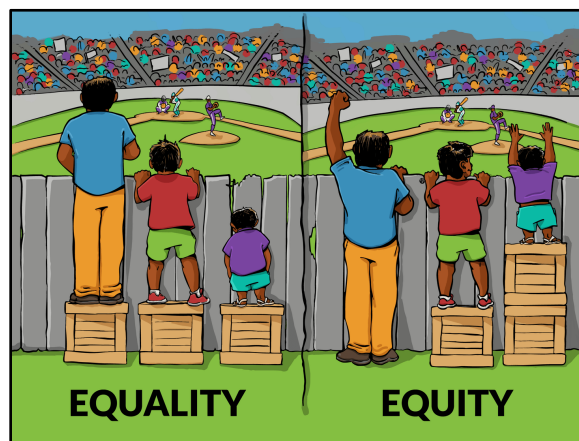
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Note that the economic value paid with lives lost significantly exceeds total revenues into the State Highway Fund.

Note also that people walking or riding bicycles are disproportionately paying with their lives: a combined value of \$845 million in the year 2018.

Some of those opposed to Senate Bill 395 have talked about “fairness”: what someone gets out of the State Highway Fund should match what they put in. By this logic, but using a more complete accounting based on USDOT guidance, people walking and bicycling are paying far more—18%—than their fair share.

In fact, what is fair is to invest in Safe Routes for All, ensuring every Oregonian can get between home and school, work or shopping safely. *Equality* is making equal investments. *Equity* is achieving equal outcomes:



Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire⁴

The 5% that Senate Bill 395 calls for represents a modest and cost-effective investment to protect the lives of those most vulnerable on our roads—and thereby to save significant economic value for Oregon.

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

For BEST,

Rob Zako

Rob Zako, Executive Director

¹ Wesley Meadows Funeral Costs, GoFundMe, <https://www.gofundme.com/f/funeral-costs-for-a-grieving-family>.

² Revised Departmental Guidance on Valuation of a Statistical Life in Economic Analysis, USDOT, 8/8/2016, <https://www.transportation.gov/office-policy/transportation-policy/revised-departmental-guidance-on-valuation-of-a-statistical-life-in-economic-analysis>.

³ 2018 Oregon Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes Quick Facts, ODOT, 7/8/2020, https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Documents/QuickFacts_2018.pdf.

⁴ Illustrating Equality vs. Equity, Interaction Institute for Social Change, 1/13/2016, <https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity>.