

Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, State and Regional Affairs Advisor
In support of House Bill 3134
House Committee on Judiciary
March 16, 2021



Metro is the elected regional government that serves nearly 1.7 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. We provide a broad range of public services that includes land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, housing and homeless services, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

Metro supports HB 3134, which would amend ORS 801.026, replacing the words “vehicle accident” or “vehicle collision” with “vehicle crash.”

The Metro Council’s adopted goal to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries in the greater Portland region by 2035 requires a multi-faceted, safe system approach, including how we think and communicate about traffic safety. Metro uses and supports using the word “crash” at all times when referring to traffic crashes, deaths and serious injuries. For nearly two decades, Metro has intentionally used the word “crash” in place of “accident,” “collision” or other terms in plans, policies and communications because of the important connotations of the word.

The word “accident” conveys a sense of inevitability, but we know that life-threatening crashes can be prevented. A safe system approach rejects the notion that deadly crashes are unavoidable. Instead, it asserts that there is a responsibility to investigate what interventions could have prevented the crash, such as a different roadway design, vehicle safety features, or speed management controls. Using the term “accident” supports the notion that traffic deaths and serious injuries are the unavoidable cost of mobility, whereas the term “crash” suggests agency to investigate and change the system that led to the crash. Finally, in an effort to use simple, straightforward and consistent language, Metro uses and supports use of the word “crash” over “collision” or other terms less common in daily language.

Metro urges you to advance HB 3134 with a do-pass recommendation. Thank you very much for considering these comments and the opportunity to provide testimony.