

PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

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Jo Ann Hardesty Commissioner **Chris Warner** Director

March 5, 2021

Senator Byer, Co-Chair
Representative McLain, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is writing today in support of HB 3134, which would replace the word “vehicle accident” with “vehicle crash” in ORS.

The City of Portland’s Vision Zero goal is to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries. A multi-faceted approach is necessary to achieve this ambitious goal, including a transition in how we think about traffic safety. Safe systems thinking asserts that people are vulnerable, they make mistakes and that all travelers have a shared responsibility for keeping each other safe. In addition, safe systems put the onus on transportation agencies to build forgiving streets so that when mistakes happen they are not deadly.

Transitioning how we think about traffic safety includes changing the language we use to describe it. Traffic crashes are very commonly referred to as accidents. The word “accident” suggests a mistake, and more importantly suggests that what happened was unavoidable. A safe systems approach rejects the notion that deadly crashes are unavoidable. Instead, it asserts that there is a responsibility to investigate whether something could have prevented the crash, such as safer infrastructure, better vehicle safety features, or different transportation mode options. A traffic accident can be accepted as the unavoidable cost of mobility, whereas a traffic crash gives agency to investigate and change the system that led to the crash.

Using the words “vehicle crash” in place of “vehicle accident” is a symbolic but significant step toward embracing a safe systems mentality. The language change urges agencies like PBOT to look at crashes and ask what we can do to make sure they don’t happen again. PBOT urges you to pass HB 3134 with a do-pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,



Chris Warner, Director
Portland Bureau of Transportation



The Portland Bureau of Transportation fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the ADA Title II, and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For accommodations, complaints and information, call (503) 823-5185, City TTY (503) 823-6868, or use Oregon Relay Service: 711.