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March 15, 2021

Members, Joint Committee on Transportation

900 Court Street NE, Salem, OR 97301

RE: Verde Comments on the HB 3065 -5 Amendments

Dear Chairs Beyer and McLain, members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

Verde's mission is to serve communities by building environmental wealth through social enterprise, outreach, and advocacy. We continue to create *ambiente*, the powerful concept of a wealthy holistic constellation of family, community and a healthy environment that can be achieved through grassroots organizing, policy change and the empowered self-determination of our communities. Since 2005, Verde has brought environmental investments to low-income communities, designed community engagement strategies around these new investments and ensured assets provided direct benefits to low-income people and people of color.

Frontline communities (Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color and low-income communities) have experienced transportation injustice for generations in Oregon, with little change in the affordability, accessibility and safety despite massive capital investments and technological innovation in the transportation sector. Past efforts to identify ways to address these disparities and engage community members in processes that would result in equitable mobility and a diversity of transportation options have not resulted in the transformative change that our communities are needing – namely, a massive expansion of public transportation options and safer active transportation infrastructure.

The current transportation systems that our community interacts with are woefully inadequate and inflicts active harm in terms of safety, exposure to onroad mobile emissions and access. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comment on HB3065 and the -5 amendments, which appear to undermine a number of ongoing public processes and the outcomes that our communities are intending to see as a result.

Equity Considerations

The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the stark inequalities of existing systems. Transportation infrastructure continues to be built for the convenience of people who are driving single occupancy vehicles. More than a third of Oregonians don't have reliable access to a car, are not able to drive, or have barriers to attain a driver's license, money for gas, insurance, maintenance and repairs. Existing limited options are often unsafe, unreliable, take a lot of time, or don't offer access to the places where people need and want to go.

The people who lack the most choice in their transportation modes are also most burdened by the negative effects of the system, including exposure to air and noise pollution and physical injury. Exposure to air toxics is associated with major impacts to respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological and reproductive health. These negative effects are experienced disproportionately by low-income and communities of color, including the land use impacts of expanding roadways. Tolling for the purpose of revenue generation to complete the projects as outlined in HB2017 via the proposal in HB3065-5 does not address the varied mobility needs of our communities nor does it spend limited resources in an equitable manner.

Sequencing of Tolling

ODOT already has the highly coveted authority to use congestion pricing and tolling on existing lanes through the value pricing authority granted from Federal Highway Administration. Verde alongside other stakeholders participated on ODOT's Value Pricing Advisory Committee (2017-18) and worked alongside jurisdictional partners to inform ODOT's preliminary study, with the goal of evaluating options to implement value pricing to reduce congestion on I-5 and I-205; considering public input for the various options; and determining effects and potential mitigation strategies for options evaluated. We are pleased to see acknowledgement that any pricing mechanism must address the impact on low-income users and that exemptions, mitigations and complementary investments in public transit must be done in tandem. Portland's Pricing for Equitable Mobility (POEM) Task Force has done a deep dive focused on this policy area, and their recommendations should be looked at early in the process. The difference in using the tool of congestion pricing for managing congestion and raising revenue also will determine the necessary mitigations needed for low-income users of the system.

Congestion pricing, if implemented for the outcome of managing congestion, can be customizable and variable over different lengths of time to adjust as necessary. Congestion pricing for the goal of raising revenue commits us to plans, modeling and assumptions that are already outdated and did not adequately evaluate equity, climate and mobility impacts nor demand management.

Our scarce public dollars are being spent to build more roads to accommodate an ever-increasing number of private vehicles, instead of maintaining and managing the existing roads to accommodate more people and goods. Not only do we not have the money, we also don't have the space to keep expanding roads to move more vehicles. As Oregon's population continues to grow, there will be more demand to move people and goods, and we can't build our way out of that need. Congestion pricing should be sequenced first to manage demand, and based on evaluated performance that incorporates equity, climate and mobility impacts (including diversion to local, unpriced

roadways), then should we undergo the same robust public involvement process to utilize congestion pricing to raise revenue for necessary roadway improvements.

Jurisdictional Transfer of 82nd Ave.

Neglect and active under-investment of 82nd Ave by ODOT has resulted in the designation of 82nd Ave as one of the state's most dangerous streets for all modal users.¹ The recent failure in the Metro region to pass the Let's Get Moving transportation bond measure only increases the urgency and need for real solutions for this vital connection to opportunity for communities living, working and accessing cultural and economic resources along the corridor. A permanent and real solution for ownership of 82nd Ave. is desperately needed, although this proposal isn't quite it. ODOT needs to make the necessary investment in the roadway to bring it to safety standards and then transfer it to the City of Portland. The City of Portland has limited mechanisms for which to raise revenue to dedicate to roadway repair and maintenance across all roads, and the needs of 82nd Ave. without substantial and appropriate funding from ODOT would have the consequence of jeopardizing planned PBOT safety and maintenance projects. Tolling may also create diversion onto 82nd Ave. from users who wish to avoid paying the toll on I-205, creating increased usage of the roadway, which in its current state without increased investment in safety infrastructure makes for a dangerous if not deadly proposal.

Our local and state transportation agencies are currently grappling with urgent budget challenges. The gas tax has been insufficient for decades to pay for even the direct costs of maintaining, let alone expanding the system, yet our transportation agency continues to add new lane-miles. Funding approaches must support justice, climate and efficiency outcomes, and we support the Oregon Revenue Roundtable's preferred tax principles of progressivity, adequacy, and equity.² We can begin to follow these principles by implementing a congestion pricing/tolling program on the system prior to dedicating or bonding funds for specific projects that would incur additional single occupant vehicles. Following congestion pricing/tolling the system, reassess project scope as well as diversion impacts, and adjust accordingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment,



Vivian Satterfield (she/her)
Director of Strategic Partnerships

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<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/investigations/here-are-the-10-most-dangerous-roads-in-oregon/283-515379419#:~:text=SE%2082nd%20Ave.&text=Busy%20Southeast%2082nd%20Avenue%20near,in%20the%20past%20three%20years.>

² https://www.ocpp.org/media/uploads/RevenueRoundtableProposal_fnl.pdf