



March 15, 2021

Members, Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Safe Routes Partnership's Comments on HB3065 -5 Amendments

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Beyer and Rep. McLain; members of the Joint Transportation Committee,

The Safe Routes Partnership is a national nonprofit that works to advance safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, to improve the health and wellbeing of kids of all races, income levels, and abilities, and to foster the creation of healthy communities for everyone. Through our work on transportation, housing, and affordability policy in the Pacific Northwest, we serve as a catalyst for the creation of safe, active, equitable, and healthy communities. Our charge is to build policies and secure funding to support students and families to be able to walk and roll to and from school and other destinations in their communities, and we work to ensure that those in our community who have the fewest options for transportation are given the most opportunities for better ways to get around.

There are many elements of the HB 2017 transportation package that have already begun to have a positive impact on communities across the state -- notably, much needed investment in transit operations for urban and rural systems, and nearly \$50 million already allocated in dedicated funding to Safe Routes to School projects. In HB 2017, we were pleased to also see attention given to jurisdictional transfer needs across the state, as well as congestion pricing of the interstate system in the greater Portland region to go into a congestion relief fund for congestion management and mitigation. In the current -5 Amendments to HB 3065, we submit the following comments.

Tolling/Congestion Pricing Program

Although I do not speak for the committee in this testimony, I currently sit on ODOT's Equitable Mobility Advisory Committee for the Oregon Toll Program. The committee was established to advise on how tolls on the I-205 and I-5 freeways, in combination with other demand management strategies, can include benefits for populations that have been historically and are currently underrepresented or underserved by transportation projects.

Given an ever-increasing number of people moving to Oregon, and the scarce transportation dollars available, not to mention the high cost of roadway expansion, it is in the interest of the state to manage and maintain our existing system, while supporting less-expensive ways to alleviate traffic congestion. A congestion management (tolling) program must begin with goals of reducing traffic congestion



through smart management of the system, and by increasing viable alternatives to single occupant vehicles. However, tolling, and specifically bonding for dedicated roadway expansion projects scoped for current conditions, does not allow for real congestion management, and only further reinforces ongoing future traffic congestion by expanding roadway capacity, which will fill up again with single occupant vehicles through induced demand.

Our concern with the direction the congestion pricing/tolling program appears to be going in the -5 amendment is that funding is being committed to projects first, before any meaningful attempts to manage the system take place. Not only is this poor system management, it begs the question of whether tolls will ultimately be set purely to raise revenue, and if there would be any funds remaining after paying off bonds for other demand management and mitigation strategies that have been promised to support those who are underrepresented or underserved by the targeted transportation projects.

One of the key design features of congestion pricing is to place positive pressure on the transportation system to discourage trips on our highways, and we recommend the Legislature directs OTC and ODOT to implement congestion pricing on the system prior to commitment to any projects through bonding. The Legislature will see better return on investment and have the opportunity to deliver efficiently on both HB 2017 commitments as well as safety, climate, and racial equity goals, by implementing a congestion pricing/tolling program first, in order to reduce congestion so that an accurate project analysis can be undertaken; only then should project scoping and any commitments proceed. To do otherwise is to ignore realistic forecasting for future demand, ultimately neither delivering an efficient transportation system that allows goods to get to market, nor delivering benefits for populations that have been historically and are currently underrepresented or underserved by transportation projects.

Jurisdictional Transfer

We are glad to see 82nd Avenue in the City of Portland receive acknowledgment for the need to make long-overdue improvements to this street, which because of active under-investment by ODOT, is one of the most dangerous in the state for all users by all modes. While a funding solution for 82nd Avenue is much needed, ODOT needs to take full responsibility to bring 82nd Avenue to modern safety standards for all users prior to transferring ownership to the City of Portland; the proposal in this -5 amendment sets a poor precedent for state roads eligible for transfer, and would hobble the City of Portland to deliver other planned and needed safety projects already under their jurisdiction.



In summary, we ask the Joint Transportation Committee to look closely and holistically at how we go about achieving the elements of HB 2017, and other directives that are also now in play, most notably agency-wide commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and Governor Brown's EO 20-04, directing state agencies to take actions to reduce and regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

- Implement 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.
- On known safety corridors such as 82nd Avenue, provide ODOT the support and funding they need to bring the road up to modern and safe standards for all users prior to jurisdictional transfer.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment,

Kari Schlosshauer

Senior Policy Manager
Safe Routes Partnership