



DATE: March 16, 2021
TO: Co-Chairs McLain and Beyer, Joint Committee on Transportation
FROM: Sarah Iannarone, Executive Director, The Street Trust
RE: House Bill 3065 (-5 Amendments)

Co-Chairs McLain and Beyer, Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

I am writing on behalf of The Street Trust, which represents thirty years of sustained transportation advocacy and thousands of members across Oregon. We work to ensure multimodal urban mobility options that prioritize safety, accessibility, equity, and climate justice. Today, we submit the following feedback on the -5 Amendments to House Bill 3065.

We want to begin by recognizing that this has been a very hard year for Oregonians and that this is a tough legislative session for lawmakers struggling to make meaningful forward progress while navigating the complexity of the present intersecting crises of a global pandemic, climate change, and the movement for racial justice. We also want to recognize that this hearing is just the beginning of an important conversation about our future - not just of our state's transportation system, but of our economy and environment. We want to thank Speaker Kotek for her very clear acknowledgement that we need to look at urban mobility holistically and, more importantly, that we cannot build our way out of congestion.

As we recover from COVID, we find ourselves at a critical juncture and unique opportunity to provide Oregon's families and workers with the sensible transportation choices they need in ways that they can afford. What we're grappling with now, in many respects, are the consequences of our success: Senate Bill 100 charted a course of constrained urban growth which means that more of us are traveling in congestion over shorter distances than ever before. However, the response to this situation should not be reverting to failed 20th Century tools like freeway expansions and autocentric megaprojects but rather to stay the course on our legacy of policy innovation for the 21st Century. Now is the time for us to invest in cleaner, more sensible mobility options along with more equitable, sustainable, transparent ways of paying for them. Now is the time for us to muster the same bipartisan commitment that we once had for stopping urban sprawl and apply it to stopping freeway overbuild.

The Street Trust was a proud partner in HB 2017 and we are pleased by the attempt to continue elevating its aspirations while tying up its loose ends. But let's be frank: ODOT can never build our way out of congestion with freeways. It simply won't work. And even if it could, Oregonians - present and future- cannot afford the price tag. Right now, the agency is overburdened with outsized construction projects it doesn't have the money to build; however, tolling people to make up the shortfall is not equitable, it's not sustainable, and it's not smart growth. Oregonians deserve more than a "pave now, pay later" investment in the midst of a long-overdue climate justice reckoning and recalibration.

Instead, we need to distinguish between "tolling" for revenue generation and "congestion pricing" for demand management, ensconce through policy language and in practice that our priority is the latter, and implement a system-wide, equitable pricing strategy to reduce congestion prior to expanding autocentric infrastructure. Only once this regional, system-wide traffic demand management system has been implemented should we consider the right (and right-sized) project investments to increase mobility for our state and region. Furthermore, as Speaker Kotek noted, this work must be undertaken through an equity lens and decision-making about future revenue generation and investments must happen with adequate transparency, accountability, and community oversight in both ODOT and the OTC.

Finally, as a resident of a neighborhood adjacent to 82nd Avenue, I am happy to see its jurisdictional transfer from ODOT to PBOT high on the agenda but insist that it be accompanied by the transfer of adequate resources to the City of Portland for essential safety, mobility, and livability improvements. What policymakers might think of as state highways in their decision-making are actually streets where my neighbors and I live, work, shop, eat, and play. For too long, too many Portlanders have been underrepresented, underserved, and endangered by ODOT's lack of investment in our "orphaned highways."

Please do not hesitate to reach out to The Street Trust as a partner in tapping into the technical expertise in our community, fully thinking through an effective system-wide demand management system, and innovating equitable models of accountability and transparency. Now is the time to craft a community-led plan for moving forward and we're here to help however we can.

Onward,



Sarah Iannarone,
Executive Director
The Street Trust