



SUNRISE MOVEMENT PDX

Date: March 16, 2021

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

From: Paxton Rothwell, Sunrise Movement PDX

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to Freeway Expansions funded by HB 3065-5

Good morning co-Chairs Beyer and McClain and members of the committee. My name is Paxton Rothwell and I live in NE Portland. I'm speaking today on behalf of myself and Portland's hub of the national Sunrise Movement.

I am testifying to express opposition to this bill and its -5 amendment not only because it was snuck in at the last minute, but because this amendment as written is a climate disaster that will lock in Oregon's transportation policy to pollute the planet for decades to come.

I have a lot on the line this morning. I'm 27 years old and I'm fairly sure that I will be alive much longer than any of you in this meeting today. 11 years ago, I first learned about the devastation climate change will continue to bring to the world. More frequent and larger wildfires, stronger hurricanes, coastal flooding, and the extinction of far too many species to count. 11 years ago I was a Sophomore in High School taking an Environmental Science class and thought "Wow, I'm sure glad I'm being taught this in school because that definitely means that someone somewhere was making big government level decisions about how to get us out of this mess!" If I had only known back then how baked in fossil fuels were into the government of this country I would have started pushing my elected officials to make the right choices when I was in high school. But I know now that I, or someone else from Sunrise, must be here, showing up to byzantine state government meetings to watch your every legislative move until you all realize that young Oregonians are terrified about our futures will not sit on the sidelines as the consequences of inaction grow with every passing year.

Many of you, I imagine, have children or at least have nieces and nephews. When you look into their faces, what do you tell them about the future planet they stand to inherit? Do you feel any personal sense of obligation, as adults, as elected officials, to ease the immense suffering that awaits future generations? Coastal Oregonians dealing with rising oceans. Horrific yearly wildfires like we experienced last fall. Droughts destroying farmers crops, floods wiping out entire communities. This is all going to get worse, and **you will be responsible**. You must fundamentally rethink every aspect of our society to demand a Green New Deal where we put people to work building sustainable infrastructure instead of just widening freeways.

40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation. It is a simple, unavoidable truth that our state will not hit our carbon reduction targets without substantially reinvesting our transportation dollars away from freeway expansions and instead towards public transportation, walkable neighborhoods, and electrified rail infrastructure. And here's a bill - with modified language slipped into the legislature mere days before a hearing - that would lock in billions of dollars for freeway expansions that will wreck the planet, pollute the air, and rob us of funding we need for transportation alternatives like safety improvements, bus service, and basic street maintenance.

I share my story of overwhelming anxiety and fear about my climate future because it's ultimately in your hands. I'm fairly certain I'm by far the youngest person who will testify about this bill today - which is a shame, because this bill has an enormous impact on the future planet I inherit, the air I breathe, and the unstable society I will be forced to live in for the rest of my life. The elected officials sitting in front of me on this zoom call will be making decisions on whether or not to move forward with countless massive freeway expansions - and forcing me and my generation to pay for them for decades to come.

I conclude my testimony by supporting the policy recommendations submitted by organizations including Verde, the Oregon Environmental Council, No More Freeways, and 1000 Friends of Oregon to rethink the best way to design transportation policy in support of our goals for a livable, equitable future.

I know that Speaker Kotek and members of the Joint Transportation Committee feel an obligation to deliver on the projects outlined in House Bill 2017. I also truly believe that Speaker Kotek and members of the Committee feel a moral obligation to protect my future, and the future of all young Oregonians who are terrified about climate change. I want to reiterate that you are ultimately going to have to choose between these two obligations. There's no way around it. Climate leaders simply do not widen

freeways. Are you a climate leader? For the sake of my future, and the terrifying fires, floods, droughts and rising oceans that await - I hope my generation can count on you to choose wisely.

We will be watching.