

Co-Chairs Beyer and McClain and members of the committee -

My name is Cassie Wilson. I'm part of the Clackamas County Youth Advisory Task Force on Climate, but am testifying independently. I live in Boring and I am speaking against HB 3065.

Last week, I celebrated getting my driver's license by going beyond my street alone for the first time in my life. I am 22 years old and I've been completely reliant on having someone drive me where I need to go until now. I wasn't even interested in driving, but I knew it was the only way I'd ever be able to get a job or pursue a higher education. Driving was my gateway to everything, but it shouldn't have to be. Participating in life and in our community shouldn't be dependent on having only one way to navigate the place we call home.

Owning a car is an expense that many cannot afford. Driving oneself is a luxury that comes and goes with age and ability. Regardless of if you can drive yourself or not - if you work or live in Clackamas County, chances are traveling by car is your only option for getting around.

Every time more money is invested into widening roads and freeways instead of making age-friendly, walkable and bikeable infrastructure, ODOT is saying that you are not welcome if you don't own a car or can't drive.

For these reasons, I'm opposed to the I-205 Expansion project and House Bill 3065 that'd create a slush fund for ODOT to pay for it by bonding against expected tolls.

Transportation is 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions. Over the past year, we have seen Clackamas County take hit after hit from windstorms, wildfires, and ice storms - all of which worsened by climate change.

With this crisis looming over, why are our elected officials still aiming to throw millions of dollars into widening several miles of I-205 when that will only exacerbate the problem? There isn't a single freeway expansion in history that has ever improved congestion, and it's baffling ODOT suggests this project will somehow be unique. The I-205 expansion project webpage curiously doesn't mention anywhere the carbon emissions this project represents to my community or my future.

Not to mention ODOT can't seem to maintain the roads we already have. We've all been there - driving adjacent to the tire ruts that are just trenches of potholes as the road disintegrates more every time it warms and freezes.

What could it look like if we invest in solutions that benefit our whole community and our climate?

We should have safe and accessible transportation options for all and invest in protecting the place we call home and the air that we breathe.

I don't want to spend my twenties begging my elected officials to care about the longevity of the communities we live in, but I also don't want to see this place that I love go up in flames every summer. We need unapologetically bold climate leadership.

It's clear that the proposed 205 expansion won't solve congestion, will rob us of money for desperately needed road maintenance and safety improvements, and will push us further into climate chaos. It's not too late for you to go a different direction and invest in alternatives. Let's work to ensure that a driver's license and automobile ownership aren't prerequisites for participating in our economy and society and invest in alternatives to freeways instead. Nothing short of the future of the planet depends on it.