

Honorable members of the Joint Committee On Transportation,

It is 2021 and we are near the point of no return to avoid irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Meanwhile ODOT is proposing to expand freeways through Oregon's largest urbanized area, investing in infrastructure that will accelerate our movement towards that unimaginable future. It is not rational or economical in any fashion to be considering to expand highways in our region at this time. We must be reducing our reliance on automobililty, not increasing it. No matter what claims ODOT makes about how they are mitigating the potential impacts of additional automobile traffic, no matter how many times they use buzzwords like "connected" and "multimodal" to describe their planned projects, you must see through their rhetoric and recognize the simple truth: this is a highway expansion bill which we cannot allow to pass.

We do not need to imagine the specter of future climate change and the terror it will unleash on our children in order to see that we must oppose this bill and ODOT's highway expansion plans. Today we already live with the terror of traffic violence, which has 26 Portlanders and 131 Oregonians so far in 2021, which are a 100% and 26% increase over last year, respectively. These deaths do not generally happen on the freeway system, but rather on ODOT owned and operated surface street highways such as 82nd avenue and Lombard blvd. On 82nd avenue, 2 pedestrians have been killed by traffic violence in just the last few weeks, because of ODOT's continued negligence and refusal to implement reasonable safety infrastructure on this corridor through one of Portland's most diverse areas. On Lombard, which I live 200 feet from, I have been told that there is not sufficient pedestrian traffic to justify additional crosswalks at Newman avenue, despite the fact that there is residential on either side of the street, bus stops on either side of the street, and I regularly see and am myself a pedestrian attempting to cross the road and being prevented by heavy vehicle traffic breaking at least 2 laws--both speeding at 50mph or more and failing to stop for a pedestrian at an unmarked crosswalk.

We are choosing this reality. If we pass this bill, we will be choosing this reality again. We are choosing climate catastrophe which will burn our beautiful state and we are choosing traffic violence which is maiming our most vulnerable residents.

We must make better choices. That can start with you, now, on this bill. Reject ODOT's request to allocate new and existing revenue to expanding highways and making investments in unsustainable and dangerous infrastructure. Reform ODOT and demand through a radically revised bill that ODOT spend funds on creating safe and sustainable pedestrian, transit, bike, and mobility device infrastructure that supports livable communities, saves lives, and turns us away from climate catastrophe. Concretely: a future adjusted amendment to this bill should de-list the freeway projects identified for funding, and list instead pedestrian and transit improvements along 82nd avenue in both Multnomah and Clackamas counties, Lombard in Multnomah County, and TV Highway in Washington County. Pedestrian, transit, bike, and mobility device infrastructure creates more jobs and increases public health. That's rational and economical. It's not what ODOT's asking for but it's what our present and future community needs.

Thank you for your time and please reject this bill in its current form. Best,

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Life-long Portlander