



Testimony to the Joint Committee on Transportation
RE: HB 3065 -8 Amendment Comments

May 11, 2021

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain, and members of the committee,

Oregon Environmental Council and 1000 Friends of Oregon appreciate the work that has gone into improving the -8 amendment. It is important that it clarifies that toll revenue can be spent on multimodal investments in the corridor, not just on the highway projects. This will be necessary to ensure that people can get around without driving, which is an essential part of reducing demand and managing congestion. If we do not invest more substantively in walking, transit, and biking, Oregon will fail to meet the goal of reducing congestion, and fail to meet our climate and equity goals as well.

We remain concerned about the risk of issuing a lot of debt to pay for overbuilt projects that are sized to accommodate unmanaged demand. We thus appreciate Section 35's requirement that highway project design include analysis of the impacts of tolling on vehicle miles traveled and the future demand on the freeway. This will help ODOT right-size projects based on managed demand.

This legislation is a start, but it isn't the end, of this conversation. There is a lot of work ahead in solving transportation problems around revenue, demand management, and necessary maintenance while keeping a clear focus on our larger goals for the transportation system. Oregonians need to be able to get around safely, conveniently, and affordably without imposing enormous financial and environmental costs on ourselves and our children and grandchildren.

Moving forward, it will be essential to do two things. First, we must structure the pricing so that it manages demand and ensures that when people have to drive, they can count on a reliable travel time. Revenue generation cannot be the primary focus of the pricing. Second, we must ensure that toll revenue is actually significantly allocated to projects that make it easier for people to not drive, in order to actually reduce demand. We cannot divert all new revenues to highway projects, and the climate crisis necessitates we invest now in an equitable and climate friendly transportation system that centers public transit.

We support the requirement to create an income-based approach to tolling, which is a welcome effort to address inequity through transportation policy. We also support the inclusion of the labor agreement language, and are encouraged to see this effort to bolster ODOT's support of labor.

We appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this process and provide feedback on HB 3065 with the -8, and we look forward to continuing to engage in this conversation throughout the months and years to come as we reshape our transportation system.

Sincerely,

Sara Wright
Oregon Environmental Council

Mary Kyle McCurdy
1000 Friends of Oregon