



Follow-up Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Julie Fitzgerald on HB 3065-8:

If Metro-Area Highway Tolling Is Implemented, then Legislation Should Establish Key Principles for Use of Revenues and Increase Public Transit

Responses to Questions Posed by Rep. Boshart Davis for Local Governments regarding HB 3065-8 on May 13, 2021, before the Joint Committee on Transportation

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Noble, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the City of Wilsonville, I am providing follow-up testimony responding to questions posed by Representative Boshart Davis to local governments regarding HB 3065-8. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this follow-up testimony, and welcome the opportunity to dialogue further with members of the Joint Transportation Committee and legislative leadership.

Q1 HB2017 committed to funding the Rose Quarter Project, and the intent of this bill is to continue to fulfill that commitment. How does this bill affect your position on the project?

The City of Wilsonville recognizes in developing the transportation-funding bill HB 2017 of 2017, the Oregon legislature worked with many interests to develop the priority highway traffic “bottleneck” projects list that included I-205/Abernathy Bridge and I-5/I-84 Rose Quarter projects.

The -8 amendment adds the crucial I-5/Boone Bridge and Seismic Improvement Project as a priority facility for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to advance in conjunction with other HB 2017 priority projects. Given the various community and organizational dynamics associated with each of these projects, the City would expect that the projects might proceed on timelines that may be difficult to specifically program for implementation.

The City recognizes that Oregon’s freight-movement industry strongly supports the Rose Quarter project in order to facilitate timely deliveries for traded-sector industries of manufacturing and wholesale distribution that are located on Swan Island, Rivergate, Port of Portland, etc.

Thus, this bill has no bearing on the City’s position regarding the Rose Quarter project.

Q2 If this bill passes, what benefits does this provide for the local jurisdictions that they don’t have already? What exactly is in this bill that brought the local jurisdictions to a place of support?

The City greatly appreciates that HB 3065-8 explicitly names in Section 1 the Interstate 5 Boone Bridge and Seismic Improvement Project as a priority facility for the Oregon Department of Transportation to advance, along with I-205/Abernathy and the Rose Quarter projects.

Additionally, the City appreciates legislative leadership’s specific named inclusion of the Interstate 5 Boone Bridge and Seismic Improvement Project in Section 18 of the -8 amendment that provides for tolling revenues to fund highway diversion mitigations in subsection (4) that “(a) Reduce traffic congestion not only on the tollway but also on adjacent, connected or parallel highways to the tollways, regardless of ownership; and (b) Improve safety not only on the tollway but also on

adjacent, connected or parallel highways to the tollways, regardless of ownership;” and subsection (5) to “(b) Determine appropriate investments or efforts that may minimize or reduce any potential impacts”. This commitment of support by the legislature to fund traffic mitigation efforts on local arterials impacted by tolled-highway traffic diversion is highly significant to Wilsonville interests.

The City respectfully suggests that this same approach as outlined in Section 18 to address tolled-highway traffic diversion impacts mitigation be applied *to all and only tolled highway corridors* where diversion is impacting local arterial facilities. Providing similar benefit to the tolled highway corridors’ arterials can help generate support from local jurisdictions impacted by traffic diversion.

At this time, the City has a neutral position on HB 3065-8. While the City applauds the legislature’s foresight to seek a mechanism for creating a regional/state funding match to a pending federal transportation infrastructure program of considerable significance, serious concerns remain by many segments of the public. Members of the City Council and our constituents seek answers and to resolve issues around the impacts of tolling on our communities on the proposed legislation.

In essence, if tolling of the freeways is implemented, then new highway facilities, improved corridor arterials and increased public transit/alternative transportation options must be realized. HB 3065-8 makes strides to accomplish these goals; however, there remain unresolved issues regarding use of toll revenues and support for public transit and alternative transportation.

Specifically, revenue generated by tolling a specific highway should be used for (1) new facilities that improve that highway corridor’s traffic-handling capacity and sustainability, along with (2) funding improvements to designated parallel local arterials directly impacted by tolled-highway diversion traffic. At this time, HB 3065-8 does not make this core principle clear on a tolled system-wide basis.

An improved HB 3065 would create a process for ODOT and the Oregon Transportation Commission to designate in conjunction with local jurisdictions specific highway-corridor arterials impacted by diversion traffic, and a program using toll revenues and other sources that funds mitigation measures for road improvements and maintenance of those impacted arterials.

Finally, HB 3065-8 does not address the important issues regarding multimodal transportation alternatives and public transit options that must be expanded and coordinated if tolling is implemented. Tolling will increase the cost of travel in private vehicles on key highways in the Metro region, and therefore will have a greater cost-impact to lower-income communities. Consequently, bus and rail transit services and bike and pedestrian infrastructure be expanded and coordinated in order to provide viable transportation alternatives, including advancing highway bus-on-shoulder options. Particularly in the southern half of the Metro area, transit service is inadequate for many work and school commutes.

Since the Oregon Constitution limits funds raised by fuel taxes and user fees to be spent solely on roads and related bike/ped facilities, the legislature will need to provide alternative sources of funding, such as the State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) program, to ensure that transit service can be expanded and coordinated to meet growing demand, particularly for both the suburban and urban-rural interface areas. Additionally, public subsidies to lower-income populations to support work/school commuting should be considered as an option for communities impacted by tolled highways.

Q3 How do you expect your local communities to react to tolling? How do you manage that?

Simply put, no one wants to pay more. Many Oregonians believe that the current highway system has been paid for already. Therefore, it is crucial that if tolling is implemented, then revenues must be used to pay for new highway facilities that replace and improve the traffic-handling capacity and seismic-resilience of outdated facilities on that highway and to pay for mitigation efforts on tolled-highway division traffic that impacts local arterials.

On the other hand, Wilsonville may be the one Portland metro-area community most impacted by the daily I-5/Boone Bridge traffic bottleneck that grinds the freeway to a crawl. Since most local-area arterials are heavily impacted by I-5 traffic, when I-5 grinds to a halt, adjacent city and county roads also tend to clog up. Thus, many Wilsonville residents who commute daily either on the highways or on local arterials would welcome efforts to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion that impacts mobility throughout and beyond the community.

The City recognizes that Oregon faces some big-ticket transportation costs ahead to replace key highway facilities, including \$500 million for the I-205/Abernathy Bridge capacity- and seismic-improvement project, \$500 million for the I-5 Boone Bridge and seismic improvement project, over \$750 million I-5/I-84 Rose Quarter improvement project, and the multi-billion-dollar Interstate Bridge/Columbia River replacement project. It is unrealistic to expect that the “feds” will bail us out on all of these projects, and therefore we need to look for ways to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and use funds generated by the region and state to leverage even greater amounts of federal funds to improve our transportation system.

The City anticipates that implementing the provisions of HB 3065 will take a number of years, during which time the legislature, ODOT and other levels of government are expected to provide public-input opportunities that shape a final transportation package. The City of Wilsonville has an active public-engagement program to inform and involve residents in important public-policy discussions. The City publishes a monthly all-city newsletter with a circulation of 14,000 to all addresses in and near Wilsonville. The City actively engages with residents on social media and other channels, including online video. The City Council is scheduling a presentation on HB 3065 issues with ODOT staff for this summer, and would be pleased to host a public Q-and-A open house event for ODOT. Thus, the City has a number of mechanisms and processes in place reach out and engage the local community.

Thank you consideration of this follow-up testimony that the City hopes is responsive to Representative Boshart Davis’ questions posed to local governments.

Sincerely,



Julie Fitzgerald, Mayor
City of Wilsonville