

Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager
In support of House Bill 3113
Joint Committee on Transportation
April 6, 2023



Metro is the elected regional government that serves nearly 1.7 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. We provide a broad range of public services that includes land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, housing and homeless services, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

Metro supports HB 3113 which provides critical transportation funding for state-owned local roads throughout Oregon. Far too many of our roads, once appropriately designed for throughput and freight, are now main streets in the hearts of our communities and need to safely accommodate local trips made by cars, bikes, buses and pedestrians. The decades-long prioritization by ODOT of the Interstate system has led to an underinvestment in these state-owned arterials, resulting in substantial deterioration, lack of adequate facilities for bicycles, pedestrians and transit, and a considerable number of crashes, fatalities and serious injuries. Significant investment is needed to address the enormous and critical needs of these facilities.

That is why Metro has continued to advocate for funding solutions for these facilities, including placing a transportation measure on the ballot in November of 2020 that would have provided much needed improvements to a significant number of these facilities in our region. It is also why Metro, in consultation with ODOT, sponsored a study of facilities across the region that might be promising candidates for jurisdictional transfer. This study, finalized and adopted by the Metro Council in December of 2020, developed an analytical framework for evaluating specific facilities both on a technical level and with respect to the readiness of local governments to assume ownership under appropriate circumstances. It was conducted in partnership with the cities and counties of our region as well as state and regional agencies responsible for transportation. The study identified eleven state-owned highway segments in our region that could be considered for jurisdictional transfer and addresses some of the opportunities and barriers to transferring the routes to local ownership. The report also concluded that not every corridor is ripe for a transfer, and identified other tools to modernize neglected urban highways.

What we need now is funding to implement these critical and necessary repairs. This past spring, alongside our partners, we successfully advocated for \$50m for the Great Streets Program to be included in ODOT's STIP, using newly available IJA funds. The Great Streets Program is a new program that addresses the safety improvement and access needs for these ODOT owned main streets. This bill's intent is to add additional funding to this program, increasing the number of streets across our state that can access funding and make these critical improvements. This is a crucial transportation need in our community and in communities across the state. We urge you to increase funding in the Great Streets Program and pass HB 3113.