

Submitter: Elijah Vennebush
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB2098

I support the replacement of Interstate Bridge, but I oppose HB 2098-2 because this legislation, as currently written, jeopardizes a right-sized bridge. I support the forthcoming -3 Amendment (and the policy recommendations offered by the Just Crossing Alliance) that ensures this replacement bridge project moves forward smoothly with explicit pro-labor provisions, finance guardrails, and major investments in mass transit.

As a regular cyclist and user of public transportation, I am impressed by the infrastructure Portland currently has to support these modes but discouraged by PBOT and ODOT's lack of responsibility and accountability to take action when and where the people want it. In the past year, we have seen several traffic deaths and hundreds of instances of traffic violence, which has led to a decline in cycling across the city. This proposal to expand the bridge solves one problem but would create or exacerbate several others. Together with the proposed freeway expansions, it would mean more cars are driving on our roads, which makes it even harder to be a cyclist or pedestrian (and it wouldn't reduce the traffic on the bridge). Additionally, the bill as written puts almost no limits on the cost of this project, meaning that ODOT would be building a "mega-bridge" at the expense of more pressing projects, such as affordable housing or improved public education.

Instead, the legislature should consider a smaller bridge, more similar to the current one, but with mass transit options built in and no extra freeway space. The "extra" money freed up as a result could go to seismically retrofitting the hundreds of other bridges around the state, or to expanded public transit service, or to any of the other things designated as priorities on the state's budget. The amendment submitted by the Just Crossing Alliance, HB 2098-3, would do exactly this and is supported by many more individual interests.

Choose the option that promotes the people and the planet. HB 2098-2 will only promote more traffic.