

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Boquist and Boshart Davis, and members of the Committee,

This testimony is being introduced on behalf of the Metro Climate Action Team; we are a community of volunteers based in the Metro area seeking to help move Oregon to adopt science-based solutions to the climate crisis we all face, and while doing so attempt to redress the disproportionate impact this crisis has on lower-income, rural, and people of color communities. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on HB 2098-2 as seen in the meeting materials of 4/13/23.

- We are strongly supportive of replacing the aging I-5 bridges with a seismically resilient crossing that fills the safety, health, employment and equity needs of the people of this region, while being fiscally responsible to the many other needs. This project is likely to conclude with an Oregon-Washington connection that will affect much of the development of the region over the next several generations. This will have huge influence on transportation but, also, air quality, viability of surrounding communities, employment, and perhaps most significantly, the climate.
- In regard to the employment of a workforce for this project, we support Project Labor Agreements as a means to ensure high quality performance standards are met and a high-skill and well-trained workforce can be ensured with area-standard compensation.
- We note that in the preamble lines 7-10, state transportation goals are discussed: “Whereas the Interstate 5 bridge replacement project aligns with the state’s transportation goals, including increasing access to alternative modes of transportation, improving safety and mobility and enhancing regional connectivity;” there is no mention of state greenhouse emissions or VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) reduction goals. We recommend these climate goals should be added explicitly and the project designed to conform to them.
- Again in the preamble lines 22-24, evaluation of the market impacts, equity and safety of tolling is discussed, there is no mention of considering reduction of emissions or VMT in designing a tolling program such as a congestion pricing strategy would and could do.
- The requested allocation of Oregon’s portion for this project risks jeopardizing many other acute needs for investment in other Transportation projects as well as regular General Fund expenditures across our state especially since ODOT has a history of project costs significantly exceeding those initially projected. The Legislature needs to find ways to cut back on the design and total price-tag of the bridge and interchanges, and then exercise close supervision to ensure that the history of cost overruns does not repeat itself in this instance.
- In Section 3, article 2, regarding the \$1B investment from the General Fund, we recommend first, paring the Locally Preferred Alternative design for the bridge and exchanges down significantly to reduce the costs overall, and with it this “down-payment” (for instance, by designing the new bridge and exchanges to closely match the

footprint of the current bridge and exchanges); and second, we recommend turning the resulting new amounts into allocations of a quarter of the new down payment each year, contingent on reporting from the IBR Program showing that it is remaining within projected budget limits. This would avoid this down payment of \$1B (or lesser amount) causing us to be responsible for the likely cost-overruns, without influence on the process.

- We recommend that the Legislature requires obtaining an investment grade analysis regarding the impact of tolling on traffic patterns at the I-5 bridge, itself, and subsequent tolling revenue, in the first year after allocation of the first tranche of funding.
- We also recommend creating an independent panel to oversee project expenditures and to advise all parties when project revisions are needed to avoid serious overruns.
- As traffic studies have consistently shown that increasing the width of highways by adding lanes quickly results in increased vehicle traffic and renewed congestion problems, thereby increasing emissions and air pollution, and as the communities around I-5 and the Interstate Bridge already suffer disproportionately high emissions and pollution, we recommend that the Rose Quarter project be considered separately and not included in this bill. We urge the removal of lines 11-17 of the preamble and Sections 11 and 12, so that this bill solely addresses the urgent I-5 bridge replacement and necessary interchange work.
- We encourage the Committee to direct the IBR Program to provide plans that prioritize the state's emissions reduction per the Governor's Executive Order 20-04. This would require plans for a crossing with a footprint limited to that of the current bridge, with total lanes being limited to three plus one auxiliary plus shoulders (already a significant highway widening), and with increased safety through avoiding a very high bridge.

Thank you for your hard work on this crucial project and your consideration of the issues presented.

Sincerely,

Members of the Transportation Committee of Metro Climate Action Team