

Submitter: Christopher Hale
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB2098

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

My name is Dr. Christopher Hale.

I'm an ER physician practicing in Salem and Portland for the last decade. I grew up in Oregon, and went to OHSU for medical school.

I'm also the father of two young children, 4 and 5 years old. I'm sure that many of you are parents. We all want our children to grow up in a world that's safe, that's better than the world we inherited.

Unfortunately, right now we experience historic wildfires every summer that turn our sky orange for weeks and make the air unbreathable, and suffer through record-shattering heat dome events.

People flood our ERs, unable to breath and delirious from heat stroke.

We are failing our children.

We are in the midst of a catastrophic climate emergency. A full 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation. The plan that is decided on for the I-5 bridge will lock in the transportation patterns for the next several generations. It will determine whether the world we leave our children is livable, or one where the air is unbreathable and the heat is deadly.

I support the necessary step of replacing the I-5 bridge, but I oppose the -2 amendment in the strongest possible terms. However, I support the -3 amendment, which is aligned with building a right-sized bridge, right now.

The plan that is ultimately accepted needs to commit to NO freeway expansions, and needs to replace the I-5 bridge within the existing footprint.

There is a well known effect in transportation called induced demand. Anytime you build more freeway, more people drive. That means that any reduction in congestion

is only temporary, as more cars clog the streets, traffic once again comes to a standstill, while pumping out more climate worsening emissions.

There are many examples of other states that have become locked in a cycle of perpetual freeway expansion.

The Katy Freeway in Texas is the most well known example, currently 26 lanes wide, with traffic slower than ever before. But there are many other examples throughout the country.

The New York Times recently did a piece on induced demand, which I would strongly encourage you to read:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/06/us/widen-highways-traffic.html>

Oregon needs to be smart enough to avoid falling into that trap.

Any plan needs to have an explicit goal of keeping the Vehicle Miles Traveled at or below current levels.

The design needs to include public transit that's easy and affordable, and safe infrastructure for biking and other active transportation. These priorities need to be front and center in the design plans AND funding priorities.

I urge the committee to explore smaller bridge design options, such as those outlined by the -3 amendment. I strongly urge you to choose a plan that is less polluting, and focused on a sustainable, livable future for our children.