

**Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager
In Support of House Bill 2793, -2
Joint Committee on Transportation
May 4, 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 2793 with the -2 amendment, which advances the prospect of jurisdictional transfers of key facilities in the Portland region and statewide.

In many parts of Oregon, state highways originally built as farm-to-market roads and designed and managed for intercity travel and freight movement today serve as local roads or main streets for cities that have grown up around them. These state highways now must safely accommodate many additional uses and transportation users including autos making short trips, pedestrians, buses, and bicycles. However, the state has failed to make the necessary investments to address these changes and, in some cases, even keep up with maintenance for these urban facilities. As a result, these roads have become a barrier to community livability and economic development, present safety hazards that put people at risk, and have fallen into disrepair.

One strategy to address these facilities is to align their ownership with their current context and function. In many cases, this means transferring ownership from the state to a local government. However, years of deferred maintenance and the cost of improving these facilities create a substantial financial liability that local governments are not prepared to assume. A funding source is needed that will support improvements to these roads to the point that it is possible for the local community to consider assuming responsibility.

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 these roads. It is also why Metro, in partnership with local governments and ODOT, sponsored a study of roads across the region that might be promising candidates for jurisdictional transfer. This 2020 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. There is a copy of the study on OLIS.

This bill offers a systemic approach to addressing these issues at the statewide level. The legislature's efforts towards jurisdictional transfer and needed improvements to urban arterials in the past has been irregular, often one-off investments in certain facilities. HB 2793 -2 offers a methodical, organized way to begin to address these needs by establishing a committee charged with advancing three roads a biennium for consideration. Paired with needed significant investment in the Great Streets Program, the bill charts a path for the state to steadily fix this critical safety and maintenance transportation concern in our communities.

The success of this program will depend on the state committing financial resources to bring these roads up to state-of-good repair prior to transferring. In addition, Metro is pleased to see that the application process for inclusion in the program is voluntary for local governments. Not every urban arterial is a good candidate for jurisdictional transfer, and it should be up to the discretion of a local government to transfer a facility.