



Representative Hoa Nguyen
Oregon House District 48

HB 2098 - INTERSTATE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT BILL

4/27 Joint Transportation Hearing Testimony

Co-Chairs McLain and Frederick, Vice Chairs Boshart Davis & Boquist, members of the committee:

My name is Hoa Nguyen, state representative for House District 48, representing outer Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County

I'm here to testify about HB 2098, the Interstate Bridge Project, to express my concerns around the funding plan for one of the largest expenditures we'll make this legislative session.

I became interested in transportation through my work as a School Attendance Coach at Portland Public Schools for close to a decade. Through this work, I found that transportation to and from school is simply too costly, inaccessible, or frankly too dangerous for too many Oregon students. This lack of transportation access is one of the main reasons for chronic absenteeism, and poor attendance is one of the biggest barriers to student success.

People living in my district have suffered from unsafe streets for years. That is why I sponsored bills this session to make it easier to find funding for students walking and biking to school. As an educator, it's been disheartening to see ODE and local school districts having to devote their scarce funds to helping students get to school because our state is not funding a street system that would be safe for students that live close enough to walk or bike to school.

Traffic Safety is a top priority for my district, given that we continue to see a rise in traffic deaths, especially on Powell Blvd, a state-owned road that runs through HD 48. I have grave concerns about the opportunity cost of

not having enough money to maintain our streets. Instead, I would like to see ODOT and our legislature prioritizing transportation dollars towards addressing these traffic deaths and dangerous conditions, so that we can spend our General Fund dollars on educational priorities like seismic retrofits for our schools or other needed capital improvements that are also funded through General Obligation Bonds.

While devoting *some* money in G.O. bonds may be appropriate given the importance of this interstate project, locking in the legislature to contribute the full \$1 billion in bonds of General Fund revenue over the next decade worries me, especially without a robust discussion about our shared priorities. I worry about eating up desperately needed revenue for education and school infrastructure needs.

There are so many traffic safety projects in my district and around the state in critical need of funding — We owe it to Oregonians to ensure we have fiscal guardrails and don't get overextended in spending on this one bridge so that we have the necessary funding for these safety improvements in my district, and across the state.

Thank you for the time and for your work on this project.

