



May 6th, 2023

Joint Committee on Transportation  
Oregon State Legislature  
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support of HB2793

To members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

My name is Zachary Lauritzen and I am the director of Oregon Walks. We are an advocacy organization based on the fundamental principle that all people should be able to safely move around their community outside of a vehicle. I am writing in support of HB2793.

Our organization has been intimately involved in the jurisdictional transfer of Highway 213/82nd Avenue in Portland. Currently, our organization is leading the organizing efforts of the 82nd Avenue Coalition, a group of people who live, work, play, attend school, and worship along the corridor. We are at the front lines in seeing how the transfer is making it possible to transform a dangerous, high crash highway into a safer, more vibrant, and people-oriented corridor where people regularly were experiencing life-changing injuries and, tragically, deaths.

**82nd Avenue is not unique.** Communities across our state are crisscrossed with high speed roads that are undeniably dangerous. The data backs this up. Vehicular injuries and deaths continue to rise in Oregon and we hold the undesirable distinction of being near the top of that category in the entire United States. We know that significant numbers of injuries and deaths occur on orphan highways where the original intent and design of the road (often rural) no longer matches the land use and community needs through which these roads now pass.

Currently the approach to orphan highways is through a series of one-off advocacy efforts. 82nd Avenue, Powell Boulevard, Hall Boulevard: these are all examples of communities coming together to make a change. While admirable, this approach is not systemic nor coordinated, leading to inequitable outcomes.

**We can do something about this** and this bill is an excellent way to begin this process. While we have a sense of the breadth of this problem, this bill will set up a system to study and fully understand the true nature, extent, and needs of all orphan highways across the state. Only with this knowledge can we begin to set aside and prioritize resources to make change.

Of course, we could continue to bury our heads in the sand while people are dying and being maimed on our roads. Or, we can be honest with ourselves, and earnest in our conviction, to address the ongoing problem of orphan highways bisecting and destroying our urban environments. It is important to note: this problem is not going away. Every year we fail to address this problem results in more injuries and deaths, further deterioration of our infrastructure, and continued misaligned investment of public and private resources along these corridors.

Oregon Walks not only fully supports this legislation, we hope to lend our expertise and experience with 82nd Avenue to inform the future jurisdictional transfer of orphan highways. Please pass this legislation and begin the journey toward a safer, more just transportation network.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Z Lauritzen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "Z" and a stylized "L".

Zachary Lauritzen  
Director  
Oregon Walks