

Submitter: Kevin Kincaid
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB564

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and members of the Committee,

I am writing in opposition to SB 564. Why, at a time when Oregon is already dealing with a Climate Crisis and ODOT is experiencing major difficulties with maintaining our existing roads, would we pass a bill mandating widening a highway? It has been shown repeatedly that adding more lanes only induces demand for car travel. The Katy Freeway in Texas, the widest highway in the US, has longer travel times than before the expansion. Adding additional lanes will only encourage people to drive, increasing emissions from both the construction process and further car travel. Freeway expansions are an expensive waste of taxpayer dollars.

Furthermore, this act itself is woefully incomplete. It specifies an approximately 3 mile section of US Highway 20 for ODOT to “widen and increase the capacity of”. There are no restrictions or qualifications to what the proposed redesign should be or how it would function. It does not even currently have a proposed amount of money appropriated to it. Furthermore the funding comes from the general fund, when there are endless better uses for the money that don’t promote emissions and car travel.

Expanding the road will take out a significant number of trees, encroach upon property owner’s land, increase emissions, and will ultimately fail to reduce traffic. If Oregon wants to make investments to improve Philomath and Corvallis Area traffic, they could instead invest in transit infrastructure. Increasing bus frequency and route coverage, both between local cities and longer routes to the coast, would do far more to reduce traffic than widening highways. The fact that Oregon, which prides itself on being a leader in Climate Action is considering a bill mandating a road expansion is deeply disappointing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.