

Transportation Safety Testimony

Opposition to 12-Foot Lane Requirement in Transportation Bill 2025

Chairs Senator Chris Gorsek and Representative Susan McLain and members of the committee:

My name is Sarah Coulter Mitchell and I'm here today as a Philomath resident to speak against a seemingly small but dangerous provision in Transportation Bill 2025—the requirement that all freight routes maintain 12-foot travel lanes. This single sentence could undo years of progress in transportation safety and put Oregon communities at greater risk.

As someone living in what could be described as ground zero for this debate (according to some transportation nerds), I've witnessed firsthand how this issue plays out. During the design of the newly completed Philomath project, the trucking industry pushed hard to maintain 12-foot lanes. Fortunately, engineering judgment prevailed, and our lanes were narrowed to 11 feet. The result? We now have safer streets with room for buffered bike lanes and parking.

Here's why this matters: **wider lanes kill people**. When lanes are wider, drivers go faster. When drivers go faster, crashes are more severe and more deadly. The physics are undeniable—higher speeds mean greater impact forces and more catastrophic injuries.

This isn't just local opinion. A 2023 study from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health—the largest research ever conducted on lane width and safety—provides conclusive evidence. The study found that "roads with 10–12-foot lanes at 30–35 mph speed limits have a significantly higher number of crashes compared to those with 9-foot lanes." The researchers discovered that "increasing to 12-foot lanes did increase the risk of crashes, most likely due to drivers increasing their speed and driving more carelessly."

Let me be clear: when comparing 9-, 10-, and 11-foot lanes, there is no difference in the number of crashes—but 12-foot lanes increase danger significantly.

Transportation professionals across the country are moving toward narrower lanes because the evidence is overwhelming. Oregon should be leading this safety revolution, not mandating a return to outdated, dangerous standards that prioritize speed over human lives.

This bill would handcuff our transportation engineers, forcing them to ignore safety data and best practices. It would prevent communities like mine from implementing proven safety improvements. And it would make Oregon's streets more dangerous for everyone—drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

I urge you to remove this 12-foot lane requirement. Let our transportation professionals use their expertise and the latest safety research to design roads that protect lives, not endanger them.

The choice is clear: we can mandate wider lanes and accept more crashes, injuries, and deaths—or we can trust the science, support our engineers, and prioritize safety over speed.

Thank you.

Sources for written testimony:

[Lane Width - NACTO](#)

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/narrower-traffic-lanes-in-cities-could-help-lower-risk-of-traffic-related-collisions>