

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek, Vice Chairs Boshart-Davis and Starr, and members of the committee,

My name is John Giacoppe, and I'm a resident of the South Tabor neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. I live in Senator Pham's district, District 23, and I live about a mile from two of the deadliest streets in Portland: 82nd Avenue and Powell Boulevard. On March 20th, our neighborhood suffered the loss of a long-time resident, Roger Lee. Roger Lee was crossing Powell Boulevard on foot, coming home from a Trailblazers game, when he was hit by a motorcyclist. We promptly planned a meeting with representatives from the Portland Bureau of Transportation, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and TriMet to discuss how we could make Powell safer for residents of our communities. The day before that meeting took place, another man, a motorcyclist, was killed on Powell just 13 blocks from where Roger died.

This kind of violence has become commonplace to us. Historically, the Oregon Department of Transportation prioritized moving cars as quickly as possible over the safety of the communities they moved through, and Highway 26 is one of their oldest highways. The section of Highway 26 that we call Powell Boulevard is designed just like a highway - two wide traffic lanes in each direction, with a turn lane in the center. This design encourages high speed driving and fast turnoffs onto our neighborhood's much slower residential streets. Drivers trying to turn onto intersecting residential streets have to watch oncoming traffic closely to find an opening they can use to make their turn, meaning they are NOT looking at the intersection they are turning into - putting anyone who happens to be in that intersection at great risk.

This design costs us lives. According to BikePortland's Traffic Fatality Tracker, eight people have died on Powell Boulevard in the last 3 years in the South Tabor Neighborhood alone. Attempts to make Powell Boulevard safer by lowering the speed limit have not succeeded, and the state has not invested the money into Powell Boulevard necessary to protect the people who use it and the communities who live beside it.

For years, our neighborhood has been demanding our transportation agencies to change this situation. Our last meeting with agency representatives was yet another frustrating denial of our requests. As always, the reason stated was money – despite the fact that the state is planning to spend billions on highway expansions elsewhere in the city.

It is in this context that I have mixed feelings about the transportation package that stands before us today. I am thankful to see that our Great Streets and Safe Routes to School programs are finally getting funding that is more commensurate with their importance to residents. The \$125 million going to Great Streets annually is excellent; I would like to see the lives of our children be valued a little more than \$25 million dollars a year, but I acknowledge this is a major improvement from its 2017 budget. Fully funding these programs will have a direct impact on Powell Boulevard, possibly in our neighborhood, and will help prepare the road for its anticipated jurisdictional transfer.

I am also happy to see that this package would increase the state payroll tax to fund public transportation statewide. Many of South Tabor's residents, including myself, do not own a car and are reliant on public transportation to get to work, run errands, and otherwise get our families where they need to go. Too many communities in Oregon have insufficient public transit service, making riders plan around being late and waste valuable time waiting for a bus that never comes. Worse, almost no communities in Oregon have meaningful night service, putting lucrative job opportunities out of reach for those without a car and encouraging intoxicated driving. Fully funding our state transportation

departments means people who work the night shift, who work outside of a dense urban core, and our elderly and disabled neighbors will have a safe and dependable way to get around no matter what time of day they need to travel.

However, I am not thrilled that highway expansions, which are given the inaccurate euphemism "anchor projects", are receiving such a large portion of our new revenue. The highway expansions previously planned by our state transportation department do not meet the moment for the climate crisis, encouraging private driving when we need to be building up sustainable, accessible transportation infrastructure for all. Additionally, I am very concerned by the attempt to demand that roads classified as "freight corridors" be a minimum of 12 feet wide. Increasing the width of a roadway from 9 feet to 12 feet while keeping the speed limit the same increases the crash rate by 50%, according to a 2023 study by John Hopkins. Powell's lanes are about 11 feet wide in the section that passes our neighborhood, for context. While the movement of goods is crucial to Oregon's economy, the safety of community members must come first. I urge you to strike that provision from the final package. Additionally, I would recommend that legislators look to amend the package to invest the \$125 million per year currently dedicated to the anchor project fund towards maintenance of the existing road network, to prevent costly rebuilding projects later and meet the more urgent needs of Oregonians.

Lastly, a major improvement that my neighbors wish to see to our transportation network is more car-free infrastructure, such as dedicated pedestrian and bicyclist paths. This is not recreational infrastructure. Building these separate paths will reduce fatal crashes, as it will give nondrivers a viable alternative to high crash corridors to reach their destinations, and it will encourage walking and bicycling for short trips, reducing our carbon emissions at a critical time. The package, as currently written, does not include significant funding for the programs that build this infrastructure in Portland. However, an amendment is being brought forward to levy a 4% tax on the sale of luxury vehicles in Oregon to fund this vital car-free infrastructure. Passing this amendment would save lives, and would only obligate those who can afford to buy luxury vehicles to foot the bill, rather raising the taxes that apply to all voters.

To conclude: my neighbors and I in South Tabor are very excited to see that the state is looking long-term to solve its revenue problems, and is directing much of that revenue to the safety and accessibility projects that our communities need the most. However, a few more tweaks are necessary to make sure that Powell Boulevard, and other high-crash corridors like it, do not claim more lives in the coming years. Please ensure that the "anchor projects" fund is redirected towards the basic maintenance Oregonians have demanded for years, and please pass the amendment creating a 4% tax on luxury vehicle sales to ensure that our car-free network receives the funding it needs to become a viable alternative. We cannot stand to lose any more neighbors. We are counting on you.

Sincerely, John Giacoppe