



133 SW 2nd Avenue, Suite 201 • Portland, OR 97204 • (503) 497-1000 • fax (503) 223-0073 • www.friends.org
Southern Oregon Office • PO Box 2442 • Grants Pass, OR 97528 • (541) 474-1155 • fax (541) 474-9389
Willamette Valley Office • PO Box 51252 • Eugene OR 97405 • (541) 520-3763
Central Oregon Office • 155 NW Irving Ave • Bend OR 97703 • (541) 797-6761

April 5, 2017

Chair Caddy McKeown
House Committee on Transportation
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 3231

Dear Chair McKeown and Committee Members:

1000 Friends of Oregon opposes HB 3231. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice.

HB 3231 authorizes cities and counties to form a special taxing and revenue district to undertake everything involved with financing, designing, building, and operating a limited access tollway. The bill authorizes the tollway district to use eminent domain to acquire land, and to establish, collect, and enforce tolls. The tollway on which this idea was modeled is in the Denver area, and charges (according to the *Oregonian*) tolls up to \$17.45 for cars and \$69.80 for trucks.

Although no route is described in the bill, HB 3231's chief sponsor described a tollway extending from Woodland, WA, crossing to Highway 30 in Oregon at either Columbia City or Portland just west of the I-5 bridge (so on a new bridge) and then through Forest Park, both intersecting with Highway 26 at Cornelius Pass, then paving a swath across the Tualatin Valley west of the current UGB, Yamhill County, and French Prairie, and joining I-5 somewhere south of Donald in Marion County.

HB 3231 will not solve any transportation problem, but it will strike a severe blow to Oregon's #2 industry – agriculture – by paving over the state's most productive farm land. Oregon's agriculture industry produces \$50 billion in sales annually; much of that is traded-sector, bringing new dollars into Oregon.¹ Marion County is #1, and Clackamas and Washington counties are in the top 6, in the state's agriculture production.

Rural reserves have been agreed to by Washington, Clackamas, and Multnomah counties, Metro, and the state of Oregon, to protect this economic engine from urbanization. HB 3231 would unravel rural reserves, and allow paving across the most resource-rich areas in the state, including the Tualatin Valley and French Prairie.

This proposal is also a dinosaur road project - it would not have been a solution in the last century, much less in this century. It will commit an enormous amount of Oregon's already shrinking

¹ Oregon Board of Agriculture Annual Report,
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/Administration/BoardReport.pdf>

transportation funding capacity and leaving the rest of the state's roads even more underfunded for repairs and maintenance. And most importantly, it will not relieve congestion; rather, it will do what every bypass roadway has done in the country – become congested.

And that is the conclusion of industry analysts, not just of organizations like 1000 Friends. For example, PriceWaterhouseCoopers' international business consulting arm concludes:²

“[T]he best solution [to congestion] isn't in fact to build another road, bridge, or tunnel. Over the past several decades, brute construction to meet the needs of drivers has been the default approach for many cities and emerging nations. Yet this strategy has merely generated more traffic, and instead of one congested route, it has created two.

“Indeed, we believe that how well this issue is addressed will shape the productivity and competitiveness of cities and countries for the foreseeable future.

“[M]ass transit must be upgraded substantially in order to ensure that governments are getting the greatest possible benefit from their transportation investments and that the systems are an attractive alternative for commuters.”

The same conclusion about the futility of building one's way out of congestion with new roads also comes from an unlikely source – Houston, Texas. The Houston mayor concluded:

“[T]he traditional strategy of adding capacity, especially single occupant vehicle capacity on the periphery of our urban areas, exacerbates urban congestion problems. These types of projects are not creating the kind of vibrant, economically strong cities that we all desire.”³

The Mayor pointed out that the recent expansion of the Katy Freeway in Houston (Interstate 10) to 26 lanes at a cost of \$2.8 billion actually *increased* rush hour travel times, and one segment is ranked the #1 most congested freeway in Texas.⁴

Oregon is doing better, and we should continue moving forward in transportation planning, not backwards. We are seeing the significant positive results of two decades of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian investments in the Portland region, and in Oregon.

- Both per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and *total* VMT have declined in Oregon. This occurred from 1999-2013 – a time when the state's population rate exceeded the national average, when the state's GDP growth was amongst the top nationally, and a time when vehicle registrations increased by 17%, again more than the national average. And still, our driving *decreased*.⁵
- The Portland metropolitan region – where this mega bypass tollway would be aimed - shows the wisdom of relatively smaller investments in transit, bicycling, and sidewalks over new roads: Portland added over 24,000 new work commutes from 2000-2010, yet only about 2000 of those commutes ended up in a car. Instead, 13,000 of the new commutes are by bicycle. The number

² <http://www.strategyand.pwc.com/trends/2015-transportation-trends>

³ CityLab, Feb. 1, 2016, https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2016/02/houston-mayor-turner-texas-dot-highway-road-expansion/458709/?utm_source=nl__link4_020216

⁴ Id.

⁵ *The Road Less Traveled is in Oregon*, <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/the-road-less-traveled-is-in-oregon/>

of commuters increased by 17%, while in the same time period driving alone to work actually *dropped* by 4%.⁶

- 45% of rush hour commuters going to downtown Portland take transit and 30% of Banfield and Sunset evening commuters use transit.

Oregon, and the Portland metropolitan region, should be making more of these type of investments - increasing transit options through bus rapid transit, more frequent bus service, additional light rail lines, interconnected bicycle and pedestrian ways - as the most efficient way to both provide mobility to people and to increase roadway capacity for freight and others who need to be on the roads.

It is time to stop dredging up these dinosaurs, and start talking about a transportation system that meets the needs of all Oregonians for the next century - and that means serious investment in transit, walking, and bicycling.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director

⁶ BikePortland, <https://bikeportland.org/2015/08/19/portlands-biking-plateau-continues-faces-unfamiliar-problem-congestion-155536>)