

Dear committee members,

I'm writing to inform the committee of my urban transportation priorities and where I see HB 2017 and ODOT missing or working against our local and regional goals. While cars are efficient and convenient for covering long distances, the growing density of our cities demands a shift in how we get around.

We need to use our existing roads more wisely. Our overused urban highways carry fast, heavy traffic without providing safe space for walking and biking. With congestion, these roads become barriers to mobility for everyone. Many of our urban freeways are without carpool/bus lanes or any good parallel bike routes. State roads such as Barbur Blvd are missing continuous bike lanes, but always have at least four lanes for through auto traffic. The neighborhood streets of Portland are bearing the traffic brought by these highways, with commuters cutting-through while kids are trying to walk and bike to school. We already have too many cars brought by too many lanes. We don't need more. Urban areas need congestion pricing and smart options including carpools, protected bike lanes, and transit with express lanes.

Electric bikes can make easy work of short trips to the store or taking the kids to school over hills and in all weather, but most people look at our unpleasant, unsafe, obsolete urban highways and choose the car for that trip even at the busiest times of day in fair weather. Cities can adapt our streets and neighborhoods to shift our transportation system to more efficient and clean modes but we need the state government and ODOT to support that effort rather than impose more car traffic and high speeds on them.

It is impossible to solve congestion by widening freeways. New empty lanes will soon be filled, creating bottlenecks elsewhere and more demand for parking in scarce urban space. We cannot answer everyone's mobility needs with single-occupancy automobiles, and certainly can't expect everyone to buy a car. Congestion, pollution, climate change, and deteriorating roads are the result of growth and cheap fossil fuel energy. Raising the gas tax will dampen demand and fund maintenance or updates. We don't need a new revenue source until fossil fuels are done and gone, but it would be prudent to tax studded tires to pay for to the road wear they cause. We need to encourage more people to choose electric cars and bikes, not to take revenge on them with taxes that are a net loss to collect.

The traffic we plan and build for is the traffic we will get. Our climate action and land use plans require a shift away from car trips in urban areas, so we should allocate funding accordingly. We should direct ODOT's urban efforts to maintenance and supporting non-car modes to catch up on the decades of neglect due to car-centric designs and cars-first policies. With smart re-allocation, small updates, and maintenance, our existing roadways can be salvaged to connect neighborhoods and better serve all users with safety and convenience.

Currently, this bill tilts toward attempting to provide car users with more convenience without relieving the continued expense cars cause to everyone else with danger, noise,

pollution, and lost space. Please give consideration to the lessons other cities and states have learned with induced demand and what an equitable transportation system that truly serves all users in an urban/suburban context would look like. I think we can get there from here with minimal expense, but not get there at all if we continue to try the most expensive way first.

Thank you,
Eric Wilhelm
6925 SW Terwilliger, Portland, OR