

Kumar Nita

From: Philip Mascher <pmascher@globe-ally.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 06, 2017 7:08 AM
To: JTPM Exhibits
Subject: In opposition to HB 2017

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I am writing to communicate my concern about the transportation bill, HB 2017. While the stated goal of the bill is to reduce congestion and reduce pollution, I must urge you not to support this bill in its current form, because the actual provisions of the bill will do the opposite.

This bill allocates over \$1 billion for widening highways within Portland. We do not want our highways widened. We turned an interstate into a park and have been better off for it ever since. Portland and PBOT have been trying for years to exercise more control over state highways within Portland so that we can make them smaller, safer, and more friendly to people not in cars. Widening highways will only cause induced demand that will increase congestion, not decrease it.

This money would go so much farther if used for any other purpose: why not spend a billion dollars helping people get out of their cars? It's the cars that cause congestion. For comparison, Safe Routes to School is funded at only about 1% of this highway expansion. Imagine what that could do with an additional percent.

The bill uses a bicycle sales tax to fund bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements. This might seem only fair at first blush, but consider: What do these safety improvements make people safe from? From cars. In the absence of cars, there is no safety problem and no need for additional infrastructure. This infrastructure exists to mitigate the danger imposed on the populace by motoring and so should be payed for by motorists.

People on foot and on bike do not damage roadways and hence should not pay for the continual re-pavement of streets. A street without cars is built once and lasts centuries. Road maintenance should come exclusively from an increased gas tax, because only motor vehicles, and especially trucks, cause wear and tear on roadways.

An especially heavy source of roadway damage is studded tires, which according to ODOT cause \$8 million in damage annually on state highways alone. Studded tires should be taxed, not bicycles.

The amount that motorists pay should be proportional to the amount of driving they do. Therefore, the increases in title and sales taxes should be replaced by a larger gas tax increase. A gas tax is proportional to the use of the roadways and to the negative externalities of pollution and road wear, so it is the only tax that aligns incentives correctly to reduce emissions and congestion. We can worry about taxing electric vehicles when we have a significant number of them on our roads, and meanwhile give them a pass in return for the cleaner, healthier air we're enjoying from each one.

Just increase the gas tax. Higher gas tax leads to less driving, and hence less congestion and less pollution. No other source of revenue will do this. Just increase the gas tax.

In my experience, people who buy bicycles at retail are extremely price-sensitive. The additional \$15 on a \$500 bicycle is just that much more discouragement from making a decision that, besides supporting local businesses, will lead to less pollution, less congestion, less healthcare costs, and less road maintenance costs, for all Oregonians. Why would we put a sin tax on someone who is doing us all a favor?

The warmest regards,
Philip Mascher

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