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June 6, 2017

TO: Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization

SUBJECT: Testimony regarding HB 2017-3

Policy 4.1 of the Oregon Transportation Plan states: "It is the policy of the State of Oregon to provide a transportation system that is environmentally responsible and encourages conservation and protection of natural resources." Under this policy is strategy 4.1.2 : "Encourage the development and use of technologies that reduce greenhouse gases."

I understand that the Committee has heard from multiple stakeholders that congestion in the Portland region is a statewide problem. Please do not patronize the taxpayers of Oregon with bad proposals that will not ameliorate congestion and will violate the Oregon Transportation Plan by promoting additional motor vehicle traffic, merely moving congestion from one bottleneck to another, and increasing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

The three expensive freeway expansion projects on I-5, I-205, and Oregon 217 are expensive mistakes. While supporters say these projects will reduce congestion by eliminating three bottlenecks on our Metro freeway system, the lane expansions will shift congestion to other bottlenecks, and any additional capacity will induce more driving. Recent lane expansion on eastbound Highway 26, the Sunset Highway, has simply moved congestion to the bottom of the hill at the tunnel. Westbound, the new lanes simply fill with additional traffic.

Consider the major lane expansion proposed for I-5 at the Rose Quarter. After the money is spent, multiple downstream bottlenecks will remain. Northbound this includes the state's worst at the Columbia River bridge. Southbound, traffic already backs up on the single lane to the Banfield, and the single lane to the Morrison Bridge, shortly past the Rose Quarter.

To reduce congestion, we need to get people out of their cars during the morning and afternoon commutes. This challenge is made more pressing by the very real impacts of climate change, which the legislature will be making worse with these freeway expansions -- greenhouse gases from transportation are the state's biggest contributor to climate change.

The Portland area is experiencing a population influx of 48,000 persons a year. Vehicle travel is going up. Oregon and the Metro Region will not reach climate change goals established by law for 2020, or 2040 or 2050.

So, what should be done to get people out of their cars during rush hour, if the State Legislature were not to just throw away \$776 million (plus additional federal and matching funds) on freeway expansion in the Portland Region?

More money for mass transit is answer number one. We can't take in 250,000 more people in Portland over the next 18 years and have them all drive everywhere. TriMet must take the lead, paying attention to what Seattle and Los Angeles have done with their recent very large transit measures, approved by voters.

An expanded visionary transit system, with good service, will attract riders, and can attract funding from voters. It must include some expensive projects. Jim Howell's recent plan for expanded TriMet service, published in Willamette Week (05/24 issue), is an excellent starting point. TriMet ridership has fallen over the past decade, as service cuts following the Great Recession have not been fully restored. Recent expensive capital projects, without adequate supporting bus service, have not attracted enough riders. Bond repayments for those projects take away money that TriMet should be spending on more service. Yet another single expensive light rail line, at the expense of the total system, is not the answer.

For our freeway system, the major answer must be congestion pricing, combined with lane access restrictions and entrance ramp controls. Make people pay tolls for using the most congested freeways during the most congested times. Congestion pricing is proven to reduce congestion in Seattle-Tacoma, the San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Milan, Stockholm, Singapore, and elsewhere. It will also provide money for maintaining our infrastructure, which we are not doing well at all in Oregon or in Portland.

Businesses that rely on motor freight need real solutions to freight delay, rather than ineffective projects. Adding lanes is the last thing you should be doing. Your package takes baby steps toward actions that can actually deal with the problem, namely congestion management combined with better mass transit.

Adding lanes, which your package mandates, solves nothing. Now that President Trump has essentially disavowed any national role in combating climate change, it is up to state and local governments to take effective action, not offer nostrums.

Have you been told that any of the three major freeway expansion projects for the Portland region will reduce greenhouse gas emissions? I challenge any such claim.

There has not been an environmental impact statement or similar environmental analysis done for any of these projects. No consideration has been given to whether there are reasonable alternatives with less impact on the environment.

All of the science points toward the conclusion that expanding freeways increases, rather than reduces, greenhouse gas emissions -- especially when the system as a whole is looked at, rather than simply looking within the bounds of a particular project.

A nearly billion dollar mandate from the State Legislature, supposedly to deal with "bottlenecks" in the Portland area, should produce a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions -- otherwise it is a billion dollar failure. A properly designed system of tolling, lanes with access restrictions, and entrance ramp controls, can actually expedite motor freight movement. Better transit can provide desirable alternatives for motorists, many of whom drive not because they want to, but because they lack alternatives.

If Oregon also manages to move forward with tax reform that improves the progressive nature of our income tax system, then any burden from tolling placed on low-income motorists who lack alternatives, will be reduced. Tax reform will also make your proposed payroll tax for transit more acceptable.

Please do not mandate these freeway projects, and do not force their construction through an inappropriate delegation of authority to JPACT, which should remain as an advisory committee to Metro, not become, themselves, a taxing authority. Encourage and enable the development of appropriate and environmentally sustainable alternatives, which will also be more effective in expediting freight movement.