

June 6th, 2017

Dear committee,

My name is Zach Holz, from SE Portland, and I wanted to comment briefly on the transportation funding proposal currently before the Oregon Legislature. I have a number of concerns, primarily regarding highway and freeway expansions, and would like to make sure these views are included in deliberation about the bill.

1) I am strongly opposed to the \$1bn being proposed to expand highway and freeway lanes across the Portland Metro area. The cost of this expansion is enormous, and it will do very little to address the underlying concerns of congestion. Portlanders have consistently said throughout our city's history that we do not want more freeway miles. I am concerned that Oregon legislators, in their understandable desire to help lessen the amount of time cars spend idling on our freeways, seem to not be familiar with the concept of induced demand. Simply building more freeway miles tends to actually exacerbate traffic problems, as people no longer perceive driving as inconvenient — the added capacity simply fills right back up as if it was always there. If these proposed freeways lanes and miles were to be constructed, at enormous cost, I have little doubt that in no time at all (a few months, a few years?) we will be right back where we started — with people asking for more expansion, because traffic outcomes will not have improved. This is especially frustrating given that Portland is the city that helped decommission Harbor Drive — one of the first instances of freeway removal in the 1970s — and that also blocked the Mt. Hood Freeway. Still, decades later, we find ourselves considering another misguided freeway expansion in our central city. This is 20th century thinking, not what should be on the table today. All of this in addition to the need to decarbonize our transportation modes, the need to reduce noxious diesel pollution that central city residents and children breathe every single day due to proximity to freeways, and the truly staggering cost of freeway miles. Considering the many other transportation outcomes that we could achieve with those funds, I recommend investing them in forward thinking transportation decisions, not in freeway expansion.

2) The bicycle tax that is proposed is an issue that, on face level, seems to be about fairness. Many folks believe, understandably, that bicycles should pay for some measure of the transportation public goods that they use. Few would argue about this! However, a 3% tax on bicycles in a state that 1) has no general sales tax and 2) does not tax purchases of new vehicles at the same rate is misguided. For starters, bicycles put essentially no wear and tear on our roadways, do not contribute to the public health crisis of distracted or drunk driving that routinely kills dozens of neighbors around Portland each year, and do not add pollutants to our air, water and land. Health and environmental concerns aside, I am also not convinced that the paltry amount of money raised from this tax would even cover the money needed to collect it! At that point, why add more administrative work for a minimal revenue stream? There is an easy fiscal reason to reject this tax. This adds another reporting burden to our locally owned bicycle shops, discourages lower income people from purchasing an affordable method of

transportation, and makes it easier for the State in the future to refuse funding to bicycle related transportation from other revenue streams. People who ride bicycles exclusively for transportation — like myself — already contribute quite a bit to road maintenance through our income taxes. We want more people on bikes — and do not want to be penalizing that with another tax.

3) I am strongly in support of the pledged amount for transit funding, though I am troubled by the exclusion of light rail funding from much of the package. I am also concerned that the proposed excise tax on new and used automobile sales is nearly entirely restricted to highway construction and maintenance funds, prohibiting the funds from being used for transit. I repeat — we will not build our way out of congestion or the growing pains of a changing region by going full-bore on 20th century transportation strategies. Build for the future. A robust transit network that connects the entire region and state with each other is a key part of my vision for a better future.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts.

Best regards,

- Zach Holz  
SE Portland