

To: The Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
Re: Public testimony on Oregon's transport spending package, House Bill 2017.

Dear Committee Members:

Please consider my thoughts here, as a professional transport consultant and as a homeowner and taxpayer from Northeast Portland.

I'm writing today in opposition to the current draft of House Bill 2017. I believe it will be harmful to the future development of Portland and I therefore urge the committee to reconsider the proposal's strong car-centered focus. Specifically, I would eliminate the \$776 million in specified freeway widenings in the Portland metro area (HB 2017-3; 5/31/17 Proposed Amendments to HB 2017; Page 227) and instead channel this funding into improvements to public transit (bus and light rail; cycling; walking; and road safety).

In the 1970s, Portland broke with mainstream ideas about transport by rejecting federal freeway subsidies and instead building the MAX. Today, Portland is the envy of cities across the country for its extensive light-rail and bicycling networks.

Today more than ever, Portland needs to carefully choose how it uses its limited urban space. Cars are the least space-efficient mode of transport. We need to reallocate space from cars to sustainable alternatives, especially transit, by establishing priority lanes and building dedicated tunnels and bridges at downtown choke points. In this way, buses and MAX cars will move quickly and reliably and the travelling public will be able to opt out of traffic jams. This is what commuters want.

Freeway widenings sound good to people conditioned to car travel. But they don't work, as cities across country have learned through costly experience. From Seattle to LA to Phoenix to Atlanta -- all have more extensive expressways than Portland and all have worse congestion. Expressways do not solve congestion, they worsen it by encouraging car travel. In the last year, voters in Seattle and LA finally realized the folly of expressways and they approved gigantic spending packages to build public transit networks. This, indeed, is the way forward, but it will be terribly costly and politically fraught in both cities because of the prodigal car-based development of previous decades.

Portland can't afford backsliding! It has created the foundation of a space-efficient, environmentally friendly, humane transport system. It needs to stick to its guns and build upon it.

Please remove these road projects and spend every saved penny enhancing TriMet and MAX and making streets safer and more convenient for bicycling and walking.

Respectfully,

Greg Spencer, Communications and Sustainable Transportation Consultant
3921 NE 81st Avenue
Portland, OR 97213
hg.spencer@gmail.com