

# Testimony to ODOT

I oppose the project to widen I-5 at the Rose Quarter.

The main reason is that *ODOT has created the very congestion its project purports to solve.*

Another important reason is that current science in the field shows that widening does not solve traffic congestion, partly due to new trips induced by the widening project.

A third reason is that the forecasting used is inappropriate for a future that is already dominated by global warming.

My testimony is based upon personal experience. In the early 1970s I served as the Multnomah County Commission's Environmental Advisor and Policy Planner. During service in that official capacity I knew and worked closely with several members of the Oregon Highway Division (later renamed the Oregon Department of Transportation), including the Administrator, the Deputy Administrator, and the Regional Engineer for the Portland Metropolitan area. I also represented Multnomah County on a bi-state commission charged with addressing problems on the Interstate Bridge.

After that service I lived in Portland for the next three decades, during which time I regularly traveled on Portland's freeways. For the last decade I have continued to live in Oregon, in Hood River. I travel to Portland often and continue to use the freeway system in the region.

I will state my testimony in the most direct terms: *Since the Fremont Bridge and I-405 opened (during the time I served as a public official), the state has mismanaged the traffic on I-5 and essentially created most of the congestion that has plagued the Rose Quarter for the decades since.* This has occurred continuously since the construction of I-405 and the Fremont Bridge,

I repeat: ***ODOT itself has caused the bulk of the congestion at the Rose Quarter.***

Here's why I know this: In 1973 the purpose of I-405, as stated personally to me by then-Highway Division Administrator George Baldwin and Deputy Administrator Bob Burchell was *to relieve congestion on the Marquam Bridge and Eastside I-5 and to enable cars and trucks intending to move through Portland to southerly destinations to bypass the city center.* There was an additional de-facto purpose of I-405, which was to link to another proposed freeway, I-505, the St. Helens Freeway, a project that subsequently was killed. I had this discussion with those top officials in an official capacity, representing Multnomah County as the Board of Commission's Environmental Advisor.

The mismanagement problem lies with the information shown on the big green direction signs. As a driver proceeds south on I-5 they can see a pair of direction signs in the vicinity of the Killingsworth/Alberta crossings. One says "I-405 Beaverton and US26 West" and the other says "I-5 Salem". These signs have always said that. So newcomer motorists and truckers who choose to pass through Portland are explicitly directed to use I-5, thus funneling them into the Rose Quarter and adding to the Eastside and Marquam Bridge congestion that was to be avoided. *Not bypassing at all!*

From data made available to the public, I cannot estimate which portion of southbound I-5 traffic will pass through central Portland and thus could be directed to use I-405. I presume ODOT does its usual "origin and destination" studies, but I see no data on that.

I will comment on two other issues, both technical and both political: the traffic projections that drive all other numbers; and global warming. I am an ordinary citizen, retired, who has

adequate competence to address both issues. But my ability to comment on these issues is completely hindered by ODOT's *Environmental Assessment*. Someone referred to this document as "a promotional brochure", and that is what it is. It presents us with a virtual tsunami of numbers, creating the illusion of technical support for the project. But the presentation is opaque and dense. Impenetrable by the average citizen, the document offers no evidence or persuasion at all, just a lot of puff. ODOT is presenting technical detail as a weapon to obfuscate, confuse and distract.

Traffic projection numbers drive all other stated impacts of this project and therefore are foundational. The foundation is so flawed as to be cracked. It is not clear in the technical reports made available so far how ODOT has arrived at these projections. ODOT states that their methodology is based upon a federal 2014 document, the National Cooperative Highway Research Program's Report 765, "Analytical Travel Forecasting Approaches for Project-Level Planning and Design". In my review of that document I see that other factors "are considered", but basically traffic projection methodology appears to rely, as it always has, on past traffic numbers. In the present era, this methodology is fatally flawed. A certain future of imminent manmade global climate catastrophe (what some call "global warming") makes these forecasting approaches useless.

Modern transportation planning recognizes that the goal is to move people and commodities, not to move machines. ODOT's I-5 Rose Quarter project is structured along classic highway lines: the goal is to move machines, and lip service is given to other modes of moving people and goods. Further, from experience I am confident that this project, if built, will cost close to a billion dollars. Your current cost projection is disingenuous and misleads the citizens who will pay the cost.

Start over.

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