

March 27, 2019



PORTLAND
BUS LANE
PROJECT

I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project
Oregon Department of Transportation
% Megan Channell
123 NW Flanders Street
Portland, OR 97209

I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project

Members of ODOT's I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project team,

We all recognize that our region's population growth has meant more private automobiles on the road and that this congestion threatens our region's economic competitiveness and quality of life. Adding capacity on the the Rose Quarter segment of the I-5 freeway is neither a short-term nor a long-term solution. Freeway expansion has never solved traffic congestion--not in any city in North America over the last sixty years--and has often made congestion worse at exorbitant and unnecessary cost.

Construction of the proposed auxiliary lanes will subject the region to years of congestion-inducing construction in the Rose Quarter that will ripple outward--causing delays and detours across the region for bus riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The very groups who are already making the choices needed to reduce congestion will be severely and extensively impacted by the construction of this auto-centric project.

In response to the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Environmental Assessment published by ODOT for public comment on February 15th, 2019 and in recognition that the proposed project **significantly affects the quality of the human environment**, the Portland Bus Lane Project requests that ODOT perform a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that includes analysis of meaningful alternatives to auto-centric approaches. Prioritization of single-occupancy vehicles has significant adverse impacts on Oregon's ability to meet carbon reduction goals enshrined in state law, as well as significant adverse impacts on public health in the the local community. A full EIS should honestly assess and mitigate the potential negative, disparate impacts this project may bring to the surrounding Albina neighborhood and the region as a whole. The methodology and outcomes of these revisions should be made available for public review and comment.

The Portland Bus Lane Project asks ODOT to remove the addition of auxiliary lanes on I-5 from the I-5 Rose Quarter plan and instead pursue the following two solutions:

1. **Work with municipal, regional, business and community partners to implement decongestion pricing on I-5 before any further study or work to expand the Rose Quarter Freeway is conducted.** HB 2017 mandated that the Oregon Department of Transportation move forward with decongestion pricing initiatives on I-5 and I-205. With overwhelming research indicating that decongestion pricing is the only successful method of eliminating metropolitan traffic congestion, it is only sensible to move forward with decongestion pricing first before spending nearly a half billion dollars on the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion. Our state's tight budget, our local neighborhood's air quality, our initiatives to combat carbon emissions are reason enough for ODOT to demonstrate leadership and implement decongestion pricing before spending at least half a billion dollars on freeway expansion.



2. **Work with municipal, regional, and transit agency partners to construct continuous dedicated bus lanes, protected bike lanes, and high-quality pedestrian environments on all roadways within ODOT jurisdiction in the Metro region.** Many of these ODOT-controlled roads have significant safety problems and contribute significantly to regional congestion. ODOT has the opportunity to apply \$500 million to address congestion systemically rather than applying an expensive and ineffective spot solution. Money contributed by regional taxpayers must be spent on the most cost-effective infrastructure, infrastructure proven to reduce congestion, air pollution, and carbon emissions. Given that, nationally, gold-standard BRT lines cost approximately \$50 million a mile, our region would be better served by 10 miles of BRT on our most congested corridors.

Combining these two recommendations provides significant opportunity to reduce congestion, emissions, and public health threats, while improving safety on the region's streets and providing more equitable access. Congestion pricing can create additional revenue that could be used to implement transit-priority improvements and to construct dedicated lanes for existing and new bus lines and the Portland Streetcar. This project as currently outlined in the Environmental Assessment document actually slows public transit through the neighborhood, an unacceptable outcome for a \$500 million investment in transportation infrastructure.

The Environmental Assessment document, as provided, is inadequate. Our organization calls on ODOT to recognize address this inadequacy with real solutions for the region's challenges. Should you wish to discuss the destructive impacts of the proposed auxiliary lanes and how to implement the efficient solutions offered in this letter, please contact our lead authors identified below.

Sincerely,

PORTLAND **BUS LANE** PROJECT

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