Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2020

To: Oregon Governor Kate Brown
   Kris Strickler, Director, Oregon Department of Transportation
   Bob Van Brocklin, Chair, Oregon Transportation Commission
   Alando Simpson, Vice Chair, Oregon Transportation Commission
   Martin Callery, Member, Oregon Transportation Commission
   Julie Brown, Member, Oregon Transportation Commission
   Sharon Smith, Member, Oregon Transportation Commission

CC: Metro Council President Lynn Peterson
    Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson
    Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler
    Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
    Portland Public Schools Board Member Scott Bailey
    Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek
    Megan Channell, Oregon Department of Transportation

From: Aaron Brown, No More Freeways Coalition
      Chris Smith, No More Freeways Coalition
      Joe Cortright, City Observatory
      Anna Kemper, Sunrise Movement PDX
      Colin Herring, Sunrise Movement PDX
      Edin Cook, former Tubman MS teacher, Sunrise Movement PDX
      Joan Petit, Eliot Neighborhood resident, former Tubman MS parent
      Bob Sallinger, Audubon Society of Portland

Subject: Request for more information about upcoming OTC votes on $790 Million Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion - Suggestions for meaningful community input

As community members with grave concerns about the $790 million Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion, we are writing this letter to request more information about how the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) intends to move forward with their consideration of this proposal to widen I-5 into the backyard of Harriet Tubman Middle School.

Last month, the Oregon Transportation Commission was scheduled to hold a vote on whether to move forward with the existing Environmental Assessment for the
Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion. Information of this vote wasn’t formally available or confirmed to the public until it was published on the OTC website only seven days before the scheduled hearing. This hearing was held on a Tuesday morning in Lebanon, Oregon, over 80 miles away from Harriet Tubman Middle School, where this freeway expansion is proposed. Later reporting from *Willamette Week* confirmed that OTC Chair Bob Van Brocklin was aware of the extensive cost overruns in this project and that he intended to move forward with a vote on the EA without this $250 million price increase being made available to the public or discussed at the December meeting.1

Even before *Willamette Week*’s reporting that the project costs had escalated, community opposition to this freeway expansion has been significant and well-documented everywhere except in ODOT’s official public relations for the project. We wish to once again reiterate our long-held position that ODOT must conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement on the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion to address the public’s legitimate and well-documented concerns about the traffic congestion, air pollution, and carbon emissions this project will bring to our community, region and state. 89% of the 2200+ comments received during ODOT’s public comment period stated opposition to ODOT’s proposal as outlined in their Environmental Assessment. Over the past month, an additional 300+ Oregonians emailed the OTC and Governor Brown’s office demanding they require ODT to conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) instead of the existing EA.2 Our request for a full Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed freeway expansion was echoed this spring during the public comment period by Portland Public Schools, Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, Representative Karin Power, Business for a Better Portland, Portland Audubon Society, Albina Vision Trust, the Eliot Neighborhood Association, Neighbors for Clean Air, Portland’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees, The Street Trust, Oregon Environmental Council and thousands of Oregonians across the state. They were joined by Speaker Tina Kotek, Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, Senator Michael Dembrow, Representative Rob Nosse, Metro Council President Lynn Peterson, Mayor Ted Wheeler and 1000 Friends of Oregon this past week. The traffic projection data that ODOT provided to the public this spring was riddled with discrepancies and missing figures that were never fully resolved.3

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3 This document is a product of professionals in the field of transportation. We conclude that the methods are highly flawed and inaccurate, the methods of analysis are hidden and undeterminable from the given information, and the

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No More Freeways Coalition
800 NW 6th Avenue, Suite 253
Portland, OR 97209

www.nomorefreewayspdx.com
facebook.com/nomorefreewayspdx
@nomorefreeways | #NOI5ROX
info@nomorefreewayspdx.com
To put it bluntly, we are concerned that ODOT continues to provide inadequate and incomplete information to the public about the basic details of this $790 million freeway expansion. Independent analysis suggests that this massive megaproject is likely to significantly counter local initiatives to address air pollution, carbon emissions and traffic congestion, at exorbitant (and continually escalating) cost to taxpayers. More importantly, we are concerned that, despite ODOT’s conduct, there has been minimal oversight or demands for accountability and transparency from Governor Kate Brown and the Oregon Transportation Commission.

However, both Governor Kate Brown and the OTC have the opportunity to restore public trust that ODOT’s proposals are receiving the appropriate scrutiny, and are accountable to the public concerned about climate change, air pollution, and traffic congestion. No More Freeways, Sunrise PDX and our partner organizations are asking for the following requests from the OTC:

- **Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion hearing must be held before any potential vote:** We request that the OTC consider hosting a special hearing on the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion proposal, separate from any scheduled vote. Between the Governor’s letter, the cost overruns, and new calls for a full EIS expressed by Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Vega Pederson, President Peterson and Commissioner Eudaly.

- **OTC hearing on Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion must be held close to the proposed Freeway Expansion.** The No More Freeway Expansions requests that the OTC contract with Portland Public Schools to hold their next meeting in the cafeteria or gymnasium of Harriet Tubman Middle School. If the campus is unsuitable, we request explicit explanation of why, and hope that an alternate site is chosen within two miles of Tubman, in or close to the historic Albina community.

- **Appropriate Meeting Notification:** We request that this hearing or any other OTC agenda item involving the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion’s Environmental Assessment be announced on the OTC website with at least three environmental impacts are negative and substantial, and continue our practices of GHG emissions and transportation injustice. At the least, an EIS should be required. At the very least, an extension for public input should be granted and methodologies and data disclosed to be able to understand and reproduce the Results.”

- Our full memo detailing ODOT’s traffic projection discrepancies is available here: https://nomorefreewayspdx.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/nmf_technical_memo-1.pdf
weeks notification. We request that this meeting has minimal staff presentation and is scheduled long enough to ensure anyone who arrives is provided an opportunity to testify. Childcare and translation must be available.

- **Videotaping and live-streaming:** Given the enormous turnout, we were disappointed that the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion hearing at the Oregon Convention Center last March was not videotaped or live-streamed online. We request that any potential OTC hearing meets Oregon’s standard public records best practices.

We look forward to hearing more about how the Oregon Transportation Commission intends to make their deliberations on this matter accessible to the public. We hope that the OTC and Governor Brown share our resolute commitment to meaningfully addressing the climate emergency, upholding fiduciary duty to Oregon’s taxpayers, and tackling the snarling traffic congestion that plagues our region. Given ODOT’s questionable track record and the ever-growing opposition to this project that clamors for more scrutiny, we hope that the OTC and Governor Brown will follow our suggestions to provide more opportunity for civic engagement and transparency. We believe that the Oregon Transportation Commission must face the front line community groups most likely to be impacted by this proposal justifiably demanding an Environmental Impact Statement before taking a position to move forward with the transparently flawed, existing Environmental Assessment.

We look forward to hearing from the OTC and the Governor’s office regarding our proposals.