

Date: February 2, 2021

To: Oregon Governor Kate Brown

CC: Oregon Transportation Commission
Oregon Legislature - Joint Committee on Transportation

Subject: **New OTC Appointment Must Proactively Champion Climate, Equity, Health**

We congratulate Oregon Transportation Commissioner Maurice Henderson on his appointment to the President Biden's federal administration. We wish him well in this new position and we look forward to his success helping push for a greener and more equitable transportation system for our country.

Commissioner Henderson's impending departure creates an opening on the Oregon Transportation Commission. This entity, responsible for the oversight of the Oregon Department of Transportation, is in desperate need of new leadership and perspectives to help the department evolve and grow to reflect Oregon's changing demographics, challenges, and priorities, as well as the Governor's Executive Order on climate change and ODOT's own goals. We call on Governor Brown to choose a new member for the OTC who is ready to lead ODOT through this necessary change.

Oregon faces enormous environmental and social challenges that call for a re-imagining of the transportation system. 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation. The Statewide Transportation Strategy (STS) calls for a 20% reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled and replacement of fossil fuels. We will not accomplish these goals without major changes in the way we plan, pay for, and invest in our transportation system. Many of the strategies that will help us make these changes come with enormous co-benefits in safety, health, and more equitable access to jobs, services, and opportunity. The only thing holding Oregon back is inertia. Despite growing awareness of these shortcomings and pressure from statewide advocates, ODOT has not moved to plan and implement the significant shifts that must happen in order for Oregon to reach its ambitious, urgently-necessary climate pollution reduction targets.

For example, in December, advocates from across the state sent in hundreds of letters of testimony pushing the OTC to support an allocation of 15% of the Statewide

Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding for bike, pedestrian, and transit investments. While still inadequate to the need, this allotment would have represented a bold step forward in building infrastructure for safe, convenient, affordable, climate-friendly transportation accessible for everyone. Despite the overwhelming testimony and ODOT's own staff assessment that this investment would provide the best outcomes for equity and for climate, the OTC voted to support a proposal well short of these humble yet critical goals.

Advocates for climate justice, racial justice, safer streets, and fiscal responsibility call for the appointment of a new Oregon Transportation Commissioner who is ready to leave the 20th century behind and lead ODOT with a vision for a more equitable and decarbonized transportation future. We urge you to establish baseline expectations for candidates and consult the flourishing community leadership statewide in support of a new approach to transportation policy and investments. You can demonstrate your commitment to these values by:

- Opening the OTC selection process to include input from community members.
- Choosing an OTC member who demonstrates an understanding of induced demand, the effects of air pollution and traffic violence on Oregon communities and a vision for a transportation system that moves people and goods, not primarily vehicles.
- Choosing an OTC member who can articulate how they intend to ensure that ODOT is successful in hitting their targets for greenhouse gas emissions and reductions.
- Choosing an OTC member who will advocate for prioritizing climate and equity outcomes in ODOT's spending and policy implementation.
- Choosing an OTC member with an understanding of low-carbon transportation reforms necessary not just for cities but across Oregon's rural areas and along main state arterials. Investments in electrification, off-street trails, and both regional and inter-city bus and train service (including high speed rail) are imperative to help all of Oregon's communities access goods and services for strong rural economies, as well as quality health care, education, and recreation.

With kind regards and hope for a more equitable and efficient future,

Yours truly,

Aaron Brown, No More Freeways

Sara Wright, Oregon Environmental Council

Rob Zako, Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST)

Kari Schlosshauer, Safe Routes Partnership

Vivian Satterfield, Verde

Aimee Okotie-Oyekan, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Eugene-Springfield

Bike Walk Roseburg

Douglas County Global Warming Coalition

Portland: Neighbors Welcome

Sunrise Movement Beaverton

Sunrise Movement Corvallis

Sunrise Movement Eugene

Sunrise Movement PDX

350 Salem

Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA)

Mary Peveto, Neighbors for Clean Air

Ashton Simpson, Oregon Walks

Nora Lehmann, Families for a Livable Climate

Cascadia Rail

Victoria Paykar, Climate Solutions

Stephanie Noll, Oregon Trails Coalition

Brett Morgan, 1000 Friends of Oregon

Portland Forward

Aaron Salzman, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Chris Smith

RJ Sheperd, BikeLoudPDX

Richenda Fairhurst, Southwestern Oregon Chapter of The Climate Reality Project

OLCV Metro Climate Action Team (MCAT)

Julia DeGraw, Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Amy Schlusser, Green Energy Institute at Lewis & Clark Law School

William Miller, NAYA Family Center