



12/31/2022

PROTECTING YOUR
RIGHT TO ROAM

To: Oregon Department of Transportation, I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Team

Subject: Supplemental EA public comment period

For decades, Oregon Walks has worked to make Portland safer for all people by advocating for better pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure. In all of our years of advocacy and community engagement, freeway expansion has never been an equitable, safe, or financially astute solution to congestion.

ODOT's own analysis of the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project is in direct conflict with its own stated safety and equity goals. The Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) claims that the relocation of the I-5 SB off ramp (NE Wheeler/N Ramsay/N Williams and N Vancouver) will increase the length and complexity of crossings, thereby reducing pedestrian safety. Additionally, the SEA claims "increased potential for pedestrian auto conflict due to the placement of the I-5 SB off-ramp and updated turning movements." At a time when Portland is suffering through record rates of pedestrian deaths, it is astonishing we would consider a project that puts more pedestrians in danger. This freeway project is a direct threat to the living and a disgrace to those who have died by traffic fatalities on ODOT's roads.

Alone, safety concerns should stop this project as designed. Environmental concerns, though, are also vast. As we wrote in our letter to you in 2019, it is imperative that ODOT conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement to fully understand the impacts freeway expansion would have on our streets, our water, and in our childrens' lungs. Considering the climate crisis and our understanding of the deleterious impacts of vehicular emissions, it is truly unbelievable that ODOT is not deeply interested and invested in fully understanding the environmental impacts of this project. Whatever decision is made about this project, can we not, at the very least, be fully aware of the environmental damage to which we are committing?

Rather than further invest in single occupancy vehicles, we support ODOT in looking for solutions for traffic congestion that do not further displace residents and hinder people's ability to live, work, play, and move without using a vehicle. **On behalf of future generations, ODOT must pursue options other than freeway expansion to reduce congestion.**

The consequences of freeway construction on communities are vast, but they are not irreversible. ODOT has the opportunity to reject the false notion that freeway expansion solves traffic



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congestion. We have seen time and again that induced demand is inevitable when roadways become wider. With more lanes comes more vehicles. The Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion will absolutely inhibit goals of reducing carbon emissions.

Oregon Walks supports the proposed freeway cap over I-5. We support continued investment in the Albina neighborhood, including the freeway lids, affordable housing, and safer streets, without the additional cars, air pollution, and threats to pedestrians that come with investing in single occupancy vehicles. We support a vision that improves connectivity, centers community, and repairs the wrongs of previous freeway construction. We support using creative tools like congestion pricing and investment in active transportation and transit to reduce vehicular congestion. To achieve this, ODOT must leave behind additional lane miles for I-5. **In short, we support the lid, but not the lanes.**

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zachary Lauritzen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Zachary Lauritzen
Interim Executive Director
Oregon Walks