



CITY OF  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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**From: Commissioner Novick**

**To: Governor Kate Brown**

**Date: March 14, 2016**

**Re: Comments on Vision Panel's Preliminary Findings**

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Governor's Transportation Vision Panel's preliminary findings. Although I am generally supportive of these recommendations, I would encourage that we continue to prioritize our Vision Zero safety goals and climate goals as we work together to further develop these recommendations.

I am increasingly convinced that one of the best way to achieve both of these goals is to prioritize funding for jurisdictional transfers for "abandoned" state highways like 82<sup>nd</sup>, Powell, and Barbur. These are some of Portland's most unsafe streets, and they currently act as barriers to increased transit, walking, and biking.

We strongly agree with the panel's preliminary finding supporting funding of jurisdictional transfers, as a mechanism to make these streets safer, as well as encouraging more transit riding, biking, and walking, which helps towards our Climate goals. To ensure that we follow through with our commitments, I support only moving forward with jurisdictional transfers following improvements to current safety/operational standards.

The following is some additional feedback on the panel's additional recommendations:

**Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives** – Portland understands the consequences of unnecessary congestion caused by roadway bottlenecks. Additional state funding prioritized to our most important projects will increase the likelihood that we will be able to leverage new federal funding for freight projects like the Rose Quarter improvements to I-5 / I-84.

**Invest in strategic intermodal freight infrastructure** – The Portland region has demonstrated the importance of the ConnectOregon program for intermodal freight. Additional state funding provides a major competitive advantage for regionally significant projects like, the North Rivergate project, when we compete for federal funding.

**Invest in transit service improvements** – Continued investment in high capacity transit is essential to meeting our land use and transportation goals. This is another good example of where additional state funding can increase competitiveness for the region’s highest priority high capacity transit projects, the Eastside BRT and the Southwest Corridor HCT.

**Invest in bicycle and pedestrian improvements** – Oregon cities continue to lead the nation in planning and developing bicycle and pedestrian improvements. However, conflicts between ODOT and local transportation plans continue to limit progress on our shared facilities. To minimize these conflicts, I recommend that the state’s new Oregon Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan consider recognizing the Regional Transportation Plans from the state’s MPOs as the pedestrian and bicycle plans for these areas.

**Invest in seismic resiliency** – Portland supports the continued prioritization of seismic resiliency for the Willamette River bridges and for key infrastructure at the nine petroleum tank farms within the City of Portland.

**Make Oregon a transportation innovation ‘hub’** – Oregon is in a unique position to build partnerships between our high tech industries, research centers, and transportation departments to demonstrate how technological innovation can improve transportation. We have just learned that Portland is a finalist for the national Smart Cities grant, which we hope will help us to further this effort.

**Increase the flexibility of K-12 student transportation services across the state** – Oregon has demonstrated the effectiveness of Safe Route to School programs. We also are increasingly aware of the important role of transit to current students. We look forward to working to determine how additional flexibility could improve services.

In addition to these general comments, I would like to provide my feedback to the panel finance concepts:

**Short-term Actions (0-5 years)**

- ✓ Support an increase in existing taxes and user fees
- ✓ Support indexing the gas tax for inflation and fuel efficiency
- ✓ Support changes to make it easier for local governments to raise their own resources
- ✓ Need information about changes to the state highway fund distribution formula. This should only be done after a thorough and thoughtful process
- ✓ Support for finding progressive new funding sources for transit
- ✓ Support increased funding for bicycle and pedestrian funding that includes additional direction to maximize the use of additional federal funds and new resources – need additional information before taking a position on the bicycle excise tax

**Mid-term Actions (5-15 years)**

- ✓ Support further consideration of tolling
- ✓ Support roadway user charges
- ✓ Support carbon taxes

**Long-Term Actions (15-30 years)**

- ✓ Support creation of a transportation utility commission

Thanks again for your office's leadership in this important effort.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Steve Novick