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**Comment:**

Dear Members of the IBR Equity Advisory Group,

Thank you for serving on the Equity Advisory Group and for listening to community voices. The comments below are submitted on behalf of members of the Metro Climate Action Team (MCAT). We are a community of volunteers based in the Metro area seeking to help move Oregon to adopt science-based solutions to the climate crisis we all face. While doing so, we attempt to redress the disproportionate impact this crisis has on lower-income, rural, and people of color communities.

We are strongly supportive of replacing the aging I-5 bridge with a crossing that meets the safety, health, employment and equity needs of the people of this region, while being fiscally responsible in light of the many other needs requiring funding.

This project is likely to conclude with an Oregon-Washington connection that will affect much of the development of the region over the next several generations. It will have a huge influence, not only on transportation, but also air quality, viability of surrounding communities, employment, and perhaps most significantly, the climate. For these reasons, we advocate for a bridge design that is forward-thinking both in terms of reducing carbon emission reductions and meeting long-neglected equity needs.

We are pleased that light rail, bus service and multi-modal forms of transportation are included in the current Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) design. These are modes of transportation that need much more support, both for transportation equity and for decreasing the use of fossil gas and diesel.

However, we have yet to see explicit goals in the LPA to lower greenhouse emissions or reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). In Oregon, transportation is the single largest source of emissions. The pace of the climate crisis is accelerating, so expanding freeways does not make sense nor is it good for the health of those living alongside them. Explicit carbon reduction goals in keeping with our states' targets must be central to the project design of the IBR.

The type of tolling implemented could help contribute to meeting our Oregon's climate goals. In addition to equity and safety in tolling, we believe a congestion pricing strategy should be tested to measure emissions reductions and the degree of decline in VMT.

The requested allocation of Oregon's portion for this project risks jeopardizing many other acute investment needs. These include other Transportation projects as well as regular General Fund expenditures across our state. We are especially concerned since ODOT has a history of project costs significantly exceeding those initially projected. The need for funding in health, education, resiliency to the advancing climate crisis and

other areas is, of course, most urgent in lower income communities, communities of color and rural communities. The high cost of the current LPA is itself an equity issue.

In order to arrive at a more reasonable cost, we urge ODOT to find ways to cut back significantly on the design, the total price-tag and the “down payment” on the bridge and interchanges, and then report frequently to guard against cost-overruns. Close supervision will be needed to ensure that the history of cost overruns does not repeat itself in this instance.

We also recommend creating an independent panel to oversee project expenditures and to advise all parties when project revisions are needed to avoid serious overruns.

Traffic studies have consistently shown that adding more lanes to freeways results in increased vehicle traffic and renewed congestion problems. More traffic increases emissions and air pollution. Since the communities around I-5 and the Interstate Bridge already suffer disproportionately high levels of air pollution with corresponding impacts on health, we recommend that on and off ramps for the IBR not extend so many miles into the city. This would require plans for a crossing with a footprint limited to that of the current bridge, with no more than three lanes, plus one auxiliary and shoulders (already a significant highway widening), and with increased safety through avoiding a very high bridge as in the current LPA.

We look forward to the 60-day public comment period expected to open at the end of 2023 but hope the EAG will discuss our concerns in advance.

Thank you,

Emily Polanshek on behalf of the Transportation Committee of the Metro Climate Action Team