



SUNRISE MOVEMENT PDX

Date: 12/2/21

To: Governor Kate Brown

CC: Oregon Transportation Commission
Oregon Legislature - Joint Committee on Transportation
Portland Transportation Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty
Metro Council President Lynn Peterson
ODOT Director Kris Strickler
ODOT Assistant Director of Government and External Relations
Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Jeff Merkley
Representative Suzanne Bonamici
Representative Earl Blumenauer
Representative Peter DeFazio
US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg
Oregon Speaker of House Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney

Re: Youth Climate Leaders Continue to Demand Climate Accountability from ODOT, OTC

We are writing to you as young Oregonians with the Sunrise Movement, a youth organization fighting to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. As young people, we are deeply frustrated with your lack of action leadership around lowering transportation-related carbon emissions. Sunrise PDX has been holding climate rallies outside the Region 1 ODOT headquarters for over six months now to call attention to the agency's devastating contribution to Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions. As covered in last weekend's *Oregonian*, we must immediately enact bold changes to address the fact that 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation.¹ This is what we are calling on you to do.

At our first youth climate strike outside ODOT this past April, we listed the following demands of ODOT and the state of Oregon:

¹ "[Oregon will fail its climate goals if ODOT acts on big freeway projects, environmentalists say](https://www.oregonlive.com/environment/2021/11/oregon-will-fail-its-climate-goals-if-odot-acts-on-big-freeway-project-s-environmentalists-say.html)" *The Oregonian*: <https://www.oregonlive.com/environment/2021/11/oregon-will-fail-its-climate-goals-if-odot-acts-on-big-freeway-project-s-environmentalists-say.html>

- ODOT conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Rose Quarter freeway expansion ²
- An immediate moratorium be enacted on all freeway expansions within Portland's Urban Growth Boundary
- A youth climate advocate be appointed to the Oregon Transportation Commission
- The legislature oppose - or that you, Governor Kate Brown, veto - HB 3055, which gave ODOT legislative authority to bond for hundreds of millions of dollars for further freeway expansion.

Governor Brown, despite your continued insistence about your commitment to climate action, you have actively ignored every demand that Sunrise PDX has made, each of which are crucial if Oregon is going to decarbonize our transportation system enough to have a chance of hitting our carbon reduction goals.

To our first demand, ODOT continues to insist upon further funding to cover the rising costs of the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion, completely ignoring the lawsuits that Neighbors for Clean Air, No More Freeways and the Eliot Neighborhood Association have filed demanding a full EIS to study alternatives to expansion.

To our second demand, the agency is proposing expansions on I-5 through the Rose Quarter, across the Columbia River and near Wilsonville, and beginning construction on expansions of I-205 near Oregon City and Highway 217. Each of these proposed projects are expanding fossil-fuel infrastructure at exactly the time we need to be investing in clean alternatives.

To our third demand, you failed to fill the open seat on the OTC with a young climate advocate, instead appointing Marcilynn Burke. Dean Burke seems to be a wonderful leader and community member, but she is not a youth, nor, as far as we can tell, does she depend on public or active transportation methods to get around.³

While we are optimistic about Burke's appointment, we are extremely disappointed in your resistance to listening to the young voices who have been calling on you to do something different. We look forward to reaching out to Dean Burke in the weeks ahead, and hope that she will respond to our concerns about ODOT's climate inaction with more urgency than the existing OTC members have shown us. They have appeared unwilling to engage us throughout the

² This request for ODOT to conduct a full EIS for the Rose Quarter is the subject of a NEPA lawsuit filed in April 2021 by Neighbors for Clean Air, the Eliot Neighborhood Association and No More Freeways. The full complaint is available on the No More Freeways website: <https://nomorefreewayspx.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/complaint.pdf>

³ Similarly, a coalition of over thirty organizations wrote you a letter in February asking for opportunity for public engagement around the appointment of the next OTC member, as well as for a commitment to appoint someone with knowledgeable experience in the field of decarbonizing transportation. This letter is available on the No More Freeways website: <https://nomorefreewayspx.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/020221-letter-to-governor-brown-re-otc-appointment.pdf>

previous months of testimony at OTC meetings and repeated invitations to join us at our protests outside ODOT, the agency they are expected to oversee.

While you have already appointed a replacement for Commissioner Henderson on the OTC, we still demand that you appoint a young person, (under the age of 35, ideally with background in transportation decarbonization) as a full voting member of the OTC by expanding the commission. We do not believe that the current members of the commission represent our diverse state or share our sense of urgency to enact radical change to stop the climate crisis. Transportation and climate issues are deeply connected, and with 40% of our state's carbon emissions coming from transportation, it is essential to have the voices of young climate advocates at the table.

If there is a need for the OTC to retain an odd number of commissioners for potential tie-breaking vote purposes, we urge you to appoint *another* full voting member who doesn't or can't own a car or drive. It's estimated that 1 in 3 Oregonians (approximately 1.4 million people) currently can't or don't drive, and yet this population does not have their needs met by the current commission.

Time and time again, we have watched the OTC prioritize road expansion over investments in intracity transit frequency, transit pass subsidy, disability access, intercity passenger rail investments, and improvements for biking and walking. We refuse to let this continue, and demand you instead work to empower and meet the needs of Oregonians depending on these alternatives.

To our fourth demand, we marched to your house in Salem in July and asked you to be the climate leader you promised to be, but you didn't listen. You chose to sign HB 3055 into law, granting ODOT the money and political authority to continue needlessly expanding freeways across the Portland region. It's deeply frustrating, demoralizing, and infuriating to be told by adults that they're "doing all they can" to help address the climate crisis while repeatedly ignoring our demands.

In addition to our stated demands, there is a final opportunity, Governor Brown, for you to prove in your last year of office that your climate commitments were sincere and that you intend to hold ODOT accountable to reaching our carbon reduction targets.

With the passage of the Federal Infrastructure Bill, ODOT will be receiving significant funding for a variety of projects. **We demand that every dollar from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Build Back Better legislation (if passed) go towards transportation projects that will reduce vehicle miles traveled and carbon emissions by increasing investment in transit, passenger rail, biking and walking.**

This funding is an opportunity to make serious progress towards decarbonizing our transportation system and building climate resilient infrastructure; and as Governor, you have influence over how it is spent. You have an opportunity right now to reflect the ‘sense of urgency’ you feel towards the climate crisis in tangible action that will better our communities.

When you began serving Oregon as governor in 2015, you promised to fight for the youth, for our futures. And yet, 6 years later, you have not kept that promise. We’ve sent you this letter in hopes that you finally will. Governor Brown, we believe that in your final year in office, you can shape your legacy and grow to take the necessary action you vowed to take.

Are you a climate leader? We will be watching.

Sincerely,

Youth of the Sunrise Movement:

Lucia Baughman, age 15, Sunrise PDX
Adah Crandall, age 15, Sunrise PDX
Mazie Drummond, age 17, Sunrise PDX
Sophie Goodwin-Rice, age 22, Sunrise PDX
Naomi Hemstreet, age 15, Sunrise PDX
Maxwell Okazaki, age 24, Sunrise PDX
Joshua Phillips, age 22, Sunrise PDX
Paxton Rothwell, age 27, Sunrise PDX
Robin Sack, age 15, Sunrise PDX
Josh Spector, age 24, Sunrise PDX
Ben Stevenson, age 17, Sunrise PDX
Kristen Sartor, age 33, Sunrise PDX
Allison Stevens, age 23, Sunrise PDX
Taylor Walker, age 15, Sunrise PDX
Dreshad Williams, age 29, Sunrise PDX

Ukiah Halloran-Steiner, age 16, Sunrise Rural Oregon
Max Hill, age 14, Sunrise Rural Oregon
Kylie Johnson, age 14, Sunrise Rural Oregon
Cassie Wilson, age 23, Sunrise Rural Oregon

Selena Blick, age 24, Sunrise Bend
Thomas Hamm, age 28, Sunrise Bend
Sofia Lepore, age 24, Sunrise Bend
Kylie Myers, age 17, Sunrise Bend

Lars Romsos, age 19, Sunrise Corvallis