



State Representative Kim Thatcher House District 25

August 22, 2006

Oregon Transportation Commission
355 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in reference to Agenda Item "T" for your meeting August 24, 2006, regarding tolling policies. I've worked in the transportation construction industry for 20 years and I served on the House Transportation Committee in 2005. I am very concerned about the current direction the state is headed on toll road policies in general and specifically in Yamhill County. There is increasing unrest and mistrust of ODOT in the community.

It is my understanding that back in the 1990's when the idea of a Newberg-Dundee Bypass finally started to take shape, promises were made that tolling would not be the only source of revenue to pay for such a project. Now we're learning that is indeed the way ODOT staff is leaning, along with the consultants including Macquarie Infrastructure Group.

What's even more disturbing is the ongoing discussion of placing tolls on the existing route -- 99W from Newberg to McMinnville in addition to the new Bypass. This is unacceptable and was never part of the discussion in the early days of this Bypass concept. And why toll a road that's already paid for?

Local governments like the Dundee and Newberg City Councils have both expressed their opposition to this idea of "corridor tolling", as have several merchants in the area. As the State Representative for this region, please add my name to the growing list of people who are upset with the path ODOT is taking on tolling policies.

When the Oregon Legislature created the mechanism for "public-private partnerships" it meant ODOT would pay its fair share and not shift the entire burden onto motorists paying the tolls. I also submitted testimony to the Oregon Transportation Commission last December reminding them that the bypass is one of the Projects of Statewide Significance, a project that deserves state funding.

We've been talking about the Newberg-Dundee Bypass for 20 years. I remain an active participant in the local groups working to make it a reality. I am willing to work with ODOT to develop other funding alternatives and help reduce the total cost of the project. However, we need to put the brakes on this funding scheme before it goes too far, jeopardizing the project as a whole.

Sincerely,

Kim Thatcher
State Representative
House District 25