

February 7, 2024

Word Count: 209

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## **QuickPoint! - Oregon's highway freeze is not about the weather**

**By John A. Charles, Jr.**

The last segment of Oregon's Interstate Highway system opened in 1982. One would think that since Oregon has a nationally prominent planning system, there would be efforts underway to plan for the next generation of great roads.

But that is not the case. Planners almost universally hate highways, so they have made sure that the Interstate system remains stagnant. Even where changes are being contemplated, such as a new I-5 bridge over the Columbia River, they are not designed to address growth.

The Interstate Bridge Replacement Project, now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year of planning, will have no effect on traffic congestion because it doesn't add capacity. We will still have only two bridges over the Columbia River in the Portland region.

What we need is several new bridges, with at least one providing a direct, high-speed connection to HWY 26 on the west side. We need new bridges and highways for the same reasons that cities eventually need new streets – you can't pack every urban activity into one small area.

The Oregon Transportation Commission is determined to impose highway tolls without providing motorists with new highways. This is the wrong approach. If the Commission wants public support, it should start planning for the new roads the public wants.

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*John A. Charles, Jr. is President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.*

