

Testimony to Metro on Proposed Transit Bond

See: www.oregonmetro.gov/public-projects/2028-30-regional-flexible-funding-allocation/new-project-bond

From: John Charles

Date: Wed, Apr 30, 2025 at 4:49 PM

Subject: Comment on proposed bond

To: transportation@oregonmetro.gov

Dear Metro Councilors:

I am writing to submit a brief comment on the [proposed transit bond](#).

First, debt is not a desirable way to pay for capital projects. By borrowing against future funding, Metro will incur debt service that will cannibalize future revenue. There is no immediate crisis that requires such action. Metro and its partner agencies should learn to live within their means.

Second, most of the proposed projects are seriously flawed. Transit in general is losing market share and TriMet in particular is in a financial death spiral. There is no reason to plan for expansion when operating costs are skyrocketing and ridership is in decline.

Telecommuting is a permanent new feature of the workplace and there is no reason for transit agencies to fight it. In most respects, telecommuting is a good thing and we should encourage more of it.

In addition, the success of unsubsidized transportation network entities such as Lyft and Uber has fundamentally changed the market. Many people prefer on-demand, door-to-door service, which public transit districts do not serve. People who have become regular customers of ride-sharing companies will not be returning to TriMet regardless of how much public money you pour into shiny new projects.

Most of the projects being proposed within the bond are flawed and not worthy of public funding. For instance, the 82nd Avenue project "vision"

statement on pages 18-19 of the [PBOT project summary document](#) states that "the vision maintains two travel lanes in each direction", but also includes "potential transit priority lanes."

Those two concepts are in conflict. If you have one you can't have the other. But the PBOT preference is clear from the graphic on page 18, which shows only one thru lane in each direction as the transit priority lanes force drivers to make right turns. This is clearly going to be a "bait-and-switch" that will result in massive congestion and diversion, with the transit lanes being under-utilized most of the time.

It also seems apparent that the [new Burnside Bridge](#) will result in a subtraction of lane capacity for motor vehicles in favor of a busway. The notion that we will spend close to \$1 billion to build a new bridge that actually makes congestion worse is indefensible. TriMet ridership is in decline and there is no reason to think it will come back. The new bridge should be planned for the travel patterns we have, not the ones planners dream of.

Finally, there is no reason to extend the moribund Streetcar system to Montgomery Park. The Streetcar is a low-speed, low-capacity, high-cost mode that became obsolete more than 100 years ago. Try and learn from experience and cancel any more public funding for this urban relic.

I appreciate that Metro's public involvement on this project has been far superior to that of the Portland School Board on its much larger bond proposal of \$1.83 billion. But the substance of Metro's bond concept is lacking and should not be advanced.

Sincerely,

John A. Charles, Jr.
President & CEO
Cascade Policy Institute

