

February 12, 2009

Governor Ted Kulongoski
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor:

Oregon's transit, bikeway, and walkway systems are in dire need of funding. The federal economic recovery act, with its allocation of \$350 million in flexible federal transportation funding to Oregon, provides a unique opportunity for you to provide Oregon communities a vital transportation lifeline. We urge you to direct your Department of Transportation to allocate the maximum possible amount of this federal funding to the long list of cost-effective, job creating, and community serving bike, walking, and transit capital projects that are eligible for this money.

You have asked the 2009 Oregon Legislature to pass your Jobs and Transportation Act, which will pour \$1,000,000,000 a biennium into Oregon's Highway Trust Fund to repair, replace, widen, and build roads and bridges across the state. The new highway funding in this legislation addresses critical needs that Oregon faces. However, it only addresses roads and highway bridges. Under the State Constitution, Oregon's communities are locked out of the Highway Trust Fund when it comes to repairing or building facilities for transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Governor, please don't lock Oregon's communities out of the federal recovery funds as well. This one-time infusion of federal spending on transportation gives Oregon a chance to provide long-overdue balance in transportation spending. We urge you to follow the policy you are proposing in the Jobs and Transportation Act and "flex" these federal funds to projects that restore and expand Oregon's transit services and bikeways and walkways.

A key purpose of the infrastructure money in the President's recovery plan is to put Americans to work while building that infrastructure. Spending these dollars on trails, bike lanes, walkways, street crossings, and transit will do just that—and better, dollar for dollar, than building highways. A 2004 study by the Surface Transportation Policy Project found that investment in public transportation creates approximately 19% more jobs than new road or bridge projects. *"Setting the Record Straight: Transit, Fixing Roads and Bridges Offer Greatest Job Gains"*

It is important to ensure that Oregon can "obligate" at least half our \$350 million share of this federal stimulus within 120 days after the law takes effect, and the rest by early 2010. Again, there will be no problem doing that with spending on non-highway transportation. The Bicycle Transportation Alliance has compiled a list of \$55 million worth of bike infrastructure awaiting

funding, and ODOT itself has a \$20 million waiting list of “ready to go” bike projects. Similarly, Oregon’s three largest transit agencies—Salem, Lane Transit District, and TriMet—have project lists for recovery funding that total \$412 million. TriMet alone has \$307 million in projects that can be “obligated” within 90 days!

We’re aware that the federal recovery bill requires the state to spend \$15.5 of its \$350 million on cycling facilities and other “transportation enhancements,” and that the transit component of the bill provides an additional \$58 million to Oregon’s larger transit providers and nearly \$12 million for smaller city and county transit systems. We’re also aware that your transportation funding bill would provide \$7.5 million a year for bike facilities located within the road right of way, and up to \$44 million annually in federal flexible funding for transit, bikes and pedestrian facilities and other non-highway transportation needs. But these numbers are dwarfed by the needs of Oregon’s cyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders—needs that can never be served by Oregon’s locked-down, and soon to be massively expanded, Highway Trust Fund.

In addition, we understand the need to make decisions quickly, but urge you to ensure community involvement and to create public information systems for the public to track investments. As contracts are awarded, we also urge you to build local business capacity by creating opportunities for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises using TriMet’s innovative program as a model.

Finally, we’re also aware that your Transportation Commission and Department directly control only about \$260 million of the \$350 million in federal transportation recovery dollars coming to Oregon, and that the remaining roughly \$90 million is distributed by formula to the state’s metropolitan areas and to smaller communities. That is why we urge you to encourage your regional and local partners—and particularly those in the Portland, Eugene, Salem, Medford, Corvallis and Bend urban areas—to also spend the maximum amount possible on transit, walking and cycling facilities.

Oregon has the opportunity to spend federal dollars to make our transportation system more equitable, more sustainable, more resilient to fuel price spikes, and more independent of foreign oil sources, while achieving the goals of rebuilding our economy and putting Oregonians back to work. Governor, please take the lead to make these dollars make a real difference for Oregon’s future.

Sincerely,



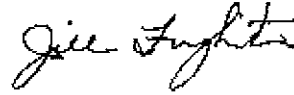
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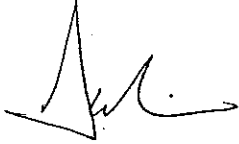
Andrea Durbin
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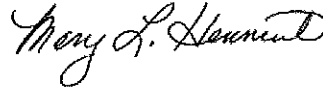
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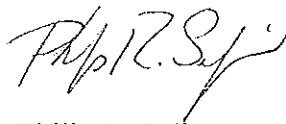
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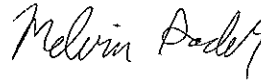
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