

Testimony:

The Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization – Albany, OR – October 24, 2016

Good Evening. My name is Saleem Noorani. I live here in Albany and am an Executive Council member and volunteer for AARP Oregon. I am also a member of the Senior Services Advisory Council (CWCOGs). I thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments and for your commitment to listening to Oregonians about their transportation needs as you work to create a comprehensive transportation plan for our state.

As you have traveled around the state, I am sure you heard many stories. At AARP, we often hear from our members about how important transportation and mobility options are to them. It is a hallmark of livable communities that are great places for people of all ages and abilities.

Pedestrian fatalities in the U.S. are on the rise. The number of pedestrian fatalities increased 19 percent from 2009 to 2014, as compared to a decrease of 4 percent in total traffic deaths in the same period. It is sad and distressing to learn that by comparing the first half of 2014 vs. 2015, the pedestrian fatalities in Oregon increased by 100 percent; according to a preliminary report for the Governors Highway Safety Association (see ghsa.org)

We call on you to **make our streets safe for everyone**. Crossing the street shouldn't mean crossing your fingers. Yet every two hours, a pedestrian in the United States is killed because a street or crosswalk is unsafe. Children, seniors, people of color and the low-income are disproportionate victims of these fatalities. According to the 2015 Oregon State of Pedestrian Safety Report; Oregonians 65 years and older are four times more likely to be killed on our streets than any other age group.

We need safer speeds, properly designed streets, targeted investments for walking and biking, and the state's adoption of zero death and injury goal to make our streets safer for everyone.

We urge you to **invest in public transit and special transportation for seniors and people with disabilities**. When asked, 90% of people over 65 say they want to stay at home for as long as possible. However, fifty percent of older adults say they could not continue living in their current neighborhood if they could no longer drive. Someone who is 70 years old today is likely to outlive driving by six years for a man and eleven years for women.

We need access to reliable, safe, affordable and accessible transportation options to be able to get around.

I am a small business owner with employees who utilize public transportation to get to work. Both in our Springfield and Corvallis locations, we see many of our customers utilize public transportation and bicycles to get around. We are located quite close to the LTD transit center in the Springfield Beltway Gateway corridor and can testify to its positive impact to local small businesses.

I am an avid bicyclist and truly enjoy riding our rural country roads in Benton and Lane counties. Most drivers are courteous of the bicyclists and share the road and we cyclists appreciate it. I understand that it was a very divisive issue but we would like to see talks resume on a bicycle corridor between Albany and Corvallis.

However we get around, mobility and transportation options, are a fundamental part of helping older adults remain active, independent and engaged members of our community. What that means is our streets have to work for everyone. It has to be safe and accessible for all users.

Finally, we call on you to require **better coordination between transportation and land-use planning** and decision making groups to create communities where it is safe and convenient to replace trips in private vehicles with walking, bicycling, and public transportation. Let's create a future where we don't rely on just one mode of travel.

I thank you for your leadership and commitment to expanding transportation options for all Oregonians and making our state a great place to live for people of all ages.