



CITY OF
West Linn

June 8th, 2023

Rian Windsheimer
ODOT Portland Region Manager
123 NW Flanders St
Portland, OR 97209

Kris Strickler
ODOT Director
355 Capitol St, NE MS 11
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Region Manager Windsheimer and Director Strickler,

On behalf of the community of West Linn, I am writing to express our collective frustration with the gridlock that has plagued our city street system since the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) closure of the I-205 northbound on-ramp from southbound Highway 43 for the construction of a new on-ramp.

Traffic levels on our local street system have increased dramatically as drivers look for alternative routes during peak rush hour times causing severe delays on the following streets, to name a few: Highway 43, Willamette Falls Drive, Tenth Street, West A Street, Broadway Street, McKillican Street, Blankenship Road, and Salamo Road (at the Tenth Street intersection.) Other neighborhood streets have also been severely impacted, creating safety issues and livability concerns.

West Linn residents have been reaching out to me personally sharing stories and frustrations about the unacceptable traffic delays. On our community social media channels, hundreds of comments have been posted expressing dismay at the situation. Residents have been unable to get to appointments and have been delayed returning home, commute times have been dramatically increased, and our youth have been unable to get to recreational activities and practices. In summary, our overall ability to move throughout our city during peak hour times has been severely impacted. In the event of an emergency, I am extremely concerned that response times from our emergency service providers (Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue, American Medical Response, and Police) will be delayed. This is not okay. Immediate actions and solutions are needed to ensure the safety of our residents and provide better traffic flow during peak hour so that our residents can access the places they need to go. I even got stuck in traffic on the way to a City Council Meeting earlier this week, as did our City Attorney, resulting in a delayed start to the meeting. The detour that ODOT established is not working, as the Tenth Street on-ramp queue has been backed up all the way to Willamette Falls Drive and beyond.

City staff have been in contact with your team and have requested several items, which I fully support, including:

- Changing the on-ramp signal timing at the Tenth Street I-205 northbound on-ramp, or turning the meter off completely. In my view, this would include evaluating the sufficiency of the existing detour that is failing and exploring alternatives.



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- Adding flaggers to direct traffic flow at critical impacted intersections which would also assist emergency vehicles.
- Using traffic control measures to allow drivers to temporarily make left turns from OR-43 southbound onto the remaining I-205 on-ramp that is open on the northbound side of Highway 43 coming from the Arch Bridge. Drivers are making U-turns to do this illegally which has created safety hazards.
- Sharing the traffic management plan that ODOT has created with the City for review and comment immediately.

I would also request that ODOT work with the Oregon State Police to bring in additional public safety resources to the impacted areas that are under the State's jurisdiction such as Highway 43 and the Tenth Street interchange to assist with traffic control and responding to complaints. This would help ensure the safety of motorists and allow emergency vehicles to move through the area as needed. Our police department has limited resources to be able to address the issues and complaints that ODOT's closure has generated while also addressing other public safety needs in our community.

Lastly, I also call upon ODOT to establish a hotline for residents to call with traffic-related issues so that concerns can be documented and addressed in a timely manner. Residents have been reaching out to the City, but as you know, the City does not have authority over the impacted streets under ODOT's jurisdiction.

I recognize that ODOT has the authority to close its on-ramps and that the construction of a new on-ramp is a necessary component of the ongoing bridge retrofitting project, and that some impacts are expected. At the same time, better planning and partnership is needed with our community. The gridlock we have seen over the past few days is unacceptable to our residents and businesses. I believe that this instance shows the precarious nature of our local street system when ODOT takes actions that West Linn has no control over. Due to the river, drivers have few alternative routes. To that end, many residents have contacted me expressing strong beliefs that this gridlock is a precursor to the tolling diversion that we will see if tolls are implemented in our area. I agree with my constituents on that point and echo their serious concerns about the future as well as the present.

I appreciate your consideration of this letter and the City's requests to improve this untenable situation. I also thank you for the correspondence with our staff today to begin discussions about solutions to alleviate the traffic stemming from the ramp closure. Please act with urgency to address our concerns.

Sincerely,

Rory Bialostosky
Mayor of West Linn