

Tualatin Chamber of Commerce will join the IP-4 Petition Campaign against Tolling.

For a few years now, the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce has been watching the tolling issue in Oregon. We lead in spring of 2021 when Susan Noack, Board Chair, went to the mobility committee meetings. Then in February of 2022 Tualatin Chamber partnered with other Chambers in the region and created a forum on the subject with Commissioner Paul Savas and Representative Bill Kennemer... But then all went quiet... and yet, ODOT kept “toiling” with their tolling plan in the background, while never truly communicating to the public.

When I was hired in April of 2022, if I asked any citizen what they knew, they would either say “Tolling isn’t happening in Oregon, we don’t know anything about tolling” or “They are only going to toll for the Abernethy Bridge.” So in September of 2022, the Tualatin Chamber’s Business Advocacy Council agreed to do a “Key Leader’s Breakfast” with Commissioner Roy Rogers of Washington County and Commissioner Paul Savas of Clackamas County speaking on Oregon Tolling Updates bringing the facts of exactly how much tolling was coming to Oregon. It was a huge surprise to learn that ALL freeways in Oregon were being set to be tolled...and this would begin with I-205 in late 2024 followed closely by I-5.

The audience of over 100 people were stunned. These were businesses, professionals, and members of our Chamber who were seriously upset and in the dark. So, I left that breakfast and partnered with Evan Olson, Daniel Lacy, and Susan Noack to immediately create the website www.oregontollingupdates.com. This website is designed to educate, inform, and motivate the people on any article, opinion, house bill, senate bill, historical document...ANY tolling issue that arises. Daniel Lacy, who quickly became an adept editor and excellent research journalist for the website, also added a short podcast to highlight interviews, or hot topics. Since, Daniel Lacy has his own podcast on all things automotive, “Dr CarCast,” this was an excellent fit, and the two podcasts complement each other. The world of automotive transportation is complex, and a historical and detailed perspective and education can help you understand how we got here with tolling in Oregon. For instance, the internal combustion engine vehicles (ICE vehicles) are beginning to be replaced by Electric vehicles—there goes the gas tax! Electric Vehicles do not use gas and are not charged a fee or tax for the roads, yet they weigh approximately 30% heavier than the ICE vehicles and cause more wear and tear on the roads...so this is one reason the state thought tolling might be fair. This is a complex issue. There are questions about diversion onto city streets and how to mitigate it. There are fears of more pollution, more danger for pedestrians and blocked access to Meridian Park hospital when Borland road becomes the diversion street. There are fears that Oregon doesn’t have money for new bridges and that employees will have to pay so much to commute that they cannot afford to work in Tualatin. For a comprehensive look at how this all got started and the winding road of current issues and updates on tolling please subscribe to www.oregontollingupdates.com . It will drop into your mailbox every Monday morning and we will not sell your email address or use it for anything other than informing you about how to have a voice.

Recently, Representative Susan McLain (D) who represents the people of House District 29 in **West Hillsboro, Cornelius, and Forest Grove** in the 82nd Legislative Assembly stated that of the 8 bills coming before her on transportation and tolling, none of them would be moving forward. SB933 was a bill to provide an emergency stop on tolling, while we re-assess the plan, but she is saying No—she will not hear any bills on tolling.

Representative McLain serves as Co-Chair of the Joint Transportation Committee, Co-Chair of the I-5 Interstate Bridge Committee, Co-Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education, and as a member of both the House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee, and the Joint Ways and Means Committee. She says she looks forward to tackling important issues affecting Oregon families, such as transportation safety, school funding, protecting our environment, and supporting our farms and all businesses. Representative McLain says she will also work to increase government accountability and transparency to ensure best use of taxpayer funds.

Representative McLain's website states "Listening to you is my number one job! I want to make sure Forest Grove, Cornelius, and Hillsboro have a strong voice in Salem on issues that affect our community. I hope you'll continue to share your questions and concerns with me by email, at rep.susanmclain@oregonlegislature.gov, or by calling my office at (503) 986-1429."

So please do email and call Representative McLain and give her your opinion about tolling Oregon freeways.

When we learned that SB933 was not going forward, the Business Advocacy Council and the Board of Directors approved the following action plan for the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce:

Intention of The Tualatin Chamber of Commerce and Business Advocacy Council to formally participate in the IP4 Petition Campaign

After careful and thoughtful consideration of the proposed tolling of our road system we find that we regrettably have been given no legislative alternatives to pursue. Some of our state elected representatives have decided to take no testimony or discussion regarding alternatives to the currently proposed tolling program. It comes as a surprise that in a representative democracy that elected officials would not understand their obligation to at a minimum hear and consider citizen input. When elected leaders no longer want to hear the views of the citizens those citizens have few options but to legislate themselves. Therefore, the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce and Business Advocacy Council intend to go forward with the following:

Whereas, Susan McLain has stated that all transportation Bills that are currently in Salem will NOT be moved forward the only alternative for the citizens of Oregon is to begin a drive to obtain signatures on the IP4 petition.

The Oregon Tolling Updates website is growing and reached more than 2000 views the week of April 10th thru the 17th We are gaining traction. Daniel Lacy Editor in Chief and Podcast Host of

the Oregon Tolling Updates website, has received a list of all businesses in Tualatin that have 50 or more employees and will begin to go in person to speak with their leadership about tolling and the IP4 petition campaign. Daniel is continuing to interview relevant leaders about the Tolling issue and is continuing to look for opportunities to speak in person to the public about tolling.

Another goal is to get more subscriptions to the OregonTollingUpdates.com website, to grow our database. Please subscribe at www.oregontollingupdates.com

Dean Suhr of the “Vote Before Tolls.com” group has agreed to work with Tualatin Chamber of Commerce BAC. He is negotiating with Julie Parrish to be a partner and director of marketing for “No Tolls Before Vote” to move this campaign forward and get 250 thousand relevant signatures. Julie Parrish will bring on a person to fundraise for this campaign. Julie brings a system for processing the petitions—vetting every signature and getting rid of duplicates. Handling the petitions carefully and securely and Julie will be handling a major marketing campaign to bring awareness, targeting addresses near the Abernethy Bridge. There will be a physical Petition campaign office opened in West Linn.

Submitted and approved on Monday April 24th 2023

This month Representative Annessa Hartman (D-Gladstone & Oregon City), Representative Jules Walters (D-West Linn), and Representative Courtney Neron (D-Wilsonville) introduced HB3614, which would place a two-year moratorium on tolling and convene a legislative task force to protect their communities from harmful impacts to struggling families and neglected neighborhood streets. Time will tell if this bill passes and allows the people to have more of a role in this process.

But Hold the Presses! There’s MORE!!! In a surprising turn of events just as I was submitting this article on May 1st 2023 a Press Release came out from Salem:

Governor Tina Kotek pauses toll collections until 2026; new subcommittee created to oversee ODOT plans SALEM, Ore - After months of advocacy, legislative Democrats representing the Clackamas County area scored a major victory for local communities facing the impacts of tolling on I-205. In a letter today, the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and the Co-Chairs of the Joint Transportation Committee have announced the creation of a Special Subcommittee on Transportation Planning to oversee and monitor the Oregon Department of Transportation’s (ODOT) plans to mitigate the negative impacts of tolling on vulnerable communities. In order to make sure that any tolling program is carefully considered and incorporates the feedback from impacted communities, Governor Kotek is responding to the calls of the legislators and pausing all toll collections until January 2026.

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Stay tuned, this is getting interesting!

For now, The Tualatin Chamber of Commerce intends to find a way to have a voice. To get our businesses a place at the table and help design a transportation system that can benefit the

greater good by continuing the IP4 petition, unless and until, we see the change that signals that it is no longer needed. We will not stop. Please, know we are tirelessly fighting this issue and intend to keep pushing—Please join us—there is strength in unity!