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Community Rally Shows Depth of Coalition in Support of Regional Transportation Package

Local trusted civic leaders rallied Wednesday in support of the Regional Transportation Package. Measure 26-218 would tax wealthy corporations to put Oregonians to work building green infrastructure and safer streets for economic recovery and to reverse decades of systemic disinvestment in low-income communities and communities of color

PORTLAND - Dozens of local community advocates held a virtual rally Wednesday morning in support of a YES vote on Measure 26-218, the regional transportation package on the ballot this fall. Numerous leaders reiterated the urgency and overwhelming need to provide 37,500 jobs to the community by asking wealthy corporations to invest in green infrastructure, safer streets, and congestion relief in the region.

The Let's Get Moving campaign includes a broad coalition of hundreds of labor, environmental, traffic safety and community organizations.

"Since 1993, our traffic delay in the Portland region has increased 252% and we're all paying it. Each of us are paying the price of traffic delay," said Keith Wilson, President of Titan Freight Systems Inc. Wilson noted how much his freight company has historically been hindered by congestion that would only get worse without this historic investment in transit. He also noted that his business has enjoyed enormous tax cuts at the federal level. "The federal government isn't going to fund us. This tax is going to be paid by me and other large businesses, but it's going to go back to us, our neighbors, and our communities. It's time we fund our own future."



“Make no mistake - asking wealthy corporations to invest in building transit and walkable communities is exactly what a Just Transition and a Green New Deal looks like for our region,” said Marshall Piotrowski, a youth climate justice organizer. “Sunrise PDX joins every single climate justice and environmental advocacy organization in the region in supporting the Let’s Get Moving package because we can’t wait any longer for action on climate. Our community is on fire and it’s time we act on it.”

Elizabeth Thiel, President of the Portland Association of Teachers, told a harrowing story about visiting a former student in the hospital after they were hit by a car crossing 82nd Avenue on her way home from Northeast Portland’s Madison High School. “The trauma to the student, her family and the community was immeasurable. There are thousands of students who have to cross 82nd Avenue every day to get home from school, and there are not many safe places to cross.” Thiel lamented the dangerous conditions of 82nd Avenue, and noted how Measure 26-218 would direct billions into fixing up other dangerous arterials such as Washington County’s SW 185th and Portland’s SE Powell Boulevard. Thiel also noted that students who walk or bike to school are healthier and more ready to learn when they arrive in class, and lamented the corporate opposition to this crucial investment in the health and well-being of Portland’s students. “Large corporations in our region can certainly afford to pay their fair share to invest in community resources that will benefit everyone for generations.”

Willy Myers, executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council, expressed urgency in putting the region to work as an economic recovery initiative. “This is going to create more than 37,000 jobs in infrastructure. Infrastructure jobs are good jobs; they are family wage jobs.”

Ashton Simpson, Community Asset Director with Rosewood Initiative, specifically called out the anti-displacement investments baked into the package to ensure that East County communities would be able to stay in place as these investments occur. “We want to see this measure passed because of the investment on 162nd, which would receive \$90 million in investment. In this moment in time, as major development happens in East Portland, we need people to be able to stay in place.”



“Traffic safety is a racial justice and social justice issue, period,” said Jess Thompson, Executive Director of Oregon Walks. “We have an epidemic of traffic violence in our communities; these arterials frequently harm people walking, biking and driving on our streets. This measure will invest billions to make sure our streets are safe for our most vulnerable road users.” She specifically called out the safety investments on TV Highway, which runs through numerous low-income and communities of color. “It’s our young, our senior citizens, our neighbors with disabilities who are the most likely to experience traffic violence due to decades of racist, ableist and ageist investments in transportation that leave the most vulnerable among us to fend for themselves.”

The Let’s Get Moving package invests in seventeen corridors around the region and ten programs that specifically target investments in public health, climate resilience, congestion relief, and traffic safety. While the campaign to pass Measure 26-218 enjoys the support of hundreds of local trusted environmental, social justice, racial justice, and labor leaders across the region, it is facing opposition solely from wealthy businesses and corporations who prioritize their shareholders profits over the Oregonians in our local community.

To learn more about the proposed transportation package and the coalition of regional partners working to pass Measure 26-218, please visit the campaign website:

www.letsgetmoving2020.com

A video of Wednesday’s rally [is available here](#).