

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

BY ANNELEAH JAXEN, CEO, TUALATIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

For a few years now, the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce has been watching the tolling issue in Oregon. We led in the 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 Kenemer... 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 was 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This website is designed to educate, inform, and motivate the people on any article, opinion, house bill, senate bill, historical document—ANY tolling issue that arises.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 a 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.

However, in a surprising turn of events, just as I was submitting this article on May 1, 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 legislators' calls and pausing all toll collections until January 2026.

Stay tuned. This is getting interesting. For the full article, go to www.oregontollingupdates.com under the tab "Expert Commentaries."



Anneleah Jaxen is CEO of Tualatin Chamber of Commerce. She can be reached at 503-692-0780 or Anneleah@tualatinchamber.com.

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