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Statewide coalition kicks off fight against Tim Eyman's anti-transportation initiative

Needed improvements to roads, bridges, overpasses, transit, street maintenance all threatened by I-976, which defunds transportation improvements at all levels

VANCOUVER, Wash.— Business, labor, civic, environmental and transit organizations from across the state have come together to fight I-976 and protect the state's transportation system. Today, Vancouver leaders came together to speak out about I-976, which would repeal billions in transportation investments at the state and local level, threatening road and transit projects across the state.

Right when our growing state should be investing in roads, bridges, rails, and transit options, this initiative reduces city-level maintenance projects, threatens voter-approved regional transit investments, and cuts billions from the state transportation budget. I-976 would cut transportation services for veterans, senior citizens and people with disabilities and funding for the Washington State Patrol.

"I-976 is another misleading scheme. Here in Southwest Washington, legislators have worked hard to unify on our top transportation priority for this region," said Representative Monica Stonier (D-49). "The business community and the people who have to sit on that bridge are in agreement. Not only would I-976 push improving the I-5 crossing out of reach, but it will cut safety improvements, the State Patrol, and delay projects across the state driving up cost. This initiative is misleading and does not keep taxpayers in mind. The negative impact to Clark County would move us back and we can't afford that."

"Southwest Washington is rapidly growing its job base. New and expanding companies require a robust infrastructure in place to allow this growth to occur," said Steve Horenstein, Policy Committee Chair for the Columbia River Economic Development Council. "Initiative 976, if approved, will limit the ability of local governments to fund those road improvements that are critical to building commercial and industrial facilities to accommodate expanding employment opportunities."

Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle also shared the City's perspective at today's event. Through a Transportation Benefit District, the City of Vancouver collects \$40 for renewal of vehicle licenses—local dollars going to local needs and projects. In its unanimous resolution opposing I-976 last month, the City Council stated, "If Initiative 976 goes into effect the Transportation Benefit District's loss of revenue would be approximately \$4.8 million in direct revenues to the Vancouver street program annually as well as the foregone opportunity to secure grant funding for the same due to a lack of local matching resources, and...this loss of revenue would reduce the City's ability to fulfill key outcomes and adopted policy objectives in the City's transportation and land use plans."

“When funding is cut to road and bridge construction and maintenance, not only are we hurting working families, we are putting those same families at risk when they travel over the bridges in Washington state that are already in poor condition,” said Deken Letinich, Assistant Political & Legislative Director of the Washington & N. Idaho District Council of Laborers. “An investment in Washington's infrastructure is an investment in job creation, congestion relief and economic growth. We cannot risk decades of decline to the condition of our roads, bridges, and highways.”

“Initiative 976 will harm Washington in a number of ways,” said Mike Bridges, President of the Longview/Kelso Building Trades Council. “Our state is very trade-dependent, and the many ports in my area along the Columbia River from Longview to Camas rely on freight mobility. By limiting funding on transportation and infrastructure improvements, Initiative 976 will handicap our ports and slow down economic development in Washington State. And we need economic development, especially in Southwest Washington. The people I represent, the men and women of the Longview/Kelso Building and Construction Trades, rely on the direct construction jobs created through transportation and infrastructure improvements, as well as new commercial and industrial construction. We as a state must show that we recognize the importance of investing in the future of our transportation system in order to attract new businesses and grow the ones we already have. I-976 is bad for business, for Labor, and for the communities we live and work in.”

I-976 also puts at risk important maintenance and improvements needed for road safety. Our state already has 160 bridges that are identified as being in poor condition and a threat to public safety. Even smaller road projects, like potholes, contribute to dangerous driving conditions. Cuts to mass transit options will only put more people on the road, making congestion worse and causing further damage to roadways. There are state, regional and local projects at risk:

- State transportation funding is spent on highway safety improvements, freight mobility projects, transit services and the Washington State Patrol;
- Regionally, I-976 puts future federal and state highway projects at risk, as well as transit services for people with disabilities and senior citizens, and needed fixed-route transit services between Vancouver, Longview and Castle Rock.
- Locally, Vancouver, Battle Ground, Ridgefield and Washougal will all lose transportation benefit district funding, which is local dollars going to local problems such as street and traffic maintenance such as pavement repairs, crack sealing, lane striping, street lighting, signals, and pedestrian improvements such as crosswalks, ADA ramp work, and sidewalk repairs.

These funding cuts will hurt the state's transportation system for decades, as neglected projects snowball and become harder, and more expensive, to fix.

A broad coalition of organizations have come together to protect Washington's transportation system. Business, labor, civic, environmental and transit organizations have joined the No on I-976 effort and are working hard to help the public understand that I-976 cripples the ability of every community to fix roads, expand light rail, maintain ferries and improve freight corridors.

For more information about at-risk projects and the coalition, visit www.NO976.org.

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