

# Jessica Vega Pederson

Oregon State Legislature: House District 47



**General Approach.** The City of Portland has often been named the best bicycling city in the country. At the same time, car vehicle miles traveled are increasing while traffic congestion grows. Why do you think more Portlanders don't walk, bicycle, or take transit for transportation, and what will you do to help Portland (especially your legislative district) become an even better city to bike in, as well as a great city to walk and take transit?

There are several reasons more Portlanders don't walk, bicycle or take transit. In my district in East Portland, there are many high-traffic streets with limited cross walks, sidewalks or bike paths which make walking or cycling down-right dangerous for people. Women with children in strollers or the handicapped are often forced to walk for blocks to find a crosswalk or risk crossing in front of traffic.

There are also too many pedestrians forced to walk in the street because of lack of sidewalks.

Another issue that will impact people's use of transit is the current Tri-Met proposal which make it harder for families to take transit. There are no "family" rates, so families with children older than six have to pay for each member of the family for any trip – no matter what the distance – based on the elimination of "zone" pricing.

I am encouraged by programs like East Portland in Motion that focuses on transportation projects east of 82nd. We've already seen improvements on Stark with improved sidewalks, cross walks and curb extenders. The planned improvements to 122nd, Division St, the north/south and east west greenway routes will all bring significant improvements to this district. As a representative, I will publically applaud these efforts, be a voice for continued improvements in the area to ensure pedestrian and bike safety, and

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work with my city and regional counterparts to find practical ways to improve transit, pedestrian and biking options.

**Choices and Public Perception.** Critics of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects often contend cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users don't pay their fair share in road taxes and other user fees. How would you make the case for allocating funds for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects?

The ease and popularity of walking, biking or taking transit are large factors in determining a city's livability, and Oregon's high ranking in livability can be attributed in part to our past successes in those areas. These rankings attract businesses and new citizens to our state, which brings in revenue. In addition any person who both owns a car and uses active transportation is paying for their share of road taxes and user fees.

Also, reducing single occupancy vehicles during peak traffic hours helps freight move more freely along our roads which is a benefit to Oregon businesses and manufacturers. Projects targeting bicycle, pedestrian and transit promotes [sic] this by keeping more cars off the road, which also reduces road maintenance costs.

**State Funding for Active Transportation.** HB 1700 from 1971 (ORS 366.514) requires the state set aside at least 1% of the highway fund to build bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Meanwhile, one-quarter of Oregonians (roughly a million people) are too poor, young, old or infirm to drive. Do you feel that the 1% is an adequate allotment to fulfill the safety and transportation needs of the ever-increasing bicycling and pedestrian community? If not, what would you do to change it?

I am open to reviewing the adequacy of the 1% allotment, but in these challenging economic times it will be difficult to increase the amount of highway funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This should be a priority in an improved economy.

**Traffic Safety.** Traffic-related crashes are the top cause of death and injury for Oregonians aged 1 to 34. Pedestrian injuries and deaths are a serious problem in Oregon, with one serious injury a day and one death a week, encompassing 14% of traffic deaths in Oregon and 30% of deaths in Portland. Not surprisingly, most walkers and cyclists are injured or killed on busy streets. How will you improve traffic safety for walkers and bicyclists, especially for youth?

Pedestrian safety is an important issue in East Portland, as we have some of the most dangerous intersections in the city. This fact underlines the need for equity in street improvement projects for the city and the state. I live within blocks of SE Division on 122nd where two cyclists were injured in hit-and-run accidents in just the first five days of 2011.

Increasing the frequency and visibility of crosswalks is key, and special attention needs to be given to areas where children and teenagers are going to and from school or making transit changes.





**Sensible Traffic Laws.** For over 30 years, Idaho has had a law allowing cyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs, and come to a rolling stop instead of a complete stop (out of understanding of the laws of physics and the excessive use of stop signs on neighborhood streets). Over those last 30 years, Idaho police departments have seen no increase in safety problems, and have provided testimony in favor of the law. The Oregon legislature has considered passing a similar law in Oregon, but has failed to. What are your views on such a proposal?

I would need to see more data on the safety of such a proposal. On one hand, I think that the practice of cyclists using rolling stops in neighborhood streets is a reality, no matter what the law says, and it seems more practical to update the law to reflect this. However, I have concerns about codifying the lawfulness in busier intersections where vehicle/bicycle interactions are more complex.

**CRC Highway Mega-project.** There has been a lot of pressure to build the most expensive public works project in the region's history, the five-mile long highway project known as the Columbia River Crossing. Despite being a multi-billion dollar project, bicycle and pedestrian facilities involved are substandard, including an under-highway mile-long path, a five-block corkscrew detour into Vancouver, and a mostly minimum-width-allowed 16-foot path width, all for a facility designed to serve the next 100 years. The project is diverting billions of dollars from other regional priorities to build an expansion that won't solve congestion. What are your views on the mega-project and what would you do about its funding as a legislator?

I support the need to improve freight transit along I-5, but the plan needs to provide safe and ample facilities for transit, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. I would support funding for the project as a legislator on the condition that the federal government and the state of Washington contribute their share of the expense.

### Cleaner Transportation, Better Choices through Land

**Use.** Smart land use planning has a huge effect on how many people use transportation choices. In 2010, legislators passed Senate Bill 1059, which requires Metro to make its land use planning decisions lead to specific reductions in global warming pollution. It also requires Eugene-Springfield to plan on how it would accomplish such reductions. Would you support an effort to provide \$300,000 for a grant to do scenario planning for one of Oregon's other four Metro areas, which would be designed as a competitive pilot effort to model how Salem/Keizer, Corvallis, the Rogue Valley, or Bend could reduce their transportation pollution? If so, how would you go about finding that funding?

Yes, and I would look at federal grant money and state Transportation Growth Management Funds to fund the project.

**Transit funding.** Transit systems throughout the state continue to struggle to make ends meet, especially in their quest for operating funds. In response, often service is cut while fares are increased. While the payroll tax cap was increased in 2009, it only increased for some cities. If you think public transit funding is inadequate, what sources of funds would you work increase or create as a legislator?

I support an increase on the gas tax to provide additional funding for transit systems. However, with decreasing gas tax revenues we need to look at new funding systems that provide more stable funding. As a legislator I look forward to working with you on identifying funding sources and building coalitions between business, labor and the active transportation community to pass laws creating those systems.





**Transportation Equity.** Recent census data show nearly 10,000 people of color, mostly African Americans, have moved from Portland's city core to the city's eastern edges over the past ten years. East Portland has much sparser sidewalks and bikeways, grocery stores and parks, and less access to transit. How would you ensure these increasingly diverse and historically underinvested neighborhoods are revitalized for their current residents? How would you improve transportation choices for low income communities and communities of color?

As I mentioned previously, my district is in East Portland and transportation equity issues are a sad reality for us. When looking at changes to the transit system, whether in cutting or adding services, the impact on lower-income riders has to be a major factor in making these decisions. I support the efforts of organizations like OPAL and Transportation Health Equity NW Network to bring these discussions to the forefront, and as a legislator I would work to provide state resources and grants to the improvements recommended in the East Portland Action Plan and East Portland in Motion.

**Personal Example and Understanding.** How do you currently travel around town, and how do you commute to work?

I have a remote worker arrangement with my employer so I am able to work from my home and not have any commute. We selected a school and day care for our children within walking distance of our home to reduce the need to drive them each day. For other errands we do use our car.

**Past Accomplishments.** Do you have any specific accomplishments in improving the quality of life for bicycle, pedestrian and transit users in Oregon or other places?

I don't have specific accomplishments, but I look forward to working closely with the active transportation community as a legislator to increase the prevalence, accessibility and affordability for bicycle, pedestrian and transit options.

**Anything to add?**

As a legislator, I will be a champion of equity issues, including economic and environmental equity, and I look forward to working closely with you on transportation equity issues.

