

“VOTE BEFORE TOLLS” INITIATIVE GAINS MOMENTUM ACROSS OREGON - IP-31 WOULD GIVE OREGONIANS THE FINAL SAY ON ALL TOLLING PROPOSALS — INCLUDING I-5 AND I-205 PROJECTS



News Release from **Neighbors For A Better Crossing Inc**

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“Vote Before Tolls” Initiative Gains Momentum Across Oregon

IP-31 would give Oregonians the final say on all tolling proposals — including I-5 and I-205 projects

[PORTLAND, OR] With proposed tolls looming over several major Oregon transportation corridors, the [Vote Before Tolls](#) campaign is gaining traction statewide. Spearheaded by Dean Suhr and supported by grassroots coalitions such as [Neighbors for a Better Crossing](#), the initiative (IP-31) would give **Oregon voters the right to approve or reject tolling projects before they can be implemented** — retroactively covering all proposals since 2018.

“This is about accountability, transparency, and letting Oregonians vote before they’re taxed at the toll booth,” said Dean Suhr, Author and Chief Petitioner of IP-31, Vote Before Tolls. “We’re not saying ‘no’ to all tolling — we’re saying the public deserves a voice.”

What IP-31 Would Do

If passed, IP-31 would require a regional vote in counties within 15 miles of any proposed toll segment — including current plans for tolling [I-5](#), [I-205](#), [the Rose Quarter](#), [the Abernethy Bridge](#), and even [bicycle tolls](#). This includes toll proposals between the Columbia River and Wilsonville, as well as [studies already underway](#) for [Hwy 26](#) and Hwy 217.

Although Governor Kotek announced a temporary **pause** on tolling until 2026, Suhr says the threat is far from over. “Tolling hasn’t been halted — it’s just been delayed to avoid election backlash. The public should still be paying close attention,” he warned.

Grassroots Growth and Signature Drive

To qualify IP-31 for the 2026 general election ballot, the campaign must submit **161,000 valid Oregon voter signatures by July 2026**. The goal is to collect **180,000** by **June 2026** to ensure a buffer. Thousands of signature sheets have already been distributed across the state, and interest is growing rapidly.

“This is a nonpartisan issue that resonates across the political spectrum,” said Suhr. “Most Oregonians have no idea that tolls are coming. But when they find out, they want to help.”

Currently, hundreds of volunteers are canvassing neighborhoods, attending events, and hosting signature drives. The campaign is calling for thousands more to join. Volunteer roles include signature gathering, social media support, web help, petition fulfillment, and yard sign distribution. Visit [VoteBeforeTolls.org](#) to get involved.

Impacts on Major Projects Like the IBR

Tolling plans for the **Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR)** and the **Rose Quarter project** would fall under IP-31, requiring a public vote before implementation.

“Tolling is being used as a fallback to cover ballooning budgets. That’s not fiscal responsibility — that’s just kicking the can to commuters,” Suhr said.

Estimates show the IBR’s cost may [now exceed \\$9 billion](#), with the toll burden rising to approximately **\$4.2 billion**. According to [ODOT’s own estimates](#) presented in legislative hearings, toll collection overhead could consume as much as 86% of the revenue —

meaning drivers might be charged up to **seven times** the intended \$4.2 billion just to cover costs. That equates to only **14 cents of every dollar actually funding transportation** improvements, with **no additional vehicle capacity**.

Adding to the urgency, Governor Tina Kotek has called a special legislative session on August 29 to address a \$350 million budget shortfall at the Oregon Department of Transportation. **ODOT's financial planning heavily depends on toll revenue — a source that may not be guaranteed if IP-31 passes.**

"ODOT is gambling on tolls to fill budget gaps," said Suhr. "But if the voters demand a say through this initiative, those toll assumptions could vanish overnight. That's why transparency and public buy-in are more important than ever."

Impacts on Vancouver and Hayden Island Residents and Businesses

"For those of us living on Hayden Island, tolling would be devastating," said Kimberly Haslett, a Hayden Island resident and volunteer with Neighbors for a Better Crossing. "Many of us cross into Vancouver daily for basic needs like doctor appointments, and grocery shopping because we don't have a lot of basic services like a grocery store, a mechanic, a vet, a gym, or medical facilities on the island. Tolls would effectively tax us just for leaving home for our basic needs."

Haslett emphasized that **local businesses on Hayden Island** would also take a major hit. "A huge portion of their customers come from Vancouver. If those people start avoiding the bridge to skip tolls, our restaurants, shops, and service providers will feel it immediately," she said. "And for low-income residents who rely on crossing the bridge for work, errands or school, it's incredibly unfair. Tolls don't care if you're making a living wage or not, they just keep charging."

A Message to Lawmakers and Planners

"Vote Before Tolls is coming," Suhr warns. "There's still time for elected officials to demonstrate transparency and fiscal responsibility — or face a public that's ready to shut down unchecked spending."

Feedback gathered through the campaign reveals widespread concern about diversion of traffic, regressive impacts on low-income commuters, and a lack of clarity about where toll funds are going. Residents want better roads — not endless tolls that rarely improve congestion.

How to Support the Initiative

All **registered Oregon voters** can sign the petition. Single-signer sheets and 10-line packets are available for download or request at VoteBeforeTolls.org. Supporters can also:

- **Volunteer**
- **Host an event**
- **Donate** via the [Vote Before Tolls PAC or Foundation](https://VoteBeforeTolls.org)
- **Spread awareness** on social media
Facebook: [@VoteBeforeTolls](https://www.facebook.com/VoteBeforeTolls)
X (Twitter): [@VoteBeforeTolls](https://twitter.com/VoteBeforeTolls)

Additionally, Oregon residents can claim a **political tax credit** — donating up to \$100 per household and getting the full amount back on their taxes.

"We are asking everyone to take a few minutes to print a petition, sign it, and get others to sign as well," Suhr said. "Bring them to your neighborhood BBQs, farmers' markets, or family events—it's nonpartisan, it's empowering, and it's our chance to say we deserve a vote before new tolls are imposed."

"It's a Vote — Not a Veto"

"This isn't a blanket rejection of tolls," said Suhr. "If a project is equitable, transparent, and solves real problems, voters will support it. But they deserve a say first."

Neighbors for a Better Crossing stands with *Vote Before Tolls* in demanding accountability before Oregon becomes a state of toll booths. We encourage all Oregonians to learn more and make their voices heard before they're charged just to cross town.

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