

There are so many reasons to either vote or throw up your hands and say “I quit.” This year has stretched our patience, pocketbooks, and perspective. I, too, have had to reorganize my priorities as a CEO of a business organization to respond to the needs of our 503 members and their 32,451 employees.

But I urge you to join together to stand up and say yes to long-term good ideas and candidates and say a loud NO to untimely bad ideas.

That brings me to the Metro Transportation Tax, an untimely bad idea.

Nothing would make me happier than to be able to get in my car and drive around the metro area without rush hour traffic starting at noon. Traffic congestion is causing higher levels of toxins in the air, frustration in the car, and wasted time for employees and employers.

But the plan Metro is promoting is NOT the answer--- nor is it the right time.

They are promising so much. Thousands of new jobs. Clean air. Lower congestion. Travel alternatives for the underserved. But all of these promises are shallow in depth. And yet you pay for it---forever. If 26-218 passes, it is a forever wage and benefit tax, that can (and will) be raised and small business owners will be included. In the first year alone, more than 70% of all workers in our region will be harmed by this tax, including those in nonprofits, churches, and charities. Metro and other governments will be fine—they exempted themselves from the tax.

If Metro’s measure was truly about congestion, it would have specific projects, specific budgets, specific timelines and a completion date. That would also mean the tax would end. That is not what Metro is doing. They want a new funding stream. And your paychecks and benefits are their target.

Adding an expensive light rail line from downtown Portland to Bridgeport, eliminating hundreds of homes and businesses in the path, and then calling it equality transportation is laughable. MAX ridership continued to decline before COVID. How healthy is it to ride in a confined compartment now?

Congratulations if you are a bike rider or walker. You will have miles of new paths and sidewalks to use. Congestion will no longer be on the sidewalks or bike lanes, Metro fixed that problem. (Sarcasm intended) Many of Metro’s new bike miles aren’t well designed, just a narrow chute between busy highways. And if you need a car to get your kids to school or buy Christmas gifts, this measure does nothing to help the streets you use to accomplish that. In other words, the huge new tax meagerly addresses bicycle congestion but not car congestion. That will continue with no end in sight.

Metro is tugging at our heart strings, telling us the good things the largest tax in our region's history will do. But Metro isn't telling us how many jobs will be lost, businesses that will close, families that will be displaced, or non-profits that will struggle if the tax passes.

News flash: We are in a pandemic. The transportation issues have been grave for years. My members want to be at the table to help with the solutions. But Metro is in such a frantic need for permanent funding, it is choosing to impose the largest tax in history on us during the worst health and financial crisis in recent history.

Voting no doesn't mean we don't want to fix all of the issues Metro claims they want to correct. A NO vote says this the **WRONG PLAN** at the **WRONG TIME**. We have time to get back to the drawing board and come up with timely solutions that truly helps with congestion, clean air, equity, and new jobs.

Vote NO on the highest tax in the region's history. Protect your wages and benefits, your job, and your favorite neighborhood small business. Vote NO on Metro tax 26-218.

