



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
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Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

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Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Planning and Sustainability Commission has reviewed the Steering Committee's Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project Preferred Alternative report, and support their conclusions.

While the Southwest Corridor is evaluated as a transportation project, we believe it is fundamentally a tool to shape and manage growth. A central feature of Portland's Comprehensive Plan is directing growth to a network of centers and transit corridors. Over the next 20 years, we expect 70 percent of Portland's growth to occur in the Central City and along major transit lines. We have also adopted ambitious transportation planning goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cut vehicle miles travelled, and double the share of commuters who use transit – to 25% by 2035. Full build-out of the regional light rail system is a critical element of our land use plans and Climate Action goals. The Southwest Corridor is the last major spoke in this regional system. Development of high capacity transit in a dedicated right of way in this corridor helps to advance many of the City's goals.

The PSC was deeply involved in laying the groundwork for this project through our consideration of the Barbur Concept Plan (BCP), adopted by the City in 2013. The Preferred Alternative implements that plan, which emphasized the land use, growth management, and place-making opportunities that should drive the project alignment.

As we noted in an earlier letter in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, we appreciate these project elements:

- The through-route alignment serving downtown Tigard.
- Shuttle service and strong pedestrian and bike connections to the PCC Sylvania campus.
- The in-Barbur alignment north of the Crossroads (including replacing the viaducts).
- The shared transitway to facilitate more reliable bus service in Southwest Portland.
- The inclusion of important pedestrian and bike improvements for station access.
- A strong connection to Marquam Hill.

We would also like to note our strong support for reconfiguring the Ross Island Bridgehead to re-establish an urban street pattern. That project facilitates significant redevelopment close to the Gibbs station, which supports transit ridership and regional growth management goals.

The alignment options at the West Portland crossroads deserve more discussion. Like downtown Tigard, the crossroads is a Town center in the 2040 growth plan. Both places are expected to accommodate significant residential and commercial growth over the next 20 years. We appreciate that several crossroads alignment options are being carried forward into the Final EIS. We understand the Bureau of Planning and



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Sustainability is moving forward with a more detailed land use plan for the crossroads, thanks to Metro grant funding. It is important that this work be coordinated with the light rail project Station Optimization Study, and evaluation of the alignment options here.

Because the Preferred Alignment follows the freeway south of the crossroads, that section of Barbur might not see the same level of pedestrian and bike improvements. We urge Council to work with Project partners to seek funding to remedy that gap.

Past transit investments in Portland have contributed to the displacement of low-income households and communities of color. It is essential that the transit project and the housing strategy are funded and implemented in tandem. As we noted in a letter about the Housing Strategy, the City now needs to step up.

- Make a one-time investment to fund an emerging collaborative involving tenants organizations, communities of color, affordable housing organizations, and funders.
- Increase investment into anti-displacement services
- Make a one-time multi-million-dollar investment of general funds in an apartment building acquisition fund such as the Network for Oregon Affordable Housing's fund.
- Form a SW Corridor URA with strong guardrails against funds being used for anything other than affordable housing until the housing stretch targets have been met.
- Follow through on proposals and funding for new tenant protections citywide.

We are also cautiously optimistic that Metro and TriMet will also step up to be part of the solution to meet our region's housing needs. The regional housing bond measure became a reality in no small part due to the request by Mayor Wheeler for TriMet to contribute to affordable housing resources through the SW Corridor light rail project. We appreciate TriMet's commitment to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Portland and other jurisdictions to prioritize affordable housing on properties purchased for the light rail project deemed excess after construction.

Other anti-displacement efforts are underway elsewhere (Division, N/NE Housing Strategy, East Portland Action Plan, and others). We recommend the City Council use this opportunity to direct the bureaus to establish a coordinating structure to leverage investment and enact new policies for affordable stable housing in all areas. More housing resources are especially needed in East Portland, which is becoming vulnerable to gentrification and displacement pressure. The lessons and approaches learned through the SW Corridor Equitable Housing Strategy should be applied the East Portland. While transit and Housing investments in the SW Corridor are very important in a regional context, we hope the Council will remain focused on East Portland needs.

Sincerely,

Katherine Schultz
Chair



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