

I-5 EASTBANK FREEWAY TUNNEL ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, PRINT YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

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AUDITOR 10/23/12 PM 1:22

October 24, 2012

Mayor Sam Adams  
Commissioner Dan Saltzman  
Commissioner Randy Leonard  
Commissioner Nick Fish  
Commissioner Amanda Fritz

I am writing in support of the I-5 Eastbank Freeway Tunnel Alternative Concept which is being presented to you as part of the Central City Plan. I am doing so as a concerned citizen who spent forty years advocating for the welfare and livability of our city and its region. On this matter, however, I am motivated by my chairmanship of the last of several committees that, over the years, attempted to address the future of the East Side Freeway. Mayor Katz appointed this committee, known as The Freeway Loop Advisory Group in Fall 2003. After two years of studies and analysis its report was completed in Spring 2005 and has since been accepted by the City Council. The Group included representatives from local business and industrial firms, neighborhoods, planning and transportation agencies as well as representatives from the regional and state firms and governments. The following is a summary of our findings and conclusions.

1. The I-5 / I-405 Freeway loop plays a crucial role in statewide, regional and local commerce. Regional and state freight movements rely on the loop for access to the marine, rail and air terminals as well as major clusters of industrial firms.
2. The Freeway Loop will need improvements if it is to serve the needs of a growing and changing region and state. The Loop was planned in the 1950s and built in the following decade. While the local and regional demand has increased substantially, improvements to the Loop have been minimal and it will not be able to serve in the next 50 years without capacity, safety and access improvements. The Loop needs a long range "Master Plan" to identify and program those requirements.
3. The Freeway Loop needs more than a master plan—it needs improvements now. The region has grown rapidly and there are specific safety and capacity issues that should be dealt with in the near future. The Master Plan should contain both the long-term plan and a phased improvement strategy to get there.
4. The Freeway Loop needs to be adapted to the urban design and development changes that have occurred and will continue to occur in the Central City. These

changes mean more people living and working near the freeway loop and traveling around it on a daily basis. Much of the loop was designed for its then industrial setting. As districts change and the importance of the river as an amenity increases, the freeway loop must be adapted to meet new requirements.

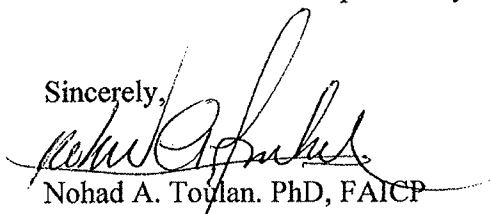
One of the key recommendations that we made was the placement of the freeway in a tunnel in order to remove what is currently an eyesore and to open the central eastside neighborhood to the river. While we were very much concerned about the viability of the district as an industrial incubator we were also aware of the potential for residential development along the river. In our report we were aware that what we were doing at that time was basically a vision that if accepted could guide future development along the loop.

The concept in front of you today embodies that vision. It does not commit you to any immediate action or investment but it provides a degree of certainty for the Central East Side District that has always been the concern of the business leaders. We know that the Markham Bridge is already at or close the point when it will need to be replaced or undergo very expensive improvements.

In calling for the improvement of Water Ave as an arterial similar to Naito Parkway the Concept addresses another of our concerns. That is the need to improve the surface road network in order to reduce local traffic that uses the loop and as such increase its capacity to handle the expected growth in regional traffic. Obviously, this goal will require improving access from the Hawthorne and Morrison Bridges to the newly improved Water Ave. but this should not be difficult to accomplish.

I regret that I am unable to appear in front of you personally because of some commitments abroad but I am hoping for your approval so as to bring a degree of closure to a matter that has occupied many citizens and professional for close to three decades.

Sincerely,



Nohad A. Toflan, PhD, FAICP  
Distinguished Professor and Dean Emeritus  
Chairman of The Freeway Loop Advisory Group