



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
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Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

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October 5, 2012

Mayor Sam Adams and Portland City Council
Portland City Hall
1121 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Adams and City Commissioners,

At a public meeting held on September 25, 2012 the Planning and Sustainability Commission voted to forward the N/NE Quadrant Plan and I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan to City Council for adoption by resolution. The Commission took actions on two separate motions:

1. To recommend the City Council adopt the N/NE Quadrant Plan with several minor amendments. This motion passed unanimously.
2. To recommend the City Council ask the Oregon Transportation Commission to adopt the I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility plan, and direct the Portland Bureau of Transportation to work with the Oregon Department of Transportation to develop a phasing strategy and seek funding to implement the facility plan and implement near-term safety-enhancing improvements to surface streets in the vicinity of the interchange. This motion passed by a 7-for to 1-opposed vote.

The Commission strongly supports the N/NE Quadrant Plan and the sustainable, vibrant, urban development vision it lays out for the Lloyd District and Lower Albina. This plan is supportive of and consistent with the Central City 2035 Concept Plan which the Commission is also forwarding to City Council for adoption as a separate agenda item.

At a September 11, 2012 public hearing on the two plans, the commission received a range of testimony generally supportive of the N/NE Quadrant Plan and both supportive and critical of the I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan. The opposing testimony centered on concerns about potential changes to neighborhood traffic patterns and on general opposition to any investment in freeway improvements within the urban core.

A majority of the commission supports the transportation improvements described in the I-5/Broadway Weidler Interchange Facility Plan and finds that the improvements are supportive of and well-integrated with the goals of the N/NE Quadrant Plan. In particular, the commission is highly supportive of the innovative City/State partnership that was used to develop the plans and the attempt to use freeway transportation investments to improve local neighborhood-serving connections and development conditions in the vicinity of the project. In addition, the commission is pleased that the recommended freeway improvements are compact and don't consume any additional land for freeway uses while still making significant safety and operational improvements on I-5.



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As noted, the recommended I-5 Broadway/Weidler Interchange improvements suggest significant improvements to the local street system above the freeway. This is largely due to the incorporation of freeway “lids” that cap portions of the freeway trench. The space on these lids could be used for a variety of productive purposes including open space or development-related uses such as buildings or parking and access areas. The commission feels strongly that these lids and the proposed Clackamas bicycle/pedestrian bridge between the Lloyd District and the Rose Quarter must be included in the final project and cautions against the temptation to drop them or scale them back in the value engineering phases of work on the project.

The Commission engaged in a lengthy discussion about the Metro Regional Transportation Plan modeling assumptions used, which assume a higher VMT than does the Climate Action Plan. The Commission hopes Metro will review its modeling at a regional scale to address these inconsistencies before additional major projects are planned. A minority of Commissioners also raised concern about the high cost of the freeway project – a single transportation facility – in contrast to what could be achieved if funds were to be spent in smaller increments around the city to improve safety issues for all transportation modes and that could better address climate initiatives.

The Planning and Sustainability Commission recommends that Council adopt the Resolution which:

1. Adopts the N/NE Quadrant Plan as non-binding City policy (pending completion of CC2035 work);
2. Recommends that the Oregon Transportation Commission adopt the I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan; and
3. Directs the Bureau of Transportation to work with the Oregon Department of Transportation to:
 - a. Develop a phasing strategy and secure funding to implement the I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan; and
 - b. Implement near-term safety enhancing improvements to surface streets in the vicinity of the Broadway/Weidler interchange.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of these plans and for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,



André Baugh
Chair
Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

