

Transportation System Plan Testimony – February 24, 2015

On behalf of the Northwest District Association and its Transportation Committee I am submitting the following comments on the Transportation System Plan project list.

The NWDA Board has endorsed a specific streetcar extension to serve the newly developing northeast portion of our neighborhood that was approved through the Con-way master plan a few years ago. It is critical that this rapidly developing area is well served by multiple transit options.

We are requesting a new project, an extension of the street car line on NW Northrup that would extend north on 21st to Thurman and then run on Thurman to 23rd and finally travel on NW 23rd to Northrup.

Further, we are requesting that a study be placed on the TSP studies list that would examine a further extension of streetcar service to Montgomery Park.

The other changes we are asking for are:

- 1) Combining projects 60027 and 11740 as these two projects are linked and should be constructed at the same time. Project 60027 relates to reconfiguration of the NW 23rd/Vaughn/I-405 off-ramp and 11740 relates to creating a 'jug handle' from that intersection that would loop north onto NW Wilson and create a new NW 20th under the off-ramp that would link into the Con-way area. Both of these projects were envisioned by the Con-way master plan and are necessary to relieve the heavily congested and failing intersection. These projects are our highest priority as it is essential to improving the functioning of this gateway to the neighborhood and providing a key access point to the Con-way site.
- 2) We are asking that two studies be reinstated and put onto the TSP studies list. These studies are currently listed as projects 60002 and 60010. The studies would investigate the feasibility of decoupling NW 18th and 19th and NW Everett and Glisan. All four of these streets are currently classified as Local Service streets, which are inappropriate for couplet treatment. The studies would investigate the decoupling of these streets and/or identify appropriate changes to calm traffic on them.
- 3) NW 23rd between Lovejoy and Vaughn has been identified by PBOT as having major structural problems that require a rebuild of the street. It is not clear where this type of project, which goes far beyond mere maintenance is housed in the TSP. This part of 23rd requires rebuilding sooner rather than later.
- 4) The other high priority project for our neighborhood is 20097, the NW Flanders pedestrian/bicycle bridge over I-405 in conjunction with bicycle improvements from the Steel Bridge to NW 23rd. This project is badly

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needed to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety between our neighborhood and the Pearl.

- 5) Project 20014, W Burnside improvements from 15th to 23rd, should be renumbered to reflect its location adjacent to the NWDA.
- 6) And finally, we are very supportive of the program area funding approach. It's important to have a way of making the small projects happen. The smaller projects can often have an important impact on neighborhood livability and safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

NWDA Transportation Committee Comments on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan
November 4, 2014

The Northwest District Transportation Committee supports the following comments on the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

Our committee believes it is premature to provide input on the transportation-related policies in the proposed Comprehensive Plan because the update of the Transportation System Plan is still in its infancy. Without more detail relating to street classifications and more-specific policies and actions that, presumably, will be part of the TSP update it is hard to know whether the policies before you are appropriate and adequate. Therefore, our comments are predicated on the presumption that the Comp Plan policies will be revised as necessary to be consistent with the TSP.

Our comments are as follows:

Lack of a vision for the next 30 years. The policies are reflective of current practice and don't address the huge changes that will occur in Portland as it continues to grow, become more congested, and as climate changes accelerate. What should the transportation system look like in 30 years? How do we get there?

Policy language is generally weak. The policies use words such as 'encourage', 'promote', 'coordinate', 'improve' and 'support'. These words are ambiguous and leave little hope that anything will be accomplished. An example is Policy 9.59, "Encourage the development of a range of stable funding sources . . ." Why not, "Develop a range"?

Comp Plan designations versus TSP classifications. It is not clear what designations such as Civic Corridor (applied to Burnside) means in relation to its TSP classifications. How will aspirational designations, such as Civic Corridor, be reconciled with the street's existing constrained elements such as inadequate sidewalks?

Regional Coordination is given short shrift in the proposed policies. Increasingly, in NW Portland, we are suffering from large number of commuters accessing our streets from Washington County. We have been in contact with Metro representatives and staff and have basically been told there is nothing they can do; the local jurisdictions need to take the lead in dealing with regional traffic issues. This is not a satisfactory response. The Comp Plan policies should make a strong statement on how to resolve of issues, including classification conflicts across jurisdictions, not just talk about coordination.

Transportation Demand Management should have more emphasis, as the ability to build new traffic capacity is very limited. Currently, TDM is only required of developers via quasi-judicial land use approvals. This applies to a relatively small percentage of development. Both BPS and PBOT need to develop citywide requirements to reduce auto usage across the range of development types and locations.

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The proposed Institutional Zones will not be able to address the unique needs of neighborhoods to ensure that large institutions address their transportation impacts. Required TDM measures for institutions are frequently complex and change over time in response to changing circumstances. How will the proposed zones deal with these critical issues and preserve neighborhood livability?

Transit needs are increasing beyond TriMet's ability to provide it. Rather than 'punt' the responsibility for transit provision to TriMet, the city needs to take a more aggressive role in defining the future transit network. Just as developers pay system development charges for street, bike and pedestrian facilities, they should contribute to transit service as well. Also, when transit operations are funded through employee taxes, transit service is reduced during recessions to unacceptable levels that reduce people's ability to get to jobs. The city should be supporting development of a sustainable operating budget for transit service during good times and bad.

Commercialization of the right-of-way. Policy 8.37 allows more use of the right-of-way for commercial uses such as street seats and private utilities that take up valuable space needed for pedestrians, bicycles and even parking. This is a significant expansion of existing policy and ignores the value and need in the right-of-way for more bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks and on-street parking to support economic activity. The northwest district neighborhood has been subjected to this increasing use of the right-of-way for non-transportation purposes and, over time, it has led to overly congested sidewalks.

And speaking of parking, while the proposed parking policies are extensive, Policy 9.50, On-Street Parking, is in direct conflict with Policy 8.37. Parking management is currently reactive when it needs to be pro-active and turn its eyes to other areas of the city outside the Central City before parking problems migrate to more neighborhoods. It took ten years, in the most recent effort, for the City to adopt and begin to implement a parking management plan for NW Portland. Other neighborhoods shouldn't have to wait that long.

Thank you for your consideration.

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