

March 13, 2015

Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission
Comprehensive Plan Update
1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Suite 7100
Portland, OR 97201

Re: Draft Comprehensive Plan Testimony

Dear Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission:

Thank you for this final opportunity to comment on the draft Comprehensive Plan. This letter supplements previous comments I submitted on December 2, 2014.

First, as I attended the PSC worksession on March 10, 2015, I was quite pleased to learn of two recent inter-bureau and inter-agency agreements. The PBOT-BES Coordination Charter and the PBOT-BPS-TriMet Letter of Intent are two examples where better planning will very likely lead to better outcomes, as was illustrated in the TriMet Service Enhancement Plan discussions. At the neighborhood level, we are frequently frustrated when we work with bureaus in silos, and we hope that this approach can be sustained over the long run across a wide range of projects.

Second, while I understand that this is a technical update of the TSP, I believe a more thorough update is needed right away. In general, I found the sequencing of tasks for the Comp Plan Update quite confusing, and am concerned that policies will be locked in place before we learn from studies that have only recently begun, such as the parking policy study. Many of our volunteers spent time submitting comments on the TSP projects and I hope the comment database will be used in a more complete TSP update, so that their time will not have been wasted.

Third, as a member of the Transportation Expert Group and PBOT Budget Advisory Committee, I shared comments with staff that may not have been captured in the TEG comments. I am a proponent of using performance measures and support the city's approach of using seven outcomes to prioritize investments. However, there need to be performance measures tied to the outcomes to enable citizens to evaluate whether the investments are accomplishing the outcomes. I reviewed the scoring criteria (as a TEG member) and had questions about how some of the scoring was applied to many of the projects. I commented last October that the proposed TSP project schedule did not allow enough time to provide meaningful comments on the project rankings, and I continue to be concerned that they need more vetting. I hope the public gets a closer look at the scoring and staff accepts comments on how to improve the scoring and ranking of the many transportation needs citywide in the near future.

TSP Projects

Many projects in SW Portland have not been re-scoped since 2002 and are frequently more than two miles in length with no curbs nor stormwater management system. They

are expensive to build and ranked low in terms of “cost-effectiveness”. Areas with high percentages of people of color, low income and seniors were averaged out since the projects often covered multiple census tracts. Many individuals and neighborhood associations have submitted comments regarding how they could be phased, segmented or re-scoped to prioritize the most needed improvements, such as segments leading to town centers and frequent service bus stops. Many neighborhoods have experienced significant infill without the necessary street and stormwater improvements because the City granted thousands of “waivers of remonstrance” over the last 20 years, exacerbating the problem.

The following projects are my top priority projects, with notes about how they might be re-scoped or segmented to make them more competitive.

Capitol Highway (Multnomah to Taylors Ferry) - TSP Project #90026:

Capitol Highway is the highest priority needed improvement in all of SW Portland, and this segment has the most potential for allowing people to walk and ride bikes and not rely completely on the automobile. It serves as an important route for reaching Multnomah Village in the north and the West Portland Town Center and Barbur Boulevard Transit Center to the south, with no alternative routes nearby. Today, the road consists of a 24-foot wide two lane asphalt roadway, with wider asphalt or unpaved shoulders in some areas providing informal vehicle parking. For most of this segment, pedestrian, bicycling and parking improvements are nonexistent. The bus stops are generally unimproved, and travel to and from the bus stops often entails walking on narrow roadway shoulders adjacent to motor vehicle traffic, including frequent service bus and truck delivery vehicles. Bicyclists today must share the travel lane with motor vehicle traffic, but the 2030 Bike Plan designates it a Major City Bikeway. The segment also lacks stormwater treatment and detention facilities which likely contribute to stream degradation of Fanno and Tryon Creeks, both identified as Essential Salmonid Habitat by the Oregon Dept. of State Lands. Because this is such a significant route through our community without nearby alternatives, it needs the full build-out as envisioned in the Capitol Highway Refinement Plan. We hope PBOT and citizens can work together to create context-sensitive solutions that benefit a wide range of stakeholders, including the local and regional users of the roadway and the stormwater management issues.

Outer Taylors Ferry Road (Barbur Blvd to 60th) - TSP project #90064:

PBOT gave it a low score--in the "unconstrained" list-- likely because it is two miles long with no shoulders or stormwater management system. It should be in the "constrained" list because it supports the SW Corridor Plan and is the only way for anyone to get to West Portland Crossroads (intersection of SW Barbur Blvd and Capitol Hwy) from the west, whether by motor vehicle, bicycle or on foot, because of the presence of Woods Creek and I-5 as major barriers nearby. It suffers from a lot of motor vehicle traffic from Washington County and the I-5 ramps leading to Portland Community College. PBOT could "segment" it to prioritize the segment from Capitol Highway to SW 48th, and could "re-scope" it to build just a sidewalk on the south side and an uphill bike lane on the

north side, but full improvements all the way to SW 65th would also lead to more people walking and biking in the neighborhoods.

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities from SW 61st and Pomona to SW 64th and Barbur (portion of TSP 90011). This project is ranked in the unconstrained list, likely due to its long length and lack of curbs and stormwater management system. The segment between SW 61st and Pomona and SW 64th and Barbur (a “jog” on the map) is the most critical segment due to the multifamily residences in this area, including a Home Forward property (Ash Creek Commons) but no sidewalk for the residents to walk to the nearby frequent service bus stop at SW 64th and Barbur and nearby shops and services. In fact, since cars are usually parked on the shoulders, the residents are forced to walk in the street along a street with high traffic volumes. Even a small segment of this project could go a long way to improving safety in a very unsafe area.

Markham Pedestrian Bridge (from SW 48 over I-5 to Markham School) - TSP Project #90048: The Ashcreek and Crestwood Neighborhoods have some of the lowest “walkscores” in the entire City of Portland, in large part because of the presence of the Interstate Highway as a major barrier. A pedestrian and bicycle bridge would enable people to access the Capitol Hill Library, Markham Elementary School, Jackson Middle School, and frequent transit service on Barbur Blvd. as well as the future SW Corridor transit service.

SW 45th (Cameron to Taylors Ferry) - TSP Project #90008: PBOT ranked it in the 11-20 year constrained list, but this is a much lower priority than the above projects. It needs to be re-scoped and segmented in order to build the most important segments that actually lead to places (i.e. Southwest Community Center and Gabriel Park, or commercial businesses on Multnomah Blvd.) at a lower cost. In fact, without building Projects 90033, 90050, 90064, and 90067 it would not lead to any improved facilities.

There are also several neighborhood “greenway” projects in SW Portland that, in my opinion, are a low priority because of the greater need to improve busy arterials due to the topography and lack of a grid system in our neighborhoods. I also question the high priority given the Johns Landing Streetcar Extension and the Red Electric Trail given their limited local benefits; instead, segmenting or phasing other projects could provide interim solutions in strategic places where SW Portland needs the transportation improvements the most, providing greater mobility to large numbers of people to access transit, commercial areas, shops and services without relying on individual cars.

Finally, I’d like to emphasize a comment that I made in my December 2, 2014 letter, because I saw recent materials in the Mixed Use Zone project that indicated no change in the draft plan.

“Western Neighborhoods”, and in particular, Centers and Corridors, need sidewalks and bicycle facilities. Not trails. The transportation system in Centers

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and Corridors needs to be safe and accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

Trails such as those built by SWTrails PDX are not accessible in many places, and are not maintained well enough to be safe. They are also not very safe to use in the dark in unlit places. The City needs to evaluate each Center and Corridor to determine what pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities, and streetlights and other services each Center and Corridor needs to function as envisioned in the plan.

Sincerely,

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