



March 13, 2015

Portland Bureau of Transportation
Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

The Northeast Broadway Business Association (NEBBA) represents over 350 businesses along the NE Broadway/Weidler Civic Corridor from Martin Luther King Blvd. to NE 37th Ave. The Corridor serves as the economic spine connecting six different neighborhoods: Eliot, Lloyd District, Irvington, Sullivan's Gulch, Grant Park and Hollywood, which the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability reports contains 50,000 people and 21,000 households.

As part of our mission to strengthen economic vitality, increase jobs, and build a successful business district, NEBBA has reviewed the proposed Transportation System Plan (TSP) component of the Comprehensive Plan and offers the following comments:

NE Broadway/Weidler has been identified for planning purposes in the Comprehensive Plan as a critical Civic Corridor linking the Central City/Lloyd District with the Hollywood Town Center. Considerable future growth in those areas and infill in the middle should be accompanied by a comprehensive upgrade of the overall Corridor. It suffers from serious issues that have plagued it for several decades – of which the City of Portland and its bureaus have been fully aware – but that have not been addressed and fixed.

For example, the 2012 N/NE Quadrant Plan noted that the Corridor carries large volumes of traffic into and through the area. Further burdened with limited signalized, a wide roadway, and insufficient marked crosswalks, NE Broadway and Weidler have been identified as barriers to connectivity and to travel by walking and bicycling both from the surrounding neighborhoods and through the Corridor. The resulting insufficient access, high vehicle speeds and poor street-level environment has hurt businesses, reduced economic growth and made for a much less livable community overall for residents.

Given the complexity of a major business district within a high traffic commercial corridor surrounded by multiple neighborhoods, it is critical that any work here be approached in a careful and balanced manner. While there have been a few piecemeal fixes over the last 20 years, the time has come to study the entire Corridor and create a major plan that balances better overall design, multiple transportation modes, parking resources, delivery requirements, sidewalk upgrades for a pedestrian-oriented streetscape and more. Our primary goal: a dynamic main street that can support and grow our retail/commercial economy, serve as a gathering spot for neighborhoods, and help the City reach its goal of healthy connected neighborhoods.

NEBBA strongly encourages PBOT to seek a planning grant to be included in the TSP that would comprehensively update the outdated 1996 Broadway/Weidler Corridor Plan, followed by a major improvement project for the Corridor from the Broadway Bridge to Hollywood. The

concept was addressed in the N/NE Quadrant Plan as item TR6 in Implementation Actions/Lloyd District - Transportation.

In conclusion, we would like you to take action to support the projects we've identified as our top priorities, and remove those we've identified as projects of concern to support a strong NE Broadway Business District. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Transportation Systems Plan and help guide future transportation planning for Northeast. Thank you.



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TSP Projects That Are NEBBA's Top Priorities

The overall NE Broadway/Weidler Corridor is complicated by the many different ways people move in and through the entire area from the Broadway Bridge to Hollywood. From the interstates and major traffic corridors to smaller neighborhood streets, from larger bicycle/pedestrian greenways to safe and local multi-modal access, there is complex interrelated movement made up of tens of thousands of smaller movements.

Outside the core of downtown Portland, no other area of the City encompasses this much traffic and public transit with such complexity. With major high-density, mixed-use growth occurring now and much more forecast over the next 20 years, several of the proposed TSP projects could help our section of NE Portland be truly first rate. We feel they deserve your strong support.

#40030 - Broadway/Weidler, NE (15th - 28th): Multi-modal Improvements, Phases II & III (Removed, but most elements potentially added back – see below).

This streetscape project – a major priority for many years by NEBBA and our neighborhood partners - was one of the few NE Broadway/Weidler Corridor projects removed from the January 30, 2015 TSP list (along with its \$9 million budget). Two related bikeway projects, #116460, Broadway/Weidler Protected Bikeway and #40108 NE Broadway Bikeway remained intact.

In discussions with PBOT staff, NEBBA questioned the removal of #40030, wondering how the city planned to handle serious needed improvements in many areas that it addressed (signals, crosswalks, wider sidewalks, better lighting, landscaping, a strategic plan for parking, etc.). We also felt that it was extremely shortsighted to only propose bicycle improvements without addressing the entire streetscape at one time.

After recent meetings and communication with PBOT, it is our understanding that the proposed revisions listed below of #116460 and #40108 will appear in the late April TSP draft update. While some critical improvements are addressed by these projects, none does so as

comprehensively as #40030. NEBBA requests an expansion of the project descriptions in #116460 and #40108 to encompass all improvements listed in #40030.

116460 – NE Broadway Corridor Improvements, Phase 1, Broadway/Weidler, Broadway Bridge – 24th, Years 1-10 (PBOT proposed revision).

“Design and implement an enhanced bikeway and improve pedestrian/bicycle crossings. Construct traffic signals, improve transit stops, and construct streetscape improvements as recommended in the Broadway Weidler Corridor Plan. Project design will consider freight movement needs, consistent with policies, street classification(s) and uses.” It is our understanding that funding has increased from \$3,500,000 in the Jan. 30, 2015 list to a proposed \$8,949,869.

There is one side note regarding “freight.” We feel that adequate delivery access to local businesses on NE Broadway and Weidler is essential and that any street redesign must provide such access, but we would like to see other transit of large freight trucks restricted to maintain an attractive main street atmosphere.

40108 – NE Broadway Corridor Improvements, Phase 2, Broadway 24th – 42nd , Years 11-20 (PBOT proposed revision).

“Design and implement bicycle facilities, ped/bike crossing improvements, transit improvements, and streetscape amenities.” NEBBA believes the final project description should be the same as for #116460. It is our understanding that funding allocation for this project has increased from \$3,500,000 in the January 30, 2015 list to a proposed \$5,681,569.

The Smart Thing to Do: Combine These Projects Into One

NEBBA feels strongly that the projects above should not be separated, but combined into a single project on an accelerated timeline during the first 10 years of the TSP. That would make it possible to undertake a comprehensive study for the entire Corridor, create a revised plan, and complete a construction project. This would minimize negative impact on businesses and neighborhoods, and prepare us for major changes in density, structure and population.

Improvements will be needed sooner, rather than later, across the entire Corridor so this critical link works well for everyone. Considerable mixed-use development is coming as the Lloyd District grows north, the eastern edge of the Corridor from 28th Ave. and Grant Park Village to 37th Ave. fills in underdeveloped areas, and more mixed-use buildings and infill projects occur in the large section between 9th and 28th Aves.

Such development will create additional serious traffic flow issues that will need attention. The intersections of NE Broadway and Weidler with signalized north-south intersections carrying considerable traffic should receive study and planning attention to alleviate current increased congestion that will only get worse as the Corridor further develops.

We would also like to see a reexamination of the I-84 on and off ramps at NE 33rd Ave., 37th Ave. and 39th Ave. for ways to minimize usage of NE Broadway as a freeway alternative and cut traffic counts. The lack of four-way access to I-84 creates inefficient vehicle patterns and pushes cars to surface streets. While a review would involve ODOT, support by PBOT would be highly beneficial.

#116340 NE 7th/9th Neighborhood Greenway, 7th/9th Ave, NE (Holman - I-84)
#20077 Inner Eastside Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge, 7th/8th/9th Ave NE (over I-84)

NEBBA recommends improving NE 7th to contain both an enhanced bikeway and auto lanes. We would not support the project if it removed autos from NE 7th. This is a well-used north-south street that brings customers back and forth to local Corridor businesses, keeps cars out of smaller neighborhood streets, and also serves as a relief valve for often-jammed Martin Luther King Blvd. We want to see a smooth flow of autos in and out of the Corridor, while at the same time making it more accessible and safer for bicycles to move from NE Portland to I-84, the future Sullivan's Gulch Trail, and on to SE Portland or Downtown.

We also support the proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge over I-84, which would enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to the Lloyd District, the Sullivan's Gulch Trail, the NE Broadway/Weidler Corridor and to the north up NE 7th Ave. The bridge would also help separate cars and bicycles in the area to improve safety and travel efficiency.

TSP Projects That NEBBA Opposes or Has Concerns About

#11102, Hollywood Streetcar Expansion

It appears that an Eastside extension of the Streetcar on NE Broadway/Weidler is not planned or budgeted. NEBBA has serious concerns and does not support the Streetcar at this time. Our concerns include: taxes on property owners that would raise costs and lease rates for businesses, heavy infrastructure investment, construction disruptions that would harm many businesses, usage of right of way that might be best used for other needs, blockage of traffic flow if streets are narrowed from the current number of lanes, and irreplaceable parking loss, among other things.

#40109 NE 14th Ave. Neighborhood Greenway

#40110 Upper NE 22nd Ave. Neighborhood Greenway

While we are in favor of improving bicycle access to the NE Broadway/Weidler Corridor and recognize the potential to bring more cyclists as customers to area businesses, we also want to be cautious of negative side effects. We've had issues on NE 7th with removal of already-limited parking for businesses due to bicycle improvements. Businesses tell us their number one customer complaint is a lack of parking. While we hope to encourage other transit modes and reduce parking pressure, our priority is making sure customers can reach us to spend money and grow the local economy. We ask that any bicycle project on, adjacent to or crossing the commercial corridor be closely vetted so as to minimize negative impacts on businesses.

#108670 ODOT. I-5/Broadway/Weidler Interchange, Phase

#108840 ODOT. I-5/Broadway/Weidler Interchange, Phase 2

#111760 ODOT. I-5/Broadway/Weidler Interchange, Phase 3

The I-5/NE Broadway/Weidler interchange project was examined during the N/NE Quadrant Plan. Some of the safety and design aspects are admirable, but we have concerns about the potentially multi-year negative impact on business districts in the Corridor due to construction. We also question if funds could be better spent in NE Portland on higher priority projects. We would like to see this project plan updated and discussed in much greater depth by the City.