



Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

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November 4, 2009

Ellen Vanderslice, Project Manager
Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030
Portland Bureau of Transportation
1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Portland OR 97204

Dear Ms. Vanderslice:

The neighborhoods in Southwest Portland are known for the hills, scenic vistas and curving streets that make for challenging but rewarding bicycling. We have followed the development of bicycle improvements on our major arterials in recent years, and bicycle traffic counts have noted the increased use these improved roadways by cyclists. We commend Portland Bureau of Transportation for taking on such a comprehensive and visionary program in the proposed update to the Bicycle Master Plan.

Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI) is fully supportive of Portland's strategies for promoting a high quality of life in our region. We view the 2030 Bike Plan as an excellent opportunity to create "complete streets" and active transportation corridors that incorporate safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, particularly on our collectors and arterial streets.

According to the recent Bike Transportation Alliance survey, "Bicycling Perceptions and Experiences in Oregon and Southwest Washington", respondents said the least-safe routes include those in Southwest Portland. Chapter 3 (page 41) illustrates how little has been completed in SW since 1996 to connect residents to improved bikeways. Chapter 3 (page 42) recognizes the hilly topography of Southwest Portland as limiting to the creation of low stress bikeways, and that there are few alternatives to arterials with high traffic volumes. Although these constraints, and the needed stormwater improvements, make bike and pedestrian improvements more expensive, this should not be an excuse to avoid implementation indefinitely. Our residents deserve the opportunity to use improved transportation options already being implemented elsewhere in Portland.

We offer several broad topics and some specific suggestions for your consideration:

1. The envisioned bicycle network for 2030 (p. 35) illustrates the grid-like network of "complete streets" (streets that prioritize safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access) that will make cycling a viable option in SW Portland. Unfortunately, the recommended project list in Chapter 3 (pp. 56 - 58) falls short

of getting there. Many of the proposed Tier 1 projects are isolated projects that leave significant gaps in the system. To meet the City's Climate Change goals of reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) by 30% from 2008 levels, this plan needs to be much more strategic in helping people get to destinations by bike, with greater emphasis on connections to transit, business and shopping districts, schools and employment areas. The current list often connects Tier 1 facilities to unimproved roadways or Tier 3 projects. We need to select projects that will further increase bicycling as a transportation option in Southwest Portland and be part of the solution to reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions while enhancing safety, health and livability.

2. Active Transportation Corridors are an important concept that deserves additional attention in the bike plan—meaning, these projects should be more than just adding bike lanes. Metro's Atlas of Mobility Corridors describes the "Portland Central City to Tigard/Tualatin" Corridor #2 as the major mobility corridor in our coalition area, and we recently developed an Active Transportation Demonstration Grant proposal to improve the regional bicycle and pedestrian system in this corridor.
 - Tier 1 projects need to create improved connections to town centers and business districts, with particular consideration for major employers with large client bases such as Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus, Lewis and Clark College and Oregon Health Sciences University. Tier 1 projects should emphasize connections to existing or proposed major bikeways such as SW Barbur Blvd., SW Multnomah Blvd. and SW Beaverton Hillsdale Highway that include the multi-modal improvements needed in Active Transportation Corridors.
 - We understand that multi-modal improvements must include bike, pedestrian, transit and storm water management facilities. These all drive up project costs, especially in hilly SW Portland. We appreciate that SW will receive a significant and fair share of the estimated project costs listed in the Appendix A: Action Plan. Our perspective is that although the projects are more expensive, the value added and benefit for local residents is proportionally much greater.
3. Metro's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) calls for transportation improvements that support density in the central city, centers and corridors. There appears to be a disconnection between the 2035 RTP centers and corridors and the 2030 Bike Plan. In our coalition area, the RTP priority projects include SW Capitol Highway, the Red Electric Trail, SW Barbur Blvd., SW Hamilton and SW Vermont. Bike Plan Tier 1 projects should complement the proposed RTP priority improvements:
 - Capitol Highway. We recommend that Capitol Highway be designated a Major City Bikeway. It is one of the older roadways in Southwest Portland and follows the ridgeline so it is relatively flat; it connects the Hillsdale and West Portland Town Centers; several schools, shops, restaurants and places of worship; two libraries, and two community centers; and it has transit

service seven days a week. The three Capitol Highway RTP projects (#10189, 10272 and 10273) should be reflected in the Capitol Highway Bike Plan projects (# 2094, 1205) and these should be Tier 1. Proposed safety improvements for the Hoot Owl intersection at SW 30th/Vermont/Capitol Highway need to be addressed in the bike plan.

- Red Electric Trail. This trail that connects the Fanno Creek Trail with the Willamette River Greenway will create a new multi-use pathway that would provide a low-stress east-west route through Southwest Portland (RTP #10354). One segment of this trail is currently funded. Other segments of the trail (Bike Plan #2033, 2066) are considered Tier 2 but have the potential to significantly increase bicycling and walking trips in Southwest Portland.
 - Barbur Blvd./99W. We support the designation of Barbur Blvd. as a Major City Bikeway. SWNI appreciates that Middle Barbur Blvd (Bike Plan #1206) is a Tier 1 project, particularly needed between SW 17th and 26th, and especially needed at the Vermont and Newbury bridge structures. There are some gaps in the bike lane that are not in the current list of projects but need to be added, which we call South Barbur from SW Multnomah Blvd. to the city limits at SW 65th. Specific safety improvements needed but not mentioned are the intersection with Taylors Ferry and Capitol Hwy in the West Portland Town Center and the bridge crossing between SW 60th and 64th Avenues.
 - In addition to travelling along Barbur Blvd via bike, more attention should be paid to safe crossings of this major regional arterial, such as the needed bike lane on SW Capitol Highway between SW Huber and SW Taylors Ferry Road in the West Portland Town Center.
 - SW Vermont. Improvements are proposed for the federal RTP system (#11131) and we recommend Tier 1 designation for Bike Plan project # 2042 to help connect residents with the two community centers in Hillsdale and Multnomah Village and the Southwest Community Center.
 - SW Hamilton. Improvements are proposed for the federal RTP system (RTP #10226) and we recommend Tier 1 designation for Bike Plan project # 2038 to help connect residents with the much-needed Scholls Ferry Road (*Multnomah County*) improvements.
4. The bicycle plan street designs and designations need to avoid conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians with regard to pedestrian rights along roadways. We do not favor giving bicyclists' rights over pedestrians on streets that have no pedestrian facilities.
 5. Bicycle path improvements should be classified to avoid giving bikes priority on facilities not having associated pedestrian facilities by labeling or classifying them as combined or shared bicycle/pedestrian facilities. If necessary, Oregon statutes regarding right of way may need modification. State law requires pedestrians to walk on the left side of roadways (facing traffic). Hilly and curving streets are common in Southwest Portland, especially on neighborhood

collectors. If uphill climbing lanes for bicycles are constructed, or road shoulders are widened on the outside of curves to accommodate bicyclists, it should be legal for pedestrians to use these paved surfaces as well, and the pedestrians should be provided legal right of way.

6. We request that PBOT work with the neighborhood communities on design standards for bicycle and pedestrian projects, and ask coalitions to determine priority projects within their areas.
7. We request that PBOT better coordinate construction projects among city bureaus, particularly the Bureaus of Environmental Services, Water and Parks. We have seen many examples of missed opportunities, and that due to scarce funding, all city bureaus should work harder to be more efficient, and strive for multiple benefits out of projects.

Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc recognizes that the proposed plan and project list of today is a huge improvement over the 1996 Bicycle Master Plan. Cycling opportunities in Portland are already light years ahead of most American cities. The Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030 makes excellent progress in solving the challenges of growth, climate change, economic sustainability, community livability, equity and environmental health that will continue to keep this region busy for years to come. Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. shares your goal of creating a grid-like network of facilities that will enable people to meet their daily needs without a car. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important process and ask you to incorporate these comments into the Bicycle Plan.

Sincerely,



Brian Russell, President
Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.