



Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

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October 15, 2009

Metro Council and Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation
Metro Regional Center
600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232

Re: 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and Making the Greatest Place

The Board of Directors of Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI) applauds Metro for its efforts to integrate long-term land use planning and transportation planning in a way that will enhance our region's livability.

To summarize, the SWNI Board submits the following comments on the Regional Transportation Plan (more detail follows):

1. 30 days is not an adequate "public involvement" period for a document this complex;
2. We support keeping the urban growth boundary in place, but the transportation agencies need to make improvements to the regional infrastructure that supports this growth without negatively impacting existing neighborhoods;
3. We support the I-5/99W mobility corridor to be a high priority for a Corridor Refinement Plan;
4. We support numerous improvements to transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with specific comments on the project list, and we re-submit our November 15, 2007 letter along with other details about the projects. The Active Transportation initiative of Metro is a large step in the right direction and should be strongly supported.
5. We want to make sure the performance measures address deficiencies in local areas such as SW Portland.

Background

Our coalition's geographic location covering Southwest Portland includes:

- One major throughway (I-5)
- Three major regional arterials (Barbur Blvd./99W, Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway/10, Macadam Avenue/43)
- Three regional transit system routes (Barbur Blvd./99W, Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway/10, Macadam Avenue/43)
- Two collectors of regional significance (Terwilliger Blvd., Boones Ferry Rd.)

- Three regional boulevards and streets (Capitol Highway, Multnomah Blvd., Scholls Ferry Road)
- Five Regional Trails, (Willamette Greenway , Red Electric, Hillsdale to Lake Oswego Pedestrian Trail and the 40 mile loop, and Terwilliger)

Our neighborhoods accommodate a significant amount of regional traffic from travelers in neighboring counties and cities heading toward downtown Portland or traveling through the region. None of the major regional arterials or regional transit system routes listed above has a complete pedestrian, bicycle or transit network. TriMet recently cut transit service to the extent that few bus routes serve southwest neighborhoods outside of weekday commuter hours.

In Southwest Portland, the rugged terrain, numerous creeks and lack of a grid system make it very expensive to retrofit roadways with the pedestrian and bicycle paths and stormwater facilities needed to meet the Plan goals. One of the major goals of "Making the Greatest Place" is to reduce reliance on motor vehicle travel and support growth in centers and corridors that can be accessed by walking, biking and transit. We believe much more investment is needed to help our coalition area achieve equity with other parts of the Portland region.

Regional Transportation Plan Comments

1. The current 30- day comment period for a document as large and complex as "Making the Greatest Place" is not adequate for citizen groups to adequately review the proposal and provide meaningful input. Metro's own public participation policy recommends at least a 45-day comment period and this should have been built into the project schedule. Our neighborhood associations and Board meet monthly and our newsletter deadline is the 15th of the month, so 60 days would provide more time to adequately inform our citizens about such an important plan and opportunity to comment.
2. Making the Greatest Place assumes the region's urban growth boundary will not expand, and that growth will be focused in cities, town centers and main streets or corridors within the current boundary. SWNI supports this approach, but the region needs to make improvements to the transportation infrastructure (particularly developing more multi-modal systems and active transportation corridors) and other amenities such as greenspaces to accommodate growth that is attractive and livable within the existing boundary.
3. Metro's Integrated Land Use and Transportation Vision include ten Goals and Objectives for Making the Greatest Place (Chapter 2). The main "mobility corridor" within SWNI is the I-5/99W corridor (corridor #2), which includes Barbur Blvd and feeder routes described in Metro's "Atlas of Mobility Corridors". SWNI recommends that the I-5/99W mobility corridor be designated a high priority for a Corridor Refinement Plan. Significant congestion occurs on I-5, and significant local congestion occurs on a regular basis on Barbur, Capitol Highway, Taylors Ferry Road and other intersecting streets, especially at the freeway on- and off-ramps. Traffic diverted from I-5 can paralyze Barbur, Capitol

Highway, Taylors Ferry Road, Terwilliger, Macadam and other arterials and local streets. Most of the arterials and collectors have significant sections of missing sidewalks and bike paths, making it unsafe to walk or ride bikes in the neighborhoods. centers and commercial nodes. The corridor refinement plan is especially needed to evaluate how the selection of Barbur as a near-term priority for high-capacity transit will allow Barbur to accommodate all modes of transportation (transit, bicycles, pedestrians and motor vehicles) while preserving livability in the neighborhoods and the economic vitality of the commercial businesses in the corridor. If not done right, the addition of high-capacity transit on Barbur could result in loss of auto and freight capacity, housing, businesses, greenspaces and habitat and have a negative impact on mobility and exacerbate congestion on adjacent transportation routes in neighborhoods. The project list includes #11304 (Mobility Corridor analysis and refinement planning) and several projects on Barbur/99W that will help accomplish the goals and objectives for Making the Greatest Place.

4. Metro's Regional Design and Placemaking Concept (Chapter 2) describes a grid-like system but Figure 2.10 illustrates significant gaps in the grid in SW Portland. Figures 2.15, 2.22 and 2.25 show significant gaps in the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian network, and the project list falls far short of the projects needed meet this vision. We recommend that the Regional Transportation Plan envision a grid-like system of "complete streets" that safely accommodates bicycles, pedestrians (especially those in need of accommodation) and transit as well as motor vehicles, and could include, at a minimum:
 - a. east-west routes: Patton, Hamilton, Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway, Red Electric Trail, Vermont, Multnomah Blvd., Taylors Ferry Road, Stephenson
 - b. north-south routes: Macadam, Barbur Blvd., Terwilliger Blvd., Boones Ferry Road, 30th/Dosch/35th , Capitol Highway, 45th/48th , Shattuck, 62nd, Scholls Ferry Road
5. The plan discusses transit improvements needed in the region, but over the last few years, TriMet has been disinvesting in transit service in Southwest Portland. There are only two frequent service corridors in Southwest Portland (along Barbur Blvd. and Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway), and most of the neighborhood bus routes only run during weekday commuter hours. TriMet recently eliminated weekend bus service to the Southwest Community Center, and only one bus line serves eight of our neighborhood associations south of I-5 on weekends. The only major additional transit service proposed in our coalition area is the proposed High-Capacity Transit Service in the Barbur Blvd corridor, but we need better bus service in the neighborhoods to accommodate growth in centers and corridors and reduce reliance on motor vehicles.
6. We applaud Metro for developing proposed performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of these planning efforts, but there are many problems with the details. Living within 1/2 mile of a bus stop is a good performance measure but it should only be measured if people have ADA-compliant pedestrian facilities to enable people of all abilities to get to that bus stop safely. The presence of a bus line is a good performance measure but it should only be counted if it includes service outside of commuter hours.

Most importantly, the proposed regional goals are based on regional averages and we believe there should be some minimum target level for alternative modes for all areas of the region. In other words, SW Portland's bicycle network is not platinum status but the current measuring stick does not show this deficiency because bike path investments made in the flatter sections of the region raise the averages. Another example is that new light rail ridership raises average transit ridership even though we have seen significant cuts in bus transit service in our SW area. Develop measures that are subregional in scope to more accurately identify deficiencies and measure improvements.

7. The draft Regional Transportation Plan describes an "investment strategy" in Chapter 3 that illustrates that more than half of the projects and half of the costs are dedicated to throughways, roads and bridges, and freight, with relatively little invested in trails or bicycle and pedestrian facilities. If the region is serious about meeting objectives for reducing vehicle miles traveled or greenhouse gas emissions, then it must seriously invest in the infrastructure needed to allow people, goods and services to reach destinations without relying on motor vehicles.
8. The Active Transportation Corridor approach is a large step in the right direction. We are very pleased with Metro's recent initiative on Active Transportation Corridors and we believe this concept should be developed as a separate section of the Regional Transportation Plan to further focus on this critical need in a very logical manner. The region needs to fully integrate walking and cycling into each jurisdiction's transportation system plan as well as Metro's Regional Transportation Plan.

Investment Strategy Comments (Appendix 1):

1. The comments SWNI submitted on November 15, 2007 regarding the previous version of the Regional Transportation Plan are still valid and are attached to this letter.
2. We support the inclusion of SWNI priorities for bicycle and pedestrians improvements on Capitol Highway (projects #10189, 10272 and 10273) and the Red Electric Trail (project #10354 including a connection with the Gibbs Pedestrian Bridge) on the federal priority list.
3. The SWNI priorities for improvements to Barbur Blvd. are currently on the state list (projects #10283 and 10285) we further recommend that the Slavin Road connection between Barbur and the soon to be built Gibbs Street Pedestrian Bridge be included in the Barbur scope. We recommend that they be placed on the federal priority list. In addition, ODOT's proposal to improve several bridges on Barbur Blvd. (project #11324) is on the state list but includes improving some bridges that are proposed to be removed in the South Portland Improvements project #10235. We recommend that the retrofit of the Barbur Bridges project be separated into two projects so the projects that are urgently needed to complete the unsafe gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian facilities (those south of Naito Parkway that do not conflict with the South Portland Improvements project) are on the federal priority list.

4. We support the inclusion of SWNI priority safety intersection improvements at SW Garden Home Road/Multnomah Blvd. (project #10191) and SW Stephenson/Boones Ferry Road (project #10227) on the federal priority list. However, we recommend splitting the Stephenson/Boones Ferry Road project #10227 into two projects, one for the intersection (we recommend this be on the federal list) and one for the rest of the segment (we recommend this be on the state list), similar to the Garden Home Road project on the state list (project #11116).
5. We recently worked with the City of Portland and ODOT to develop a proposal for an Active Transportation Demonstration Grant for Barbur Blvd. and its feeder routes. We continue to advocate for funding for this project, and support including the following projects in the Regional Transportation Plan because the proposed bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements support the plan's goals for centers and corridors: SW Barbur Blvd. and SW Capitol Highway projects mentioned above, SW Taylors Ferry Road (10284), Barbur/Capitol Highway/Taylors Ferry Road/Huber and West Portland Town Center improvements (10282 and 10287), and the Slavin Road portion of the Red Electric Trail. We also recommend that the following projects that are in the City of Portland Transportation System Plan but are not currently proposed in the RTP be included in the RTP: SW Multnomah Blvd., SW Boones Ferry Road, SW Huber (including improvements on 40th connecting Huber to the existing pedestrian bridge over I-5), SW 19th, SW 26th, and SW Spring Garden.
6. We support the inclusion of the following projects on the federal list that support the RTP goals for centers and corridors: the SW Capitol Highway, Red Electric and SW Barbur Blvd. projects listed in strategy comments #2 and #3 above, SW Hamilton (#10226), Scholls Ferry (#10384), and Vermont (#11131). We also support the inclusion of other projects, such as pedestrian and bicycle improvements to SW Dosch Road, to develop the network of "complete streets" that are described under Plan Comment #4 above.
7. We recommend the Regional Transportation Plan provide a project to evaluate the risks to the transportation system associated with a seismic event or landslides that could hamper emergency response and create safety issues and develop a priority plan to address these issues. We must upgrade critical infrastructure to meet seismic standards before we have a catastrophic earthquake.
8. Finally, we thank the City of Portland for including some general funding for bike boulevards (11200 and 11191) and sidewalk infill (11193).

We recognize that we are recommending many additions to the federal "financially constrained" list. We believe that Metro can refine the large set of projects that are in the federal plan to provide the financial support needed for these and other projects in order to meet the goals and vision outlined in the Regional Transportation Plan.

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Thank you very much for considering these detailed comments, particularly as they attempt to identify projects that meet the RTP goals. We invite the City of Portland, ODOT and Metro to meet with Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. and discuss these comments in more detail.

Sincerely,



Brian Russell
President
Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

Attached: SWNI RTP Comment Letter dated November 15, 2007

Cc: Mayor Sam Adams, Commissioner in charge of Transportation
Nick Fish, Commissioner in charge of Parks
Sue Keil, Director, Bureau of Transportation
Jason Tell, ODOT Region 1
Robert Liberty, Metro District 6
Carlotta Collette, Metro District 2