



# City Club of Portland

Good citizens are the riches of a city

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October 1, 2013

Mayor Charlie Hales  
Commissioner Nick Fish  
Commissioner Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner Steve Novick  
Commissioner Dan Saltzman  
1221 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Hales and Commissioners:

The City Club of Portland urges you to prioritize safer bicycling and walking on Barbur Boulevard.

As you consider the Southwest Corridor recommendations, the City should engage the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Metro, and relevant local and regional stakeholders to immediately study solutions on Barbur that could significantly improve safety for every road user. This crucial connection to Southwest Portland has been too dangerous for too long and delayed action will almost certainly result in more preventable collisions and injuries.

As you know, in June 2013, City Club of Portland members overwhelmingly adopted an extensive research report on the role of bicycles in Portland's transportation system. This report highlighted the urgency of creating a citywide bicycle network that is better integrated, better connected, and above all, safer for all types of bicycle riders. As a direct and relatively gentle grade, Barbur Boulevard presents a major opportunity to make this network a reality for thousands of residents who live in Southwest Portland.

The City Club recognizes that the Barbur corridor presents challenges as a state-owned facility and a busy commuter route, which requires a greater level of cooperation and study than a city-owned arterial. But this is no excuse to delay studying and implementing safety improvements for many years.



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Barbur Boulevard is especially dangerous and intimidating for people riding bikes or walking between SW Hamilton Street and Terwilliger Boulevard. Crossings are few and far between, sidewalks are nonexistent, bike lanes are narrow and dangerously disappear at two bridge crossings. Meanwhile, speed limits are among the highest non-freeway limits in Portland. As a result, this is one of the city's High Crash Corridors, with at least 10 fatalities in the last decade.

Without further study, it is premature to say what the best configuration will be on Barbur. Reducing motor vehicle lanes to accommodate safer bicycling and pedestrian facilities (a "road diet") might be the best solution. Other approaches that could work (such as a reversible lane) might emerge after further study. What is known now is that the status quo is unacceptable, as is waiting a decade or more for the completion of Metro's Southwest Corridor planning process, as ODOT has suggested.

The City of Portland has repeatedly affirmed its intentions to increase residents' ability to walk and bicycle safely for commuting, errands, and recreation in such documents as the Portland Plan, the Barbur Concept Plan, the Portland Bicycle Plan, and the Climate Action Plan.

Now is the time to act on these professed intentions. With the proper improvements, Barbur Boulevard could be safer for all road users: bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists. As you consider adoption of the Southwest Corridor recommendations, we urge you to work with ODOT and Metro to complete a thorough study of a safer multimodal Barbur Boulevard — in the next two to three years, not the next 10 to 20.

The City Club of Portland and our committee appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important opportunity to create a truly multimodal, safe transportation system for our city and region.

Sincerely,

Craig Beebe  
Chair, Bicycle Transportation Advocacy Committee  
City Club of Portland