

For Immediate Release

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From: The People's Department of Transportation, Infrastructure Division

Accompanying video (contains interviews with residents): <http://vimeo.com/9523059>

Activist organization blocks foot traffic, inconveniences transit users in East Portland

On February 19th, a rogue, out-of-town organization calling itself the "Oregon Department of Transportation" or "ODOT" will complete installation of a wall impeding access to transit and pedestrian facilities in an outer Northeast Portland neighborhood.

The wall was completed shortly before the People's Department of Transportation (PDOT) was scheduled to begin work on the mid-block crosswalk and pedestrian signal preferred by local residents and transit users in a lengthy public process.

In an online statement claiming credit for the wall's construction, an ODOT spokesperson said the group's goal was "addressing orderliness which can contribute to real or perceived criminal activity and safety issues in the area." <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION1/82ndimprovements/index.shtml>

The wall runs down the middle of East 82nd Ave, dividing the street neatly down its length between the two major intersections of Jonesmere and Wasco Streets, where the street crosses the I-84 freeway. The wall is about four feet high and resembles the barrier on a divided highway.

The top of the wall is decorated with a fence, billed as public art, that obscures sight lines across the street.

The block serves as a major transit hub and enjoys heavy foot traffic. PDOT estimates that the transit center is used by over 10,000 people each day.

Previously, common practice was to cross E 82nd Ave mid-block in order to access transit facilities on the other side, using a median to wait for a gap in car traffic.

During a recent visit to the site, numerous people were observed crossing the street on foot in a 50 foot gap between the wall's southern terminus and the crosswalk at Wasco. In interviews, users deemed the existing legal crosswalks unsafe because of turning cars.

The high speed of car traffic on E 82nd is described by locals as "reckless" and "dangerous."

"There have been a number of pedestrian accidents, and I'm surprised there haven't been more," East Precinct Commander Mike Crebs told the Mid County Memo news site in February 2009. http://www.midcountymemo.com/feb09_streetcar.html

ODOT's wall includes no traffic calming function, though the organization did work with TriMet to move the bus stops away from the entrance to the MAX station and to a less convenient location near the intersection with Wasco.

The final cost of the wall, including alterations to nearby crosswalks and bus shelters, is \$382,000. The cost is shared by ODOT, the City of Portland, and TriMet.

PDOT will move forward with installation of the planned crosswalk and pedestrian signal at a projected cost of \$262,000. Potential funding has been identified through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funding awarded to the state for improving the safety of roads such as E 82nd Ave.

Also see the attached video clip containing interviews with local residents at the wall site. <http://vimeo.com/9523059>

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