



PORTLAND FREIGHT COMMITTEE

October 8, 2013

Commissioner Steve Novick
Portland City Council
1221 SW 4th Ave. Suite 210
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Commissioner Novick,

The Portland Freight Committee (PFC) strongly supports improving safety and access for all modes of transportation in the City and region. However, with fewer resources for transportation investments there are greater expectations from the system in how we invest in infrastructure priorities.

Members of the Portland Freight Committee have serious concerns about the 'road diet' design concept and its inherent reduction in vehicular and freight movement into and through the city. Specifically, we are opposed to the proposed 'road diet' on SW Barbur Blvd (Highway 99W) because it serves as a critical north-south corridor connecting Downtown Portland to Downtown Sherwood and all neighborhoods in between. The City's Transportation System Plan currently classifies SW Barbur Blvd as a Major City Traffic Street, Major Emergency Response Route, Major Truck Street, Major Transit Priority Street, City Bikeway and Walkway and the future High Capacity Transit – bus or light rail route. In Metro's adopted Regional Freight Plan, Hwy 99W is classified as a Regional Main Roadway Route which is intended to serve regional and state freight mobility needs. According to ODOT and the City of Portland, SW Barbur Blvd is also a Seismic Lifeline Route that experiences double the traffic when an incident closes lanes on I-5. In our opinion the corridor is of regional significance and warrants an increase, as opposed to a reduction, in capacity.

The PFC strongly supports investments that improve safety along this corridor and prioritizing transportation improvements based on the areas where the safety concerns have been documented. ODOT has made and continues to make improvements on streets that are identified as "High Crash Corridors." For example: ODOT has installed Rapid Flashing Beacons to improve pedestrian crossing safety just south of Hamilton in Portland where they have a history of crashes involving people walking and cycling.

Fortunately, to date there are no recorded crashes involving pedestrians or cyclists on the Vermont and Newbury bridges. However, if the conditions are unsafe along the corridor we would recommend a public outreach campaign sponsored by the cyclist community and other stakeholder to help educate cyclists on how they can use the corridor more safely. For example, cyclists could dismount and walk the short distance across the bridges and then resume on the bike path, or cyclists could divert to other streets. While this may not be an ideal solution, it is a short-term solution that needs to be further evaluated and considered to take people out of an "unsafe area."

Portland Freight Committee ■ 1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Room 800 ■ Portland OR 97204

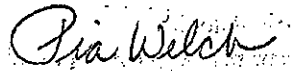
Given the significant importance of this corridor throughout the region, the PFC request that the City look to the Southwest Corridor Steering Committee's comprehensive land use and transportation study. The road diet concept was discussed, however, not selected for implementation. Therefore, we recommend the City postpone any further advancement of a road diet on SW Barbur Blvd until the Steering Committee and ODOT can complete the next phase of the plan. In our opinion, to do otherwise disregards the extensive public planning process and resources spent for this regionally significant project.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments.

Sincerely,



Debra Dunn
PFC Chair



Pia Welch
PFC Vice Chair

Cc: Mayor Charlie Hales