



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON
OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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November 9, 2015

Dear Mr. Windsheimer,

Thank you for your leadership in convening the Barbur Boulevard Road Safety Audit (RSA) this summer. I am glad to see that the report included several strategies for improving safety for all users of Barbur and an acknowledgement that the design of the street should be changed to better serve the surrounding urban area.

I am also glad to see that the report included several options for improving bike facilities across the Vermont and Newbury bridges and that one of the recommendations of the RSA committee is for the Oregon Dept. of Transportation (ODOT) to provide physical separation between vehicle lanes and bike lanes. This approach is consistent with the Federal Highway Administration's Bike Lane Planning and Separation Design Guide (released May 2015). This is also consistent with the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, which was recently endorsed by ODOT.

The City of Portland believes that given the speed differential between cars (up to 55 mph) and bikes (10 mph) on the bridges, there should be either a striped or physical separation between bikes and cars—bike lanes, protected bike lanes or a raised cycle track. In order to complete such a project, one or more car lanes would need to be removed from Barbur to provide for adequate separation, which the City of Portland strongly supports.

While I had considered recommending the removal of a northbound travel lane from Barbur, I was interested to see that a significant number of southbound cars were making a right turn on to OR-10/Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway. In effect, it is my understanding that the rightmost southbound lane of Barbur serves as a de facto right turn only lane to OR-10. Thus, removing one of the southbound lanes south of OR-10 should have minimal impacts in the corridor. Further, this lane removal could be as short as 2,900 feet, just long enough for people walking and biking to cross the two bridges safely.

Moreover, based on conversations with constituents, advocates, neighbors and City staff, the City of Portland strongly supports 11-foot wide travel lanes throughout the corridor as well as a two-foot buffer for bike lanes. Numerous studies have highlighted the ability of narrow travel lanes to reduce motor vehicle speeds, and thereby improve safety. Two-foot buffers will have an immediate safety benefit, but roadways like Barbur need protected bicycle facilities and sidewalks to encourage their full use.

Ultimately, I am seeking improvements that will make this street safer for all users. Any width that can be made available to create protected space for people bicycling and walking in the corridor, and any reconfiguration that can slow motor vehicle speeds to the existing posted speed limit, would be a positive change.

The City of Portland has designated Barbur as one of ten “High Crash Corridors” because of its high rate of documented fatal and serious human injury crashes. As part of Portland’s Vision Zero traffic safety program, PBOT hopes to focus education, enforcement and engineering resources where they are needed most throughout the city, especially on High Crash Corridors. I appreciate ODOT’s continued involvement in the region’s Vision Zero efforts and am hopeful that this RSA will encourage low-cost striping changes in 2016.

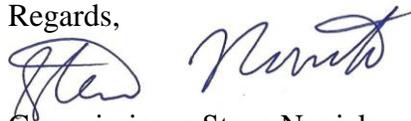
As you may recall, an analysis last year showed no significant traffic spillover to surrounding neighborhoods when a travel lane was eliminated during construction on Barbur. I feel that narrower travel lanes paired with lane reductions would be optimal for the safety of all who use the corridor.

I would like to highlight that this is an interim solution to address crashes while the Southwest Corridor study is underway; it does not preclude future changes. It is also worth highlighting that connectivity to the west is preserved with a dedicated lane to Highway 10. I believe this plan would address crashes as well as perceived and actual safety issues that affect people who bike or would like to bike or walk along Barbur.

I believe removing the southbound lane over the Newbury and Vermont bridges is in the same spirit as the recent change ODOT made on the last mile of I-84 in which two lanes were dedicated toward I-5 south as opposed to I-5 north. This change had safety improvements and was generally not noticed by road users because it reflected the natural flow of traffic.

I appreciate the effort that went into this RSA and am thankful for ODOT’s leadership in creating a safer and more livable Barbur. I look forward to seeing long-awaited safety improvements in 2016.

Regards,



Commissioner Steve Novick
City of Portland, Oregon

ATTACHED:

Letter from Congressman Blumenauer (November 9, 2015)

CC:

Director Matt Garrett
Karmen Fore
Bobby Lee

EARL BLUMENAUER
THIRD DISTRICT, OREGON

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Congress of the United States
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November 9, 2015

Matt Garrett
Director, Oregon Department of Transportation
355 Capitol Street NE, MS 11
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Dear Mr. Garrett,

I write today in strong support of Commissioner Novick's recommendations from the Barbur Boulevard Road Safety Audit (RSA) released last month. I am glad to see several options included in the report for improving safety for everyone who uses Barbur Blvd and encourage swift action to support the recommendations called for by Commissioner Novick.

I'm encouraged to see ODOT and the City of Portland recognizing the need to prioritize retrofitting urban arterials and further embracing the concept of Vision Zero. Prioritizing these investments reflects the legislation I introduced in Congress, the Vision Zero Act, H.R. 1274. This report makes it clear that Barbur Blvd needs significant safety investments, and there are actions that can be taken in the next few months to address some of the critical improvements that will save lives and are long-awaited by the community and my constituents.

Specifically, I support Commissioner Novick's proposal to move forward with removing a southbound lane for the segment of Barbur approaching OR-10/Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway to create a right turn lane and to restripe to reduce lane widths and add protected bikeways. These buffers will have an immediate safety benefit for roadway users. As noted by Commissioner Novick, this approach is consistent with the Federal Highway Administration's Bike Lane Planning and Separation Design Guide (released May 2015). This is also consistent with the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, recently endorsed by ODOT.

I encourage ODOT's continued involvement and full participation in the region's Vision Zero efforts and I am hopeful that one of the tangible outcomes of this RSA will be low-cost striping changes in 2016 that will complement the City's existing Vision Zero efforts. I look forward to seeing these much needed and long awaited safety improvements in the very near future.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Earl Blumenauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress
Oregon's 3rd District

CC:

Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1

Karmen Fore, The office of Governor Kate Brown

Portland City Commissioner Steve Novick