

Climate Justice Collaborative & Allies

APANO * Native American Youth & Family Center * OPAL * PAALF * Verde

September 6, 2017

To: Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
Commissioner Nick Fish
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Dan Saltzman

CC: Susan Anderson, Director, Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability
Leah Treat, Director, Portland Bureau of Transportation
Mary Hull Caballero, Auditor, City of Portland

RE: Green Loop & Equity

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners,

The Climate Justice Collaborative (CJC) is a cross-cultural organizing and advocacy coalition that works to prioritize equitable processes and outcomes in Portland's built environment, centering frontline communities, i.e. those most impacted by climate change (namely, communities of color and low-income people). Over the last year, we have been disappointed in the City's numerous efforts to elevate the Green Loop concept while failing to elevate similar efforts in areas outside the city core. While we recognize this is part of the Central City Plan, it is impossible to ignore the implications of the effort: the Green Loop fails to meet even the simplest understanding of equity, one of the five guiding principles of your Comprehensive Plan. All the while, numerous areas outside of the City core lack even the most basic pedestrian and bike safety infrastructure.

We applaud and value great vision, but vision at the expense of critical and much needed investments outside of the City core serve only the elite. This is not a vision we stand behind; this is not the vision the City of Portland has espoused. Simply put, it is time we prioritize the vision in frontline communities.

We request that you direct the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to cease expenditure of all bureau resources on the Green Loop project, including staff time, until advancing similar investments driven by frontline communities in areas of greatest need.

In a 2016 study by Dr. Lubitow of Portland State University, Portland residents living in neighborhoods outside of the city core were asked about their city planning priorities and needs. Participants for the study were selected based on their neighborhood location in order to build a more diverse and representative sample of Portland residents and their attitudes towards city investments. A majority of participants were low-income and racial/ethnic minorities. Two-thirds of residents reported that they do

not travel to downtown Portland in a typical week, meaning that the Green Loop would not benefit them directly. In addition to this, participants called for resources and focus on their neighborhoods outside of the city center perimeter. The findings show that Portland’s residents are concerned with inequitable distribution of resources— past, present, and future. Portland must focus on strategies that address the perceptions of inequity held by residents, including those of frontline communities who are often at risk of displacement and have unsafe or underdeveloped infrastructure in their neighborhoods.

In advancing the Green Loop, the City is advancing carbon goals for white, middle and upper class residents. Equity is listed as a guiding principle in the Portland Plan, 2015 Climate Action Plan, 2035 Comprehensive Plan, Vision Zero, and across City Bureaus. However, the Green Loop is not equitable in either process or outcome.

So what do we want? As stated above, our communities encourage you to, at a minimum:

- Halt investments, including city staff time and resources, in planning the Green Loop until basic investments in safe infrastructure are met in frontline/vulnerable communities across the city;
- Invest in the Lents Green Ring;
- Develop green space and safe routes in the JADE District;
- Improve pedestrian safety in the Cully neighborhood; and
- Engage and invest in residents in East Portland to develop their own visions for neighborhood connectivity and safety—their own versions of the Green Loop.

Additionally, the fear of gentrification and displacement should not be used as an excuse to continue the City’s inequitable distribution of resources and infrastructure. Instead, staff time and monetary resources must be geared toward planning strategies and initiatives that both address gentrification and displacement and ensure all Portlanders have access to infrastructure, services and amenities to thrive—not just survive. These priorities MUST advance before the Green Loop. Simply put, justice delayed is justice denied and our communities know this denial all too well.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you. The Climate Justice Collaborative member organizations extend an open offer to share our collective wisdom, expertise and community-driven ideas with you.

Sincerely,

Climate Justice Collaborative:

Joseph Santos Lyons, Executive Director
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

Huy Ong, Executive Director
OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon

Dani Ledezma, Interim Executive Director
Coalition of Communities of Color

Joy Alise Davis, Executive Director
Portland African American Leadership Forum

Paul Lumley, Executive Director
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Ally Organizations:

Noel Mickelberry, Executive Director
Oregon Walks

Kari Schlosshauer, Pacific Northwest Regional Policy Manager
Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Adam Brunelle, Program Director
Green Lents