



A Joint Letter from the  
Bicycle Advisory Committee & Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
1120 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 800, Portland OR 97204

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December 6, 2017

Portland City Council  
1221 SW 4th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Commissioner Saltzman, Mayor Wheeler and Members of the City Council,

As members of the City's Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) and Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), we are jointly writing again in opposition to the proposed amendment to Ordinance No. 127882, regarding the vacation of SW Madison St between SW 10th Ave and SW Park Ave adjacent the Portland Art Museum (PAM). The reasons for our opposition remain unchanged:

- The amendment diminishes the usefulness and network connectivity for people who walk, bike and take transit to, from, through and around the neighborhood.
- The presence of small, walkable (and publicly-accessible) blocks are critical to a pedestrian-oriented city.
- The proposed creation of a superblock, even with the described access, fails to live up to the City's adopted goals of a walkable city.
- Public access to this block has been incrementally eroded over the years, the proposal is an unacceptable further limitation of public access.
- Allowing this exception to the city's street vacation policy will set a dangerous precedent and prompt future requests that would further erode the protection of public space, city right-of-way, and Portland's renowned pedestrian and bicycle network.

Before discussing the specific location of the SW Madison site, the PAC and BAC note that enclosing the vacated street would create a superblock, which runs counter to various policies within the Central City Plan and Transportation System Plan (TSP). Specific TSP policies that would oppose this amendment to the Ordinance include Policy 9.14, Policy 9.17 and 9.18, which provide guidance for the city to create a street system that integrates transportation and

public spaces, and encourages walking as the most attractive mode by creating a more complete network of pedestrian facilities.

The proposed amendment has quantitatively and qualitatively negative impact on pedestrian, transit and bicycle transportation and access the surrounding neighborhood. The existing ordinance requires a minimum public access easement width of 8 feet; however, the existing built condition of the vacated section of SW Madison includes a pedestrian- and bicycle-accessible path between SW Park Ave and SW 10th Ave that is approximately 20 feet wide. An 8 foot wide access is below any contemporary standard for a multi-use path, narrower than any standard downtown sidewalk, is generally regarded as an unsafe width for two-way travel, and could not provide for any meaningful volume of users as as would be expected traveling through one of densest parts of the city.

While the existing ordinance technically allows for night time closures of the passage between 11 pm and 7 am, the vacated section of SW Madison St has actually remained open at night except for intermittent temporary closures during events. The amendment to allow night time closures was only developed in response to security concerns raised nearly 40 years ago and which have not been revisited by Council. Without an active practice and history of actual night time closures, the BAC and PAC believe this writing of the ordinance is not appropriate to use as a baseline for a new proposed amendment. Portland, especially downtown, has changed dramatically since the 1980's, and pedestrian and bicycle activity has markedly increased, and the Madison connection has remained open at night. In April, the Council heard testimony from neighbors, bicycles and pedestrians that they use the passage on a daily basis, by bike and on foot, to access local destinations, as a connection on longer trips and to access transit. The Portland Streetcar runs directly adjacent to the site, and operates from 5:30 AM to 11:30 PM. TriMet buses serve stops directly adjacent to PAM from approximately 5:20 AM to 12:30 AM at night, and stops on SW Madison St until 1:30 AM. Of course, bicycle and pedestrian travel doesn't stop when transit service ends. Enclosing the easement and implementing the previously unutilized allowance for night time closures would negatively impact local residents, visitors, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users.

The Portland Art Museum's proposed revision to the amendment falls far short of addressing the concerns of the BAC, PAC and other members of the community who have previously expressed their opposition to the proposal. Many individuals and organizations have been disappointed to find themselves in a position to oppose an expansion to one of the City's oldest and most significant cultural institutions. As stated in our April letter, the BAC and PAC would consider support for an amendment to Ordinance No. 127882 that does not enclose the public access easement. Unfortunately, despite resounding feedback in this regard, PAM has not pursued a design solution that meets their internal goals *without* impeding public access. A decision to

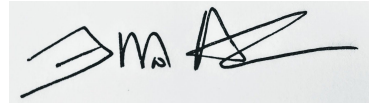
modify the current easement before a building design has been completed and reviewed is premature. We hold out hope that PAM will consider a community-oriented and more creative design approach to expanding their campus. Please consider the BAC and PAC as stakeholders to be included in the future as proposals for Portland Art Museum evolve.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

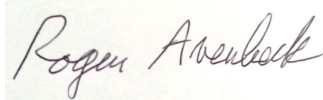
Respectfully submitted on behalf of Portland's Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Bicycle Advisory Committee,



Rithy Khut, Chair  
Bicycle Advisory Committee



Elliot Akwai-Scott, Vice-Chair  
Bicycle Advisory Committee



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Cc:

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