



**Commissioner Chloe Eudaly**  
City of Portland

**October 15, 2020**

**Phillip Ditzler, Division Administrator**  
**Federal Highway Administration**  
**530 Center Street NE, Suite 420**  
**Salem, OR 97301**

Re: Participating Agency status on I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Ditzler:

In 2017, the City of Portland welcomed an opportunity to be involved in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project (Project) as a Participating Agency. This was seen as an important first step in realizing the outcomes identified in the N/NE Quadrant Plan and the I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan, which were developed in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to integrate long-range land use, urban design and local transportation planning for the area.

**As the Commissioner-In-Charge of the Portland Bureau of Transportation, I am writing to notify the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that the City is now withdrawing its support of the Project as currently envisioned, and of the EA itself.**

**The City of Portland has not been a participating agency in the process since the Portland City Council issued a Project stop work directive on July 6, 2020 (attached).**

As a former Project partner, we felt it important to ensure the FHWA is aware of the current lack of local jurisdictional and stakeholder support. ODOT's continuation with the current EA process creates uncertainty regarding the path to address Environmental Justice, racial justice and local street improvement issues.

In the City's letter to the FHWA accepting partner agency status dated January 30, 2017, we documented several issues of concern that needed to be addressed as the EA moved forward. These issues related to negative short- and long-term construction impacts with the potential to disproportionately impact our most vulnerable road users and communities of color; impacts to City facilities including changing road grades and ability to address concerns of existing and future residents and users of the area; and a number of design issues grounded in PBOT's guiding transportation policies that prioritize multimodal improvements for people walking, taking transit, and biking.

Not only have these items not been sufficiently addressed, but some of the City's comments within the EA technical topics provided April 1, 2019 remain unresolved. Further, ODOT has not been successful in incorporating feedback from community and partner agencies regarding issues identified through the Environmental Justice process.

In partnership with Multnomah County, Metro and the Albina Vision Trust, the City of Portland provided testimony to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) and ODOT on a number of occasions as the OTC considered a path forward for the project through the NEPA process. Testimony was provided on December 12, 2019, January 23, 2020 and March 27, 2020 that continually called on project leaders to develop an alternative outcomes-based process and partnership agreement that could demonstrate shared values and public benefit and/or proceed with an Environmental Impact Statement to take full account of the issues identified and address stated desired outcomes.

The land below and around Interstate-5 (I-5) in this area is special. Before the highway, Albina was the heart of Oregon's African American community. The project area encompasses Harriet Tubman Middle School, which preceded the construction of I-5. The forced displacement and associated disinvestment in the decades following I-5 construction is our shared history. This Project provided an opportunity to tell stories from Albina's rich history, create new transportation systems that help heal and connect us, and demonstrate responsibility for the past and commitment to a shared future. Unfortunately, the Project has not leaned into this opportunity and ODOT's efforts have fallen short.

Due to this lack of forward and transformational movement by ODOT, the Project concept as defined in the EA is not aligned with the values of the City as articulated in our Comprehensive Plan (Central City 2035), Racial Equity Plan or Climate Emergency Resolution.

We want to ensure that FHWA leadership and staff also consider suggestions made by the panel commissioned to provide an Environmental Assessment Peer Review (June 2020). The focus of their review was around concerns raised about the sufficiency of the noise, air quality and climate analysis performed for the EA. However, the panel acknowledged the level of controversy from partner agencies and community organizations in their deliberations. Panelists made a number of recommendations regarding how ODOT could proceed in a way to build partnership and support, all of which are relevant and most of which have not been acted upon, including:

- *“the collaborative involvement of the Albina Vision Trust, City of Portland, Multnomah County, Metro and others will be essential in helping to determine the use of this “new land” created by the I-5 cover and adjoining properties. A commitment to affordable housing, community development, and strategic land use planning/zoning needs to accompany the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project planning.” (p. 9)*
- *“A Community Benefits Agreement or Funding Framework Agreement should be put in place with all parties represented. This would allow commitments from ODOT, the contractor, the City, Metro, Tri-Met, Portland Trail Blazers, the Faith community, neighborhoods, local business associations and anyone else to be gathered in a single agreement. An auditor could be assigned to report back to all parties to ensure the bigger package of investments is made.” (p. 10)*



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Bringing these issues to you in our role as a partner agency is unprecedented in our region's history. Nonetheless, we hope that agency leadership will take them seriously. We would welcome further discussion with you about how to best address our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chloe Eudaly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chloe Eudaly  
Commissioner, City of Portland



City of Portland

July 6, 2020

City Bureau Directors,

As evidenced by [Commissioner Eudaly](#) and my June 30, 2020 statements, ODOT's I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project is not currently aligned with the values of the City as articulated in Central City 2035, the Racial Equity Plan and the Climate Emergency Resolution.

Effectively immediately, we are directing all City Bureaus to suspend all operations until further notice related to the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project. This includes attending meetings, providing technical support or responding to project emails.

Any resumption of City staff services will be at the direction of the Portland City Council.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ted Wheeler

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

Commissioner Amanda Fritz