



September 25, 2022

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty  
Director Chris Warner, Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT)  
Andre Miller, Commissioner Hardesty's Office  
Nick Falbo, Nicole Peirce, Roger Geller, PBOT Staff

**Lower 7th Avenue is a uniquely dangerous street in the entire City. Retaining traffic diversion will solve the problem.**

Commissioner, Director, and City Employees,

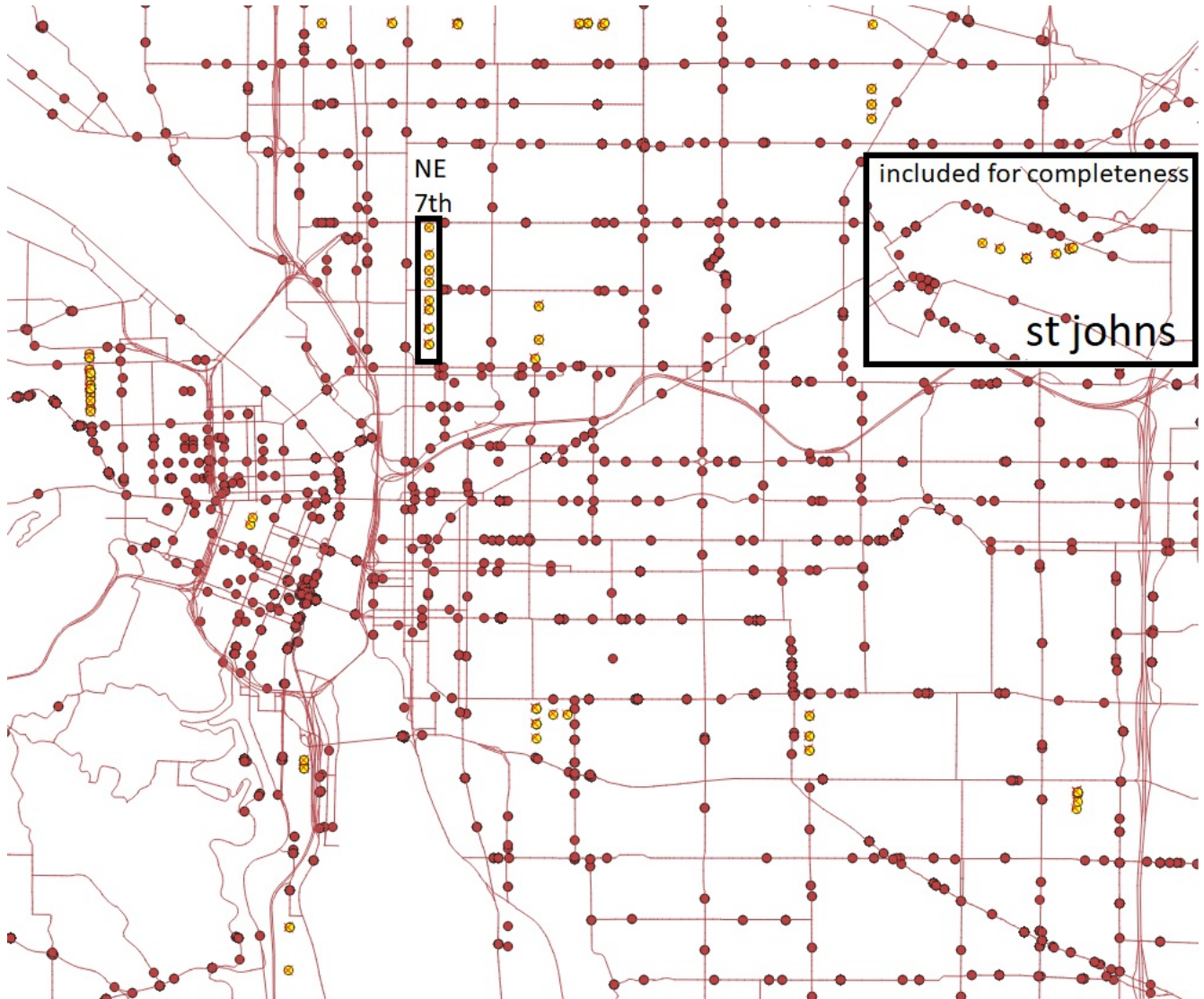
We are again writing to you on behalf of the Eliot Neighborhood Association (ENA), which has received numerous complaints from neighbors about the dangerous conditions of lower NE 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between NE Broadway and NE Fremont (residents describe this as "Lower 7th Avenue"). The ENA has written to you a week ago, in addition to in 2018, 2015 and earlier, as Eliot residents are particularly concerned about the continued deterioration of the road from a traffic standpoint.

Lower 7th Avenue has way too many cars for a local street: 6,000 per day by the PBOT's estimation. It is difficult to walk, bicycle and even at times drive on or across the street due to the pre-construction **traffic volume**. This dangerous traffic volume significantly exceeds the targeted volume established in the City's planning documents, and our analysis indicates 7th Avenue is one of only two streets in the City where PBOT has not implemented changes to address the very high volume of traffic on a residential street.

In order to illustrate our point, we used GIS software to import various data sources from the City's own open data on traffic volume. We would like to present this chart of all streets in the city with some analysis of the data. Lines on this chart are the streets that are not designated as local streets, and dots are locations where PBOT has recorded traffic counts on streets designated as local that are inappropriately busy (within 80% of 6000 cars per day, rather than the 1000 to 2000 cars per day that these streets are planned to accommodate). These data points are all above 2400 ADT (average daily trips - per direction). Data is from 2010-present. This analysis highlights 11 corridors within the City that exceed 4800 cars per day in both directions. Some of these corridors are simply a continuation of a previously designated street where the traffic doesn't magically disappear after the designation ends, while others have no designated traffic street nearby. However, four (4) of the streets on the list have a parallel non-local street where traffic should be routed according to the city's policy documents. Of those, two (SE 52nd at SE Division and SE Clinton at SE 31st Ave) have had vehicle diversion installed. The other two (Lower 7th Avenue and N Columbia Way/N Smith St) are in historically marginalized and politically disconnected communities.

(continued on the next page)

# Eliot Neighborhood



The list below displays local streets that show up with high volumes in the data (>2400 ADT - cars/day per direction). Note that there are **only 11 streets in the city** that fall into this category. Many of these streets now have some form of traffic calming. **Of the 11 streets on this list, Lower 7th Avenue is unique - it has offset (aka 3-legged) intersections along it.** (N Columbia Way has quirky interactions also, theirs are at strange angles). As a result, the traffic calming measures that were installed on NE 7th 30 years ago are not effective.

Adjacent to parallel designated non-local street

N Columbia Way/N Smith (St Johns)

**Lower NE 7th Avenue**

SE Clinton (diversion added)

SE 52nd (diversion added)

No parallel designated street / continuation of designated street

NE Ainsworth

SE 86th/Bush

SW Corbett

NE 60th - Lombard to Cully

SE 21th/NE 21st

NW 25th

Of the streets with a local parallel street, the city has added car diversion on several of these streets: SE Clinton and SE 52nd (at division). We feel that this is the only solution that will substantially reduce traffic volume on Lower 7th is to divert car traffic back onto NE MLK where it belongs.



Why are so many cars using Lower 7th Avenue? Vehicle drivers have realized that due to the (pre-construction) design of the street, Lower 7th is a faster route through inner NE Portland than NE MLK, Jr Blvd for traveling north-south on many routes. Having only two (2) traffic signals, at Broadway and Fremont, instead of the seven (7) that NE MLK has just one block to the west, it is easy to see how NE MLK can be a slower trip in a car for many users. As a result, vehicle drivers have been voting with their wheels and taking NE 7th in droves. Older neighbors remember Lower 7th being more of a neighborhood street with fewer cars until MLK was redesigned in the 1980s to have the median and more traffic signals. After that, Lower 7th became more and more popular as a cut-through route. The traffic islands that were installed did not do enough to deter through traffic, especially when combined with the yellow centerline strip that PBOT has added to this residential street, and the traffic patterns of the past 30 years have solidified.

Increased traffic leads to a number of negative outcomes for nearby residents. If you are not familiar with this, please visit this page to learn about a famous book by Donald Appleyard called *Livable Streets*. The summary is that the number of local social interactions increases greatly with reduced traffic. The neighbors with increased social interactions have a number of positive health outcomes, and the residents around NE 7th and Tillamook are already experiencing these benefits now while traffic is being diverted during construction. There are some compelling diagrams from the book here: <https://kottke.org/19/01/creating-livable-city-streets>

Before installation of the construction fencing, dangerous high-volume speeding traffic conditions on Lower 7th Avenue were obvious to PBOT, residents and other road users. We believe that it is of paramount importance that PBOT take steps to ensure that Lower 7th Avenue stays a safe neighborhood street with low traffic volume after this construction project is over. After many years of ignoring this issue, Lower 7th Avenue should return to being a neighborhood street, consistent with City planning documents. The construction fencing has brought Lower 7th Avenue much closer to meeting the City's goals for the street, and we would like to **make sure we do not revert to the old traffic volume**. Redirecting non-local vehicle trips to use NE MLK, Jr Blvd, just one block to the west, will provide safety improvements for impacted residents and vulnerable road users within and beyond the local neighborhood.

We are proposing to **keep Lower 7th closed to vehicles until at least one diverter is installed on Lower 7th**. Split diverters for North- and South-bound vehicle traffic on Lower 7th and Tillamook would also be acceptable. Please start the public outreach for this process immediately and/or delay the removal of construction barriers so that when this project is complete, a diverter (pilot or permanent) is in place on Lower 7th.

Thank you for helping make our neighborhood safer and more comfortable for children and elderly residents and easier for everyone to cross and travel along our streets. **We look forward to hearing from the PBOT planning and capital construction managers shortly regarding a diverter proposal**. We hope this meeting will occur by October 7th - within 2 business weeks as was promised this morning by Nicole Peirce.

Regards,

Allan Rudwick  
Co-Chair and Land Use Chair, Eliot Neighborhood Association  
503-703-3910



Appendix A: why were some streets fell off the main list:

Adjacent to parallel designated non-local street

Street with >4800 trips/day	Comments
N Columbia Way/N Smith (St Johns)	This is the continuation of N Columbia way. It could be on either list but I left it here because of the parallel designated route (N Fessenden). It has several non-right angle intersections on the street.
<b>Lower NE 7th Avenue</b>	<see letter>
SE Clinton	<b>diversion added</b> - vehicles must turn off Clinton at SE 31st and SE 26th
SE 52nd	<b>diversion added at SE Division St</b> , (This could be in the other list - it is a continuation of SE 52nd Avenue Neighborhood Collector south of Foster)

- this is the continuation of N Columbia way. It could be on either list but I left it here because of the parallel designated route (N Fessenden) and the non-right angle intersections on the street.

SE Clinton (diversion added - vehicles must turn off Clinton at SE 31st and SE 26th)

SE 52nd (diversion added at SE Division St) (This could be in the other list - it is a continuation of SE 52nd Avenue Neighborhood Collector south of Foster)

No parallel designated street / continuation of designated street

Street with >4800 trips/day	reason why we removed from above list
NE Ainsworth	several long blocks from parallel routes <b>median makes it easier to cross, feels like 2 streets with &gt;2400 instead of one with &gt;4800</b>
SE 86th/Bush	4 blocks from adjacent routes. main route to a busy destination (school). <b>Speed bumps installed</b>
SW Corbett	continuation of designated neighborhood collector. only street that connects through in the area. ( 4 blocks from adjacent designated route: SE Macadam) <b>Has Speed bumps and median islands installed</b>
NE 60th - Lombard to Cully	one of a few connections to NE Columbia. designated a connector north of Lombard. Not exactly parallel to Cully <b>Speed bumps installed</b>
NE 21st	Continuation of NE 20/21st Neighborhood Collector. 6 blocks from NE 15th. <b>Has roundabouts</b>
SE 21st	Continuation of NE 20/21st Neighborhood Collector. 5 blocks from SE 26th.



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	<b>Has speed bumps</b>
NW 25th	Continuation of NW Westover and major route from west hills. Two incredibly long blocks from 23rd (1038 feet). <b>Speed bumps + roundabouts installed</b>