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Ernie Bonner's testimony before City Council on I-5

Ernest Bonner

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL DECEMBER 23, 1987

My name is Ernie Bonner. I reside at 2836 SE Main, Portland. I am a member of Riverfront for People.

We are appealing the decision of the Hearings Officer approving the City/State application for improvements to the I-5 freeway. We are doing so because we believe (along with many others in the City and the region) that there are alternatives to the proposed freeway improvements which better serve the long term interests of the City and its people.

In fact, we will present one today.

We do not take the view that ours is the only alternative. We do believe our alternative is better than the one now being pursued by the City; and we ask only that the City consider such an alternative before committing the East Bank of the Willamette River to the I-5 freeway.

This is our last chance, for decades to come--maybe forever, to right the wrong that put that freeway on the East Bank of the Willamette River years ago. Don't make this decision in haste. Don't settle for less than a full public display of alternatives. Don't spend millions of dollars simply patching up what was a bad decision in the first place.

If we're going to spend millions of dollars, let's do it right. Reverse the Hearings Officer decision and let's get on with a plan to recapture the East Bank of the Willamette River. That's what the people of Portland want. That's what the City Club has called for. That's what the Planning Commission envisions.

Riverfront for People petitions you to deny the comprehensive plan map amendment, the zone change, the conditional use and the greenway permit before you, partly because we believe there are alternatives to your plan which deserve serious consideration. Let me introduce Bob Belcher, who will present one of these alternatives.

(Bob Belcher presentation)

(Ernie Bonner returns to wrap up)

Thank you.

A PROPOSAL BY RIVERFRONT FOR PEOPLE
TO FREE THE EAST BANK OF THE WILLAMETTE RIVER

ERNIE BONNER, REPRESENTING RIVERFRONT FOR PEOPLE, COMMITTEE NO. 2.

THE EAST BANK OF THE WILLAMETTE RIVER--THIS CITY'S GREATEST UNTAPPED RESOURCE--LIES IMPRISONED BETWEEN THE FREEWAY AND THE RIVER. IF WE SPEND ANOTHER \$150 MILLION ON THE FREEWAY WHERE IT NOW EXISTS, THE RIVERFRONT WILL REMAIN IMPRISONED--FOR OUR CHILDREN, OUR GRAND CHILDREN AND OUR GREAT GRAND CHILDREN--IF NOT FOREVER.

WE MUST NOT ACCEPT THE EAST BANK FREEWAY IN ITS PRESENT LOCATION FOR OUR FUTURE. WE MUST FIND ALTERNATIVES TO THE PRESENT PLAN. WE MUST FIND WAYS TO FINANCE THESE ALTERNATIVES.

RIVERFRONT FOR PEOPLE IS DEDICATED TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST BANK FREEWAY AWAY FROM THE RIVERFRONT. WE HAVE A PROPOSAL THAT ACCOMPLISHES THAT, BUT IT ACCORDS TO THE NEEDS OF THE AREA.

IT'S A BETTER PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL EAST SIDE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:

1. IT GETS PEOPLE IN AND OUT OF THE CENTRAL EAST SIDE WITHOUT CONFLICT WITH THE MAIN LINE OF THE RAILROAD;
2. IT OFFERS A SIMPLER, MORE UNDERSTANDABLE ACCESS ROUTE INTO AND OUT OF THE CENTRAL EAST SIDE;
3. IT REMOVES THROUGH TRUCK TRAFFIC FROM UNION AND GRAND;
4. IT OFFERS THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPMENT OF A TRULY FIRST RATE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PARK IN THE CENTRAL EAST

SIDE, USING DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO INCREASE DENSITY ON THE RIVER SIDE OF THE FREEWAY AND ASSURE INDUSTRIAL SANCTUARY ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE FREEWAY.

IT'S A BETTER PLAN FOR INTERSTATE DRIVERS:

1. IT PROMISES A SAFER TRIP FOR CARS AND TRUCKS;
2. IT OFFERS A SIMPLER, STRAIGHTFORWARD FREEWAY ROUTE.

IT'S A BETTER PLAN FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE CITY BECAUSE IT GETS THE FREEWAY OFF THE RIVER, FREEING THE EAST BANK FOR ENJOYMENT BY THE CITIZENRY.

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE EXPENSE OF OUR PROPOSAL. WE AGREE THAT THIS REGION CANNOT AFFORD ANOTHER EXPENSIVE FREEWAY. BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE EXPERTS HAVE LOOKED HARD ENOUGH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PLAN NOW BEING PUT INTO PLACE.

WE ARE NOT ASKING THAT HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS MORE BE SPENT. WE ARE ONLY ASKING THAT WE ALL RE-THINK OUR PLANS BEFORE WE COMMIT THE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF THIS CITY TO THAT FREEWAY ON THE RIVER. LET'S SEARCH FOR WAYS TO KEEP FUTURE OPTIONS OPEN SO THAT PORTLAND CAN STILL HOPE TO GET THE EAST BANK OF THE WILLAMETTE RIVER OUT OF PRISON.

THIS CITY HAS RECENTLY PASSED SOME IMPORTANT POINTS IN ITS HISTORY. AND, I THINK, WE HAVE CHOSEN WELL. WE ARE AT ANOTHER IMPORTANT POINT IN THE HISTORY OF THIS CITY. WE MUST DECIDE NOW TO FREE THE EAST BANK. IF WE ARE TO BE TRUE TO OUR CHILDREN AND RESPONSIBLE TO OUR FUTURE, WE MUST TURN FROM THE CITY'S FREEWAY PROPOSAL--SO THAT SOMEDAY (SOON, MAYBE, BUT CERTAINLY SOMEDAY) WE MAY ENJOY THE EAST BANK OF THE WILLAMETTE AS MUCH AS WE ENJOY THE WEST BANK.