

8-26-1988

Outline of City Club remarks

Ernest Bonner

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_bonner



Part of the [Urban Studies Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Bonner, Ernest, "Outline of City Club remarks" (1988). *Ernie Bonner Collection*. 32.
https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_bonner/32

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ernie Bonner Collection by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Delivered Aug. 26, 1988: City of Portland
City Club.
(See video)

OUTLINE OF CITY CLUB REMARKS

A. Current plans for the stretch of I-5 between the Marquam Bridge and the Fremont Bridge are not right for Portland. These plans don't get the freeway off the East Bank of the river; they don't recognize the coming investments at the new convention center and at the new OMSI site; they don't significantly improve the safety and convenience of Interstate or local travel.

B. Riverfront For People is convinced that we can get more for our money.

C. We believe (as the City Club does) that the Willamette River is fundamental to Portland; that Portland has been, and must again be, a City of the River. As we grew beyond the confines of the present downtown and as the channels of interstate commerce changed from water to rail to interstate highway, the river became an obstacle--to be overcome by ferries and eventually by bridges. It was less and less our lifeline of commerce and more and more a divider.

That division continues to this day and, in our opinion, cannot be overcome until the East Bank of the Willamette River enjoys the same attention and level of public and private investment as the West Bank.

D. The City Club agrees, as your Goals for the City and your visionary 'Riverwalk' publication make clear.

F. Riverfront For People was formed because no local public or private institution (with the single exception of the City Club) was diligently pursuing that vision. When the Central City Plan cast the vision but then failed to take the \$150 million freeway plans to task, Ron Buel started calling around. And here we are. And here we'll stay until your vision and ours gets official recognition.

G. Riverfront for People likes an alternative that isn't being discussed any more, a plan affectionately called alternative 3. That plan was a real vision--promising the best service to the interstate traveler and offering Portland 43 acres of riverfront land for public and private development.

But in the spirit of working together we agreed with the City Council Study Committee to a compromise alternative which provided only 21 acres of riverfront land, about half of what Portland could get, and 1/3 less than the 37 acres which already exist on the West Bank.

Still, Riverfront for People agreed that the balance of benefits represented by the recommendation of the City Council Study Committee

had the best chance of gaining consensus from the rest of Portland and a fair chance of gaining a majority vote in the City Council.

Early returns on that judgement are encouraging. The City Planning Commission, after review of the Committee's recommendation and a public hearing, unanimously affirmed the recommendation and called on the City Council to begin engineering and other technical studies in preparation for building a new freeway along the Water Avenue-First Avenue alignment.

Riverfront for People supports the Study Committee's Plan. We support the Planning Commission's recommendation to the City Council.

Now we are being asked to accept an eleventh-hour vision that provides only 5 acres of riverfront land. I'll bet that some of you have that much land in your back yard. But that's not all. This vision will cost us \$72 million dollars!

I ask you, am I crazy or does that sound to you like no vision at all!

In fact, you begin to wonder. Why should all this money be spent to get so little? If we can't get a truly visionary plan going, let's do nothing at all. That at least would leave options open for the next generation. You can be sure that Portland will eventually get its riverfront back. Now is the best (certainly the cheapest) time to make that happen. But if now doesn't have the votes, let's don't make it harder for our children by pouring money into schemes which will just have to be bought and torn down to make way for their vision.

H. RFP agrees that we have some hard work ahead of us to get the money we need to realize the Committee's plan. But there is more than just hope:

1. ODOT has obtained (only recently) an interpretation from the Federal Highway folks that Portland will not lose the \$54 million in federal funds already authorized. This means we can take the time we need to make the Committee's plan work.

2. additional money is required for any of the alternatives under consideration. The Committee's plan will require some \$38 million more. That is a lot of money, but it's not an insane amount of money. It's less than the cost of one downtown office building. Now I ask you, isn't that precious little to invest in the future of Portland?

3. this region has a congressional delegation that has successfully found federal funds for many projects in the past and would do so again--if the people of the City agree that freeing the

East Bank of the river is a desirable and important project, as we think they will.

4. we made a serious mistake 25 years ago with our decision to place the freeway on the riverfront because it was 'too expensive' to do otherwise. Do we want to make that same mistake again? No.

I. In summary, we think that freeing the East Bank of the Willamette River is an important and desirable goal for the City and the Region; we know that many others agree; we are convinced that we can get the money; and we hope the City will either go for the vision or leave the decision for the next generation.

J. We will not have another chance to move the freeway in the lives of all of you here, or in the lives of your children. The right path is clear, if difficult. And we're down to the nitty gritty. It's now or a lot later. Let's make the right decision. Let's decide now to move that freeway off the East Bank. Then let's all get together and find the money to make the right decision work for the people of this City and the Region.