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An alternative to the Mt. Hood Freeway

Portland (Or.). Bureau of Planning

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A PACKAGE OF TRANSPORTATION
INVESTMENTS TO SERVE THE SOUTHEAST
AREA OF THE CITY OF PORTLAND

[An alternative to the Mt. Hood Freeway]

Bureau of Planning
June 12, 1974

The Citizens' Advisory Committee report and recommendations to the City Council clearly delineated a number of important reasons why the construction of a Mt. Hood Freeway would seriously disrupt the Southeast neighborhoods. In their own terms, the Committee stated that a freeway would "...cost more, disrupt more, pollute more, clog more and dehumanize more than a nonfreeway solution."

The Planning Bureau is in consonance with that judgment. In particular, the Planning Bureau would like to emphasize and reiterate two points in the CAC report. Construction of a major auto facility through that area puts great pressure on the areas at both ends of the facility. In the Downtown, it complicates the implementation of City policy to strengthen that vital part of the region. At the eastern end of the facility -- in both Clackamas and Multnomah County -- a freeway will promote great pressure for residential and other development where CRAG land use policies as well as terrain, soil and drainage constraints dictate limits to development. In short, a high-capacity freeway promotes one outcome while public policy is attempting to promote another.

But transportation problems in the southeast are nonetheless real and long-standing. If City Council chooses to follow the recommendation of the Citizens' Advisory Committee and recommend to the State that a freeway not be built, what kinds of transportation investments could be made in that area and to what extent would those investments resolve the existing transportation problems?

For the last month, members of the Planning Bureau staff have been looking at a range of improvements which could be made in the southeast. Our guidance for these improvements has come from the criteria established by the Citizens' Advisory Committee on the Mt. Hood Freeway. In general, it has been our goal to supply a high quality of transportation service to the southeast with the greatest economies of human, environmental and dollar resources, and with minimal disruption of existing neighborhoods.

I would like to call the Council's attention to each element in this "package" of investments, as well as our judgment on the extent to which each element conforms to the CAC criteria. Tri-Met staff have made an evaluation of the transit proposals contained in the package. I would like to call upon the consultant to the Governor's Task Force, Mr. Arlee Reno, for his judgments on the extent to which this package will reduce traffic congestion in the southeast area.

Express Transit Service

The Governor's Task Force has completed its investigation into the feasibility of express busway or rail service in the Sullivan's Gulch (Banfield Freeway), Johnson Creek and I-205 corridors. These corridors -- in existing rights-of-way -- are planned to serve trips between East Multnomah County and the Downtown -- trips which would otherwise be forced to use the Banfield Freeway or arterial streets within the southeast.

The Task Force analysis indicates that transitways in these two corridors could operate with the same efficiency as the Mt. Hood Busway yet could be constructed at lower economic and environmental costs. Subsequent study by the State Transportation Commission has shown that if a transitway alone was constructed in the Sullivan's Gulch corridor, it would reduce congestion levels in the southeast to those predicted for the Transit Only options described in the Range of Options.

This kind of express transit service would clearly meet the Housing criteria of CAC and, in conjunction with feeder bus routes, meet the neighborhood criteria. It also meets the criteria established with respect to the two ends of the corridor -- the Downtown and eastern suburban areas of Multnomah and Clackamas Counties. If the Johnson Creek express transit line were added to the Sullivan's Gulch Line, congestion would be reduced even further. This element thus meets the criteria of reducing congestion in the area. Furthermore, commuting time criteria is also met.

As to other more specific criteria, this element "...should have a minimum impact on the existing neighborhoods...", will keep "...the removal of housing units in the corridor to a minimum," and will achieve optimal standard levels for noise and air pollution.

The express transit elements noted above can be implemented without inordinate delay. The exclusive bus or rail transit lanes in the Banfield Freeway corridor, if given high regional priority, can probably be accomplished relatively soon. State Transportation Commission estimates show that the facility could be completed by 1980 at a cost of roughly 50 million dollars. As noted previously, construction of this segment alone would reduce congestion in the southeast. The Johnson Creek corridor would be somewhat more time consuming, though it too could be in operation by 1980 under favorable circumstances.

Local Transit Improvements

Much can be done to improve transportation in the southeast through a relatively modest program of local transit improvements, and these improvements could be accomplished in the relatively near future. The Planning Bureau has recommended to Tri-Met that they pursue the following improvements to local transit service in the southeast:

1. Increased headways on major bus routes serving the Downtown.
2. Increased headways on existing cross-town routes including Union-Grand, 39th and 82nd Avenues.
3. An increased number of cross-town routes, which would supply north-south service about every ten blocks, and use smaller buses on routes which do not coincide with major arterials.

4. Bus shelters at transfer points and bus stops.
5. Improved signing and information concerning bus routing and schedules.
6. Coordination of cross-town and east-west bus routes in order to provide a feeder system to main line transit service in the Sullivan's Gulch and/or Johnson Creek Corridors.
7. Demand-responsive transit systems for neighborhoods with a high percentage of transit dependence.
8. Improved transit equipment on designated arterials, including quieter buses, trolley buses and surface street light rail routes.
9. Transit priority lanes in congested areas.

These improvements would increase mobility for all southeastern residents, an important criteria established by the CAC. The staff of Tri-Met has reviewed these proposals and Tri-Met's Director of Planning has indicated that "...implementation of these [proposals] will contribute materially to improved transportation services in that area of the City." The Director also indicated that Tri-Met only recently "...increased frequency of service on the Foster, Powell, Hawthorne, Mt. Tabor and 52nd Avenue lines," as well as "...increased night

and Sunday service on Powell and Holgate." Eighty new buses to be delivered this Fall will make further improvements such as these possible. Another 100 buses have been ordered. Finally, funds have been secured for the purchase of the first 100 of 715 bus shelters, and new bus stop and information signs are now being installed.

In summary, some local transit improvements have only recently been accomplished, others will follow in the Fall and Winter months. Most of the remainder of the improvements should be accomplished within 5 years. Some will await the accomplishment of a regional transit system to which they are related.

Arterial Streets Improvements

Funds have been set aside within the Bureau of Planning for the development of an Arterial Streets Plan. This program will accomplish the following over the next nine months.

- A. The designation of major transit and traffic streets within the City.
- B. The designation of capacities of traffic flow for arterial streets.
- C. The designation of appropriate transit improvements on arterial streets including the designation of routes which call for major transit improvements.

- D. The development of criteria for improvements to arterial streets, which would include:
 - a. Ways of improving traffic movement and safety without impairing the quality of neighborhood life
 - b. Improved and safer pedestrian environments
 - c. Ways of offering priority lanes to transit
 - d. Ways of limiting access through neighborhoods.

The Arterial Streets Program is aimed at improving local transit service, and at reducing 1990 vehicle congestion and pollution.

The City has already recommended to C.R.A.G. that improvements to one segment of this arterial street system -- Powell Boulevard -- be made with the use of State Highway Bond funds. The types of improvements made would be determined by the Arterial Streets Program, and will probably include the following items:

- A. A boulevard treatment
- B. Improved pedestrianways, bikeways and pedestrian crossings
- C. Limited access through bordering neighborhoods

D. Appropriate transit improvements. Some major transit investments will be analyzed for feasibility.

This project would be aimed at improving Powell Boulevard visually as well as aiding traffic and transit flow.

The kinds of improvements projected for Powell Boulevard also meet the criteria of the CAC. Minimum disruption of the neighborhood would result. The improvements would be part of an overall plan for the City and region. The facility would provide full service to each neighborhood, and easier access to local shopping, laundromats, schools and parks.

Alternatives to Truck Movement Through the Southeast:

The level of truck traffic in the southeast area now is not "uncommon", but substantial noise results from that which is present. Truck traffic in the area to serve local businesses and industries is not expected to increase significantly by 1990. Truck traffic through the area from eastern origins to destinations along either river or in Clackamas County, however, will grow. The SOM-prepared Range of Options proposes that "...to accommodate nonlocal truck movement without a freeway, specific alternate routes could be designated and signed as special truck-movement corridors. The...routes are located in mainly undeveloped areas and are currently used by heavy trucks. The roadway surface of both routes is in

good to excellent condition and there appears to be no difficult grade or curve problems."

Successful accomplishment of this alternate routing for trucks would help meet the criteria of minimizing noise and air pollution in the Mt. Hood corridor.

Improved Pedestrian and Bicycle Environments

A set of bicycle and pedestrian improvements will be made following from recommendations of the Bicycle Transportation Facilities Program and the Arterial Streets Plan. The following general items could be included:

- A. Wider and better landscaped sidewalks
- B. Control of automobile curb cuts on arterial streets
- C. Facilities for handicapped access to and between pedestrian-ways
- D. Safer pedestrian crossings of arterial streets and particularly at school crossings
- E. Lanes for bicycle use on minor and collector arterials, as well as on those major and principal arterials where no reasonable alternative exists

- F. Facilities at bridge approaches and viaducts for the safe diversion of bicycle traffic onto a sidewalk or other separated space

- G. Intersection designs where necessary to provide safe passage and direct access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Recommendation

The alternative investments proposed in this package will cost less than the freeway facility proposed, will disrupt the neighborhoods less and will be more consistent with neighborhood, City and regional policies and criteria.

I recommend to the Council that they disapprove the Mt. Hood Freeway, that they transfer \$110 million for use in public transit improvements and that they express their intent to proceed with alternative transportation improvements in the southeast area immediately.

At the Council hearings Frank Ivancie really had at Ernie. Implied, rather clearly, that Ernie was the Mayor's lackey, lacked professional honesty, and based his comments on a Citizen Advisory Committee report, an "ad hoc" body whose work took six months and ignored a \$2million study by Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill. Pounded the table.

Afterwards a lot of people said to Ernie not to worry and were supportive of him. Even Mildred Schwab was friendly, offering him a drink from her office.

E repeatedly responded that it was o.k., that he expected it. He told somebody it was being a martyr, somebody else it was like being kicked in the nuts and not bending over. He didn't respond to Ivancie's tirade, for which he was given credit.

E is predicting that Connie McCready will vote with the Mayor and Jordan, and seemingly trying to drum up attempts to influence her in that direction.

6/12/84

Lynn Barber @ Jan 2000