

5-15-1940

To Oregon Journal from Public Works

Portland (Or.). Commissioner of Public Works

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May 15, 1940

Editor, Oregon Journal,
Journal Building,
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Sir: In re: Front Ave. Improvement

In answer to certain questions submitted to the Editor of the Journal by letter of May 10th from Mr. Jas. B. Jones, I beg to submit the following:

1. "Is it fair to the property owners, who have in the past (such as Union Avenue) paid heavy assessments to be asked as taxpayers to pay for Front Avenue?"

The proposed improvement of Front Avenue is to be financed only partially by the bond issue as the total cost of the improvement and right of way amount to \$4,050,000, and the bond issue for the taxpayers to pay is \$1,250,000 for the purpose of acquiring Portland's share of the right of way. In the case of Union Avenue and practically all arterial streets, there has been a bond issue or general tax to pay for a portion of the right of way and improvement.

2. "Is it fair to the automobile taxpayers for the State Highway Commission to spend 2½ million dollars for 2 miles of City Highway?"

The automobile taxpayers of the City of Portland pay a large proportion of the state gasoline tax (in an amount estimated at over 3 million dollars in 1939) and

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are therefore entitled to their pro rata to be expended on streets and highways located within or near the City of Portland. Many firms paying heavy gasoline taxes operate solely within the confines of Portland. Instead of 2 miles, the proposed highway construction will be approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length and will link together two major state highways - 99W and 99E.

3. "Would it not be better for Portland to ask the State Highway Commission to spend one million on the Bear Springs-Madras Warm Springs short cut and rush to completion so that Madras, Redmond, Bend and Klamath Falls might have cheaper transportation? That business will be encouraged to Portland. Some day Front Avenue will be needed if we can get some business here."

It is one of the duties of the State Highway Commission to program road construction and allocate state highway funds, and no doubt every consideration is being given to the various districts within the state and to the road mentioned above.

4. "Also would it not be better for Portland if Front Avenue were set aside for a few years and the other $1\frac{1}{2}$ million were spent on the Columbia Highway? Industry might have considered the Bonneville area if this highway work had been completed upon completion of Bonneville Dam. At least it would be a real help to bring business from points east on that highway to Portland.

Admittedly it will help to facilitate the flow of traffic to Portland from points east on the Columbia River and work is now under way on the road which will

accomplish this result. For many years the State Highway Commission has allocated a considerable portion of available funds to out-state roads leading to the various centers of trade including Portland, but congestion is becoming so great within the metropolitan areas that the Highway Commission is now forced to give consideration to relieving congestion at these points and to expedite traffic through the cities and towns.

5. "There has been millions spent on Wolf Creek and Wilson River roads and now Front Avenue. Is it not time to get some much needed highway improvements before the next census, so that it will be at least 200,000?"

There appears to be a great demand for the completion of short roads to the coast both from a military, recreational and industrial standpoint; and in view of the large expenditures already mentioned in the above paragraph, it would not appear wise to leave the roads in an uncompleted condition. However, it is our understanding that such is not the intention of the State Highway Commission.

Front Avenue is a needed civic improvement. It is long overdue. The improvement will be a tremendous aid in relieving traffic congestion at the bridge heads and on other down-town streets. It will beautify our waterfront which is now an eyesore, and certainly of no credit to a beautiful city like Portland. This improvement can be obtained at practically no cost to the taxpayers of Portland, and will be financed with a bond issue extending over a period of ten years, with bonds callable after three

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years at a very low rate of interest. The State of Oregon and the Federal Government will pay for more than two-thirds of the cost of this improvement.

This improvement will provide much needed employment at this time, providing over two million man-hours of labor over a period of three years.

If this project is approved by the voters, work will commence immediately.

There are so many advantages to this improvement, I most earnestly recommend it to the voters on May 17th and urge their approval of this project by voting 500 X Yes.

Yours very truly,

Commissioner of Public Works

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