

# Powell-Division Transit and Development Project

## Opportunity Area Selection and Key Issues Summary

September 15, 2014

The Powell-Division Transit and Development Project includes efforts to come to regional agreement on a route, transit vehicle type and station locations for enhanced transit in the Powell-Division corridor. The project seeks to provide a better experience and faster ride for the thousands of people who board buses in the corridor every day to get to school, work or go shopping.

Transit's purpose is to connect people to the places they need to go. For this reason, the project also includes in-depth studies of opportunity areas along the route. Opportunity areas are defined as places in the corridor, typically intersections, which have the potential for housing, job and/or commercial growth; are likely to become major station areas in the future; and/or would benefit from improved access to destinations that help people satisfy their daily needs.

This summer, building on previous research completed for this project, City of Portland and City of Gresham staff identified eight opportunity areas for in-depth study.

### Selected Opportunity Areas

1. SE Powell/SE Chavez
2. SE Powell/SE Foster
3. Jade District  
(SE 82nd between SE Division & SE Powell)
4. SE Division/SE 122nd
5. SE Division/SE 162nd
6. SE Division/SE 182nd
7. Division/Eastman/Main
8. Stark/242nd (Hogan)

In selecting these eight areas, in addition to housing and/or employment development capacity and anticipated growth, staff sought out areas that have medium to lower levels of development readiness and medium to lower levels of transit orientation today and/or urban design issues. Staff also looked for areas with populations of likely transit-dependent households. Staff's focus on less well-served, but growing areas was guided by the adopted Powell-Division Transit and Development Project goals, which emphasize equity, well-being and efficiency in the transportation system.

The purpose of the forthcoming opportunity area planning is to develop community visions and action plans that identify land uses, development types and investments that those who live and work in and around the opportunity areas would like to see.

Advanced planning in areas with growth potential, but also with concentrations of lower-income and transit-dependent households, will provide the opportunity to identify actions and measures to preserve and enhance affordability and support community stability. It will also provide the opportunity to develop strategies to create thriving mixed-income communities and to spur ground-up economic development.

Community visioning and action area planning work will begin this fall and will continue into early spring. Early work will include research and outreach, with larger workshops expected in January 2015, and completed community visions and action plans in spring 2015.

### How were the opportunity areas for in-depth study identified?

The eight identified opportunity areas were selected based on an assessment of both qualitative and quantitative factors. Efforts were made to select areas that represented the diversity of conditions found throughout the corridor. Studying areas that represent a diversity of the issues in the corridor will aid the development of action plans that could be applied to other station areas, as the project moves forward.

A data analysis conducted by Fregonese Associates for the cities of Gresham and Portland provided important background information for staff's decision-making process. This data analysis included, but was not limited to, an assessment of demographic conditions, transit orientation, transit ridership and development readiness in and around each of the nodes identified in the opportunities and constraints work completed by project staff in February 2014. To organize their analysis and to tie the analysis directly to the larger project, Fregonese Associates identified measures that correspond to each of the project's adopted goals: transportation, efficiency, equity and well-being. For more information on the data analysis, please review the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project Opportunity Area Screening Process report, which is provided as part of the Steering Committee packet for the Sept. 29, 2014.

In addition to data analysis, staff completed site visits, reviewed existing development patterns and conditions and analyzed existing and proposed land use policies and plans, prior to identifying the eight identified opportunity areas. Areas that already have a high transit orientation and with high development readiness were generally not selected for further study.

### Opportunity area summaries and key issues

Provided below are brief descriptions of the eight selected opportunity areas. These descriptions provide a summary of conditions and highlight key challenges and opportunities. For more information, please review the node profiles provided as Appendix A in the Opportunity Area Screening Report referenced above.

#### SE Powell/SE Chavez

The intersection at Powell and Chavez is a key transit and community service hub for adjacent residents, many of which live in the large number of multi-family residential complexes south of Powell, from 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue up to and near Creston Park. Currently, the area includes a Safeway and commercial and community services. It is also a transfer point to TriMet line 75, which connects south to Milwaukie and north to St. Johns. With the exception of the Safeway, much development in this area is set back behind parking, which creates an auto-oriented feel.

The area is designated as a Neighborhood Center on the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft. Neighborhood Centers are intended to provide a wide range of housing types and should have sufficient zoning within a half-mile walking distance of a Town Center to accommodate 3,500 households.

The City of Portland's gentrification and displacement study noted that census tracts in this area are in the early stages of gentrification (Bates, 2013). Given the documented

gentrification and displacement risk and growth potential, the area surrounding Cesar Chavez and Powell is an important area to study.

Key issues include identifying ways to preserve and expand the affordable housing supply in the area, which has proximity to services, active main streets and the downtown employment core. It will also be important to study different design approaches to creating pedestrian and transit-friendly environments adjacent to a street with higher traffic volumes. The larger commercially-zoned parcels along Powell may provide opportunities to explore innovative site design concepts that create more pedestrian oriented environments.

#### SE Powell/SE Foster (SE 50<sup>th</sup>/SE 52<sup>nd</sup>)

The Powell/Foster intersection is more than the meeting point of four streets, it is a significant landmark in Portland's geography and transportation system. In addition to connecting to the diagonal Foster Road, which provides neighborhoods to the south and southeast, like Lents and Mount Scott-Arleta, access to inner Portland main streets, the intersection provides connections to Brentwood-Darlington, the Springwater Corridor and Clackamas County. TriMet lines 71, 14 and 9 all pass through the area and Franklin High School is located to the north, between Powell and Division.

The area farther southeast along Foster is identified as a potential Neighborhood Center and growth is expected along the Foster corridor, up to Lents, which is a regionally-designated Town Center. Like the census tracts near Powell and Chavez, Bates' 2013 study indicates that this area is in early stages of gentrification and displacement. Given the noted gentrification and displacement risk, the presence of larger parcels and its role as a transportation hub, it is important to set goals and intentionally guide development in this area.

Key issues to explore may include providing opportunities for developing mixed-income and/or affordable housing and for creating a more walkable area that would better facilitate transit transfers and safe pedestrian and bike connections.

#### Jade District (82<sup>nd</sup>/Division-Powell)

The Jade District is a burgeoning commercial area, with growing services like Portland Community College, which are drawing people from around the region. The recent success and popularity of the Jade Night Market, coordinated by APANO (Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon), is an example of the growing community interest in the area. Significant additional work is being completed by APANO as part of the Jade District Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative, which is a public/private partnership that aims to transform underserved commercial districts in east Portland into engines of economic growth without displacing residents or businesses. The Jade District is an ethnically-diverse area.

The areas along 82<sup>nd</sup> from Division to Powell and along Powell and Division near 82<sup>nd</sup> are active, with heavy pedestrian and transit use. Thousands of people get on and off buses in the area to access businesses and services every day. Traffic volumes on all three major streets in this area are also very high.

The PCC SE Center Campus at 82nd and Division is a key activity point and its role is expected to grow significantly over the next 10 years. This facility provides accessible education for people of varying ages and educational backgrounds. As enrollment increases, it will become increasingly important to improve access to and from the campus and to provide needed services nearby. Beyond the anticipated growth at PCC, the entire area has notable commercial, mixed-use and housing growth potential, both along the mixed-use commercial corridors and within the adjacent residential neighborhoods, particularly the multi-family designated areas that are located between 82<sup>nd</sup> and I-205. Despite the high volume of transit users and growth potential, connections between the commercial and residential areas are poor and the pedestrian environment along the major streets is in need of improvement.

Key issues in this area include coordinating the work of the Powell-Division project with the recently completed Jade District work to ensure that existing community goals are part of the project. It will also be essential to coordinate work with the upcoming Oregon Department of Transportation Project (ODOT) project for 82nd. Creating and expanding partnerships to support locally-driven economic development and affordable housing is also important.

#### SE Division/SE 122nd

With a concentration of businesses and a connection to TriMet line 71, which runs north and south along 122<sup>nd</sup>, the intersection of 122nd and Division is a focal point of the Division-Midway area. This area is also a Town Center in Portland's 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft. Town Centers are expected to be highly accessible and walkable places, with concentrations of community, civic and commercial activity. Today, however, much of the existing development, with frequent driveways and sidewalks that are often not separated from traffic, limited landscaping and large parking lots, does not create a pedestrian and transit-friendly environment.

Compared to other areas in the corridor, there are high concentrations of communities of color, youth and elder populations and households in poverty. Today, this area includes affordable family housing, with moderate levels of transit access, but high transit use.

A land use vision and action plan for this area could identify community-supported site designs, uses and pedestrian improvements that would help create a more walkable environment and improve connections from adjacent neighborhoods. Action plans could also identify where community members may want to support specific development types or uses that would provide needed services and help maintain affordability as the city grows. Working directly with community members and community organizations such as the East Portland Action Plan and the Division-Midway Alliance, which is a public /private partnership that aims to increase the visibility of commercial districts, grow more jobs, strengthen existing businesses and fill vacant commercial spaces, will be essential to success.

Lessons learned from this area, along with lessons learned from the SE Division/SE 162<sup>nd</sup> opportunity area, could be applied to the area at 148<sup>th</sup> and Division and to other areas in Portland and Gresham east of I-205.

**SE Division/SE 162nd**

The area at the intersection of Division and 162<sup>nd</sup> currently includes a movieplex and retail shopping center, smaller businesses and other services. The area is very auto-oriented and has development potential. It is also home to many lower-income households.

Key issues in this area could include strategies to increase the number and diversity of local services to make it easier for local residents to meet their needs close to home and create a thriving and active area. This intersection is designated as a Neighborhood Center on the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft.

**Division/182nd**

This intersection in west Gresham has many people living nearby that usually rely heavily on public transportation, including people of color, the young, community elders and those with lower incomes. These groups could benefit from enhanced transit service, on the east-west Division corridor and especially on 182nd.

The areas has several community destinations, including a shopping center on the northeast corner of 182nd and Division, a health clinic, and Centennial elementary, middle and high schools. Pedestrian and bicycle access to these destinations and to transit is challenging in some areas with few routes available from adjacent neighborhoods and several areas with lack of sidewalks and comfortable crosswalks.

In addition, some properties were identified that might provide redevelopment opportunities in the future when property owners decide to make a change. The study would provide an opportunity for the community to envision what the future could look like with regard to uses, buildings, public spaces and other changes to the physical environment. Lessons learned and strategies developed at 182nd and Division could be applied to other locations along the route that share the corridor multi-family and commercial character of this area.

**Division/Eastman Parkway and Division/Main Avenue**

This opportunity area is in the middle of Gresham's Regional Center, where Civic Neighborhood and Downtown meet. This area is designated for intense new residential and commercial development as part of Gresham's Community Development Plan and would benefit from a rethinking of this area to improve the connection between the two halves of the Regional Center.

Some areas have small blocks and good buildings with interesting commercial uses. These areas are separated by large shopping centers, parking lots and arterials with five or more motor vehicle lanes. The Downtown lacks significant buildings and gateway elements to indicate its presence to those passing on the arterials.

This opportunity area also has important destinations, such as City Hall, Gresham High School, Multnomah County library, social service organizations, Main Avenue restaurants and shops and some of Gresham's most cherished parks and plazas. It ranked first among the corridor's opportunity areas in the number of community amenities/services found within one-half mile of the station area.

On the development side, the area has good transit service but has not seen significant non-subsidized market-rate development in the last 10 years. This study could determine strategies to encourage more intense development with a mix of uses to bring more jobs, housing and vitality to Gresham's Regional Center.

Lessons learned and strategies developed at Division and Eastman/Main could be applied to other locations along the route that are centers with key destinations and a need to determine how to encourage desired development.

#### Stark and 242nd (Hogan)

This intersection has less transit service than most of the opportunity areas but is expected to have high growth in employment in the near future. This opportunity area shares some characteristics of the corridor environment of 182nd and Division (with different demographics) but is defined by its proximity to three important campuses - Gresham Vista Business Park, Mount Hood Medical Center and Mt. Hood Community College. These campuses will drive the expected employment growth, and a key part of the study will be determining how to connect enhanced transit and the campus destinations.

Although the campuses have significant developable land, most of the commercial and residential property nearby is already developed. Some potentially redevelopable properties were identified, so the study could determine how any redevelopment could take advantage of and support the nearby campuses. Physical improvements, such as better road, pedestrian and bike connections, between nearby residential areas, the campuses and the enhanced transit could also be evaluated.

Lessons learned and strategies developed in this opportunity area could be applied to other areas with campuses along the corridor, including those with older shopping centers that might desire to update to take advantage of changing circumstances.

What are the next steps? What will community visions and action plans include? This fall and winter, staff will continue to work with Fregonese Associates and will work with the community to complete in-depth analyses of the eight identified opportunity areas.

Community visions may identify:

- Desired land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, public space)
- Development intensity (how big are buildings and how close together)
- Street design
- Access to transit and key destinations, such as need for better pedestrian/bike connections and safety
- Safety and security
- Community needs, such as quality affordable housing, support for existing businesses, community gathering places

Action plans could include such elements as:

- Physical improvements such as street improvements, sidewalks, crosswalks, plazas or elements related to stations
- Changing development rules to remove obstacles to desired development
- Financial incentives to promote desired development
- Developer recruitment
- Promoting equity through such strategies as affordable housing retention, adding affordable units and small business retention programs.

#### Staff Contacts

For more information about the work described in this report, please contact City of Gresham, City of Portland or Metro staff. Contact information is provided below.

#### City of Gresham

Brian Martin, Senior Planner

[brian.martin@greshamoregon.gov](mailto:brian.martin@greshamoregon.gov)

(503) 618-2266

#### City of Portland

Alexandra Howard, Project Coordinator

[alexandra.howard@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:alexandra.howard@portlandoregon.gov)

(503) 823-7849

Radcliffe Dacanay, Management Analyst

[Radcliffe.dacanay@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Radcliffe.dacanay@portlandoregon.gov)

#### Metro

Brian Monberg, Principal Regional Planner

[brian.monberg@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:brian.monberg@oregonmetro.gov)

(503) 797-7621

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