



600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
oregonmetro.gov

March 29, 2019

Megan Channell
Oregon Dept. of Transportation
megan.channell@odot.state.or.us

Emily Cline
Federal Highway Administration
emily.cline@got.gov

Re: I-5 Rose Quarter Project Environmental Assessment Comments

Dear Ms. Channell and Cline:

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project has a significant place in our region's history and presents an opportunity to address a unique set of land use, economic and transportation challenges with impacts that will ripple across greater Portland. It is with this lens that the Metro Council appreciates the opportunity to submit public comment on the Environmental Assessment for this project. Metro staff are also submitting a letter with more detailed technical comments on the Environmental Assessment (attached).

The Metro Council urges leadership and staff of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to explicitly acknowledge and consider the significant historical context surrounding the Rose Quarter area during project evaluation, planning and implementation. In the 1950's the Oregon Highway Commission razed the predominantly black Albina neighborhood displacing hundreds of families and destroying black-owned businesses and community to build I-5. These actions, along with other government policy decisions have made a lasting detrimental impact on the African-American community of Portland. It is our collective responsibility to address these wrongs through a community-centered approach to project development to help limit further harm and provide new opportunities for healing and growth.

Specifically, in accordance with the regional policies included in the Regional Transportation Plan, the Metro Council would like to see the following elements of the project continue to stay at the forefront of ODOT's attention as it moves forward:

- Create opportunities for consistent and continuing dialogue between ODOT, impacted communities and the city to ensure the most viable opportunity for redevelopment;
- Look at alternatives and align urban design elements of the project and the lid to create active, safe, and usable spaces supportive of community visions such as the Albina Vision;
- Features like walkability, access to affordable housing and local business growth potential for displaced communities should be central to design planning;
- Ensure robust engagement with communities of color, especially the African American community, providing opportunities to impact decision-making on project outcomes and objectives;

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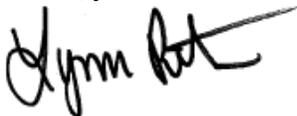
Re: Re: I-5 Rose Quarter Project Environmental Assessment Comments

- Consider project elements that recognize the impacts of the freeway's construction and attempt to reconnect the neighborhood space with a focus on people, cultural, and community amenities and cohesion over convenience to the automobile;
- Continue to advance the surface street improvements proposed in the plan to address pedestrian and bike safety, mobility and transit access;
- Monitor and invest in systems and plans that decrease greenhouse gas emissions and diesel particulate effects on the surrounding schools and neighborhoods and seek other strategies to improve air quality; and
- Work towards a thoughtful and comprehensive value pricing system that contributes to decreased trips and less congestion throughout the corridor.

As you know, I am convening a task force to advise the Metro Council on a 2020 measure to invest in much-needed transportation solutions across our region. Funds from such a measure could be used to advance equity, safety, and climate resiliency in conjunction with the project.

The Metro Council and I appreciate the work that ODOT has done thus far and want to emphasize our interest and willingness to stay engaged as the project moves ahead and to ensure that the final design accommodates neighborhood needs and desired outcomes—including authentic community building, increased pedestrian and biking safety, transit access, enhanced urban development capacity and a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Peterson", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Metro Council President Lynn Peterson
On behalf of Metro Council

cc: Oregon Transportation Commission
Portland Bureau of Transportation
Portland Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
Metro Council