

Susheela Jayapal



Multnomah County Commissioner, District 2

April 4, 2019

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

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

RE: I-5 Rose Quarter Project Environmental Assessment Comments

Dear Ms. Channell and Ms. Cline:

I represent District 2, comprising North and Northeast Portland, on the Multnomah County Commission. As such, I represent neighborhoods that are among those most directly impacted by the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project -- including the area that was formerly home to the predominantly black Albina neighborhood, which was razed during construction of the highway.

I write to urge you to work with the residents of District 2, Portland Public School District, neighborhood associations, and community-based organizations to address the concerns raised during the public comment period. You've received many comments on technical aspects of the proposal and the Environmental Assessment; I won't address those here, but would like to highlight the following issues:

Impacts on Harriet Tubman Middle School: I have heard from many constituents about their concerns regarding the air quality, noise, and structural impacts of moving the freeway even closer to the school than it already is. Multnomah County's Health Department has also voiced concerns, and requested more time to study the health impacts of the proposal. Harriet Tubman and the communities it serves have already borne disproportionate impacts from the freeway -- both from its initial construction and from the resulting diesel emissions and other air pollutants. They should not suffer any further adverse impact.

Safety: Improving safety on the freeway has been articulated as one of the primary objectives of this project. As I understand it, there is considerable debate as to whether it achieves that objective. In addition, District 2 constituents have voiced significant concerns about impacts on the safety of bike and pedestrian traffic in adjacent neighborhoods. These concerns need to be addressed.

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Social Justice: The construction of I5 through the Albina neighborhood ripped apart a thriving black community, displacing hundreds of homes and businesses. Those actions, exacerbated by a wider array of institutionally racist government policies and practices, have had profound and lasting impact on Portland's black community, including on a broad range of the social determinants of individual and community health.

Even without that history - but especially, given that history -- it's absolutely vital that our decision-making processes center our most vulnerable communities. That means deep community engagement that manifests itself in impact on project design and outcomes.

There are ongoing community efforts, including the Albina Vision project, to re-imagine and re-create the community and neighborhood fabric that was destroyed by the construction of the freeway. I urge you to center these efforts, and people, neighborhoods, and communities, as you move forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susheela Jayapal".

Susheela Jayapal
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 2

Cc:

Portland Bureau of Transportation
Oregon Transportation Commission
Portland Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
Metro Council
Multnomah County Board of Commissioners