

Date: Dec. 28, 2022

To: Oregon Transportation Commission
Governor Tina Kotek
Megan Channell, I-5 Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion

From: Trisha Patterson, Portland: Neighbors Welcome Secretary
Shane Kwiatkowski, Portland: Neighbors Welcome Board Member

Subject: Request for full Environmental Impact Statement for Proposed Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion

Portland: Neighbors Welcome is a grassroots nonprofit that advocates for policies and actions that support and create healthy, vibrant communities. This means advocating for tenant power, preserving affordable housing and preventing displacement of residents, advocating for zoning changes that allow density in Portland's high opportunity neighborhoods, and most importantly, seeing planning as an intersectional and multifaceted practice. We believe in building walkable communities full of abundant, affordable housing connected by frequent, reliable transit. While integration and harmony between transit planning, housing planning, and meeting our carbon emissions goals may never be completely aligned, we must ask ourselves, as a community, if a multi-billion dollar investment into widening our highway aligns with our values and goals. We believe that the proposed \$1.4 billion Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion will not help solve congestion long term, meet our local and state emissions goals, nor advance equity and restorative justice in the Albina neighborhood. We are therefore joining community partners including Neighbors for Clean Air and No More Freeways in demanding that ODOT conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement that studies alternatives to freeway expansion to address congestion, air pollution and traffic safety.

To meet these long range goals— racial justice *and* climate justice— we need more transit, not more roads. We support the Albina Vision Trust's advocacy to restore the neighborhood and add more homes. More homes does not have to mean more cars. While the vision of walkable, safe, and affordable communities may be a lofty goal, the first step is directing investments towards that goal. A multibillion dollar freeway expansion in this neighborhood would perpetuate the environmental racism that built this freeway in the first place. Attached is a photo from the City of Portland Archives that depicts how this highway cut a trench through northeast Portland in 1962. The Highway Commission, now ODOT, razed over 300 homes to make way for the highway. Some homeowners were paid as little as \$50 a piece as compensation for the taking of their home. That the median home sale price in the Albina neighborhood now tops \$587,000 illustrates the inequality of opportunity to build Black wealth in the neighborhood and environmental racism at the heart of the siting, construction, and now expansion of this freeway. An expansion that will cause additional carbon emissions and worsening air quality through the heart of Portland's historic Black neighborhood is unconscionable. It is time to start repairing the harm done to the neighborhood and get serious about Portland's, and the state's, climate goals.

We ask for a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concerning the proposed Rose Quarter freeway expansion. We add this letter to the litany of public testimony from

many communities, and urge you to consider taking this action. We echo the demands made by Albina Vision Trust and the No More Freeways coalition, and add our support to an EIS that would study alternatives to expansion. What improvements could we make to Portland's sustainable transit infrastructure with the billions of dollars earmarked for this project? How many electric buses could be brought online, how many bike lanes expanded and protected, how many crosswalks enhanced for pedestrian safety? A full EIS should take these alternatives into consideration, evaluate the efficacy of the project's proposed lane caps in mitigating additional air pollution, and evaluate whether this project achieves the best and highest use of taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

Trisha Patterson, Secretary, Portland: Neighbors Welcome

Shane Kwiatkowski, board member, Portland: Neighbors Welcome



MINNESOTA FREEWAY CONSTRUCTION
LOOKING NORTH

Image from the Portland Auditor's office, City Archives. Minnesota Freeway (I-5), Dec. 31st, 1963.