

## **A common sense approach from Riverfront for People:**

### **What we propose?**

**Central City Plan up-date** (first time in 20 years), including:

#### **1) Transportation Framework:**

Autos – commuters and freight. Mass Transit. Pedestrians, Bicycles, Passenger Rail

#### **2) Land-use Framework**

Commercial, Retail, Housing

#### **3) Quality of Life Framework**

River, Open Space, Natural Environment

#### **4) Capacity Analysis**

Central City Build-out Analysis – what's possible now?

#### **5) Sustainability Strategy**

Environment & Energy

#### **6) Implementation Strategy**

Phased over time – 25 years

Priorities set with costs and benefits calculated.

### **Why Now?**

- 1) Congestion from population growth. Freeway Loop is central to the region's transportation system and economic development, yet is very congested.
- 2) Quality of life is at risk: Air, water and noise pollution, time loss from traffic.
- 3) Central City Plan Update needed.
- 4) Recommendation of Freeway Loop Advisory Group.
- 5) We need to get informed about our choices and act.

So, Riverfront for People supports the Resolution before the Council, and the Report of the Freeway Loop Advisory Group. We ask the Council to vote yes.

## **II: A defensive stance:**

- 1) We need additional capacity in the loop, particularly where I-5 meets the Banfield. (We don't oppose short-term fixes to the I-5-Banfield interchange if they are inexpensive).
- 2) We think more capacity can be added more easily, with less disruption, underground.
- 3) We think you can also expand I-405 within the existing cut, to three lanes both directions, within the loop.
- 4) It is much easier to have a much needed North/South interchange in the Central Eastside when it's underground.
- 5) No significant takings with a tunnel, no adverse impact on existing property owners. We have tunnel expertise in the City with the sewer project. Can build tunnels fast with "cover then cut". Can go down 7<sup>th</sup> or under existing freeway or both. RFP will oppose any "cut" approach because it will have significant takings.
- 6) It is possible to connect to the Lloyd Center at 12<sup>th</sup> going East on the Banfield, so the Lloyd Center area can be better served.
- 7) We feel tunneling can be very compatible with the new PDC Land Use plan for knowledge jobs in the CEIC. With access to the River, the area becomes more desirable for everyone, including employers and employees. The city has great tunneling expertise already from the Big Pipe project. No one is challenging the plan for the Central Eastside with this proposal.
- 8) No one on the Freeway Loop Advisory Group, including the Riverfront for People representative, supported taking out the Eastbank Freeway altogether.

### **III: We gain 43 acres.**

If we put the Eastbank Freeway in a tunnel, the community needs to look at what it wants to do with the 43 acres where the freeway (and ramps) sit today, which is on the River and in the heart of the City. The Central City Plan Update and a public participation process gives the City a chance to talk about those benefits with Portlanders. Is it more land for jobs that people want? Is it workforce housing adjacent to the jobs area that people want? This land would be owned by the State if the freeway comes down, and we think it would be appropriate to ask the State to sell it to the City and PDC for an appropriately low price so it could be developed in keeping with the PDC plan for the Central Eastside, and parkland could be added on the River itself. Riverfront for People strongly supports the public participation process as part of the Central City Plan update. In addition to the uses of the 43 acres we would get, we believe that public input is important in choosing among options for the River crossing to replace the Marquam. Should there be a tunnel under the River – we have a lot of expertise in the City on tunnels? Should there be a new, more graceful, lower profile bridge that goes across the river between OMSI and what is now the Portland Opera, and goes out to a four-way intersection at McLoughlin, and then goes in a tunnel under Seventh Avenue? Or should we simply kneecap the Marquam, lower it and take it in a tunnel directly across the river on the Eastside? Similarly, public input is important in designing where the tunnel or tunnels go to minimize impacts above ground. We believe the tunnel down 7<sup>th</sup> connecting with the

Banfield, is a good option, and so is a tunnel underneath where the Eastbank Freeway is today.

**IV:** What can be done to **restore the Riparian Habitat** in the river, on the bank, and on top of the bank? We can really make a wonderful esplanade, not one next to a noisy freeway spewing diesel fumes and putting all of its run-off water directly into the Willamette without filtration. If you stand under the Morrison Bridge, the noise will damage your hearing – more than 100 decibels regularly. And you can hear the noise from the ramps and the Marquam on the West Side too, say at Salmon Street Springs, not just at OMSI and on the Esplanade. Look at what has been done elsewhere in the City, where we have a greenway program, such as in South Waterfront. This is very valuable land we are talking about on the River in the Heart of the city. But our Riverfront really belongs to the people of the City, and it should not be sold to the highest bidder for private uses. What a great thing we will have done if Tom McCall Waterfront Park on the West Side is mirrored on the East Side, much as has happened on the South Waterfront. If we put the freeway and its ramps in a tunnel, there will be acres and acres to develop after we have provided parkland on the River, at least 18 blocks for development after taking out bridgeheads and putting in the new park. We believe the Bureau of Parks in the City should inherit this 100 foot strip from OMSI to the Banfield. This Greenway is a very important part of what Riverfront for People proposes. We also want better access to the River – people should be able to walk down new boulevards, with broad sidewalks on Davis, Stark, Taylor and Hawthorne, all the way to the River. And we want new bicycle trails down to the Esplanade, as well. The Springwater Trail should connect with the Esplanade, making a wonderful walkway all along the Eastside of the River.

**V: Riverfront for People believes Mass Transit** should be an important part of what the Central City Plan Update discusses. Not just the Eastside trolley down MLK that Commissioner Adams has proposed. We see a new extension of the Yellow light rail line along First Avenue to Milwaukie as an inexpensive way to make light rail work in the City, to lighten the load on Downtown for people not actually needing to travel there. We are turning that proposal in to the City Council today. We believe such an extension should come before the Carothers Crossing. When that expensive River crossing is completed, then our transit loop would echo the Freeway Loop. We are excited to see that Rex Burkholder and Metro are leading a serious look at a high capacity transit system for the region and what it might look like in 25 years. We are very happy that the Council for a Livable Future is mirroring that effort itself. Riverfront for People has done its own regional plan that includes commuter rail, subways for light rail, trolleys and buses. With subways, our light rail trains can be longer than two cars each, so that it doesn't take 23 minutes to go from the Lloyd Center to Jefferson Street downtown on light rail, so that a single train can carry thousands of people. We are not just constricted by Downtown, we are also constricted by cross-traffic interference at the Steel Bridge and by headways in the tunnel under the hill. Subways solve the problems, and thousands of more people can commute to work in the Central City without jamming up our freeways, keeping them free for important freight movement.

**VI: Bury the Railroad on the Eastside.** Let's take a serious look, in the Central City Plan Update, at how important it is to put the railroad underground as it runs through the Central Eastside, especially if we put the freeway in a tunnel. Everyone has seen what happened when the Lovejoy Ramps were obliterated and the roadway brought down to ground level. Look at the development that has occurred in Northwest Portland extending back from the Broadway Bridge and up Lovejoy itself. Imagine what would happen at the Burnside, Morrison and Hawthorne bridgeheads on the East side if those bridges didn't have to run out over the railroad and could, instead, come down to ground quickly. Imagine what our Central Eastside could be like to work in and live in if you could walk or bike down to a beautiful park and esplanade on the River without the freeway or the railroad creating the barriers to access that they do today. The cost of a stand-alone rail tunnel would exceed \$100 million. The rail tunnel can't be put any further East than Grand, because it must keep the train tracks level. Burlington Northern would love to get the tracks underground, as safety and liability problems would decrease with fewer crossings, and speed could increase too. What if we could make the rail tunnel part of the tunneling for the freeway system? We could save tens of millions of dollars in renovating our Eastside that way. It's important to note that freight trains no longer make stops in the Central Eastside.

**VII: Economic Development** in the Eastside is crucial. This is not the 1890s in Portland. New industrial jobs are not coming to the Central Eastside – they are going to Asia. In the last 20 years, the make-up of the workforce in the Central Eastside has changed dramatically, some would say for the worse. There are definitely fewer family-wage jobs over-all in the Central Eastside than 20 years ago. But the bigger change has been the type of job – retail, warehousing and other service industry jobs prevail. Everyone sees an opportunity for **knowledge economy** jobs in the CEIC – high tech, marketing, advertising and business service jobs are prominent in every look at the possible future of the Central Eastside. People see a chance for development of a creative class in the old buildings that dominate the Central Eastside landscape. Entrepreneurs love old buildings – rents are cheaper, and experience demonstrates that's important to a start-up business – see Jane Jacobs in The Death and Life of Great American Cities for the reason why. But bringing the knowledge economy to the Central Eastside will take several dozen more companies like Integra, Coaxis and Kindercare. Duncan Wyse of the Oregon Business Council has a great idea for a summer learning center connected to MIT. We need to look to PSU and PCC for help. We need PSU to become like the University of Washington has long been in Seattle – the generator of dozens and even hundreds of new businesses. The City through PDC needs to figure out how it can leverage our institutions of knowledge to bring us new knowledge jobs. An early look at Biotech in the South Waterfront connected to OHSU shows we have much to learn. If we are serious, we have to look for a way to replace money from the Business Investment Tax, or to suspend it for an enterprise zone for knowledge businesses in the Central Eastside.

**VIII: Jobs in the Central City.** Riverfront for People wants our Central City to be competitive with the Suburbs for jobs. Our Central City has not been competitive with Washington County for jobs over the last 20 years. We used to have nearly 50% of the jobs in the region in our central city. We have shrunk to 20% in the 1970s and 15% today. Our status as a great city is threatened by this suburban shift. As more than 1,000,000 people move to our region in the next 20 years, the Central City must become more competitive to help the region. We think a goal of getting back to 20% of the jobs in the Central City and staying there is within our reach, and the Central Eastside must play a key role in that effort, along with the South Waterfront. We cannot afford our freeway loop to be simply an interchange for people going from Washington County to our regional airport and back. That's why a transportation demand look at our freeway loop is inadequate. We must have the transportation planning led by economic development concerns, and that's the reason we need transportation planning to be done as part of the Central City Plan Update. We believe there are two important keys to central city competitiveness in the jobs arena. The first is high-capacity transit, so that workers can commute to downtown and home again in the suburbs without hindering freight movement in the Loop during the rush hours. Our rush hour has been getting longer and longer at both ends, and our modal shift has been moving to freeways from transit, despite the fact that, according to the Portland Business Alliance Survey, more than 50% of Downtown workers still commute to Downtown by foot, by bicycle and by transit. It is not news to you that the second main way the central city can remain competitive in the jobs arena is to build workforce housing in the central city, near where we want the jobs to be. We have a shortage of workforce housing in the central city – workforce housing defined as from 60% of average family housing cost to 140% of average family housing cost. This is to be distinguished from so-called affordable housing, where we are also short. Increasingly, particularly with the congestion on our freeway system, people want to live near where they work. They are no longer willing to live in Gresham and commute by auto to Lake Oswego, or live in Hillsboro and commute by auto to the Central Eastside. This is good news for those who want to contain sprawl in the region. But it is not good news for the Central City. We need more workforce housing in the Central City, and Riverfront for People believes a lot of it can be built on the 43 acres where the Eastbank Freeway sits today, maybe as many as 10,000 units. It's also important to note that a major construction project like a tunnel will produce meaningful jobs.

**IX: Property Values** in the Central Eastside are still down compared to the Westside. Riverfront for People did a study of the 198 blocks or acres between OMSI and the Banfield, and back to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We flopped those 198 acres over on the West side, from Burnside down to Arthur and back to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We discovered that the land value itself, the value of the dirt, is only one-fifth on the East side that it is on the West side. And the appraised value of the West Side is eight times the appraised value of the Eastside. If we take the Eastbank Freeway and put it in a tunnel, and replace the Marquam ramps on the Eastside, we are going to see a real estate boom on the Eastside, much like has happened in the last 20 years in Northwest Portland. The city will capture much of that increase with tax increment

financing as part of its urban renewal plan. We also believe there will be enough tax increment in the 400 blocks of the Central Eastside back to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue to finance the local match on the freeway. In the long term, the city may be able to afford better schools and a healthier port, Tri-Met and City government because of this new development. It will help us to be a great city.

X. Speaking for Portland, not just the Region. Why is this Eastbank freeway project a 15 to 25 year project to completion? Why can't we do it sooner than that? First, there is the extensive planning and public participation process that must occur, and perhaps as much as \$3 million must be found for such a multiple year process from ODOT, PDC and the City planning and transportation budgets. Transportation demand must be integrated with urban design, and land use in this planning effort. Most people don't understand the federal transportation funding cycle and how it works in Portland. For one thing, federal highway funding for this project will require federal legislation, and if the City has a plan it likes, Congressman Earl Blumenauer, and Senators Wyden and Smith will need to get fully behind the project to get federal funding to be allowed for a tunnel and bridge replacement project. There are precedents in Boston, San Francisco and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Nevertheless, permission must be received at the Congressional level. Before the City can even get to that point, the project must get into the cue as part of the list of projects to be completed as part of a "six year plan". The next six year plan, the federal funding cycle, comes up before any planning will be completed, so that puts funding of the project from **10 to 12 years out at best**.

The prioritization for this region's six year plan is done at JPACT, an adjunct of Metro and, factually, the region's transportation funding decision-making body. Sitting on JPACT are City Commissioner Sam Adams, Metro Commissioner Rex Burkholder, and representatives of the region's three counties and multiple small cities, as well as citizens at large.

To get into the funding cue at JPACT, the city will have to make a strong case for prioritization of the Freeway Loop, and certify its ability to find local match for the project, perhaps from tax increment financing. This will require sustained effort across multiple years.

Clearly, the project will be behind the Columbia Crossing, the region's current number one priority and a multi-billion dollar project itself.

But, perhaps more important to the timing of this project are the competitive demands from other suburban parts of the region – demands supported by Congressman David Wu for widening 217; demands from East Multnomah County and Clackamas County for a new freeway there called the Sunrise Corridor; and demands for connecting to Highway 99 from I-5 via the so-called Newberg-Dundee bypass. These competitive projects will cost from \$500 million to multiple billions for each.

This region gets a lot of money from the federal and state governments to build and maintain freeways – in the billions every six years – but it must be noted the the Bush Administration has been cutting back dramatically on U.S. transportation infrastructure funding so it can pour more money into its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and perhaps soon, Iran. This combination of reasons explains why this project will require 15 to 25 years to complete.