



Willamette Pedestrian Coalition

P.O. Box 2252
Portland, Oregon 97208-2252
info@wpcwalks.org, www.wpcwalks.org
503- 223-1597

August 11, 2010

*Working together to
improve conditions for
walking in the Portland
region*

Secretary of Transportation Ray La Hood
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities TIGER II Grant Proposal

Board of Directors

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Dear Secretary LaHood:

The Willamette Pedestrian Coalition (WPC) was founded in 1991 to promote the creation of sustainable and walkable communities. We define a walkable community as one in which it is safe, direct and attractive to walk.

Public transit and the walking infrastructure are really part of the same transportation system. Transit is an extension of the walking experience for the pedestrian and public transit is a wasted resource if members of the community cannot access transit safely and conveniently. The Connecting Communities TIGER II grant proposal continues TriMet's careful attention to pedestrian needs as a part of its bus and rail transit projects. The Southeast Corridor poses some significant challenges and opportunities for the pedestrian. This planned light rail line will operate along a mainline railroad and will cross one of the region's notoriously dangerous arterial streets for pedestrians – both are formidable barriers for interconnect communities and access to essential transit services.

On the other hand, the corridor includes parkland, trails and institutions that are important destinations for persons of all ages – East and West Moreland Parks, the public facilities clustered around the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and two important points of access to the 21-mile Springwater Trail. Safe and convenient pedestrian access to and alongside the light rail project will also enhance jobs access for moderate and low income neighborhoods in the corridor and access to jobs in the corridor's industrial districts.

Critical elements of this South Corridor Project: Connecting Communities TIGER II grant proposal include:

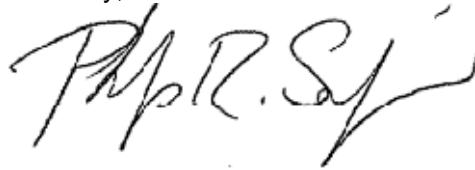
- The relocation of SE Water Avenue at a new light rail, streetcar and bus transit hub will facilitate pedestrian access to OMSI, Portland Community College, the Portland Opera and the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation's planned new home. This relocation will complement emerging redevelopment of this district and improve jobs access. This location will be part of an important multi-modal hub and it is important that transit, pedestrian and bike modes work in tandem.
- Access from the Clinton Street neighborhood to the river and Springwater Trail today is done by way of broken down roads and railroad crossings. The introduction of light rail will solidify for safety reasons a barrier between the neighborhoods and the hub of trails and educational facilities near OMSI. The Clinton Street to the River Multi-Use Path will not only compensate, but will greatly enhance this important connection to educational institutions, employment sites, the Springwater Corridor multi-use path, the East Bank Esplanade and the future Willamette River Bridge. This connection will promote transportation choices, improve the livability of the neighborhood, and reduce carbon emissions.

- The Rhine Pedestrian Bridge will replace a substandard pedestrian bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad and the future light rail line that many today are afraid to use. Alternative routes are far out of direction and would compromise access to both light rail and principal bus connection on SE 17th Avenue and Powell Boulevard.
- The Kellogg Lake Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge will provide an attractive alternative to either the hazardous trespassing across freight rail trestle or circuitous detour to SE McLoughlin Boulevard. The new bridge would provide a direct access to a major high school as well as light rail and downtown Milwaukie's retail district.

Walking is the building block for all modes of travel. Everyone is a pedestrian. Large park and ride lots directed at automobile commuters are not appropriate in urban residential and industrial neighborhoods. This corridor is surrounded by an extensive pedestrian infrastructure that can and will be used if key connections as noted here are provided and well connected to the adjacent pedestrian, bike and transit networks. The project proposal will provide cost-effective solutions to global warming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as called for in Portland's Climate Action Plan.

For the safety and benefit of pedestrians living, working, shopping and recreating in this corridor, the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition strongly encourages you to fund the Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities. Please contact Steph Routh, the WPC Director, (steph@wpcwalks.org) or 503-223-1597 with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip R. Selinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "S".

Philip R. Selinger
Board President
Willamette Pedestrian Coalition