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October 15, 2007

MEMORANDUM

Susan D.
Keil
Director

TO: Urban Renewal Advisory Group-Westside
FROM: Susan D. Keil, Director, Portland Office of Transportation
SUBJECT: River District Transportation Infrastructure Needs

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As Director of the Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT), I appreciate the opportunity to describe the transportation infrastructure needs in the River District. PDOT has been and will continue to be an active partner with PDC and community members in the River District. The River District historically was part of the early settlement of Portland and has experienced profound changes for over a century. The transportation infrastructure needs in this area present dual challenges for PDOT: maintaining the existing facilities, and in many instances replacing and adapting the transportation facilities to meet current and future community needs.

The Westside Study provides the opportunity to highlight a number of projects that will continue PDOT's contribution to the success of the River District as well as other districts in the Central City. At the request of PDC, PDOT has identified a number of projects that will form the basis of future infrastructure investments in the area. They continue PDOT's tradition of place making and contribution to economic development opportunities vital to the success of the Central City.

Policy Context

The 1988 Central City Plan built on the success of the 1972 Downtown Plan to create a blueprint for development and investment in the Central City, including the areas north of W Burnside. Since then, other community efforts and plans have identified a list of transportation needs and aspirations for the area. They include projects identified in the River District Urban Renewal Area Plan, the River District Plan, the Pearl District Development Strategy, the Northwest Plan, the Downtown Waterfront Urban Renewal Area Plan, the Old Town Chinatown Framework Plan, the NW Broadway Urban Design Master Plan and the Ankeny Burnside Development Framework, among others. PDOT has implemented many of the projects identified in these plans, and others have been identified in the Transportation System Plan as projects for future implementation.

River District Catalyst Transportation Projects

Transportation investments have been an important catalyst for the economic and community revitalization of the River District. The following briefly summarizes key transportation projects that helped spur economic development and generated tax increment funding. They include:

- 1992 NW 13th Avenue improvements
- 1996 Lovejoy Ramp removal
- 2001 Portland Streetcar

NW 13th Avenue, replaced an old abandoned railroad spur with a modern industrial –pedestrian street. Today NW 13th is considered by many to be the historic “heart” of the Pearl District and the main stage for the First Thursday Arts Event. The street has a special right-of-way design standard. PDOT led the

creation of a Local Improvement District that provided over \$900,000 to improve the right-of-way, leveraging many additional investments in the area.

Lovejoy Ramp Removal, removed an elevated highway structure and replaced it with a pedestrian friendly main street. This project also led to the opening of a large tract of land north of NW Hoyt for development. The total cost for the project was \$14.5 million total, with \$12.2 million in federal funds and \$2.3 million in City funds.

Portland Streetcar, which opened in 2001, with a 4.8-mile loop connecting the emerging Pearl District with Downtown and Portland State University and Northwest Portland. This is an example of adapting older streetcar technology to stimulate modern urban revitalization. The total cost of the PDOT led project was \$56 million. Funds originated from a variety of sources, including PDOT area parking revenue, TriMet funds, a local improvement district as well as contributions from the South Park Blocks URA. The streetcar has contributed significantly to the rapid development of the Pearl District and the addition of close to 4,500 housing units built and under construction in the River District, as well as several million of square feet of non-residential development.

PDOT's Financial Situation

PDOT recognizes the need to leverage public and private resources to maximize the financial resources needed to support community infrastructure goals. PDOT does not have sufficient resources to meet all the transportation demands. PDOT's FY07/08 budget continues a trend of flat growth in the State Highway Trust Fund, PDOT's principal funding source. Since 1997, revenues from this source have seen very limited growth, just \$6 million, not adjusting for inflation. This represents a 1.4% average annual increase in revenue. This situation has been particularly dramatic given the continued increases in construction costs and system needs. As a result, PDOT's principal source for increased revenues has been the reliance on parking revenues, which generate a much smaller portion of PDOT's revenue.

A majority of PDOT's budget is spent on maintenance and operations, leaving only about 6 percent for capital improvement projects. For the next 10 years, PDOT has identified a list of capital projects that will be funded from a budget of \$3.4 million a year (with no growth in revenue expected and no cost of living adjustments), leaving only \$165,000 for additional projects, including projects in the areas north of Burnside.

Next Generation of Projects

As the district and Central City continues to grow, there will be increased pressures on the transportation system. To meet future needs, PDOT recommends continuing the strategy of providing high-quality travel choices for employees, residents and visitors in the District.

This entails providing improvements in pedestrian and bicycle access, traffic operations, and transit service. We believe these projects will better connect the District to adjacent areas, such as Northwest Portland, downtown and the Lloyd District, as well as make a significant contribution to reconnect the District to the Willamette River, from which the district's name derives. Currently the majority of the district lacks good access to the riverfront due in part to the Union Pacific railroad tracks and the present configuration of Naito Parkway.

PDOT is committed to continuing to meet the goals for the District. Below is a list of priority projects that will help leverage PDC investments, increase TIF opportunities and achieve the goals of the River District URA and other community plans. Most of these projects have been identified in the Transportation System Plan but have no identified funding sources. To implement these projects and achieve our goals,

PDOT will need to rely on urban renewal funds to fund the majority of the project costs as well as help the City leverage additional resources at the regional, state and national levels.

- Portland Streetcar Loop
- Burnside/Couch Streetscape improvements and Streetcar
- NW Flanders Bridge and bike/ped improvements
- NW 10th Boardwalk and NW Marshall Pedestrian Bridges
- Naito Parkway improvements
- Union Station Renovation
- Old Town and NW Broadway streetscape improvements
- Pearl District Circulation/Livability improvements

Portland Streetcar Loop

This project, adopted by City Council, calls for streetcar improvements in the District as part of an effort to extend streetcar service to the Lloyd District and the Central Eastside to connect to OMSI and eventually to South Waterfront via a loop around the Central City. Improvements in the District will include an expansion of the maintenance facility, the construction of complex track work and traffic signaling and utilities relocation. The project meets River District goals 1, 5, and 6.

West Burnside/Couch Alternatives Analysis

Adopted by City Council, when built the project would provide streetscape improvements from east Burnside at 12th to W Burnside at NW 24th. At City Council's request, PDOT is currently working on drafting preliminary engineering drawings and studying the addition of a streetcar line. W Burnside from NW 2nd to NW 16th would be a couplet with NW Couch. The plan intends to improve connections to Downtown and Northwest, improve pedestrian access and operations, provide on-street parking, and improve transit service. A PDC sponsored project¹ concluded that the project would leverage and 10:1 return on investment and achieve payback in 15 years. The project meets several of the River District Goals, including goals 2, 3, 5 and 6.

NW Flanders Bridge

An improved pedestrian/bicycle bridge and bikeway will provide a direct, safe and convenient connection from Forest Park to the Willamette River through the heart of the River District. Elements include a new pedestrian/bicycle bridge over I-405 and bicycle and pedestrian improvements on NW Flanders. The project will be followed by Naito Parkway crossing improvements between NW Everett and NW Glisan. The projects meet River District goals 1, 5, and 6.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridges

Two new pedestrian/bicycle bridges over Naito Parkway and the Union Pacific railroad tracks: a northern extension of the boardwalk on NW 10th that will continue across Fields Park to join the Centennial Mills development and the Willamette Greenway, and a connection across Naito and tracks at NW Marshall. The projects meet River District Goals 1, 5, and 6.

Naito Parkway

PDOT has identified pedestrian, bicycle, streetscape amenities, the provision of on-street parking and possibly stormwater management treatments to Naito Parkway/Front Avenue from the Broadway Bridge to the Freemont Bridge, improving access from downtown and the NW District, as well as from the rest of the River District, to the Willamette Greenway and Centennial Mills. The project meets River District Goals 1, 5, and 6.

¹ The 2005 Burnside and Couch Transportation and Urban Design Plan Phase II, Catalyst Development Study

Union Station renovation

This project includes a comprehensive examination and renovation of the historic station, to utilize it as a transit hub for inter and intra city passenger service via consolidation of services for long distance rail and bus trips, light rail, streetcar and city buses, as well as act as a catalyst for the redevelopment and transformation of adjacent properties. This project meets River District goals 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Additional Projects

- Streetscape improvements in the area of NW Broadway and Old Town/Chinatown, following the Chinatown Development Plan and the NW Broadway Urban Design Master Plan. Improvements include sidewalk improvements and amenities, street trees, and street lighting, among others.
- Capital and operation improvements, including traffic signaling and operations, improved pedestrian crossings, additional bicycle facilities, and pedestrian improvements under Hwy I-405.
- Pearl District Circulation/Livability improvements, including transportation system improvements to allow additional development potential and expanded TIF, improvements to traffic operations and the provision of green streets, expanded transit and increased bicycle and pedestrian connections.