

## RESOLUTION No. 6008

### PPS Comments on Status of Oregon Department of Transportation's "I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project"

#### RECITALS

- A. In 2012, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the Bureau of Transportation developed the I-5 Broadway-Weidler Facility Plan in conjunction with the City's N/NE Quadrant Plan. The N/NE Quadrant Plan set goals and actions for the land use and development in north and northeast Portland, while the Broadway-Weidler Facility Plan was intended to improve safety and operations on I-5 in the vicinity of the Broadway/Weidler interchange. Key elements of the facility plan include:
1. Adding auxiliary lanes and full-width shoulders (within existing right-of-way).
  2. Rebuilding structures at Broadway, Weidler, Vancouver and Williams and adding a lid over the freeway.
  3. Moving the I-5 southbound on-ramp to Weidler.
  4. Adding new connections over the freeway for pedestrian and bicycle travel in the interchange area.
- B. In 2012, the Portland City Council and the Oregon Transportation Commission approved the Broadway-Weidler Facility Plan. The proposed plan includes substantial widening of I-5 immediately adjacent to Harriet Tubman Middle School, including extending travel lanes closer to the school and constructing new retaining walls.
- C. In 2016, ODOT concluded the Broadway-Weidler Facility Plan improvements were technically feasible, and proceeded with development of an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA is intended to evaluate the benefits and impacts within the Project Area of two alternatives: one in which the project would move forward as planned (Build Alternative), and one in which the project would not be built (No-Build Alternative).
- D. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. Based on the EA, the following actions can occur:
- a. If the agency determines that the action will not have significant environmental impacts, the agency will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). A FONSI is a document that presents the reasons why the agency has concluded that there are no significant environmental impacts projected to occur upon implementation of the action.
  - b. If the EA determines that the environmental impacts of a proposed action will be significant, an Environmental Impact Statement is prepared.
- E. ODOT's EA was published on February 15, 2019. The public comment period closed April 1, 2019. ODOT is required to take into consideration public health impacts in its analysis, and to use an equity lens in its planning processes. The historical legacy from ODOT ignoring health and equity concerns voiced decades ago about building a freeway too close to a school has cost PPS millions of dollars that were used to make the air inside Tubman safe for students and had health and environment consequences for our students and the surrounding community..

- F. Although the proposed project is immediately adjacent to PPS properties, in particular Harriet Tubman Middle School, neither ODOT nor the City meaningfully engaged with PPS during the planning process to assess the potential impacts, either short- or long-term, on the health of students and staff from environmental hazards of the freeway and the expansion or on the structural integrity of PPS facilities from incursions on PPS property during construction.
- G. An initial review of the EA by PPS staff raised substantial questions about potential impacts on PPS properties, including risks to soil stability under the Harriet Tubman Middle School site during the construction process, increased air pollution, increased noise pollution, lack of school bus egress from Harriet Tubman Middle School with the removal of the Flint Street overpass, and shifts to traffic patterns in the vicinity of both Tubman and District headquarters.
- H. In March 2019, the PPS Board of Education passed a resolution urging ODOT to move forward with a full Environment Impact Statement (EIS) to fully resolve questions around the potential impacts of the I-5 freeway and the proposed expansion on our students.
- I. In June 2019, ODOT convened a group of elected leaders and staff as well as community stakeholders to discuss the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project in the Albina neighborhood.
- J. To date, this group has met five times and made no substantial progress to substantially address issues raised by Portland Public Schools and the Albina Vision or offer alternatives to the current project plan.
- K. At this time, the OTC has privately stated that it plans to unilaterally take action at its December 17 public meeting without addressing any of the troubling and significant impacts that the widening will have on students and community health.

## **RESOLUTION**

- The Board of Education for Portland Public Schools opposes ODOT's efforts to move ahead with the Interstate 5 North of the Rose Quarter expansion in Albina without conducting a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and addressing the long term health and environmental issues at Harriet Tubman Middle School caused by the I-5 freeway.
- The Board of Education for Portland Public Schools will work in partnership with Albina Vision Trust to understand and develop alignment around improving environment and health impacts for students in the Albina neighborhood and mitigating the freeway's impact on students and their families in this neighborhood.
- The Board will work with the community to share information about the impacts of this freeway and the expansion with the legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation and other legislative leaders so that they understand the potential impacts of this project to Portland Public Schools' students and the wider Albina community.