
Executive Summary

What is the Interstate 5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Supplemental Environmental Assessment?

The Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) discloses results of the environmental study for the Interstate 5 (I-5) Rose Quarter Improvement Project (Project). The Project addresses a Revised Build Alternative, which includes design changes to the Build Alternative analyzed in the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT's) 2019 Environmental Assessment (2019 EA) and subsequently determined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to not result in a significant adverse impact on the human or natural environment in the 2020 Finding of No Significant Impact and Revised Environmental Assessment (2020 FONSI REA). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, ODOT re-evaluated the Project design changes and considered the differences of the Project compared to the design that was presented in the 2020 FONSI REA. At the conclusion of the re-evaluation, FHWA and ODOT agreed that the design changes required additional analyses beyond what was presented in the REA, and FHWA rescinded the FONSI on January 18, 2022. This SEA supplements information presented in the 2020 FONSI REA with an evaluation of the impacts of the Revised Build Alternative compared to the No-Build Alternative.

What is the purpose of this document?

This SEA discloses results of the environmental study for the Project and documents whether or not significant impacts to the environment would occur. This SEA supplements information presented in the 2020 FONSI REA with an evaluation of the impacts of two alternatives: one in which the Project would move forward as planned (Revised Build Alternative), and one in which the Project would not be built (No-Build Alternative).

Information contained in this document allows the public, businesses, interest groups, and agencies at all levels of government an opportunity to better understand the Project's benefits and impacts. This information also supports transportation officials in making informed decisions about the Project that balance engineering and transportation needs with social, economic, and natural environmental factors, such as noise, air quality, and traffic patterns. The information provided in this document and input from public review will be considered by the FHWA to make a decision on the Project.

What is the Project?

The Project is one of several large transportation improvement projects in the Portland metropolitan area being managed by ODOT's Urban Mobility Office. The Project includes upgrades to I-5 between Interstate 84 (I-84) and Interstate 405 (I-405) in central Portland to improve safety and operations at Oregon's top traffic bottleneck. Highway improvements would include auxiliary lanes and full shoulders to smooth traffic flow by providing vehicles additional space to accelerate or decelerate safely when merging on or off I-5, as well as space for emergency responders and disabled vehicles to move out of the way of traffic. Above I-5, the Project includes the construction of a highway cover to reconnect neighborhood streets. The connected streets improve travel for people walking, biking, and driving through the Rose Quarter area, with upgrades to sidewalks and street crossings.

The Project, or Revised Build Alternative, would include the following elements related to both the highway and local street system:

- Extending the existing auxiliary lane on I-5 southbound (SB) and adding a new auxiliary lane on I-5 northbound (NB) between I-84 and I-405
- Adding 12-foot-wide outside shoulders on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 in the NB direction only
- Adding 12-foot-wide outside shoulders on I-5 between I-84 and I-405; (SB from Broadway off-ramp to the I-84 off-ramp and NB from I-84 on-ramp to I-405 off-ramp)
- Removing existing overcrossing structures at North (N)/Northeast (NE) Broadway, N/NE Weidler Street, N Williams Avenue, N Flint Avenue, and N Vancouver Avenue (including the columns that support the structures) and replacing with a single highway cover structure over I-5 that incorporates these streets
- Relocating the existing I-5 SB off-ramp at the N Vancouver/Broadway intersection to a new location south of N Broadway where N Williams, N Ramsay Way, NE Wheeler Avenue, and the I-5 SB on-ramp currently come together
- Altering the cross section on N Williams between N Ramsay and N/NE Weidler to accommodate traffic exiting from SB I-5
- Modifying the I-5 NB off-ramp to include an additional right-turn lane to NE Weidler
- Increasing route options for pedestrian and bicycle routes through a new crossing at N/NE Hancock Street, bike lanes on N/NE Broadway and N/NE Weidler, and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities on N Vancouver and N Broadway
- Constructing a new roadway crossing to extend N/NE Hancock west across and over I-5

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- Constructing new widened and well-lit sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible ramps, high-visibility and marked crosswalks, and widened and improved bicycle facilities
 - Implementing stormwater management on the streets connected to the Broadway/Weidler interchange

What is the purpose of the Project?

The purpose of the Project is to improve the safety and operations on I-5 between I-405 and I-84, at the interchange of I-5 and N Broadway and NE Weidler (Broadway/Weidler interchange), and on adjacent surface streets in the vicinity of the Broadway/Weidler interchange. In support of this purpose, the Project also would support improved local connectivity and multimodal access in the vicinity of the interchange, improve multimodal connections between neighborhoods located east and west of I-5, and complement the land use, urban design, and transportation system envisioned for the planning districts of Lower Albina and Lloyd in the City of Portland's Adopted Central City 2035 N/NE Quadrant Plan and PedPDX, the Pedestrian Master Plan adopted in 2019.

Why is the Project needed?

I-5 is the main north-south highway moving people and goods and connecting cities and towns across the west coast of the U.S. from Mexico to Canada. I-5 between I-84 and I-405 is the top traffic bottleneck in Oregon, and the 28th worst freight bottleneck in the nation. The Project is needed to address the following:

- **I-5 Safety:** Data from 2011 to 2015 indicate the segment of I-5 between I-405 and I-84 had the highest crash rate in Oregon, approximately 3.5 times higher than the statewide average for comparable urban interstates.
- **I-5 Operations and Reliability:** I-5, in the vicinity of the Broadway/Weidler interchange, experiences some of the highest traffic volumes (121,400 average annual daily trips) and hours of congestion (12 hours per day) in Oregon. Travel reliability has decreased as periods of congestion have increased from morning and afternoon peak periods to longer periods throughout the day. This portion of I-5 is also one of the top freight bottlenecks in the nation, hindering the efficient movement of people and freight.
- **Broadway/Weidler Interchange Operations:** The configuration of the Broadway/Weidler interchange is not standard and is difficult to navigate. The high volumes of traffic in this area contribute to congestion and safety issues (for all modes) at the interchange ramps, the Broadway and Weidler overcrossings of I-5, and on local streets near the interchange.

What are the Project goals?

In addition to the purpose and need, the Project includes the following related goals:

- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility in the vicinity of the Broadway/Weidler interchange.
- Address congestion and improve safety for all modes on the transportation network connected to the Broadway/Weidler interchange and I-5 crossings.
- Support and integrate the following land use and urban design elements of the *Adopted Central City 2035 Plan* (which includes the N/NE Quadrant Plan) related to I-5 and the Broadway/Weidler interchange:
 - A diverse mix of commercial, cultural, entertainment, industrial, recreational, and residential uses, including affordable housing
 - Infrastructure that supports economic development
 - Infrastructure for healthy, safe, and vibrant communities that respects and complements adjacent neighborhoods
 - A multimodal transportation system that addresses present and future needs, both locally and on the highway system
 - An improved local circulation system for safe access for all modes
 - Equitable access to community amenities and economic opportunities
 - Protect and enhance the cultural heritage of the area
 - Improve urban design conditions
- Improve freight reliability.
- Provide multimodal transportation facilities to support planned development in the Rose Quarter, Lower Albina, and Lloyd.
- Improve connectivity across I-5 for all modes.

Where would the Project be located?

The Project area is a stretch of I-5 that runs through the heart of Portland. It is located in the historic Albina community in an area near the Willamette River that passes through the Lloyd, Eliot, and Boise neighborhoods.

The Project would be located along I-5 in both the NB and SB directions between I-405 and I-84 in Portland, Oregon, and includes the Broadway/Weidler interchange and the surrounding transportation network from approximately N/NE Hancock Street to the north, North Benton Avenue to the west, N/NE Multnomah Street to the south, and NE 2nd Avenue to the east.

What happens if the Project is not constructed (No-Build Alternative)?

If the Project is not constructed (i.e., the No-Build Alternative), I-5 and the Broadway/Weidler interchange, including most of the local transportation network in the Project Area, would remain in its current configuration. Improvements to I-5 that would enhance traffic flow and safety and the new highway cover that would improve multimodal connections east and west of I-5 would not occur. Without the Project, congestion on I-5 and in the vicinity of the Broadway/Weidler interchange would continue to worsen, and frequent crashes would continue to occur for all modes. Delays in the movement of freight on I-5 would continue to impose costs on shippers, businesses, and consumers. Traffic delay and vehicle/bicycle crashes on surface streets near the interchange would also continue to worsen. In addition, the highway cover would not be built, and the reconnected streets and new land created over I-5 would not occur.

If the Project is not constructed, the City of Portland would be unable to implement some aspects of the land use components of the *Adopted Central City 2035 Plan* or PedPDX, as adopted. Some planned re-zonings to allow higher levels of employment or population density would not be allowed, which would limit allowed development within the Lower Albina and Lloyd planning districts and would not provide for the approximately 4 acres of buildable space on the highway cover or establish connectivity between the neighborhoods of Lower Albina and Lloyd through construction of the highway cover.

Other transportation improvement projects, including separate and distinct projects identified in Metro's Regional Transportation Plan, would likely still be constructed. This would include the City's plans to make improvements in the N/NE Broadway and N/NE Weidler corridor from the Broadway Bridge to NE 7th Avenue to enhance safety for people walking, bicycling, rolling, and driving through the Project Area.

What aspects of the environment are analyzed in this Supplemental Environmental Assessment?

This SEA evaluates the potential for the Project to affect a wide variety of environmental resources, consistent with the 1987 FHWA *Technical Advisory T 6640.8A Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents*. The environmental topics addressed in this SEA include the following:

- Air Quality
- Archaeological Resources
- Climate Change
- Environmental Justice
- Hazardous Materials
- Right of Way
- Section 4(f)
- Socioeconomics
- Transportation
- Utilities

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- Historic Resources
 - Land Use
 - Noise
 - Water Resources
 - Cumulative Impacts

What areas within the City of Portland were studied to assess impacts on environmental resources?

The areas within the City studied to assess environmental impacts from the Project generally include the Broadway/Weidler interchange and the surrounding transportation network, from approximately N/NE Hancock to the north, N Benton to the west, N/NE Multnomah to the south, and NE 2nd to the east. The “Project Area” represents the estimated area within which improvements associated with the Revised Build Alternative are proposed, including where permanent modifications to adjacent parcels or construction activities may occur. Impacts are described as short term or long term. Short-term impacts are primarily related to construction. Long-term benefits or impacts are considered out to year 2045, and compare outcomes of the Project No-Build and Revised Build Alternatives.

For the purposes of this SEA, this area is referred to as the Area of Potential Impact (API). For most resource topics, the API is the same as the Project Area. However, for some resources (e.g., Air Quality), the API was expanded beyond the Project Area to include additional areas that could experience effects from the Project.

How is the Project expected to improve driver and vehicle safety on I-5?

New ramp-to-ramp connections (auxiliary lanes) are designed to separate slower vehicles entering and exiting the highway from higher-speed vehicles using the through lanes on the highway. Auxiliary lanes are proven to increase safety by providing drivers more time to merge, which reduces rear-end and sideswipe crashes. The new ramp-to-ramp connections are expected to reduce the frequency of crashes by up to 50 percent.

What is a highway cover?

The highway cover is a concrete or steel platform that is placed over a highway to accommodate community uses and structures above. As part of the Project, there is an opportunity to reconnect the street grid in the Albina area by replacing existing, aging bridges with one large, seismically resilient highway cover over I-5. The proposed highway cover design was recommended by the community after multiple highway cover options were evaluated through an Independent Cover Assessment review in 2020 and 2021, and has been incorporated into the Revised Build Alternative. The highway cover in the Revised Build Alternative would connect streets

that are currently divided by I-5. It would also add new land over I-5, allowing for wider sidewalks and potential for future economic development opportunities.

What are the Project's anticipated benefits?

The Revised Build Alternative would provide a variety of transportation and environmental benefits, the most notable of which include the following:

- Operations (speed and travel time) on I-5 would improve in both the AM and PM commute periods, potentially saving I-5 travelers nearly 2.5 million hours of travel time each year.
- Conditions for pedestrians and cyclists would be improved by increased physical separation between motorized and non-motorized users, sidewalk gap closures, and reduction in the complexity of intersections along N/NE Broadway, N/NE Weidler, N Wheeler, N Williams, N Vancouver, and the new N/NE Hancock crossing.
- Multimodal benefits would include improved access to transit, improved mobility and safety for transit riders and people walking and biking, and improved physical connections to areas east and west of I-5 provided by the new highway cover.
- The Revised Build Alternative would include approximately 8,500 feet (or more than 1.5 miles) of street improvements, including wider and improved sidewalks, additional safe bicycle lanes, additional ADA-compliant street crossings, and safer ingress and egress to parcels throughout the Project Area.
- Police, fire, and emergency responders would experience beneficial effects from reduced delays and crashes on I-5 and in the Broadway/Weidler interchange area.
- Safety improvements and reductions in congestion and delays on I-5 would have beneficial effects on the regional economy by improving the movement of goods and people.
- Improved traffic operations on the local street system and the addition of new pedestrian and bicycle enhancements would provide benefits to the local business environment.
- Restoration of east-west neighborhood street connections over I-5 and improvement of overall community cohesion within the Project Area.
- Treatment facilities to manage stormwater runoff would be developed at three locations: N Mississippi Avenue, north of N Mississippi under the highway, and NE Weidler on-ramp.
- Completing the Revised Build Alternative would be consistent with the goals and objectives identified in the Adopted Central City 2035 Plan, PedPDX, and Oregon's Administrative Rule 660-012-0015(b).

What are the Project's anticipated adverse impacts and what would be done to mitigate these impacts?

ODOT and FHWA worked together to develop the design concept for the 2019 EA Build Alternative with the objective to avoid and minimize impacts to the natural and human environment to the greatest extent possible. ODOT continued to refine the design concept for the Revised Build Alternative with FHWA, still with the objective of avoiding and minimizing impacts. As a result, adverse environmental impacts from the Revised Build Alternative would primarily result from construction activities and would therefore be short term.

The most likely impacts include the following:

- Short-term air quality impacts during construction would include the release of fugitive dust generated by soil excavation, surface grading, hauling, and various other construction activities, as well as exhaust emissions from construction equipment. ODOT would require construction contractors to implement a variety of measures to control dust and exhaust emissions from construction equipment and vehicles.
- During construction, 13 historic properties could be affected by noise and vibration, increased truck traffic, traffic congestion, changes to access, increased dust, and temporary changes to the historic setting due to the presence of construction equipment, staging areas, and materials storage areas. ODOT would require construction contractors to follow a variety of best management practices to minimize these types of impacts. ODOT and FHWA have also developed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) in consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to avoid and/or minimize the potential for Project-related vibration to historic properties.
- During construction, there would be the potential for spills or releases of oil and fuel from mechanical equipment, including the mobilization or release of existing contamination in soil and groundwater. Such spills or releases could potentially increase human health and safety hazards for construction workers and the public. ODOT would require construction contractors to implement a range of measures to address hazardous materials concerns, including testing procedures for identifying the presence of lead-based paint and asbestos; requirements for the safe transport, use, and storage of hazardous materials; and the obligation to develop a Health and Safety Plan, a Project-specific Pollution Control Plan, and a Contaminated Media Management Plan.
- There would be a permanent conversion of approximately 1.8 acres of commercial land to transportation right of way (ROW).

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- Construction activities would result in a short-term increase of noise levels from construction activities. ODOT would require construction contractors to implement noise abatement measures to minimize the adverse effects of construction activity. No substantial operations-related noise impacts are anticipated.
 - Short-term construction-related impacts to transit would include temporary bus stop closures or relocations, bus route detours, and changes to streetcar operations. To address short-term impacts during construction, Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet) has indicated that it may consider implementing bus route detours around the impacted area for the duration of the construction period to avoid multiple temporary changes for a single bus route.
 - Construction would result in short-term impacts to highway traffic, local street motor vehicle traffic, cyclists, pedestrians, transit, and event access at Moda Center and the Oregon Convention Center. ODOT would coordinate with the Moda Center, City of Portland, and Oregon Convention Center to avoid traffic disruptions during major events to the extent practicable.
 - Highway lane closures are likely on I-5 during removal and construction of the overcrossing structures and retaining walls, including potential late night and weekend closure of all directional lanes. ODOT would develop a comprehensive transportation management plan that documents construction staging and schedule, alternate routes for all modes of travel during road closure, and lane closure restrictions, as well as transportation management and operation strategies. Temporary local street closures, crosswalk closures, or turn restrictions would be implemented as necessary to limit traffic diversion onto local streets in residential neighborhoods.
 - Existing above- and below-ground utilities would likely be impacted during construction, with effects ranging from brief temporary service interruptions to major relocations of electric transmission and distribution lines, water supply lines, and large capacity sewer lines. Coordination with utility providers and the use of standard construction procedures and techniques would minimize disturbance to system users and avoid damage or impacts to existing utilities.
 - Previously undiscovered archaeological resources could be altered, damaged, or destroyed by the operation of heavy equipment or during compaction, excavation, or grading of soils during construction and subsurface maintenance activities. Potential impacts to archaeological resources during construction would be addressed through an Inadvertent Discovery Plan and a Project-specific PA between FHWA, Oregon SHPO, and ODOT that would identify mandatory protocols to be followed in the event of an inadvertent discovery.

What are the Project's anticipated right of way needs?

ROW needs to construct various Project features along I-5, including several new or reconfigured on- and off-ramps and surface street improvements, would displace and relocate five commercial retail or service-related businesses, three landlord-only businesses (properties owned for the sole purpose of leasing), eight personal-only properties (impacts requiring relocation of personal property from the ROW, but no need for full relocation), and four outdoor advertising signs. No residential displacements are anticipated. Displaced businesses are not "sole source" type businesses or unique to the surrounding community. All ROW acquisition and relocation activities would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (49 Code of Federal Regulations 24), Oregon Revised Statute 35, and the *2018 ODOT Right of Way Manual*.

Where can you find more detailed information about Project impacts?

Additional information on the impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Project, beyond those provided in this SEA, can be found in separate supplemental technical reports available in Appendix A of this SEA and on the Project website at: <https://www.i5rosequarter.org/resources/library.aspx>.

How has the public been involved in this Project?

Since its inception in 2010, the Project has included an active public involvement component. Early planning efforts for the N/NE Quadrant (as part of the *Adopted Central City 2035 Plan*) and I-5 Broadway/Weidler Plans were guided by the unique collaborative partnership between ODOT and the City of Portland, and a 30-person Stakeholder Advisory Committee. This partnership allowed for joint planning and decision-making to develop a design concept for the I-5 Broadway/Weidler interchange that would complement the land use, urban design, and transportation system envisioned for the planning districts of Lower Albina and Lloyd.

Advisory committees oversee and provide input into the Project development. Committee members' expertise reflects diverse professional backgrounds, including minority-owned firms, advocacy groups, workforce development organizations, industry associations, and community-based organizations. Members are leaders and volunteers with strong ties to the historic Albina community, with a wide array of civic and community interests. All members are recognized for advocating for people, particularly for people of color and other diverse groups.

The Community Oversight Advisory Committee (COAC) works to ensure the construction contractor meets its community and project goals and expectations for contracting with disadvantaged businesses and employing minorities and women. The

COAC brings a broad perspective on community, social, economic, and workforce issues in the Project Area.

The Historic Albina Advisory Board's (HAAB) purpose is to elevate voices in the Black community to ensure that project outcomes reflect community interests and values, and that their community directly benefits from the investments of this Project. The board brings community perspectives into the Project's decision-making process concerning elements that most directly support community connections, urban design, and wealth generation in the Black and historic Albina community.

To learn more about these advisory committees, visit the Project website at: <https://www.i5rosequarter.org/community/committees.aspx>.

In addition to the committees, in early 2020, the Oregon Transportation Commission directed ODOT to conduct an independent assessment of the highway cover designs and identify new options for using highway covers to address restorative justice for the Black Albina community. This effort involved local Project stakeholders including Metro, Multnomah County, City of Portland, Portland Public Schools, Albina Vision Trust, and the Oregon Transportation Commission. The Independent Cover Assessment (ICA) team worked directly with local community members from the historic Albina neighborhood to understand how the highway cover design concepts might best serve the historic Albina community. The Project's HAAB, Executive Steering Committee, and COAC Board also provided input as part of the ICA process.

In addition to the ICA, the Project team has participated in numerous community events and briefings and has hosted a series of public design surveys to gain public input on specific aesthetic design considerations associated with the highway infrastructure (columns, walls, crash barriers, etc.).

How has the Project addressed the history of environmental justice in the Project Area?

In Portland, generations of Black families in the Albina community are still impacted by the lasting harm caused by the original construction of I-5 in the 1950s, which resulted in the loss of their homes, businesses, and community places. Early recognition of environmental justice issues in the Project Area led to substantial targeted outreach to raise awareness about Project alternatives and the environmental studies under way. In 2020, the Project team expanded outreach efforts during the ICA process. A team was created consisting of community engagement, urban design, engineering, and environmental experts. The ICA team reviewed Project public records for community concerns, engaged with historic Albina community members, and solicited feedback from stakeholder participants to understand how the highway cover could be configured to create the greatest potential for restorative justice outcomes for the historic Black Albina community. These outreach efforts, together with technical

expertise from the ICA team, resulted in identification of the Revised Build Alternative. The Project presents an opportunity to acknowledge the past harms of the destruction of the Albina community, and to deliver a restorative project through intentionally investing in Black- and minority-owned companies and workers.

What agencies and organizations did ODOT consult with during preparation of the Supplemental Environmental Assessment?

ODOT worked closely with the City of Portland, FHWA, Oregon SHPO, TriMet, Metro, Port of Portland, Portland Parks and Recreation, Portland Public Schools, and Portland Streetcar to ensure that community concerns and potential environmental impacts from the Revised Build Alternative have been fully addressed and disclosed. ODOT would continue to work with these partners to ensure that mitigation measures and environmental commitments are implemented during construction and operation of the Revised Build Alternative. In addition to the agencies listed above, the parties listed below were invited to participate in the Project. Some agencies invited declined to participate, as indicated (note that some agencies qualify as cooperating agencies).

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries (cooperating)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (cooperating)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (declined)
- United States Coast Guard (cooperating)
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (no response)
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde (no response)
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz (no response)
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (no response)
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe (no response)
- Multnomah County (no response)

Cooperating and participating agencies provided the following support to the Project:

- Reviewed and commented on the purpose and need and range of alternatives
- Reviewed and commented on methodologies used to address technical topics consistent with special expertise or jurisdiction of the agency
- Identified issues of concern regarding the Project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts
- Provided timely input on unresolved issues

Where can I find more information about the Project?

ODOT has created a Project website (<http://i5rosequarter.org/>) that includes detailed information on the Revised Build Alternative, including graphics and links to newsletters, maps, and other relevant documents. Interested parties can sign up for email updates and view a calendar of upcoming events.

How can I submit comments on the Supplemental Environmental Assessment?

Comments on the SEA may be submitted in a variety of ways:

1. Online Open House/Project Website: The Online Open House (www.odotopenhouse.org/i5-rose-quarter-sea) will run from November 15, 2022, through January 4, 2023. The same material provided at the Open House will be available online at the Project's website (www.i5RoseQuarter.org). The public may comment on the Project via this webpage.
2. Email: Comments may be submitted via email to: i5RoseQuarter@odot.oregon.gov.
3. Virtual Public Hearing: ODOT will hold a virtual public hearing (i5rosequarter.org/community/events-meetings.aspx) on December 14, 2022, to provide an opportunity for the public to provide oral testimony on the Project.
4. Phone: The public may leave recorded verbal comments at (503) 470-3127.
5. Mail: Written public comments may be mailed to:
Project Manager
c/o I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project
888 SW 5th Avenue
Suite 600
Portland, OR 97204

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