

Date: 8-13-15
To: Transportation Futures Study: Study Advisory Committee & Staff
From: Steve Larrance, SAC member
Subject: Long term scenarios and other thoughts

In reading the materials for our 8-13-15 meeting several thoughts came to mind.

My first concern is that there is only one common starting point for the two long term planning investment packages (IPs) scenarios to be studied and compared. Both start from assumptions and points of view expressed by Metro. As stated by Dyami Valentine and Scott Harmon "The Study Team proposes to use the federal financially constrained Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) with the addition of the enhanced transit package from the Metro Climate Smart Communities Strategy and a basic local grid transportation system in the Urban Reserves as the basis for the projects lists. From this common base the unique transportation investments for each of the two IPs will be developed."

Is there anyone who doubts that Metro's assumptions and mandates over the past twenty years have taken Washington County backwards? We went from a system that was planning for the big picture with the West I-205 on the adopted plans and expanded MAX and transit, building the multi modal arterial system to four lane capacity to serve the local planned density and uses with MSTIP \$ and building the new and old local roads with developer funds together with local urban road tax and city contributions. And where are we today? Thanks to Metro we have no planned limited access corridors, a system of arterials that can't serve even the local users let alone the through traffic that we now are causing to rely upon those same under sized arterials and local roads so skinny that fire and garbage trucks have great difficulty safely utilizing them.

As stated in our meeting materials a common need for any foreseeable future is to complete our incomplete transportation system. Dyami and Scott list as challenges: a lack of capacity in both east-west and north-south travel corridors, arterial traffic spilling over into neighborhoods to avoid bottlenecks (congested arterial intersections) and state, regional and local policies that will not allow properly sized and designated streets to be built in proximity to newly urbanizing areas and urban reserves. These were all brought to us by Metro policies and mandates. Metro hasn't been accurate in their estimates of congestion and what it would do to our livability. If we agree to continue with Metro driving the future planning then we will have more of the same. And it is not like Metro is treating the remainder of the region the same as we are being treated. Portland has many limited access corridors for all forms of vehicles to utilize and they have a completed grid of multilane arterials and a usable local streets grid.

I propose that Metro shut down I-205 for a day or two so they can feel the fury of Portland citizens. Short of that, we need to model what that scenario would look like so we all can better realize the value of limited access corridors and also how a complete grid of multilane arterials can act as an emergency back up when limited access corridors fail.

Why can't one of our scenarios start from a point not following Metro's mandates? A clean slate to design a system to meet our future needs. Sure we start with the street layout we now have and then move forward in our design but without Metro's policies and mandates to limit our system. A comparison of our ideal system with one that follows the existing policies of Metro would be a real learning tool. We may find that our system is more effective and efficient in meeting our community's goals. Dyami and Scott state "this study has the unique opportunity to look beyond current regulatory financial constraints and identify aspirational projects to address long term needs." I vote for these two scenarios.

More thoughts:

A.M. Peak traffic volumes : I first called Chris Deffebach on May 5th to express my concerns about NOT including A.M. Peak volumes and congestion statistics in the Transportation Futures Study. I said how serious can this study be taken if it will not define the scope of today's problems by including the worse case scenario we face each day. At each of our SAC meetings we have been told that staff will meet with me to convince me that we don't need that info. I have yet to be contacted by any staff to set up an opportunity to discuss this issue. Pretty soon we will hear that it is too late in the process to include this all important data. I recently talked to a very well known and respected transportation engineer from the private sector who said simply, "How can you know the extent of the problem unless you are willing to include the worst case data?". We need that data to be included.

New Roads: There is NO evidence that anyone has ever purchased a car because a new road was built.

Transit: I support spending money on transit within reason. We need to make riding to work on transit for everyone who carries nothing bigger than a brief case as easy as we can afford to do without spending funds needed for other transportation system users. Transit needs to be personally safer to have a chance at accomplishing this goal.

Congestion as a means to get people out of their cars: Both congestion and auto ownership have increased dramatically over the last ten years. It didn't work. So Metro admit you tried to cause congestion and now get on with changes necessary to slowly dig our way back out of the hole that you put us in.

The Portland Region's Transportation Plan: If you were an urban planning student and drew out the existing freeway plan and handed it in as your best effort you would without a doubt get an "F". It is bad long range planning to unnecessarily direct over a third of the region's E/W trips through an over capacity un-expandable tunnel only to come upon an un-enlargable freeway interchange (Hwy. 26 and I-405) and then quickly meet up with either of two also un-enlargeable interchanges where I-405 meets I-5 on the Marquam or Freemont Bridges then to be stuck in congestion on I-5 going north or south causing smog in the very smog prone central city.

The Westside Interstate: Even if we didn't need a Westside Interstate for our own de-congestion and economic purposes it would be a very cost effective and healthful investment for the region to rid the central city of that % smog and stressful congestion. A third Columbia River bridge would be very effective at moving interstate traffic. How much money has it cost us to wait this twenty years? How many newer neighborhoods will be invaded when the correct location is determined? If it had even just remained on the plans new neighborhoods could have been planned to minimize impacts. And other streets could have been more effectively planned and built in preparation for the role that the limited access facility would play.