

PBOT

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EAST PORTLAND ARTERIAL STREETS STRATEGY MEMO #1

Date: February 8, 2019

To: PBOT and Consultant EPASS Staff

From: Mimi Phillips and Steve Szigethy on behalf of the PBOT EPASS Team

Subject: Past public input pertaining to East Portland arterial streets

Before undertaking a comprehensive strategy and public outreach effort focused on East Portland's arterial streets, the EPASS project team thought it would be appropriate to review the wealth of public input that has been gathered over the past decade during community involvement efforts for plans and projects. The project team hoped to identify recurring themes heard during these processes and to subsequently share and validate these themes with the 2019 East Portland community. These themes will help inform concepts developed as part of EPASS.

This memo summarizes past public input from a variety of planning, design, and capital projects undertaken over the past ten (10) years in East Portland.

Comments were gathered for projects through open houses, online feedback forms, workshops, public meetings, as well as letters and emails submitted to project managers. Common themes gleaned from these projects are summarized at the front of this memo, followed by more detailed, project-specific feedback from the following 14 projects:



- 82nd Avenue of Roses High Crash Corridor Plan (2008)
- East Portland In Motion (2012)
- Vision Zero Action Plan (2016)
- Growing Transit Communities (2017)
- Bloom Report (2018)
- Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) Update (2018)
- Enhanced Transit Corridors (2018)
- PedPDX (In progress)
- “Walking While Black” Focus Groups (2017)
- 122nd Avenue Safety Project (In progress)
- 102nd Avenue Safety Project (In progress)
- Outer Division Multi-Modal Safety Project (In progress)
- East Glisan Street Update (In progress)
- 162nd Avenue Safety and Access to Transit Project (In progress)
- Stark Human-Centered Design Pilot (2018)
- EPASS (In progress)

Summary of Common Themes

Different public outreach methods were used for each of the East Portland projects to gather local commentary. These methods included workshops, open houses, online surveys, online and paper feedback forms, presentations at standing neighborhood and business association meetings, educational outreach and trainings, door-to-door information sharing, project office hours, testimony before council, and the collection of letters and emails by project managers. Important to note while reading this section is that individual PBOT projects rarely have the resources to perform public opinion surveys of a statistically significant representative sample of the local population. Despite concerted efforts such as working with capacity building groups that organize underrepresented populations, PBOT continues to hear from a disproportionately white, older and homeownership population in East Portland.



Overall, planners and project managers generally perceived residents to be open to the participation process and in support of improved conditions. Support for projects varied somewhat, but overall public comment was generally positive towards the studied projects.¹ Support was particularly variant depending on the stage that the project was in (early planning vs design and construction). Support also varied strongly based on the type of design being implemented. Projects seemed to accumulate more negative feedback once designs materialized and people perceived that there may be interruptions to their travel routines. Additionally, project managers and planners received more negative comments if a project implemented a new design that residents believed would permanently lengthen their commute times. Several themes remained constant throughout all the examined outreach efforts. Generally, these themes can be characterized under the realm of either safety, congestion, or both. The main areas of concern presented by community members (in no particular order) are described below:

Safe Crossings – The difficulty and danger of crossing multi-lane arterials on foot or mobility device was a concern brought up for every project on such streets. Additional frequency and visibility of crossings - especially near schools and parks - was generally desired. While concerns generally focused on “uncontrolled” locations where people must cross to reach a bus stop or other destination, there were also comments about challenges crossing at fully signalized intersections, even with a walk signal and legal right-of-way. Conversely, some lamented that people sometimes will cross at an uncontrolled location even if there is an enhanced crossing a short distance away, or that some people wear dark clothing at night.

Speeding – Speeding was a commonly raised issue, particularly during off-peak hours on larger arterials. Streets with lower density of land uses, such as Halsey and Glisan near Glendoveer Golf Course, were mentioned as particular speeding problems.

Sidewalk Improvements and Infill – East Portland residents experience a large proportion of streets with substandard, narrow, or missing sidewalks. Input early in

¹ East Glisan Street Update is the one project that has received a majority of negative feedback. The reasons for this will be examined in section II. b.



the 2010s leaned toward maximizing the length of sidewalk infill along arterials, even if that meant building curb-tight sidewalks with no planter strip. More recent feedback has focused on the need to build better, wider sidewalks that meet city standards and are not obstructed by utility poles and other obstacles. This concern ties in with the safety and modal separation desires mentioned concurrently during multiple outreach efforts.

Street Lighting – A top safety concern mentioned during multiple processes is deficient street lighting on East Portland arterials. Most East Portland arterials have street lights mounted on utility poles on just one side of the street. People have communicated that walking and accessing transit during the dark hours feels dangerous when only one side of the street is lit, and that even these lights do not provide adequate illumination levels for pedestrians crossing or walking along the street. These lighting concerns apply not just to traffic safety (fear of being hit by a car), but also personal safety (fear of being assaulted). Furthermore, focus groups and surveys revealed that deficient street lighting is a top barrier to walking for Black Portlanders, compared to citywide responses that rate this concern lower.

Enforcement – East Portland residents seemed to generally feel that they do not receive an equal amount of speed and other traffic violation enforcement on their arterial streets compared to other parts of Portland. Though vehicular speeding was a major theme, unsafe behavior by pedestrians was also raised as a common concern across the various projects and enforcement of safe crossing practices was also desired. At the same time, there were concerns about racial profiling in the enforcement of traffic laws for both people driving and walking. Separately, accounts of drunk drivers hitting and demolishing infrastructure such as signal poles and bus shelters were often heard.

Modal Separation – Residents were generally more favorable towards designs that separated modes, such as neighborhood greenways and off-street paths for cyclists rather than integrated bike lanes on arterial streets. This preference was strong even in the case of barrier protected bike lanes. Off-street paths, however, have faced increased scrutiny in the wake of the homelessness crisis due to camping.



Congestion – Residents preferred design alternatives that they did not believe would hinder commute times. Community members were concerned about current congestion on arterial streets, particularly during peak travel times. Road reconfigurations that involved reducing traffic lanes were generally not as well received as projects that used other design features to improve safety and calm traffic. People often asked how the city can reduce traffic lanes when population and jobs continue to grow.

Access to Transit - A common concern was that residents in East Portland don't feel that they have a viable alternative to driving. Design options that paired with improved access to transit and more frequent transit service were highly favored and increased positive responses to road reorganization.

Traffic Diversion– Residents of East Portland were concerned about residential streets being used as cut-throughs during peak travel times. Many people commented on the side streets near arterials currently being unsafe as drivers often speed through them to avoid traffic during morning and evening rushes. Concern that this problem will persist and perhaps increase with growing congestion was raised multiple times on each of the projects, particularly when a road reconfiguration was considered. Speed enforcement, traffic calming, and limited access to residential streets were favored as design interventions.

Less Support for Bicycle Infrastructure – On nearly every capital project that proposed to add or enhance bike lanes, project managers heard anecdotal sentiments that “the only people that bike in East Portland are homeless or collecting cans, etc.” and that project designs are prioritizing a travel mode – cycling – that is sparsely used in East Portland. While this is a gross generalization, public surveys (such as those for Glisan and 162nd) tended to follow a similar track, with bicycle improvements typically scoring as the least desired improvements, particularly if they take away space from vehicle travel or parking. Other comments included that “there is nothing to bike too,” or “my job is too far away to bike.” Support for better bicycle facilities is not totally absent, however. Longtime East Portland cycling advocates, along with new residents that previously lived in neighborhoods closer to downtown Portland, tended to support increased



investments in bikeways in east Portland. As mentioned above under modal separation, neighborhood greenways and off-street paths tended to be supported to a greater degree than arterial bike lanes.

Public Comments for Individual Projects

82nd Avenue of Roses High Crash Corridor Plan (2008)

This plan covered a seven-mile section of 82nd Ave, which had been designated as one of Portland's most dangerous streets, particularly for pedestrians. The key project goal was to create an action plan that could reduce fatalities and injuries along the corridor.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: The public involvement process for this project included three open houses, a safety survey distributed in both paper and electronic form, the formation of a CAC (Citizens Advisory Committee) and TAC (Technical advisory committee), and frequent communication with neighborhood association and district coalition members.

Themes: The major issues raised by community members regarding this project were safety related. The top concerns voiced by the community were pedestrian safety, followed by vehicles speeding, pedestrians jaywalking, and excessive traffic and congestion. Other recurring comments regarding the street focused on vehicle traffic violations and unsafe interaction between transit modes. When asked what treatments they would like to see to address these issues, the most popular responses were speed reduction devices and enforcement and enhancements for pedestrian safety (pedestrian islands, curb extensions, more frequent crossings, etc.).

East Portland in Motion (2012)

East Portland in Motion is a five-year implementation strategy for active transportation projects and programs east of 82nd Avenue in East Portland.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Public involvement efforts for East Portland in Motion included collaboration with neighborhood groups, staffed



“stations” at community events engaging with community members and voting on locations for sidewalk projects, interviews with community members and groups of typically underrepresented populations conducted by Portland State University Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) students, a travel survey conducted through a local mailing by MURP students, presentations and feedback received from stakeholder advisory groups, and through feedback received via the project website.

Themes: Community feedback prioritized safety (particularly for children), improving transit and access to transit, preference of greenways over bike lanes, and a strong desire for basic infrastructure (street maintenance and pot hole repair, safer crossings on busy streets and improved signals and sidewalks on busy streets). It was also noted that minority and lower income populations prioritized active transportation improvements (safer crossings and sidewalks on busy streets, sidewalks that access transit and neighborhood greenways), while white and upper-income populations prioritized pothole repair and signal timing. EPIM feedback also resulted in PBOT’s early 2010s strategy of completing more miles of less-expensive curb-tight sidewalk on arterials, rather than fewer miles of new-construction sidewalk with storm water facilities and planter strips.

Vision Zero Action Plan (2016)

The Vision Zero Action Plan sets a goal of eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2025.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Public comments for this project were gained from an online survey, as well as both one-on-one interviews and an interactive wall at public events including a Town Hall Listening Session, Portland Safe Streets Fair, Good in the Hood, and Rosewood National Night Out.

Themes: Community members were concerned with safety and accessibility, particularly for pedestrians. Bicycle safety and visibility was also mentioned frequently in survey comments, along with improving transit options. Common treatments included a desire for infrastructure changes including lower speed limits,



safer crossings, traffic calming, and improved sidewalks and wheelchair access, along with narrowing of streets. Enforcement and education were also common solutions mentioned by residents. Comments regarding East Portland had particular emphasis on improved and more frequent pedestrian crossings.

Growing Transit Communities (2017)

This plan is an effort to identify and prioritize the most beneficial improvements that would make getting to the bus and using the bus a safer and more convenient option along corridors in East Portland.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Public outreach consisted of a physical and virtual open house, an online survey, a community walk, several visits to community organizations and neighborhood associations, and regular meetings with a Community Advisory Group with community members from the selected corridors.

Themes: Public outreach efforts for this project were focused on gleaning values of the community and turning those into criteria for transit development and corridor selection. The three main criteria that planners found for corridor development in East Portland were transportation safety, improved access to transit, and equity (benefits for people of color, low income households, people with disabilities, etc.).

Bloom Report (2018)

PBOT partnered with Bloom Communications to gauge public attitudes and perceptions surrounding the work of the Bureau, with the purpose of improving PBOT's messaging and communications efforts. The research objects were to set a baseline measurement of attitudes towards the organization, discover top transportation priorities and issues of residents, and to gauge how current PBOT messages are being received.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Bloom Communications conducted an online regional poll of 1,000 Portland residents using a geographically and demographically representative sample of the city. They then conducted two in-person focus groups with a total of 17 Portland residents with demographic and



geographic considerations. Responses and results of the focus group can be analyzed based on geographic location in the city.

Themes: Based on survey results, the top transportation priorities for residents were safety, congestion, and road maintenance. These priorities held true among East Portland respondents. In comparison to other areas of the city, however, East Portland residents more frequently worry about the safety of their children while traveling on Portland streets, and more residents responded that poor road conditions are one of the worst parts of getting around Portland. In comparison to the rest of the city, East Portland also had higher rates of respondents saying that they drive every day, and that their trips consist of “always go[ing] to my place of employment.” Finally, East Portland respondents placed pedestrian safety as a higher priority than most other areas of the city.

Transportation System Plan (TSP) Update (2018)

The TSP is the 20-year plan to guide transportation policies and investments in Portland.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: The TSP Update involved a wide range of public outreach methods, working in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan as well as the utilization of public engagement efforts gleaned from recently completed plans and projects. Public comment came from direct contact with planners, surveys, outreach events, testimony before council, and advisory committees.

Themes: The main themes from feedback for the TSP are well reflected in the overall feedback themes in the summary section of this report. Community members greatest priorities and preference in street design included flexibility to cater to the needs of different areas (for instance, prioritizing sidewalk infill over bicycle infrastructure, allowing for curb tight sidewalks to get more sidewalk miles in areas with lack of access for pedestrians), safe crossings of main streets, as well as concern over cut through traffic on residential streets. Although comments were gathered from the City of Portland as a whole, a specific concern raised in the TSP outreach was displacement vulnerability in East Portland because of street updates and new design implementation.



Enhanced Transit Corridors (2018)

This plan - lead by PBOT staff in collaboration with TriMet - identifies a new vision for frequent, reliable, high-ridership transit and how we can achieve it in Portland.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: The project team sought stakeholder comments through public open houses, online surveys, reaching out to community members waiting at bus stops, commission briefings, and visits to stakeholder groups and committees.

Themes: Public input on this project largely fell in line with the themes found throughout all the East Portland projects. In general, East Portland community members prioritized safety highest among their concerns, followed by congestion concerns and predictability of transit (particularly during peak periods), and equitable access. Residents highly favored individual analysis of locations to select the best design treatments over broad policy implementations, but generally favored separation of travel modes for improved safety and predictability on intermodal interactions.

PedPDX (In progress)

PedPDX is Portland's citywide pedestrian plan. It aims to identify key strategies and tools to make walking safer and more comfortable across the city, and to make Portland a truly great walking city.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: PedPDX utilized a variety of public outreach methods, including an online survey and public outreach events. Targeted outreach allowed PedPDX to gain significant input from East Portland residents. Area specific community input was collected in their *Walking Priorities* survey, which will be utilized to apply themes found in the survey to EPASS.

Themes: In East Portland sidewalks/walking paths missing on BUSY streets was the highest rated impediment to walking. The next two highest ratings for impediments to walking in East Portland were people driving too fast on Residential streets, followed by there not being enough places to cross busy streets. East Portland residents reported that they felt the most important places to improve



walking conditions were areas that serve people who need to rely on walking the most, followed by streets where people walking have been killed or injured, school connections and streets connecting people to transit/bus stops. Additionally, in an open-ended question asking which places were most important to improve walking in Portland, various locations in East Portland arose as an overall theme from respondents' city wide.

“Walking While Black” Focus Groups (2017)

As part of the PedPDX public involvement process, PBOT held two focus groups to elevate and better understand the walking experiences of communities of color, particularly Black Portlanders. This more intentional effort stemmed from an underrepresentation of survey responses from communities of color and the critical need to understand the unique challenges faced by people of color, and specifically Black Portlanders, walking in Portland.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: PBOT organized and facilitated two focus group events held in November 2017, one each at the June Key Delta House in North Portland and at the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) Africa House on NE Glisan Street in East Portland. Approximately 50 registrants attended, representing a broad cross section of the Black community, as indicated by age, gender, country of origin, education level, place of residence within Portland, and mode of transportation.

Themes: When asked the same questions that were asked citywide, the biggest difference revealed at the focus groups was the impact of poor lighting on city streets. Participants raised lighting as the top concern that makes walking difficult, followed by the lack of sidewalks on busy streets, people driving too fast on busy streets, and shortage of places to safely cross busy streets. The focus groups also revealed a general feeling of vulnerability in the everyday experience of traveling around Portland while Black, from microaggressions to profiling to racial slurs and attacks. There was also a recognition that pedestrian infrastructure, including safe access to transit, schools and shopping, is severely deficient in East Portland, where many members of the Black community are now living due in part to gentrification and displacement.



122nd Avenue Safety Project (In progress)

PBOT is developing a plan to identify improvements on 122nd Avenue, between SE Foster Road and NE Marine Drive. PBOT will consider changes to the street cross-section, additional enhanced crossings, lighting, signal changes and more to meet the following goals: Increase safety for all, improve pedestrian & bicycle access and support better transit while balancing needs of freight & other modes. Identify improvements to help eliminate serious injuries and fatalities and remove 122nd Ave from the Vision Zero High Crash Corridor network.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Community outreach strategies for this project have included a series of 'community sounding board' meetings, public open houses, targeted language-based outreach with the Community Engagement Liaison (CEs) program, tabling at local events, presentations to community organizations, surveys, maintaining the website, a public video, and email and social media updates. The public outreach process is ongoing, and the themes in the following section are taken from the summary report of Community Survey #1, which incorporated comments from over 1,000 participants.

Themes: Respondents to the survey identified what they considered to be the most important criteria for evaluating changes to 122nd Avenue as traffic impacts (including congestion and diversion to local streets) and safety. Following these top two priorities were pedestrian access and comfort, transit performance, and holistic improvements ranked at nearly the same level of importance, followed closely by equity investments. In an open commentary section of the survey, key themes that emerged as priorities were crossing safety, traffic and congestion, vehicle speed, and enforcement. Comments were split on the topic of roadway reorganization. Many survey participants worried that a reduction of lanes would increase congestion and cut-through traffic on residential streets. Alternatively, there were many respondents who were enthusiastic about creating a multi-modal boulevard including protected bikeways and transit-only or transit priority lanes and suggested obtaining the needed right of way through lane reduction or removal of underutilized parking.

NE 102nd Avenue Safety Project (In progress)



The NE 102nd Avenue Safety Project will improve safety for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving on NE 102nd Avenue between Weidler Street and Sandy Boulevard. The project goals include reducing crashes, reducing vehicle speeds, improving pedestrian crossings and access to transit, and to create bicycle facilities that serve all ages and abilities. Reduction of vehicle lanes from five to three has been proposed.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Outreach methods used for this project have included several open houses, an online survey posted on the project website, and comments received by the project manager. This is an ongoing project and public outreach is still in process.

Themes: Community members have voiced concern over safety, particularly for pedestrians. Survey results from both the open houses and the online survey indicate that residents are concerned with speeding along this arterial and the lack of safe crossings. Support for this plan, however, is split. There is large support for safety improvements, but there is wavering support on design elements. While some community members favor a road reconfiguration for safety and speed reduction, many who commute through the neighborhood by car are not in favor of a lane reduction approach and voice stronger support for more enforcement, signage, and other traffic calming treatments. A final repeated concern is cut through traffic onto residential streets – this concern coming from both East Portland community members and echoed strongly by residents of The City of Maywood Park. Community members are concerned that this issue will increase if measures are not taken to limit access to side streets during peak periods, particularly if there is a lane reduction on the main arterial.

Outer Division Multimodal Safety Project (In progress)

Since 2009, the City of Portland has been working with the community on outer SE Division Street to develop projects that improve safety, including sidewalks, safer crossings and bike lanes. Safety for people walking is a special focus because outer Division is one of Portland's most deadly streets for walking. This project includes street improvements that have been proven to prevent crashes and save lives, most notably the installation of center medians



Summary of Outreach Methods Used: Comments from community members for this project were gathered through two open houses (including surveys), business and community member surveys, open office hours for project design review, contacting local businesses through the employment of a “street team”, business associations and neighborhood associations, project managers attending community events, and the formation of focus groups for community input.

Themes: Safety for pedestrians came out as a primary community concern, followed by safety for bicyclists and transit users. The community has shown enormous support for this project and its effort to enhance safety for all users. As has been a common theme with other East Portland projects, many respondents believe that enforcement should play a larger role in addressing safety concerns, both for vehicular traffic violations as well as pedestrian lawbreaking. A design element that garnished some community backlash was the center medians. Businesses shared concerns that freight deliveries would have a difficult time turning into their lots with the addition of medians and protected bike lanes to Division. Work between project management and the community to ensure safety for all modes while keeping businesses accessible for deliveries is ongoing.

East Glisan Street Update (In progress)

This project aims to achieve community and city council goals of improving street safety, providing multimodal options, and improving access to opportunity. The project covers NE Glisan Street from I-205 to NE 162nd Avenue and includes several elements such as new signalized pedestrian/bicycle crossings, protected bike lanes, and a five-to-three-lane road reorganization.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: East Glisan Street Update has appeared at several open houses with opportunities for community comments, an online survey, and communications made directly to the project manager after a widespread mailing. Construction begins in spring 2019 and public involvement continues.

Themes: Safety was brought up as a concern for community members, with the main issues being speeding vehicles and safe crossings. While there are select very



supportive community members of a road reconfiguration and reduction from five to three lanes, most of the public comments have not been supportive of this design alternative. Many comments focused on travel times and increased cut through traffic concerns, and favored increased enforcement of speed limits, improved signage, and safer crossings. Of note in the community comments was that Glisan is not a frequent transit corridor, and community members who submitted comments don't see alternative transit modes as a viable alternative to driving. Previous examined surveys have shown designs that improve transit, as well as modal separation, have been held in higher favor with community members. It is also of note that almost 90% of survey respondents self-identified as white/Caucasian, while statistically about half of the population in the project area identifies as people of color. Additionally, many of the comments received have come from commuters traveling from Gresham into Portland as opposed to community members living near East Glisan.

162nd Avenue Safety and Access to Transit

This project, funded in part with a Federal Transit Administration grant, will provide new enhanced pedestrian crossings to access the #74 bus line which began service in 2018. As part of the project, the cross section will be reduced from five vehicle lanes to three.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: The project was introduced at a June 2018 multi-project open house held at the Rosewood Initiative. Design has just begun, and public involvement will continue throughout 2019, including coordination efforts with the Metro grant-funded Rosewood Equitable Development Plan.

Themes: Comments received at the open house included requests for sidewalk infill, safer crossings, and lighting improvements. Concerns were also raised regarding speeding and right turn on reds resulting in pedestrian and vehicle conflicts. There were split opinions regarding lane reconfiguration and congestion. A dot exercise with open house attendees revealed that the most popular proposed design element was lowering the speed limit, followed by improved street lighting and protected bike lanes.



Stark Human Centered Design (HCD) Pilot (2018)

This pilot program was performed in conjunction with the Multnomah Idea Lab, a partnership of Multnomah County and the Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability. The key goal of the pilot was to have PBOT staff experience HCD and to learn possible benefits of the process. When selecting the focus area of SE Stark St from 148th to 162nd Ave, the group wanted to identify issues along a high-crash corridor in a diverse and relatively underdeveloped neighborhood.

Summary of Outreach Methods Used: The HCD process included several iterations of interviews conducted with both community members and experts. Team members spent an afternoon at the focus area interviewing local constituents, as well as additional time spent with local experts such as a police officer, fire fighters, a local library administrator, and non-profit organization staff.

Themes: During the immersion interviews on SE Stark, community members were quick to tell stories of how drug use and accompanying crime made the area feel unsafe, especially at night. Many referenced local “hotspots”, mostly bars, that attracted people who may participate in these activities. In addition, many pointed out that street lights only line the south side of SE Stark, leading to a lack of light on the north side. Both factors led people to say that they were afraid to go out at night or at all.

EPASS (In progress)

Early input for EPASS has come from meetings with the East Portland Acton Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the East Portland Land Use and Transportation Committee in the second half of 2018. Input from these committees emphasized considering displacement and affordable housing in the strategy, as well as access to jobs (particularly in non-downtown employment centers) and planning for growth both in East Portland and surrounding areas. The groups suggested consulting past plans and strong coordination with other city agencies, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and community organizations. The committees felt strongly that community outreach efforts should strive to be transparent in their CAC selection process and emphasized the importance of the committees being specific



to East Portland. The major concerns of the advisory groups for design efforts were safety - particularly at intersections and other crossings - and addressing substandard sidewalks (including narrow, obstacle filled, and missing sidewalks).

