

# Infrastructure Equity Policy Expert Group: Addendum Report

Draft April 22, 2013

*Below are excerpts from IE PEG meeting notes and survey results that are intended to serve as raw data for preparation of a feedback report to BPS staff.*

## General Comments

### 1. Infrastructure Equity (from August 2012 meeting)

- Considers the availability, quality and comprehensiveness of services and facilities on a geographic basis; geographic equity
- Benefits all population groups
- Consistent goals/levels of service: available everywhere
- Equal is not the same as equitable
- Responds to population needs by geography and groups
- Addresses historic disparities; recognizes history and outcome disparities when considering consistency and equality
- Do no harm bottom line principle for communities that have been negatively impacted in the past
- Addresses future growth and changing demographics
- Comprehensive: considers up front what is best both for the whole community and for varied populations
- Seeks to find common ground among conflicting goals; is there a solution that benefits all that isn't a compromise for some groups?
- Involves people who are affected in the planning and prioritization
- Shares costs and burdens
- Supports better quality of life and increased access to opportunity
- Provides meaningful and realistic options and choices
- Includes proactive actions to address needs of populations with low expectations, due to history of negative interactions with city services

### 2. Intended/unintended consequences and institutional racism (September 2012 meeting)

- Intentions matter. Awareness is key.
- Gentrification may be both an intended and an unintended consequence of a public investment, depending on the underlying public policy and how it relates to class and income.
- Institutional racism occurs when a dominant group acts based on its own interests, either without regard to the interests of other groups or with intentional disregard for the interests of other groups.
- The discussion should focus not on assigning blame, but on assigning responsibility for problems and their solutions.
- The regional plan prioritizes investments in areas that already have healthy community infrastructure, such as corridors and center. Is this the right path?
- The bike plan focuses investments in areas with lots of cyclists. Is this the right path?
- How we pay for infrastructure matters. If bonds are used to finance infrastructure, the costs to property owners may drive up rents.

- If local people are not involved, unintended consequences can result. Community involvement is key. In the Cully neighborhood, the community is organizing, leading to increased attention on monitoring for the possibility of gentrification and other consequences of public investment.
- The key question is whether benefits and burdens are shared among all communities. We need to look at what consequences have resulted and what to do in the future.

### **3. Key Definitions (from March 2013 meeting)**

The IE PEG identified the following concepts as ones that might be more prominently defined and explained in a central place, such as the Glossary:

- Economic vitality: Reframe so that it incorporates equity through access to opportunities and services for all, not just dollars/profits (see Chapter 3).
- Quality of life
- Underserved/underrepresented populations and communities
- Green
- Access to opportunity (also access, accessibility)
- Community values
- Equitable, equitably
- Gentrification

In deciding what to define and how to define it, staff should consider when words are “terms of art” and when they are just too vague.

## **Public Facilities and Services (Chapter 6)**

### **4. Goal-level discussion (Goals 6A – 6C, from January 2013 meetings)**

- Many comments that goal statements (aspirations) are not realistic, given existing conditions. Want some terms defined.
- These statements seem to assume that high quality infrastructure is the ultimate goal, that all Portlanders have equal access to services, that there is no need to make trade-offs between goals, and resources are unlimited. The statements also seem to assume that the City already has the capacity (in training, information, culture) to make equitable decisions and that legitimate community voices are able to participate in planning processes. Further, the statements seem to assume that community goals align with system needs.
- What does “optimal level of service” mean? Is level of service based on performance or on design?
- Potential impacts or unintended consequences of these goals (for communities of color or people with disabilities) include displacement results from gentrification, cost-of-service pressures on low income households (and people with disabilities), differing levels of service across Portland’s geographies, service design may not meet needs of communities that can/do not participate in goal-setting, and spatial and temporal impacts of localized infrastructure projects.
- Things to add to these goals: a hierarchy for investment needs, more guidance to bureau investments on infrastructure. For investment hierarchy, give priority to Portlanders with less ability to deal with disparities, and/or historically underserved areas; give priority to basic levels of service to all Portlanders before achieving good-to-optimal levels (anywhere in Portland).
- Which infrastructure systems should get priority investment, and why?
- All Portlanders deserve equitable levels of service; supporting prosperity citywide means bringing everything up and reducing disparities.

- Make clear we have a long way to go, for more equitable outcomes. We need to address the risks of gentrification and displacement.
- Need to measure services against the goals.
- Consider life cycle costs, not just initial investment.
- What is the community's willingness to pay for different levels of service? That would tell us where we need to improve, and in what ways.
- Human and environmental health go together, and are both integral.
- For Goal C, define the recovery period (24 hours or 6 months?) and consider "functional during a catastrophic event" (by prioritizing communities least able to survive without services, and anticipating those events).

## 5. Policy-level focus (from February 2013 meeting)

Policy Shift: The goals and policies should more strongly support a culture and policy shift toward integrating equity in all decision making, and prioritizing investments in underserved communities. Additional discussion by the IE PEG may help to identify specific opportunities where language could be added or modified to more strongly support this policy shift.

- **Priorities and Tradeoffs:** The Discussion Draft does not give clear enough direction to City departments about how to balance competing needs and concerns and make trade-offs. Ideally, the draft should help departments choose projects and develop budgets in ways that promote greater equity.
  - Be intentional in the use of action verbs such as *prioritize*, *require*, *encourage*, *balance* and *consider*. Fit verbs to situations. There needs to be a term that describes how to make choices/tradeoffs among non-equivalent outcomes.
- **Costs of Services:** How the costs of services will be distributed is a key component of equity. Ability to pay needs to be considered. Cost recovery is mentioned with respect to some services but not others; is this intentional?
- **Equity and Accessibility are Missing or Meaning is Unclear:** Be more intentional about when equity and accessibility are included in a goal or policy, and when they are not. Give consideration to how they are included.
  - Look at policies that specifically call out certain communities. For example, consider whether it is appropriate to prioritize community policing services for historically underserved communities (Policy 6.74.a) when the same communities are not called out as being prioritized for other services (parks, sidewalks, etc.).
  - Accessibility should be integrated into Policies 6.64-6.67 (Park improvements, Trails system, Natural areas and Community centers) instead of through a separate policy (6.69 Special recreational facilities). Should also be integrated into 6.81 (Public safety/Emergency response in City facilities).
  - The terms *equity*, *equitable* and *equitably* need to be defined in a way that helps staff operationalize equity. The Portland Plan should be the source of these definitions.
  - Equity should be better integrated into the policies, rather than stand alone. For example, Policy 6.16 might be amended to read as follows: "Consider community health impacts, equity outcomes, and watershed health risks *equitably* when planning, designing and funding capital improvements."
  - Flexible design (Policy 6.25) should include proactive communication with people with disabilities.

## Transportation (Chapter 7)

### 6. Goal-level discussion (from January 2013 meetings)

- Consider consolidating several transportation goals (they seem redundant). Could combine 7.B – 7.D, then delete 7.A.
- Transportation goals seem like a big leap from where we are today.
- Currently, more dense neighborhoods are less affordable.
- Define transportation system and relate to City's partners. Does that system include transit?
- Should be more emphasis on mobility across different quadrants of the city.
- Much of our transportation system depends on investments and choices made by partners such as Tri-Met and ODOT. What leverage do our goals have on what they do? Need to be clearer about what the City is able to do.
- Goals do not mention the need to address risks of gentrification and displacement (e.g., streetcar potentially leading to gentrification and displacement)
- "Vulnerable populations" is not the appropriate term to use; consider underserved.
- Subtle car-bashing implicit in goals.
  - For some people, car is only reasonable means of transportation
  - Large low income families are not likely to go to grocery on a bike
  - People need transportation choices
  - Alternatives to the car need to be efficient and affordable
  - Should articulate why there is a need to move away from automobiles
  - Transit relies on high-density neighborhoods, which currently are among the least affordable. \Therefore, those who most need transit access are more likely to live in less dense neighborhoods.
- Goals 7.A – 7.C lack language about accessibility or capacity (e.g., ability to accommodate multiple wheelchairs). Accessibility is not addressed in these goals at all.
- Goal 7.E and Goal 7.F seem to contradict one another on traffic fatalities. Goal 7.E would seem to require vehicles to move fast; Goal 7F would seem to require vehicles to move slowly.
- Goal 7.B assumes there is neighborhood and civic quality of life to reinforce. Assumes community and individual health goals are same for all communities. People will not give up their cars unless alternative modes are more efficient than driving. How can we account for future transportation changes? How can the CPU stay flexible and responsive?
- For Goal 7.C, add safety.
- For Goal 7.E, regional and national markets are probably more important for most small/local businesses than world markets.

### 7. Transportation Policy Clusters: 1) Affordability, Transportation Modes & Accessibility; and 2) Investment Priorities (from March 2013 meeting)

- Prioritize basic improvements to provide a basic level of service for all Portlanders (safety and access) above enhancements. This is a key infrastructure equity issue.
  - This equity and basic services language is missing and should be included.
  - Need more specific "balancing" and "prioritizing" language that address the relative priorities of "gold-plated" services, maintenance of existing services and providing basic level of services for all.

- Policy 7.24, Project Prioritization, does not address equity at all, but it should. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is an important consideration, but it is not the only consideration, for choosing capital improvements.
- The hierarchy of transportation modes (Policy 7.6) should be context-sensitive and also flexible and responsive to neighborhood input. This is a key infrastructure equity issue.
  - The hierarchy of modes should include some of the language about context-sensitivity from Policy 7.1.b.
- The Comprehensive Plan should provide clearer guidance on how to address substandard transportation infrastructure (and how it is paid for) in large annexation areas, including sections of outer SE and SW Portland. The annexation agreements do not always provide this guidance.
  - Local improvement districts (LIDs) are more likely to occur if partially subsidized, as they have been in the past.
  - To help address equity impacts of LIDs, use a more active verb—like “encourage”—to promote the identification and utilization of subsidies to underwrite the participation of lower income property owners.
  - If we establish policies to subsidize LIDs for streets, should this also apply to other infrastructure systems as well?
- Flexibility
  - Tie Policy 7.1.b (design responsive to context) into neighborhood plans.
  - Policy 7.1.c (design standards and guidelines) suggests uniform standards for street design; however, to achieve context sensitivity and responsiveness to community concerns, not everything has to be/look the same.
  - Right-of-way policies (6.21 – 6.25) should discuss what the ROW can be used for—not just cars or pavement.
  - Access to walking as a mode of transportation can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Paved sidewalks are just one option.
- This chapter is thin on funding discussion, beyond long-term maintenance costs. This needs to be fleshed out more.
- Policy 7.1.a should be divided into two policies, one dealing with safety, convenience and comfort, and the other addressing transportation access for all regardless of age, ability or mode.
- Marine transportation—the rivers as transportation corridors—needs to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.
- How does green hierarchy apply to retail and commercial areas?
- Add a policy addressing the need to assign a higher priority to projects that complete a network and connect parts of the overall system, especially those that support connections between modes (multi-modal functionality).
- Look at public/private partnerships to pursue and share costs of infrastructure improvements.
- Policy 7.2 is both too vague and too specific. Goal language is better.
- Maintenance needs should be more prominent and given a higher priority.
- Transit system design doesn’t address the needs of low income people well because of limited efficient options linking where people live and where they work.
- Is the green hierarchy building a city for a young/mobile population, while the city’s population is aging currently?

- Lifecycle costs and reliability do not have enough prominence. A stronger verb might help.
  - Lifecycle costs are at the core of what we can afford.
  - Lifecycle costs should be part of the project prioritization criteria stated in 7.24.
- Demographic information should be included in Part 2 Maps.

## **Centers, Corridors and Growth Scenarios**

### **8. Centers and Corridors and Growth Scenarios (from April 2013 meeting)**

- Expanding centers will require a lot of expensive infill development. Explain how we plan to induce that development.
- Concentrations of youth should be considered among the “vulnerability risk factors”.
- Need to involve local communities in planning and implementation of a center. Emerging economic development strategies call for communities to help shape activities and services.
- Overlay the Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative areas and schools onto the centers map, and look for gaps. Some community services are located at school sites. There are places where it isn’t safe for students to walk (and therefore must be bussed); this could help identify gaps where there is a need for investment in safe routes.
- There needs to be something between civic corridors and greenways, because in some places neither of those are an option.

### **9. Growth Scenarios (from April 2013 meeting)**

- The existing conditions in areas designated for future growth are not the same citywide. Some have infrastructure in fairly good condition, while others have gaps. Thus, areas with service deficiencies will require more investment to support growth. The designation “underserved areas for growth” means that these areas are more likely to be brought up to standard, perhaps through a combination of public and private investment. Conversely, “concentrating growth in areas with fully developed infrastructure” means that city resources may be more available to bring other areas—ones not designated for growth—up to a minimum standard. Further analysis of the infrastructure equity consequences of designating particular areas for growth is required. The performance measures should be nuanced to show how the scenarios perform across different demographic groups (not just geographic based).
- Investment should be further defined, especially if it includes both direct public investment and the provision of public incentives.
- The big issue along Powell Blvd is related to maintaining affordable housing, as that area shows up as being at risk for displacement.
- Access to frequent transit service should be determined using actual headway designation.
- The performance measures should not just look at “total” or “citywide” – but instead address impacts on specific populations and vulnerable places. Specifically, compare the growth scenarios with gentrification risk areas area maps and demographic maps (communities of color, renters, low income) to analyze how the growth scenarios perform for particular demographic groups and vulnerable communities.
- Performance measures should include sidewalks and unpaved roads. (Note: sidewalks are incorporated into the “complete neighborhood” measure.)

- It would be useful to look at what is behind the areas that aren't a complete neighborhood (e.g. is it a lack of sidewalks or something else like commercial components?).
- What worked well in Cully is that the community was actively engaged, which helped build support, impact what was done and reduce displacement.
- The maps show the lack of frequent service transit in East Portland and N and NE Portland. It seems clear you can't have a complete neighborhood without frequent service transit. Transit should be considered in the growth scenarios analysis and in choosing among investment options. The IE PEG is interested in seeing an overlay of vulnerability and the centers.
- Analyze which scenarios give us growth and investment in incomplete neighborhoods. Show how the performance measures relate to the infrastructure bureau levels of service (e.g. how they measure their performance).
- Sometimes we need to maintain the strength of the consolidated culture that exists in many communities.
- The performance measures don't seem to connect to equity beyond the issues of gentrification and access to jobs. What about access to good education and affordable healthcare? Those might be considered performance measures – they seem at least as important as tree canopy.
- Provide information about the metrics used for the performance measures.
- Be more explicit about the availability and effectiveness of the regulatory sticks and carrots for mitigating some of the impacts of gentrification. Acknowledge and consider how difficult it will be to solve – in part because of the amount of private investment and choices that are beyond what public interventions can impact.
- Be explicit about what is considered in the transit trip to jobs measure. If people are faced with a 60 minute bus ride or a shorter car trip, they'll pick the car. The macro-picture shows that residents of East or North Portland don't have shorter transit trip options available. In some cases that might be a lack of transit (e.g. East Portland), in other instances it might be something else (e.g. transit is available, but there isn't a direct route to where the jobs are located).