Appendix E: Interviews with Underrepresented Groups in East Portland

Given the relative diversity of the East Portland study area, and the fact that it includes many sub-communities that tend towards lower participation rates in standard public outreach activities, the East Portland in Motion project team early on developed a philosophy of reaching out to listen to the community in a variety of ways. We realized this approach specifically through a variety of engagement techniques, as described in Chapter 3, Community Voices.

This appendix describes in more detail one of the engagement techniques, group interviews, and some of the lessons we learned from applying this technique.

In an attempt to broaden the public outreach and involvement for East Portland in Motion, the City partnered with Portland State University to engage graduate students in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program (MURP) in conducting interviews with a wide variety of constituents in East Portland regarding attitudes toward active transportation.

Thirty students in the MURP Methods I class conducted both individual and group interviews. Group interviews were conducted with seven groups in November, 2010. These interviews, which were led by the students, included interpreters and childcare provided through the City, along with light refreshments. The seven groups interviewed were:

- Somali women at Lincoln Woods (p. E-1)
- Russian and Ukrainian immigrants at Lincoln Woods (p. E-2)
- Immigrant youth in the David Douglas High School after school program (p. E-4)
- Adult refugees through IRCO (p. E-5)
- Elders from multiple cultures at the East Portland Community Center (p. E-5)
- Parents at Shaver Elementary School (p. E-8)
- Homeless families at the Eastminster Presbyterian warming shelter (p. E-10)

The notes that follow about the seven group interview sessions are divided into two sections each. The **logistics** section is taken from notes by City staff who organized the interview session. The **findings** section is taken either from notes supplied by the students who conducted the interviews, or, where those were not provided, from the notes taken by staff at the student class presentations of their findings.

SOMALI WOMEN AT LINCOLN WOODS November 12, 2010

Somali Women Group Interview Logistics

This interview wouldn't have happened had it not been for Amal, the Human Solutions coordinator. Everyone arrived on time, the room was set up, and Somali women would walk into the room, note that Amal wasn't there, and continue on their way. I thought it was all going to fall apart and we wouldn't have an interview take place, but then Amal arrived. By the

end of the interview we had 16 children running through the room, and about 8-10 women participating. Without Amal, we would have had no connection whatsoever.

The community room was great, with a kitchen, space for kids, and plenty of room for tables to be set up. Amie Pico (A+ Child Care to You) provided one-person child care for the 16 kids that rolled through there interested in her toys. She was amazing and never flustered. Childcare was a real key to the success of this particular group interview.

We'd been told it would be best to get a female interpreter, but that was not possible. The interpreter was a man, but he was great, and did a good job of controlling the fairly chaotic space. I felt as if everything went okay, but having Amal also participate in the interview helped many more women share their experiences and feel more comfortable.

One lesson learned is to bring snacks for the children. They are especially hungry when they have just arrived off the bus after school.

Somali Women Group Interview Findings

Generally, Somali women don't bicycle. They wear long dresses that cover their legs. Their most common mode is the bus. Their children bus or walk to school.

The barriers they face using transit include inconvenient transfers and long waiting times. Many of the women shop at Winco, and must take two buses that don't line up well. They also noted lack of street lighting, lack of sidewalks or sidewalks in poor condition, and the fast speeds of traffic as difficulties. They generally felt they would benefit from pedestrian and transit improvements like traffic calming, sidewalk repair and maintenance, more street lighting, an increase in transfer time for the bus, and increased bus frequency.

RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANTS AT LINCOLN WOODS November 14, 2010

Russian and Ukrainian Immigrants Group Interview Logistics

This session was overseen by Ellen Bassett, professor of the PSU MURP Methods I class. Abra dropped off the refreshments, plates, cups and napkins to Ellen prior to the session.

Russian and Ukrainian Immigrants Group Interview Findings

Our team interviewed a group of Russian-speaking residents with the assistance of a city-employed interpreter (as well as with the assistance of team member Irina's fluency in Russian). Eleven residents participated in the group meeting. The majority of these participants immigrated from Russia or the Ukraine, and most have lived in East Portland for the last four to seven years.

We found similarities between different group members in their views of active transportation. In their opinion, the public transit system in the neighborhood, as well as the rest of the East Portland, operates dependably and has regular schedules, but it also has a number of

shortcomings. Residents view it as expensive, lacking in flexibility and time consuming. The overwhelming perception within the group was that "everyone else" in United States uses cars. The lack of pedestrian activity in surrounding neighborhoods only serves to support their perception.

Although the group wasn't reliant upon active transportation modes in their current setting, we found that all participants previously engaged in active transportation in their country of origin, where the cost of vehicle ownership was significantly higher. All members of the group continued to use active transportation immediately after coming to United States, but this appeared to be due to a different set of barriers: language (a few mentioned failing the Driver Licensing tests); car purchasing restrictions (lack of jobs and finances); and high insurance prices. Now, four to seven years later, members of the group have made the automobile their primary mode of transportation. They've moved from active transportation to cars for a number of reasons: affordability (cost of vehicle ownership is relatively low), convenience, ease of use, and faster than transit. Although members of the group do occasionally walk or use transit to reach their destinations, the group indicated that this occurs most often among elderly, youth and those temporarily unable to drive. Youth use bikes for recreation and occasionally transportation, but only in close proximity to home and under parental supervision. Parents in the group generally agreed that children could independently bike or walk to a destination once they were of high school age.

A few specific barriers to the utilization of transit were revealed through-out the interview. First, the lack of experience with U.S. transit systems and insufficient educational opportunities to learn how to use the system led to frustration and confusion within the group. The group was quite forthcoming in recounting their share of transit "horror" stories. Secondly, the group's lack of proficiency in English combined with a lack of transit information in alternate languages limited their ability to fully utilize and understand the system. Lastly, there were a number of smaller factors which added to the inconvenience of transit. One participant identified the inability of bus operators to make change for larger bills as an annoyance. Another was put off by the need to plan one's trip so far ahead of time when traveling by transit.

When pressed about access to and use of bicycles, we found that most families have bikes for children to use and they believe bicycling to be a popular recreational activity. However, parents expressed deep concerns over their children's safety while using bikes for transportation. Safety around traffic and at intersections was of particular concern to parents. When asked if bike lanes impacted their perceptions about safety, most in the group agreed that they were a positive improvement to safety, but there was general agreement that traffic safety concerns would still be an overriding concern and would continue to deter them from riding on public roadways.

At the conclusion of our interview most members of the group didn't feel that anything could or would be done by the city to enhance the area to encourage active transportation. One individual did suggested changes in the transit system to make it more attractive: more routes

and a greater variety of modes (i.e. tramways, trolleys, mini-bus service), but that was the only constructive response we received to our inquiry.

IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN THE DAVID DOUGLAS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM November 12, 2010

Immigrant Youth Interview Logistics

This interview went really well. Ellen Bassett (professor of the PSU class) was in attendance, which may have helped in making it so. Kathy, the IRCO Asian Families Center coordinator, and one of the mentors for this after-school program was also a huge help.

A logistics lesson learned: We didn't realize the classroom would be in use before the interview, so we were left waiting in the hall until class got out. Then, we were told we needed to get visitor badges from the office. This made our arrival kind of harried.

We set up in a circle of chairs with the food on a table in the corner. None of the youth were keen on grabbing things to eat during the interview, but I walked by their classroom window after we'd left and everyone was crowded around the food table.

During the interview, the moderator did a fairly good job, although sometimes I thought she kept too much to her schedule of questions and didn't follow up with some of the interesting statements made by the students.

Kathy translated some of the more important questions, or when there was a lot of detail. She sat in the circle with us and added information she thought the kids were leaving out, like how it was often a financial burden to use the bus. The students have a lot of respect for her, and were probably better-behaved because of her presence.

Ellen Bassett came up with a great idea to have the students draw maps of their neighborhoods. They split up into groups and drew up problem areas on streets between their homes and school. It was fascinating to watch, and very cool to see the PSU students getting the opportunity to interact with the high school students.

Each student received five youth TriMet tickets for participating.

<u>Immigrant Youth Interview Findings</u>

The students interviewed were part of an after-school program for immigrant and refugee education. Most of the students had been in Portland for two or three years. They do walk and bike, and had opinions about how to improve crosswalks, intersections, street lighting and unpaved roads. Their parents are concerned about their safety.

A great piece of information that came from the interview was that some of these kids rode their bikes, but many did not because their bikes had been stolen. Having a bike is too much of a stress or concern because it will probably get stolen even if locked to their apartment balcony.

There is a particular intersection on SE 122nd where students feel they have to run to get across safely. Also, they feel generally less sense of personal safety than in their home country. Girls wearing headscarves feel harassed by people in cars.

ADULT REFUGEES November 19, 2010

Adult Refugee Interview Logistics

The participants in this interview were of various ethnicities, mostly from Bhutan, but all spoke Nepalese. Although refreshments were provided, the people who participated in this interview didn't eat anything at all. We thought maybe for another time it would be important to have the interpreter welcome the participants and invite them to take refreshments.

Adult Refugee Interview Findings

The people in this interview group are heavily reliant on public transportation. There was essentially no car or bicycle ownership in this group. However, they are enthusiastically hopeful of becoming car owners, and many of them had ridden bicycle in Bhutan.

Typically, the interviewees have to walk 10-15 minutes to get to transit, and then spend 45-90 minutes on their transit trip to their destination.

Factors related to bicycling include that they don't have bikes and that bicycling is not really suited to the length of the trips they must make, for example to work.

The women in the group noted that they do not feel safe shopping at night. They feel safe on the bus, but not at the bus stop.

ELDERS FROM MULTIPLE CULTURES November 17, 2010

Elders Group Interview Logistics

Coming in a week ahead of time was super helpful. Abbe, the Center Director, and Robert, the Loaves and Fishes manager, helped to set everything up, and then distributed posters I had made around the center. I didn't think we would have a good turnout of non-English speakers, but a surprising number of Chinese seniors showed up.

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Our meeting space was a room shared with other community center users, so sometimes it was hard to hear. We had also set the room up for 8 participants, and 11 showed up. They were all scrunched around one long folding table. The set up would have probably worked much better with 8, but became quite crowded and un-conducive to good conversation with 11. Having all the Mandarin-speakers sit closer to the interpreter would have been helpful; as it was difficult to make sure that everyone had their say, or was able to participate as much as they wanted. In order to support the Loaves & Fishes program, I chose to have them provide coffee and snacks for the interview. The food was set up on a counter top away from the group, so nothing really got eaten until after the interview was over. I also wasn't impressed with the cheesecake they provided. There was yogurt, which was great, but the cheesecake wasn't quite what I had in mind for healthful foods. Better to go over specifically about what they would be offering. Very grateful to have L & F provide it for us at just \$20.

Robert had recommended we advertise that we would be giving away TriMet passes for participants' help, and I got the sense this was the main reason why many people were there. I spent much of the interview cringing for a few reasons:

- (1) The interpreter didn't actively participate unless specifically looked at or gestured to. From my perspective this left many of the Mandarin-speaking participants in the dark as to what was being said when English-speakers responded to questions, as well as without an opportunity to respond directly to the moderator's questions because English-speakers would jump in immediately with their comments. In order to hear their responses, the moderator had to make extra effort to ask specific individuals for their thoughts.
- (2) There were a few of the English-speaking participants who were monopolizing the conversation with their rants on TriMet issues. They would respond quickly with long-winded remarks and made negative statements regarding African-American ridership on the MAX and how most of the Mandarin-speakers at the table had been in the US for many years but still didn't speak English.

I would have wished for a better setting for the interview, a moderator who did a little better at incorporating the interpreter, and participants who weren't so cranky.

We gave away 5 TriMet tickets per participant. Two of the ladies attending can't use the bus, but instead use the Lift service. The regular bus tickets didn't work for them, so I sent them five lift tickets after the interview.

Elders Group Interview Findings

One man was from Vienna, Austria; has been in Portland for 50+ years. Drives most places he needs to go, takes the MAX on occasion. He does take the MAX to Beaverton, but the language that the youth use on the train is "terrible." "Pretty hard to correct." He recounts a story of when he told a group of youth using profanity that "we just won't listen anymore" and told them to leave the train. He sees this getting worse. He feels he is stuck at the hospital. He has three bikes but it is not safe to ride on the street. He is concerned about a policy at the hospitals that you cannot take a taxi home after a procedure. His daughter has to take a day off work to chauffeur him, and he does not like to see her give up a day of work, but the hospital will not let him leave in a taxi. "What would I do?"

Another man takes the bus, and recently they cut the 27 bus service. Not a popular bus, but people that rode it really needed it. People on the 27 have mobility issues, ride with canes, walkers, and scooters. He walks his bike sometimes, pushing it on the sidewalks up the hills and coasting on the sidewalks on the way down. He says he has some health issues and has been able to get to the hospital, but one time he had to flag a bus down by standing in the middle of the road. He noted that LIFT drivers serve as a check on the bedridden community members. People needing help are often only checked on my LIFT drivers and Meal on Wheels volunteers. The drivers are appreciated.

Elaine: Uses the LIFT bus, has lived in Portland her whole life. She drove until recently when her son totaled her car. On the East side the bus takes her where she needs to go. It is a little too far from the stores to walk, plus there is a hill, and she is not physically able to do it anymore.

By a show of hands and some translating the interpreter gathers that the seven Chinese elders all take the bus. One takes the bus, and walks. Typical bus destinations are the Chinese Supermarket, the Safeway, Fred Meyer. For places that are close by they will occasionally ride their bikes, mostly on one-way streets and on sidewalks to avoid traffic. There was a lot of agreement among all the interviewees that ABILITY to ride a bike was a big impediment to bicycle use. Some of the Chinese elders have never learned to ride a bike. One says she is sometimes a little scared on the sidewalk, but she is frightened by bikes that ride on the sidewalks and do not have bells, scaring her as she walks.

A woman who uses a scooter says to use the bus she has to transfer three times to get to the community center. Sometimes the drivers won't stop for her because they don't have the time. She says it is easier to get the LIFT and right to where she needs to go. Her trip takes over an hour on the bus if she makes all the connections. When it's sunny she will ride her scooter in the bike lanes to Safeway or Fred Meyer. She likes being independent and will ride her scooter from 57th out to 148th on a nice day. She feels much safer on the LIFT than on the bus. She can't go the blocks that she needs to travel to get to the bus.

Additional comments had to do with people not giving up their seats to seniors on buses. People don't wait for the others to get off before they rush on the bus, sometimes a kind bus driver will say: someone's getting off and people will wait. Also, there need to be more ramps on the sidewalks, there are no curb cuts so she can't ride her scooter safely and there are a lot of mud puddles. Balance issues, people in a state of confusion, these need to be considered in mobility.

The elders spent some time talking about how the area has changed. One woman said it has changed immensely. There used to be berry fields everywhere. Strawberry fields is what was here. There are more cars on the road now, more people, more traffic.

SHAVER ELEMENTARY PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS November 17, 2010

Shaver Elementary Parents and Community Members Group Interview Logistics

Shaver's SUN coordinator, Helen, helped set up this interview. She was super helpful. We had two Spanish-speaking moms of Shaver kids, one very-excited-about-biking dad of a Shaver student, and another woman who worked at Shaver and has had her kids attend there in the past. It was a small group, but it seemed okay. We set up in a classroom around a few tables. Child care took place in the gym.

One super helpful thing about this interview was that Erica from PSU could speak great Spanish. She was able to get some answers out of one of the mothers that may not have happened had she not been there. She asked her questions directly in Spanish, and I think the woman appreciated this.

It seemed each that two of the four interviewees were there with an agenda of things they wanted to talk about. One woman was very direct about needing a bus shelter for her kids and other students at 103rd and Sandy. The father was all about talking up his experiences biking, although not much of it had to do with East Portland. I sometimes felt the moderator didn't do a good job of reining his personal stories in.

The interpreter had a very different style from the rest, in that she interpreted simultaneously as someone was speaking in English. It was fascinating to watch and compare with interpreters from other sessions. I'm not sure if this was distracting to the other interviewees.

Shaver Elementary Parents and Community Members Group Interview Findings

There were four attendees at our group interview, with mixed racial backgrounds and language abilities. Three participants were parents of Shaver Elementary students and one was a teacher at Shaver as well as a former Shaver parent whose children now attend Parkrose High School. Their time living in Portland ranged from 4 years to their whole lives. In the course of our one-hour interview, we learned several important things about them and their community. Because

there was such a small group, individuals tended to have their own experiences and perspectives, but some perceptions and behaviors seemed to be shared.

All of the participants drive frequently. One man rode his bicycle to the interview, and claimed to ride both for short trips and as far as Vancouver, WA. One parent said she drives locally, but if she is going to downtown Portland or Clackamas town center she will ride the bus or take the Max because it is easier to manage her four children and baby on public transit than in the car. Another parent who drives everywhere said she does this because she always has her four kids with her and it is easier to use a car. Both of these women said that their children either take the bus or walk to school, depending on the weather. One parent said she used to walk with her children to school, but now that she has an infant she is worried the child will get sick in the cold weather, so she sends them on the bus.

When asked about their perceptions of biking, one participant said, "Nobody out here bikes except for gang-bangers on tiny bikes." This same participant also felt that the multi-use trails in the area were unsafe in the winter due to low traffic and increased crime, pointing out that homeless people live along the multi-use paths. These paths also have severe drainage issues during the rainy season. All participants shared the concern that biking is dangerous. The father who rode his bike often pointed out that everyone rides on the sidewalk (when there are sidewalks). One mother said that when she takes her daughters to the park to ride their bikes, she puts their bikes in the car and drives to the park because there are no sidewalks to use to safely ride to the park.

Several barriers to active transportation for both parents and their children emerged. It should not be surprising to us that the lack of sidewalks is an issue of primary concern, having heard this complaint from many individuals in our studies. Children walk to and from Shaver Elementary in the middle of the street because the streets have no sidewalks. They put themselves at risk in order to avoid mud, gravel and puddles present during much of the year. Shaver Street was mentioned frequently by name.

This affects students walking to the middle and high schools nearby as well, as they are along the same street. The teacher commented that "hundreds of kids" walk to school along this street every day, and people driving their kids to school or driving to work along the street have to drive around clusters of children. Additionally, it was mentioned that, kids being kids, a certain amount of roughhousing takes place on the way to school, with children paying little attention to their surroundings and even pushing one another into traffic.

Other safety concerns were mentioned, such as the lack of lighting for students on their way to school in the early morning, when it is still dark outside. One parent said she had seen a hit-and-run take place on 105th between Sandy and Prescott, in which the driver hit a child and then left the scene. The parent who rides his bike regularly said that he had been hit while riding his bike several times, and has also had many near misses, both in outer East Portland and other parts of town.

Security also emerged as a common concern. Two participants mentioned theft as a deterrent to biking. One said that her son, who worked at Fred Meyer, had his bike stolen during his evening shift. Since bus service ends before he leaves work, he must now walk home. This is acceptable only because he is an able-bodied young man, but would not be appropriate for a more vulnerable individual. Security and lighting at school bus stops was also mentioned, along with a lack of shelters to keep children and attending parents out of the rain. One parent mentioned a bus stop where her children wait in the dark for the bus at 103rd and Sandy. She confessed a fear that someone could abduct her daughter and no one would see it happen. Another mother said her friends and family would pay for the materials to build a bus shelter if the city would help them with permitting, since the business adjacent to the bus stop expressly forbade her children from standing under their awnings.

The lack of connectivity between Shaver Elementary and nearby neighborhoods means that some children are faced with the options of walking well out of their way, on an arterial street, taking a similarly out-of-the-way city bus, or cutting across a muddy field in order to reach school. Most choose the field. The school has held meetings about building a walking path through the field, which is an undeveloped public park, but no action has yet been taken to make this a reality. In regards to this and many other improvement projects, all participants agreed that everything the city does happens too slowly.

We knew prior to the interview that the lack of sidewalks in many parts of East Portland make walking unpleasant and dangerous, and that the distance between destinations and the lack of grid connectivity are a deterrent to active transportation. But hearing this from the parents of children who live with these issues on a daily basis was moving and difficult to hear, as we will elaborate on shortly.

HOMELESS FAMILIES AT THE EASTMINSTER WARMING SHELTER December 1, 2010

Homeless Families Group Interview Logistics

The interview was conducted during the regular dinner time at the shelter. The families who agreed to participate in the interview ate a special dinner with the interview team in a separate room at Eastminster Presbyterian Church. The team supplied homemade lasagna, bread, green salad and cookies, with milk, lemonade and water.

A Spanish-speaking interpreter was essential for the Latino family's participation, and the interpreter sent by the service was exemplary. An interesting thing happened during the interview when the Spanish-speaking father was explaining the trouble he and his wife had now, since they'd lost their home, getting their son to his school, and when the interpreter translated this, one of the English-speaking mothers explained that the school district has the responsibility to provide transportation, and told the parents where to call to pursue this. It was nice to know that a real problem had been addressed through this interview process!

Everyone who participated in the interview was invited to take several gifts from the gift table. These included ponchos, water bottles, and maps and information in both English and Spanish.

Homeless Families Group Interview Findings

The group interview consisted of five individuals, all with different transportation needs. There was a wide range in age and demographic, from an elderly war veteran to a middle aged Mexican couple to a single black mother to a young white mother with four children under the age of seven. Through the process of the group interview, we discovered some of the prevailing attitudes and needs of the participants.

None of the participants owned single occupancy vehicles, but several expressed the desire to do so due to the factors of convenience and freedom that a vehicle provides. All participants utilized transit services on a daily basis with a strong preference for MAX, because they found the MAX to be faster and more convenient than the bus. However, participants were generally willing to ride the bus to transfer to the MAX, or in situations where the MAX was not feasible. On average, participants spent between four and five hours a day riding transit. The veteran male interviewee shared that he traveled daily to the Veteran's Hospital from Gresham, which resulted in a 2.5-hour one-way trip. Sarah, the single white mother, expressed that she rode the transportation system with three of her children for a minimum of 4 hours each day, often times spending closer to 6 hours each day on public transit.

Participants discussed differing options of transporting their children to school. One mother stated that the school district in Gresham offers taxicab service to pick up and drop off homeless children. In contrast the Latino father shared that he would walk one mile each way and use transit daily to take his young son to school, which was difficult in rainy weather.

Overall, the research team found that the main mode of active transportation for the group was public transit with their secondary mode of transportation being walking. Only one participant in the group rode a bicycle. Additionally, as all of the participants were homeless, it may have been challenging to store a bicycle if it were not in use. Regarding transit services the group had a large range of opinions. The mother with strollers and four children stated she sometimes preferred to walk instead of taking the bus or MAX, as having the stroller and children on the bus or MAX was challenging due to space constraints and crowds. She also expressed that it was challenging to board the bus with a stroller, as there was a difference in height between the bus door and the curb. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with Tri-Met in terms of needing discounted fares and the variation in transfer policies between bus routes. Participants discussed coping measures utilized in dealing with these varying transfer policies, such as informing bus drivers their transfer may have expired, in which case drivers would allow them to board versus attempting to sneak on and being caught. This indicates the possible need for transfer policies that are more consistent with the travel times for lowincome individuals. The discussion also made it clear that there needs to be better bus shelters with more adequate lighting. Individuals expressed how using transit is more difficult in the rain, as they are unprotected from the elements while waiting.

When the group discussed safety concerns there was more of an emphasis on driver behavior rather than on infrastructure improvements. All participants expressed how cars were not yielding the right-of-way to pedestrians in crosswalks in East Portland (with the five year old son stepping out into traffic to stop cars for his deaf mother). Additionally, participants stated lighting at night is an issue, especially at bus stops as one participant noted that bus operators were not always able to see riders waiting without proper illumination. Participants added that sidewalks could stand to be wider to allow individuals with strollers and children not to be in the way of others, and that intersections should contain more curb cuts to afford easier access for the strollers. The mother also stated there needed to be greater access to more public bathrooms, as she traveled extensively with children and finding a place to change diapers or let them relieve themselves was a challenge.

The current pedestrian infrastructure is also inadequate for this population, as certain individuals walk long distances with numerous items or with children. Investments in transit infrastructure (shelters) and the pedestrian realm (wider sidewalks) could alleviate major issues with this population. However, certain actions can be performed more quickly, such as enforcement of pedestrian right-of-way in sting operations. Traffic calming campaigns and infrastructure could also be an effective approach to improve the pedestrian experience in East Portland for many disparate members of this outlying community, including the homeless.