



PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 800 Portland, OR 97204 503.823.5185
Fax 503.823.7576 TTY 503.823.6868 www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation

Steve Novick Commissioner Leah Treat Director

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Freight traffic in the Brooklyn Neighborhood
History + FAQ

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History

Brooklyn's long freight history

In 1868, Oregon Central Railroad (O&CRR) began developing railroad operations on land that later became the Brooklyn Neighborhood, even before the area incorporated into the City of Portland. Housing that developed around the railroad was predominantly built as temporary housing for a European immigrant working class community that moved periodically for labor. The neighborhood even acquired the nickname "Car Shops" because the railroad yards were one of the east side's largest employers, the other being the Inman-Poulsen Lumber Mill, also located in the Brooklyn Neighborhood.

O&CRR was acquired by Southern Pacific Co. by 1889 and shortly after, the East Side Rail Road Company began construction of a trolley line south to Sellwood along Milwaukie Avenue. The East Side Rail Road Company consolidated under the Pacific Railway Light and Power Company and eventually opened a large car shop complex at SE 17th and Center Street. In 1910, Southern Pacific rail yards began a major expansion, followed by a home rebuilding boom in the 1920's when Portlanders began investing in better quality housing to make the Brooklyn Neighborhood their permanent home.

In 1926, Multnomah County built the Ross Island Bridge, transforming Powell into a boulevard and taking out the core of the neighborhood. A significant number of residential and commercial properties were demolished to make way for the bridgehead and extension of Powell to meet it. Over the next 20 years, the effect of this change pulled the neighborhood's northern boundary south from SE Division to SE Powell and catalyzed what turned into a slow change from residential to industrial and commercial use.

The Great Depression of 1929-1941 added serious economic and social pain to the low-income, working-class neighborhood at the same time that the federal government made funds available after 1932 for highway projects as a form of relief for the unemployed. It was under these conditions that the Highway 99E/ McLaughlin Boulevard was built, which adversely resulted in cutting the neighborhood off from the river and barring access to it for recreational, scenic and residential use. Then Portland's trolley system was phased out after 1950 and Brooklyn workers lost their convenient streetcar links to the rest of the city.

More recent history than that

In 1956, the Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association and Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League won an injunction against Southern Pacific Co., limiting how far south the trains could be assembled and stopping them from building additional lines due to nuisance and reduction to their property values. Union Pacific Railroad took over Southern Pacific Co. in 1996 and in September of 2009 transferred their intermodal freight operations from their Albina Yard to their Brooklyn Yard.

In 2012, Union Pacific Railroad reached an agreement with the neighborhoods, ending the injunction that lasted half a century, allowing them to complete a \$75 million modernization project. The

modernization project significantly improved the company's ability to handle intermodal freight¹ at the Brooklyn site, allowed them to accommodate increased truck traffic and provided new noise and emission reduction measures.

Today

In light of the history, PBOT still receives on-going complaints from the Brooklyn Neighborhood regarding excessive truck traffic on SE 26th Ave between Holgate and Powell Boulevard and on SE Gladstone between SE 22nd and 26th Avenues. Beginning in 2010, PBOT staff has spent considerable time evaluating this issue and to identify potential options that may be available to address the neighborhoods' concerns. In August 2012, staff from PBOT and Mayor Adams office met with representatives from the Brooklyn neighborhood and SE Uplift to discuss the City's evaluation and recommendations on this issue. PBOT will do so again as part of the Stage 3 Transportation System Plan (TSP) Update, which will begin fall 2016 and include multiple opportunities for community engagement. During this process, PBOT staff will discuss a recommendation that SE 26th Avenue between Powell and Holgate be reclassified to a Truck Access Street or higher freight classification in order to remain consistent with the current function of the street network that serves the Brooklyn Industrial District and the surrounding residential and commercial land uses.

FAQ

Why is there so much freight traffic in my neighborhood?

PBOT receives on-going complaints from the Brooklyn Neighborhood regarding excessive truck traffic, especially on SE 26th Avenue between Holgate and Powell Boulevard and on SE Gladstone between SE 22nd and 26th Avenues.

The segment of SE 26th Avenue between SE Holgate and Powell Boulevard is classified in Portland's Transportation System Plan (TSP) and Freight Master Plan as a Freight District Street. The TSP is the City's policy document that establishes the street classifications based on their function in the transportation system. Freight District Streets are determined by the presence of industrial zoning and are intended to provide safe and convenient truck mobility and access in industrial and employment areas serving high levels of truck traffic and to accommodate the needs of intermodal freight movements.

This segment of SE 26th Avenue serves the surrounding industrial uses including the Union Pacific Railroad's intermodal facility. The intersections of SE 26th Avenue at both SE Powell and SE Holgate are signalized, which also creates a safer and more predictable environment for truck movements compared to non-signalized intersections.

City staff recognize that residential and industrial land uses that are directly adjacent to one another (as these are) present a fundamental disharmony. Unfortunately, the issues are so longstanding, they originated before the area even incorporated into the City. Nevertheless, the City seeks to balance the

¹ Intermodal freight includes transferring large rectangular containers between trucks, boats and trains.

needs of industry with neighborhood livability -of course, made more complicated by the disharmony of these adjacent land uses. Based on adopted transportation and land use policies, the City does not have a legal basis to prohibit trucks on City streets that are classified to accommodate these types of traffic movements, however, the City will continue to coordinate with the Union Pacific Railroad and other stakeholders to explore potential options for this area.

Is the freight traffic through my neighborhood operating within established guidelines?

Unless otherwise posted, the public right-of-way is available to all modes of transportation, including but not limited to: commercial vehicles, passenger cars, motorcycles, cyclists, those using a wheelchair, and others. The segment of SE 26th between SE Holgate and SE Powell Boulevard is classified as a Freight District Street by the Portland Transportation System Plan (TSP) and the Freight Master Plan. Freight District Streets are determined by the presence of industrial zoning and are intended to provide safe and convenient truck mobility and access in industrial and employment areas serving high levels of truck traffic and to accommodate the needs of intermodal freight movements. Given the freight district street designation, commercial freight vehicles are allowed to lawfully travel along SE 26th Ave.; not unlike any other modal user.

Traffic classification counts were taken on SE 22nd Ave, SE 26th Ave (3 locations), SE Gladstone St, and SE Holgate Blvd to determine the amount of truck traffic relative to the total vehicular traffic. The table below shows the volumes present on each street. Based on similar street classifications in other industrial districts the percentage of truck traffic in Brooklyn is within the expected operating ranges. The percentage of trucks on similar streets serving other Portland industrial districts is often much higher in the 25-40 percent range.

Count Location	Direction	Total Volume	Truck Volume	Percent
SE 22nd Ave at SE Bush St	NB	1291	160	12.4
	SB	1268	108	8.5
SE Gladstone St at SE 24th Ave	EB	1283	153	11.9
	WB	1201	159	13.2
SE 26th Ave at SE Rhone St	NB	3551	330	9.3
	SB	3694	230	6.4
SE 26th Ave at SE Cora St	NB	2027	180	8.9
	SB	3092	275	8.9
SE 26th Ave at SE Schiller St	NB	2826	353	12.5
	SB	3235	388	12.0
SE Holgate Blvd at SE 28th Ave	EB	6790	380	5.6
	WB	6397	275	4.3

What options have been considered?

PBOT staff have met on various occasions to evaluate this issue and to identify potential options that may be available to address the neighborhoods' concerns.

Changing the City's Transportation System Plan Street Classification

One option considered was changing the classification of SE 26th Ave. from a Freight District Street to a lower classified freight street, however Gladstone and 26th Ave. would still need to accommodate local truck deliveries to the existing industrial and commercial business. Enforcement of "No Through Trucks" signage would not be valid as local deliveries are allowed even if these signs were present and therefore would not be a viable option.

SE 26th Ave. between Powell and Holgate is classified as a Neighborhood Collector, which is intended to serve as a distributor of traffic from Major City Traffic Streets (Powell Blvd) and District Collectors (Holgate west of SE 26th). This segment of SE 26th is also classified as a Major Emergency Response Route, which is designed to serve as the most direct leg of emergency response trips, which limits the ability to install traffic slowing devices along this corridor. Ultimately, Freight District Streets are determined by the presence of industrial zoning and are intended to provide safe and convenient truck mobility and access in industrial and employment areas serving high levels of truck traffic and to accommodate the needs of intermodal freight movements. Given that SE 26th Ave. connects two higher classified streets that allow freight, is classified as a Major Emergency Response Route and reflects the presence of adjacent industrial and employment land uses, changing the classification of SE 26th Ave. to a lower classified freight street would be inconsistent.

Change the City's Comprehensive Plan Land Use Classifications

The 2016 adopted 2035 Comprehensive Plan includes updated zoning for a small number of properties along SE 24th Ave. between SE Holgate and SE Gladstone and on SE Gladstone between SE 24th and SE 26th Avenues. These properties are zoned EG1 (General Employment) in the existing Comprehensive Plan, but will be zoned R2.5 (Single-Dwelling 2,500) effective in early 2018 just like the other houses around them. This map change responds to the [Employment Zoning Project](#) code changes that will make household uses in employment zones nonconforming and unable to rebuild if damaged by fire or other causes if the repair cost of the structure is more than 75 percent of its assessed value (Portland Zoning Code, Section 33.258.050.D.2).

West of SE 24th and 22nd Ave. is primarily IG1 industrial zoning which includes the Brooklyn Rail Yard. Changing the industrial land use classification along SE 26th Ave. to residential is contrary to the adopted 2035 Comp Plan Chapter 6: Economic Development, which identifies the Brooklyn Yard among other valued primary sources of Portland's middle-wage jobs, upward mobility opportunities, and traded sector activity. In the section for industrial and employment districts, Policy 6.36 states "Protect the multimodal freight-hub industrial districts at the Portland Harbor, Columbia Corridor, and Brooklyn Yard as prime industrial land that is prioritized for long-term retention."

Could freight trucks use alternative truck routes instead?

PBOT staff considered various alternative truck routes and evaluated their feasibility for implementation. The difference in travel time and distance between the Brooklyn north staging yard at SE Gladstone and SE 22nd Ave. and the main entry on SE Holgate. The most direct route between the Union Pacific Rail Road staging yard and the main entry on Holgate is to head eastbound on Gladstone to SE 26th Ave. (a four-way stop controlled intersection with a flashing beacon), then turn southbound to

the signalized intersection on SE 26th Ave. and Holgate. This route is about ½-mile long and takes less than two minutes.

Southbound Route Alternatives

SE 25th and SE 24th to Holgate

The segment of SE 25th from Gladstone to Reynolds is a relatively narrow street that is zoned for residential use and contains “No Trucks” signage. Using SE 25th as an alternative route would introduce trucks onto a residential street that currently does not have high volumes of truck traffic. SE 24th currently dead ends north of the Holgate bridge structure, which is elevated above the SE 24th Ave street grade and would require major structural improvements to provide an at-grade connection.

The alternative route using SE 24th to SE Reynolds to SE 25th requires two additional turns (four total turns) compared to the SE 26th route, which would make it more difficult for large trucks to maneuver. This route may also require the removal of on-street parking to accommodate turning trucks. The intersection of SE 25th and Holgate is stop controlled and may require widening to accommodate right-turning trucks onto Holgate. Non-signalized intersections are generally less predictable for turning trucks compared to signalized intersection due to their slower acceleration speed and ability to merge with oncoming traffic.

Because of the additional turns required to avoid the residential area north of Reynolds, the likely removal of on-street parking and the structural improvements needed at Holgate, PBOT staff does not consider these routes to be practical alternatives.

East of SE 26th (SE 27th and SE 28th) to Holgate

The properties east of SE 26th Ave are zoned for residential use. SE 27th Ave south of Gladstone is a narrow residential street with on-street parking on both sides contains “No Trucks” signage. The intersection of SE 27th and Holgate is stop controlled. SE 28th is also a residential street that is more out of direction for trucks heading to the Union Pacific Rail Road entry on Holgate. Furthermore, the segment of SE 28th between Holgate and Powell is now the designated alignment for the 20s Bikeway project. Using these streets as alternative routes would negatively impact the existing residence by simply transferring truck traffic from SE 26th Ave. Because of the impacts on the existing residents and bicyclist on SE 28th Ave, PBOT staff does not consider these routes to be practical alternatives.

Northbound Route Alternatives

SE 22nd and SE 21st to Holgate via Powell

The intersection of SE 22nd and Powell is off-set and non-signalized, which limits its feasibility as a viable truck route alternative due to high traffic volumes, speed and sight distance issues along this segment of SE Powell. There are existing traffic signals at SE 26th and SE 21st so adding another signal and/or replacing any of the existing signals on Powell would require an analysis of signal spacing standards and warrants and approval by ODOT, as SE Powell Blvd (US 26) is under State jurisdiction.

Using SE 21st Avenue between Gladstone and Powell requires two additional turns (four total turns) compared to the SE 26th route, which is more difficult for large trucks and a disincentive for implementing a potential SE 21st Ave truck route. These routes primarily benefit trucks heading westbound on Powell and there is no apparent time benefit for trucks heading eastbound on Powell to

access the Union Pacific Rail Road main entry on Holgate compared to using the current Gladstone to SE 26th route. Using westbound Powell to SE McLoughlin Blvd to access the Union Pacific Rail Road entry on Holgate is considerably longer (up to 3 miles and 7 minutes longer) and does not appear to be a practical truck route alternative. Because of the significant out of direction travel and additional turns required, PBOT staff does not consider these routes to be viable alternatives.

Could our neighborhood receive some form of mitigation within the existing public Right-Of-Way?

The following summarizes the key street design issues associated with mitigating traffic impacts within the existing public right-of-way:

Edge/Buffer treatments along SE 26th Avenue between Gladstone to Powell

- The typical street cross section along this segment of SE 26th Ave is 60-foot right-of-way, 36-foot curb-to-curb (two 10-foot travel lanes, two < 5-foot bike lanes, < 7-foot parking along the eastside of the street).
- Without right-of-way acquisition, widening the existing 5-foot bike lanes on the eastside of SE 26th Ave to create a wider buffer between the curb and travel lane would require the removal of on-street parking to maintain adequate travel lane width.
- Providing a wider center lane to create a buffer would also require the removal of on-street parking and/or right-of-way acquisition.

Edge/Buffer treatments along SE 26th Avenue between Holgate and Gladstone

- The typical street cross section along this segment of SE 26th Ave is 60-foot right-of-way, 36-foot curb-to-curb with unmarked on-street parking and no striped bike lanes.
- Adding striped bike lanes on either side of 26th would require removal of parking.

Why not just remove bike lanes instead of parking?

Comp Plan Policy 9.6: Transportation strategy for people movement. Implement a prioritization of modes for people movement by making transportation system decisions according to the following ordered list:

1. Walking
2. Bicycling
3. Transit
4. Taxi / commercial transit / shared vehicles
5. Zero emission vehicles
6. Other single-occupant vehicles

When implementing this prioritization, ensure that:

- The needs and safety of each group of users are considered, and changes do not make existing conditions worse for the most vulnerable users higher on the ordered list.
- All users' needs are balanced with the intent of optimizing the right of way for multiple modes on the same street.
- When necessary to ensure safety, accommodate some users on parallel streets as part of a multi-street corridor.

- Land use and system plans, network functionality for all modes, other street functions, and complete street policies, are maintained.
 - Policy-based rationale is provided if modes lower in the ordered list are prioritized.
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Questions?

For questions regarding freight, please contact Bob Hillier, PBOT Freight Planning Coordinator, at 503.823.7567 or robert.hillier@portlandoregon.gov

For questions about the Transportation System Plan, please contact Francesca Patricolo, PBOT Associate Planner, at 503.823.5282 or francesca.patricolo@portlandoregon.gov

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