



MEMORANDUM

TO: Washington County Chair Andy Duyck & County Commissioners
Washington County Mayors, City Councils & Managers
Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook, Yamhill & Marion County Commissioners

FROM: Jerry Willey, Mayor

DATE: November 7, 2012

RE: ***"Transportation Infrastructure and the Westside Economy"*** (A Westside Corridor
Concept White Paper)

Several weeks ago, my staff and I presented the attached White Paper to most of the Washington County Mayors. We explained that our support of White Paper preparation stems from the recurring public discussion since the late 1990s among some business groups and community leaders. They've often argued that, similar to the I-205 corridor alternative to I-5 for inter-state and intra-state freight movement and domestic travel, the Westside, too, will need an I-5 freight and mobility corridor alternative.

We asked *EcoNorthwest* and the *TranspoGroup* (Seattle-based) for their analytical review of the recurring economic and mobility arguments offered by these groups and leaders as reasons for such a Westside corridor. At a broad level, the White Paper does that not only for the Portland Region, but also for the 7-County PMSA and 11-County northwest Oregon region.

White Paper data and analyses make a strong case that the State and northwest Oregon communities should rigorously assess the long-term need for a Westside freight and mobility corridor alternative to I-5. Its research/analyses clearly show that major Westside freight and travel routes (I-5, Hwy 26, Hwy 217, an I-5/99W travel shed and connecting State and regional arterials) will become inoperably congested over time, with growth-stunting economic impacts to agriculture, viticulture, tourism, nurseries, manufacturing, timber and other traded sectors in the Portland Region, the PMSA and northwest Oregon.

The Paper recognizes that State, Regional and local transportation systems and demand management policies and programs have helped a little. But, these measures will not abate or slow down eventual severe traffic delays and congestion within these key Westside freight and mobility routes if long-term growth within and outside the Portland Region occur as planned and forecasted over the next 30-50 years and no systemic transportation remedy is provided.

Declining federal, state and local transportation funding levels will simply exacerbate the onset of traffic delays/ heavy congestion within these routes that, today, already begin to spread beyond 2-hour peak traffic flows into mid-day hours. Thus, a Westside corridor assessment must also identify potential Federal funding help and corridor-sourced funding options; i.e., tolling, facility bonding, transportation development surcharges, special levies, etc.

We know full well that the concept of a Westside travel corridor, that can perform freight and mobility bypass route functions similar to the I-205 corridor, will draw vehement (and sometimes harsh) opposition/criticism from some communities and various interest groups within and outside the Portland Region: Its costs and impacts on agriculture activities and natural resources/amenities located within/along such a corridor would be huge.

But, it will have equally strong support from other communities and business groups whose concerns about Westside freight movement delays and travel congestion along Hwy 26, Hwy 217, I-, an I-5/99W travel shed and connecting State and regional arterials are already at a high level. Their concerns would reach crisis level if a steadily increasing potential of day-long traffic clogs and delays along these Westside freight and mobility routes is ever reached as forecasted population and economic growth throughout northwest Oregon over the next 20-30 years become reality.

The long-standing, recurring debate about the merits of Westside corridor belies a simple truth – in our view: We've reached a time in this ongoing debate for the State/ODOT (with participation by impacted northwest Oregon jurisdictions) to honestly and empirically evaluate the need and economic, environmental, societal and quality-of-life merits of eventually providing a Westside Corridor.

So, we are seeking 2013 legislation that will direct ODOT to do just that. We attach a draft legislative concept proposal for a 2013 Bill that would direct ODOT to undertake that evaluation. We believe there is too much at stake for jurisdictions and communities in all three areas - the Portland Region, Portland MSA and northwest Oregon - to just let the issue of rapidly growing congestion along I-5, Hwy 26, Hwy 217, an I-5/99W travel shed and connecting arterials languish without a planned, future solution and, sooner-or-later, reach a tipping point of day-long traffic delays and gridlock congestion 24-7 along these routes.

As the White Paper points out: so many key facets (i.e., products shipping/receiving, production costs, access to workforce, etc.) our local, regional and state economies can fail without strong transportation system support. Long-term, a Westside Corridor would be an essential and central piece of such a system in northwest Oregon.

Most of the Washington County Mayors have asked for a copy of the attached White Paper. Please feel free to share it with your Board and City Council colleagues. We will send your Salem legislators a copy of the Paper and encourage you to discuss its merits with them.

Of course, we ask for your active and vocal support of a proposed Westside Corridor Bill in 2013: It's time we resolve this very important Westside Corridor debate. I look forward to continued discussions about the topic. Please feel free to contact me with any thoughts or comments.

CITY OF HILLSBORO:



Jerry W. Willey, Mayor

Attachments: