

Save Helvetia

13260 NW Bishop Road
Hillsboro, OR 97124

October 21, 2011

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator, Oregon
121 SW Salmon, Suite 1400
Portland, OR 97204

The Honorable Jerry Willey
Mayor of Hillsboro
150 E. Main Street
Hillsboro, OR 97123-4028

Re: Tiger III Grant Application - US-26/Helvetia/Brookwood Interchange

Dear Senator Merkley and Mayor Willey,

I would like to thank two members of your staffs, John Valley and Don Odermott, for meeting with members of the Save Helvetia Steering Committee on October 12 to discuss the City of Hillsboro's TIGER III grant application and other transportation projects the city is planning for the US-26/Helvetia/Brookwood Interchange and surrounding area. We found it enlightening and informative. Based on the information presented and other information available to us, we are unable to support Hillsboro's application for a TIGER III grant, for the following reasons:

1. **Lack of innovation** - This is a standard interchange improvement to move car commuters. It does not offer innovative pedestrian/bicycle options or promote transit use that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We would be more likely to support a grant that would implement innovative new transportation options that promote walking, bicycling, ride sharing, and transit in industrial areas.
2. **Low priority** - There are other TIGER III grant proposals in the region that would address urgent needs in developed areas, such as the Sellwood Bridge, that we believe are more important to the safety and economic welfare of the region, and that will do more to promote walking, bicycling, and transit. This application is not one of JPACT's (Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation) top three TIGER projects for the region. While we support the City's effort to safely re-route traffic from Meek Road, this is a small part of the grant proposal and existing interchange funding should be used for this work. There is nothing special about the undeveloped industrial land north of Highway 26, and there are many vacant industrial

buildings already available elsewhere in Hillsboro. We don't see anything unique about this industrial land that justifies a taxpayer subsidy for roads.

3. Lack of need - New industrial development can and should pay for construction of required basic infrastructure; it shouldn't be subsidized by taxpayers. Until we can afford to adequately maintain all our existing infrastructure, taxpayers can't afford to subsidize new construction.

4. Our goals are simple

- a) The City needs to work to reduce the volume of commuter traffic, and to encourage that traffic to use major facilities through the center of the urban area, not smaller roads along the edges or through rural areas. Expanded roads encourage more single-occupancy car commutes. Additional traffic to West Union Road would make it harder to farm in the rural reserves on the north side of West Union Road. Widening roads allows traffic to go faster, making it more difficult to safely move large, slow-moving farm equipment.
- b) The City's priority should be to move traffic from the West Union /Cornelius Pass Road intersection to the Helvetia/Brookwood Interchange via Cornelius Pass Road and Highway 26. This could be achieved simply and relatively inexpensively by synchronizing the traffic lights on Cornelius Pass Road. Jacobson Road is the preferred alternative today because it has no traffic lights. Other roads through and around the industrial area on the north side of Highway 26, including Jacobson, will become less attractive for cut-through commute traffic as the area develops and traffic lights are added. This will also help reduce cut-through traffic that will hurt businesses that locate in this new industrial area.
- c) Priority should be given to making the Meek Road neighborhood safe on the south side of Highway 26. Existing funds for interchange improvements should be used to create safe access for that community.
- d) We do not support expansion of Brookwood Parkway to 6 lanes. There are few existing roads of this size in the county. Many 4 lane roads, such as TV Highway and Cornelius Pass Road, do a good job moving large traffic volumes. Existing 6 lane roads, such as NW 185th, have some of the most dangerous intersections in the state. Roads of this size are unattractive and often unsafe for bicyclists and pedestrians, and aren't particularly safe for vehicles either.
- e) We need innovative designs for industrial areas that promote walking, bicycling, and transit use, not vast roads oriented towards car commuters. We need effective programs to encourage car pools and rideshares. We urge the City of Hillsboro to work closely with TriMet to develop concept plans and code that will ensure new industrial areas in Hillsboro are bus-friendly and promote transit ridership, and to update older industrial areas if needed, so that TriMet will have good reasons to provide better bus service.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to weigh in on these important issues that affect the Helvetia area. we hope that in the future the city will involve us earlier in the grant process so that we can help the city develop grant applications that we can support.

Regards,

Cherry Amabisca, Chair
Save Helvetia Steering Committee

cc: Don Odermott
John Valley
Pat Ribellia
Kathryn Harrington

