

Save Helvetia

From: Cherry Amabisca
13260 NW Bishop Road
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Date: May 25, 2010

To: Council President Bragdon and Metro Councilors

RE: Washington County's request for 212 acres of "minor" road adjustments

I'd like to reiterate for the record my opposition to Washington County's recent approval of 212 acres of "minor" road adjustments along roads that are presently designated as "rural reserves". Washington County's Board of Commissioners recently approved to change the right-of-way on the rural reserve side of the road to either "urban reserves" or "undesignated". I urge you to deny this request for the following reasons:

1. Burden on farmers

You heard testimony on May 20, 2010 from Mr. Bob Vanderzanden, a farmer on Jackson School Road and member of the Board of Directors of the Washington County Farm Bureau about the burden this places on farmers. With sidewalks in place, farmers cannot spray up to the edge of the accompanying landscaping due to the risk of harming the landscaping. So, they must leave a strip of land between their fields and the sidewalk and/or landscaping. This fallow strip of land grows noxious weeds, which contaminates the seed crops of the adjacent fields. Seed contamination results in a lower purity of the crop, causing the farmer more expense in cleaning and/or lower compensation per ton.

Once sidewalks are installed on the rural side, then farmers are responsible for maintaining them and for any liabilities. Why is this additional burden being placed on farmers? (1)

2. Roads as buffers

What happened to the idea of roads as urban edges and buffers? Crossing the road and placing "urban reserves" on the rural reserve side of the road violates many of the principles clearly intended by SB 1011 and its OARs.

3. Need for more clarification

As noted during the Metro Council hearing on May 20, 2010, there is a lot of confusion about rural roads versus urban roads on the part of Metro Councilors. One councilor admitted she did not know much about this issue. Another said he was ignorant of the differences. These changes have ramifications that need to be understood by Metro Council, the Farm Bureau and citizens groups. We need to work collaboratively to make sure that we don't make quick decisions in order to make a self-imposed deadline don't have unintended consequences

later.

4. Confusion about other counties' actions

At Metro's hearing on May 20, 2010, Councilor Harrington said that Clackamas and Multnomah Counties already included these changes in their plans and Washington County was merely catching up because they didn't use GIS like the other counties. I find that hard to believe because Washington County has always touted their advanced analysis and use of elaborate software. In an interview on May 21 with a reporter from Blue Oregon, Charlotte Lehan, Core 4 member representing Clackamas County, said "... We definitely have made no effort to bring these right of ways into urban reserves. I thought it was peculiar when Washington County wanted to make all of these road changes." (2) There is enough confusion on this issue that I believe it warrants your taking the time to develop a thorough understanding. Citizens deserve clarification.

5. Current county rights for "improvements"

In response to Councilor Hosticka's questions about the differences between rural roads and urban roads at the May 20, 2010 hearing, Dick Benner referred him to Richard Whitman's memo. This memo apparently lists what developments can be made on rural roads and what developments can be made on urban roads. This memo is certainly of interest to citizens and farmers and would be helpful to study. The comparison may very well show that a sufficient amount of improvements can already be made under the existing law. It would be beneficial for Metro Councilors, the Farm Bureau and citizens' groups to collaboratively discuss this information.

6. LCDC working group considering plan amendments

Washington County has already requested many plan amendments that will increase the types of improvements that can be made on rural lands and roads. Rather than summarily approve these changes, LDCD appointed a workgroup to study the requested changes. It would be prudent for Metro Council to wait until the LCDC workgroup finished their recommendation before deciding on the 22 road changes that Washington County wants as part of the reserves process.

7. Burden on citizens to get information

We wanted to know how much farmland will be lost to each right-of-way? Is it 25 feet? 50 feet? According to Brent Curtis, Planning Manager at Washington County LUT Department, it varies according to the type of road, "It's situational". He suggested that we contact an engineer in the LUT Department to see if we could work with him to determine how much land each right-of-way might take. This is a time-consuming process and a burden on citizens to research. Councilor Rod Park, at the Metro hearing on May 20, 2010, suggested that we provide a list of the roads that we feel are the ones that are the most problematic. This research is involved and can't be done in the short timeframe before the record closes. The burden should be on Washington County to prove that the land they are requesting on the rural side of the road meets the URBAN factors.

For the reasons above, and for the fact that these road changes are NOT necessary in order for the reserves process between Washington County and Metro to be completed, I urge you to deny this request.

Sincerely,

Cherry Amabisca
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(503) 647-5334

- (1) <http://washtech.co.washington.or.us/LDS/CDCdocs/502.pdf>
- (2) <http://www.blueoregon.com/2010/05/waco-commission-more-urban-and-rural-reserves-shenanigans/>