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SW Corridor: SW 30th Avenue Station

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# Introduction

The Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project will bring high-capacity transit to one of the most congested travel corridors in our region. Although Trimet has been careful to emphasize and center the issues of equity and economic prosperity surrounding the proposed high-capacity transit project, the development will have an unavoidable set of consequences for the Corridor's current constituents. The City of Portland and Prosper Portland have set the goal of ensuring equitable economic prosperity for the businesses along and near the Yellow Line Extension. As students, we have stepped in to assist with these agencies understanding of the current climate of sentiment amongst business owners pertaining to the project, as well as to find out what these agencies might be able to do and offer to these businesses to ensure their successful transition during and after construction.

Our team was assigned the 30th Avenue Station Area along Barbur Boulevard. This section of Barbur Boulevard is an auto-oriented street with 79 businesses that we observed.

We researched existing conditions, performed field observations, completed an inventory of businesses within the area, and conducted interviews of local business owners to get the best understanding possible of how the area feels about the development and what they anticipate their needs to be. We also analyzed case studies and interesting practices of similar developments to better produce recommendations for Prosper Portland and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

## Statement of Positionality

We would like to make a clear statement of positionality within the scope of this project so as to present our results and our study area as transparently as possible. As graduate students completing our first real professional project, we had inherent ulterior motives while performing our work. We felt personally and professionally attached to our study area and its success, both in terms of how accurately our portrayal was to reality and to how we influence the City's next steps toward assisting the area's financial viability. As urban planning students in Portland, Oregon, we also had a general bias toward the light rail transit development: we are of the school of thought that mass transportation infrastructure is inherently beneficial, and this may have made us skeptical to some of the sentiments expressed towards business owners who were against the development.

## A Note on Equity

Fitting with the City of Portland and the Portland State University MURP program's ethos, our study had an intentional focus on the issue of equity at all stages of the process, particularly racial equity. We will discuss specific equity goals and lenses utilized at each step in greater detail in their respective sections.

## Existing Conditions

The following section discusses the existing conditions that impact the station location vicinity. It will look at population and demographics, history of the corridor, transportation landscape and land use patterns, and business makeup within the station location vicinity up to a half mile.

## Population and Demographics

The following section discusses the population living within the census tracts near the station location's vicinity. This includes demographics, languages spoken, and educational attainment levels.

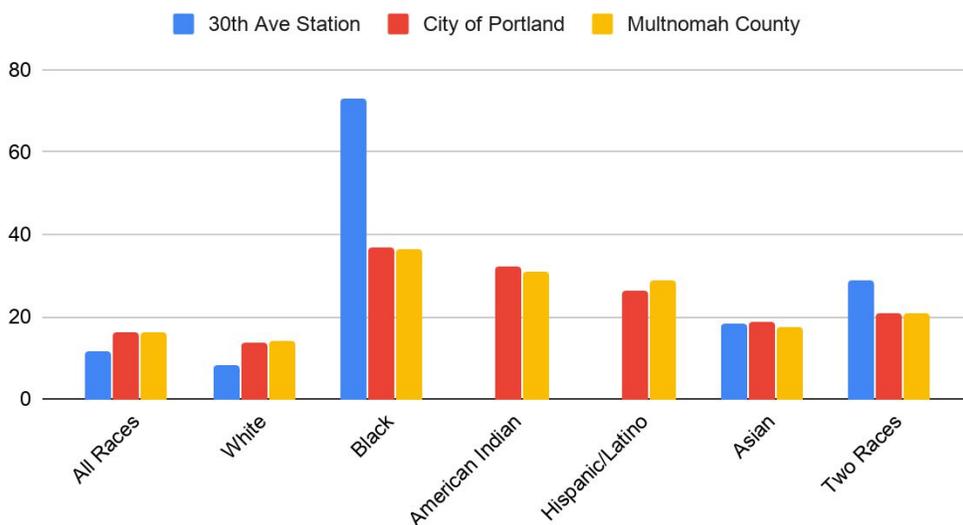
### Income and Poverty Rate

In Census Tract 65.02 the per capita income is close to \$38K, which is 10% higher than the per capita income of Multnomah County. The median household income in Census Tract 65.02 was close to \$66K, which is also 10% higher than that of Multnomah County. Census Tract 65.02 data shows that White only residents' per capita income was slightly higher than that of the whole census tract, at \$39,792 with Asian residents' per capita income not far behind at \$35,006. Latino residents' per capita income was at \$23,350. A huge drop was evident with residents Black or African American with a per capita income at \$7,448.

An estimated 11.8% of the census tract lives under poverty, lower than the 16.2% under poverty in the City of Portland, and 16.4% within Multnomah County, but higher than the 8% reported for the SW Corridor in general. Looking at the intersection of race and poverty levels tells us a lot about this section of the corridor. As seen in Chart 1, the percent of population living under poverty for black residents in this census tract is significantly higher than any other racial group (73.1% compared to 8.1% for white residents and 18.3% for Asian residents). Worth noting is that the percent population

living under poverty in the 30th Ave Station neighborhood is 0% for both both American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hispanic/Latino. No members of either of those groups reported living below poverty, though the groups themselves were small to begin with (for example only 11 American Indian/Alaskan Natives in this census tract), even though the percentages for these groups at the city level and county level each range between 20 and 30%. The percent population of black residents living under poverty compared to white residents living under the poverty within the same census tract is clear and EXTREME, but the DISPARITY is also clear when comparing to the percent population of black residents living below party within the larger area. In the 30th Ave Station census tract, the percentage is 73.1, but it's nearly half the size for the whole population of black residents within the larger Portland area (36.8 for the City of Portland, and 36.3 for Multnomah County).

### Percent Population Living Under Poverty



Source: American Community Survey 2013-2017 Estimates Image by author

### Language and Education

In regards to languages spoken at home, 88% of residents residing in Census Tract 65.02 spoke only English. The remaining languages spoken are as follows; 7% speak an Asian and Pacific Island language, 2% speak another Indo-European language, 1.5% speak Spanish, and 1.5% speak other languages. Additionally, 81% of residents who spoke a language other than English responded as speaking English “very well”.

Census data showed that in Census Tract 65.02, 64% of the White only population (over age 25) had obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher. The Black or African

American population had 31% obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher. In addition, 66% of the Asian population had obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher, with the Latino population having 100% obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher.

## History

The following section examines the existing conditions at the proposed location of a light rail transit stop at SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Barbur Boulevard, and discusses the geography of the site, as well as historical transportation, housing, and business development patterns.

## Geography

Situated 6 miles south of downtown Portland, this site, once heavily forested with both deciduous & evergreen trees, is located just below the narrow strip of land between the West Hills and the Willamette River, long considered a "pinch point" for access to the city of Portland, both by water and by land. SW Barbur and I-5 run parallel at this point, heading slightly west away from the Willamette River and cutting through the rolling hillside.

"The Southwest Corridor includes three separate watersheds and 98 miles of streams, which is more than 10 percent of the region's waterways. Water quality issues include high temperatures, excessive nutrients and pollutants. Water quantity is also a challenge. Impervious surfaces cause excessive runoff into these creeks and streams during even small storm events, scouring and down cutting stream banks and causing flooding and erosion".<sup>1</sup> Several viaducts along SW Barbur were required to cross the numerous natural streams and waterways flowing toward the Willamette.

It is relevant to note that the neighborhoods surrounding SW Barbur Boulevard are sited upon two active fault lines of the Cascadia Subduction Zone: the Portland Hills fault and the Oatfield fault. These two faults both intersect Barbur Blvd at different points. "The Portland Hills fault as well as the East Bank and Oatfield faults would pose the greatest seismic hazard to Portland because of their proximity and their potential to generate large-magnitude earthquakes".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SW Corridor Plan Existing Conditions, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Wong, 2001

## Transportation Corridor

Prior to white settlers, the Willamette Valley was home to the Kalapuya and Chinook bands of Native Americans, with the Willamette River serving as a means for fishing and travel. A natural gateway to Portland from the south, the route now known as Barbur Boulevard has always been a transportation corridor, originally as a Native American trail from Mount Hood headed to the coast, passing through the north side of Lake Oswego. As the city of Portland grew, so did the need to access to the city and the demand for land transportation routes. The Oregon and California Railroad (later Southern Pacific) rail line opened in 1871. Then from 1914 – 1929, the Red Electric line, running along the same corridor, carried passengers headed to and from Portland on the “West Side Local”. In effort to provide greater automobile access to Portland, Barbur Boulevard was first conceived as a highway along this route in 1925 by Asbury L. Barbur, a Portland City commissioner and auditor. SW Barbur Boulevard opened its first of two sections in October 1934, with a 2<sup>nd</sup> section from Bertha Boulevard/Hillsdale Highway to Tigard finished in 1936. The upper section was maintained as a green space, intended to guide visitors north through the forest with urban cityscape dramatically visible at the crest of the hill. The lower section of SW Barbur was conceived primarily as a functional transportation route and much of the existing tree canopy was removed and paved over (Figure 2).

## Built Environment - Commercial and Residential

Taking advantage of the automobile traffic, businesses along SW Barbur Blvd catered then (and now) primarily to a new car oriented culture with gas stations, drive-thru restaurants, and car repair shops, all with extensive parking lots to sufficiently accommodate customers’ cars. Located outside city limits, there was an advantage to opening a business that did not have to adapt to building codes, nor require business licenses. Starting in the 30’s, so many “auto courts” popped up, it became known as Motel Row (Figure 3). In 1950, Barbur Blvd Drive-In Theatre opened to great fanfare at SW Taylors Ferry & Barbur. Anticipating heavy traffic, this drive-in theater could accommodate up to 600(!) cars. Our area of study includes one of the oldest and beloved businesses in the district, the Original Pancake House (1953), located just off SW Barbur at 8601 SW 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Other important anchors on SW Barbur Blvd are supermarkets like Safeway and Fred Meyer, both established in the 1950’s.

When Interstate 5 was completed in 1961, much of the vehicular traffic was diverted from Barbur Boulevard, reducing it to an arterial road. The reduced traffic triggered the decline for many of the businesses dependent on the high volume of passing cars, especially the motel industry, which dropped from as many as 19 motels in the mid

'50's, to as few as 8 by the '80's. Several of the original motels have since been converted to apartments.

In terms of housing, SW neighborhoods were considered among the most desirable real estate in the city, with scenic views, convenience to the city center, good schools, access to various highways and the I-5 freeway, recreational areas - including the Willamette River and numerous parks, as well as areas of industrial employment. However, a great disparity was established between expansive single family homes with large land lots in the hills to the west relative to the modest homes surrounding the business corridor.

## Population

Originally outside the city limits of Portland, the area at the southern end of Barbur Boulevard had a relatively low population, but as the popularization of the automobile allowed residences to be established farther from commercial and transportation centers, the southwest suburbs began to attract more residents from the cities in the post-war era. The neighborhoods directly adjacent to SW Barbur Boulevard were affordable to a diverse mix of people, including those of color and many immigrants. However, the "heterogeneous character of district" was at that point in time considered a detrimental aspect to the neighborhood.

According to the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a New Deal era government-sponsored corporation, in 1938 the SW Barbur Corridor was one of the regions deemed "Hazardous" (Figure 1); the region from downtown to SW Nevada Street, just north of the intersection with SW Terwilliger was almost completely redlined. (Note that the city limits then only extended to SW Dolph Street. SW Barbur Blvd south of Hillsdale Highway/Bertha Boulevard was annexed to the city of Portland between 1941 – 1950.)

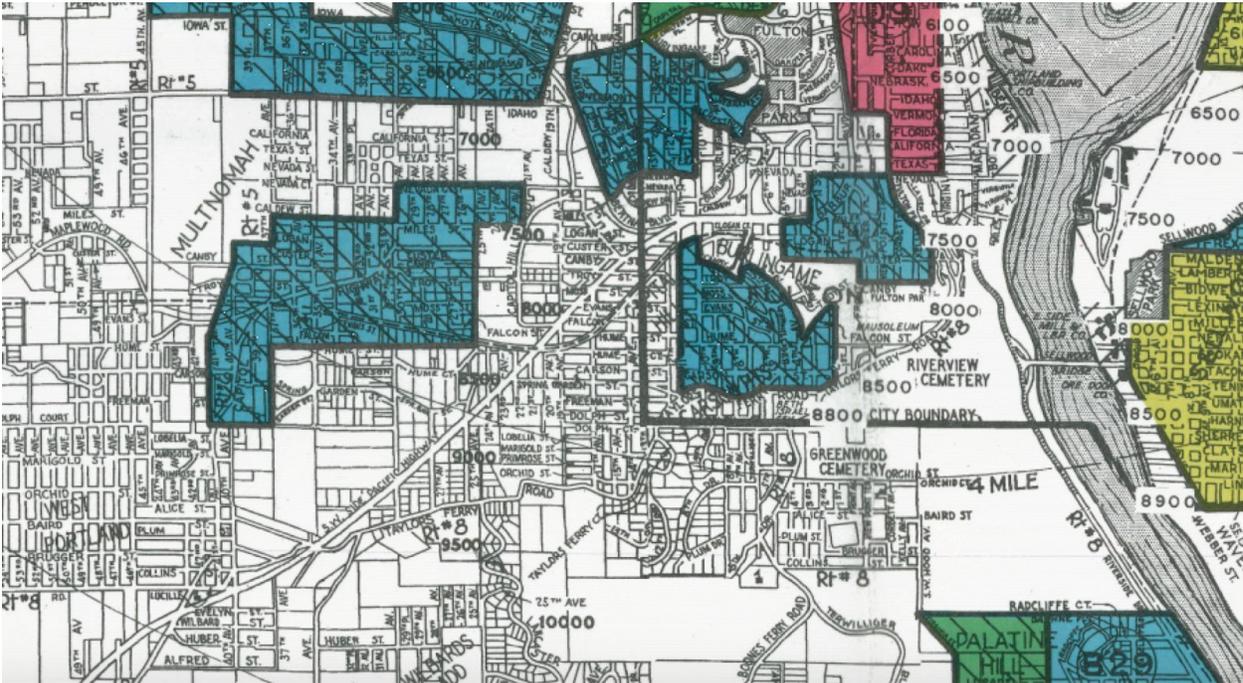
Surprisingly, just a bit farther south - which until 1938 was zoned only for commercial but had then been recently rezoned to allow for single-family residential, the HOIC map shows areas that are "Still Desirable". This was certainly due to the fact that although this neighborhood was home to factory workers, artisans, and laborers, and there was a "prevalence of low class improvements, some of them of the "shack" type, [with a] low income group population", there were far fewer immigrants "Foreign-born families 5%", and apparently no African Americans "Negro None %".<sup>3</sup> "The concentration of orientals and other foreign-born population is confined almost entirely to the northern

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<sup>3</sup> HOLC, 1938, Mapping Inequality

half of the area, the southern part being practically free of subversive racial elements”.<sup>4</sup> Blatant racism and xenophobia segregated neighborhoods along the business corridors from the upper hillside, and resulting priorities in investment created economic and social disparities that still persist.

Figure 1. SW Portland, Home Owner’s Loan Corporation Map, 1938



Source: Mapping Inequality, Redlining in New Deal America

<sup>4</sup> HOLC, 1938, Mapping Inequality

Figure 2. Safeway at SW Barbur Blvd, Multnomah Blvd and Capitol Hill Rd, 1952



Source: Barbur Boulevard History Page

Figure 3. Frontier Motel, originally located at 8715 SW Barbur Blvd, postcard ca. 1960



Source: Barbur Boulevard Motels, Tim Lyman Collection

## Conclusion

SW Barbur Boulevard has a long history as a major transportation corridor and the gateway to downtown Portland from the south. As a result of the constant vehicle traffic, businesses that both cater to and rely on cars have thrived along this route. Negative externalities from the highly trafficked corridor like air and noise pollution, bike and pedestrian unfriendly streets, and environmental issues due to extreme over-pavement and loss of natural habitat (heat island effect), are just a few of the consequences that must be currently addressed. Long standing racism & cultural bias resulted in unequal priorities in investment and segregated neighborhoods along the SW Corridor. The economic and social disparities between neighborhoods on either side of I-5, must be recognized when redeveloping along this corridor.

## Transportation & Land Use

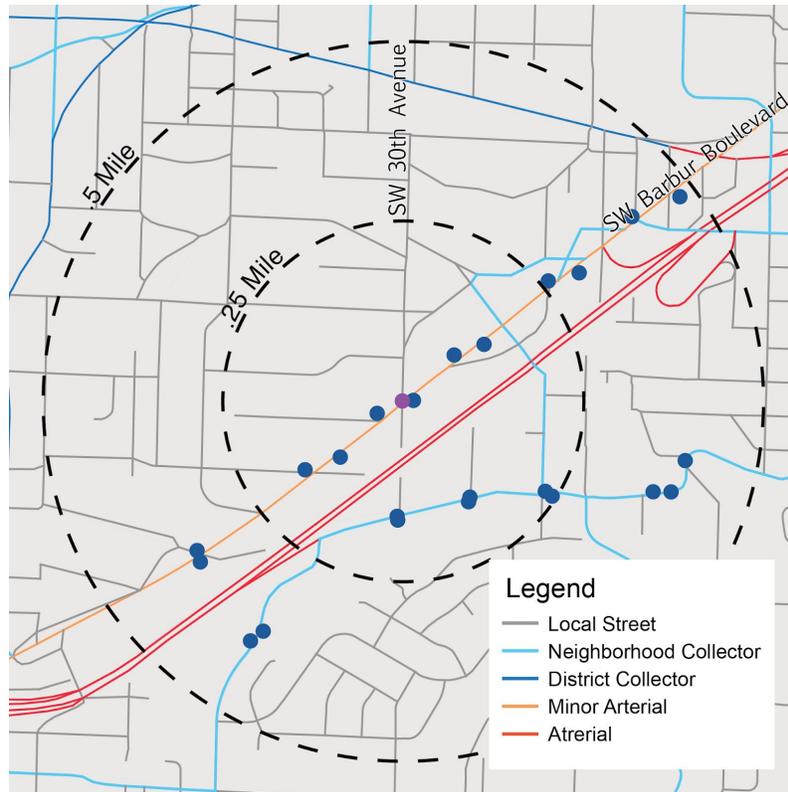
This section discusses the current infrastructure and transportation landscape for the SW Corridor Max Line potential station location at 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Infrastructure for different modes of travel and road designations will be considered from Portland's Transportation System Plan (TSP) and ODOT's Highway Plan (OHP). This document shall list the notable infrastructure and roadway designations to help the reader understand what is currently offered as part of the transportation landscape.

Current land use designations and Portland zoning code will be examined for the potential station location's vicinity. Portland's Comprehensive Plan and Title 33, Portland's zoning code will be considered. This section discusses the current land use designations at a high level within the station location's vicinity as well as discusses the zoning of land within the station location's vicinity.

## Location & Description

The station location is approximately at SW Barbur Boulevard and SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Portland, Oregon. The station location's vicinity was determined by analyzing up to a half mile distance away from potential station location. Documents such as the TSP, OHP, Title 33, and Portland's land use and zoning maps were considered within the context of the potential station location's vicinity.

Figure 1: Diagram of Station location vicinity with roadway designations, DATA from TSP and OHP



Source: PortlandMaps Open Data site

### Transportation Landscape

The transportation landscape was considered for the immediate  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile around the station location proposed at SW Barbur Boulevard and SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The transportation landscape considered multiple modes of transportation including the use of cars, transit, bicycles, and walking/rolling. A table summarizing the vicinity roadways is posted on the following page. The information comes from Portland Transportation System Plan and ODOT Highway Plan. The diagram below shows the transportation designations by jurisdiction.

Table 1: Station location vicinity roadway designations, DATA from TSP and OHP

Roadway	Jurisdiction	Functional Classification	Cross-Section	Speed	On street Parking	Bicycle Lanes	Curbs	Sidewalks
SW Barbur Boulevard	ODOT	Arterial	4 lanes	40 mph	Yes	Both Sides	Yes	Both Sides
30 <sup>TH</sup> Avenue	Portland	Local Street	2 Lanes	25-35 Not Posted	Partial Both Sides	Both Sides	Yes	Yes
Interstate 5	ODOT	Major Arterial	6 Lanes	50-55 Posted	No	No	No	No
SW Spring Garden Street/ SW 26 <sup>th</sup> Way	Portland	Neighborhood Collector	2 Lanes	35 Not Posted	Partial One Side	No	No	Partial Both Sides

### Traffic

The corridor has many roads for the use of cars in the immediate station location vicinity. The majority of roadways are designated local streets by the TSP with the exception of SW Barbur Boulevard designated a Minor Arterial and SW Spring Garden Street/SW 26<sup>th</sup> Way which is designated a Neighborhood Collector. Interstate 5 is designated a Major Arterial. Both SW Barbur Boulevard and Interstate 5 are under the Jurisdiction of Oregon Department of Transportation. The other vicinity roadways are under the jurisdiction of Portland.

### Transit

SW Barbur Boulevard is designated a Regional Transit/Major Transit Priority street by the TSP. It is served by bus 12, a frequent bus service which means bus arrivals are 15 minutes or better. Within the station location’s vicinity there are 12 stops. 6 of the stops are on route traveling towards City Center. The other 6 stops on route traveling towards Barbur Transit Center. The 12 bus stops are identified as 159, 160, 162, 163, 164, 165, 187, 194, 208, 11031, 10844, and 10849. Bus 43 runs along SW Taylor Ferry Road the bus service is not frequent and does not run on Saturday or Sunday. There is potential that it could serve as a possible connection to the proposed station location. The stations the line 43 user would deboard to connect to the proposed station location is stop ID 5720 and 5721.

### Bicycle

SW Barbur Boulevard is designated a Major City Bikeway by the TSP. It has designated buffered bike lanes on both sides of the road for the station location’s vicinity. Outside of the station location vicinity toward City Center buffered bike lanes cease on the south side of SW Barbur Street. SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue is designated a City Bikeway. There

are bike lanes present until SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue reaches SW Dolph Court, 1 half block past Dolph Court bike lanes cease. SW Spring Garden Street/SW 26<sup>th</sup> Way, SW 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Barbur Boulevard are designated recommended bike routes.

### **Pedestrian**

SW Barbur Boulevard is designated a City Walkway by the TSP. There are sidewalks present on both sides of the road within the station location vicinity. Sidewalks along SW Barbur Boulevard are for the most part buffered by a parking lane. Sidewalks are nonexistent on SW 26<sup>th</sup> Way/Avenue south of Interstate 5.

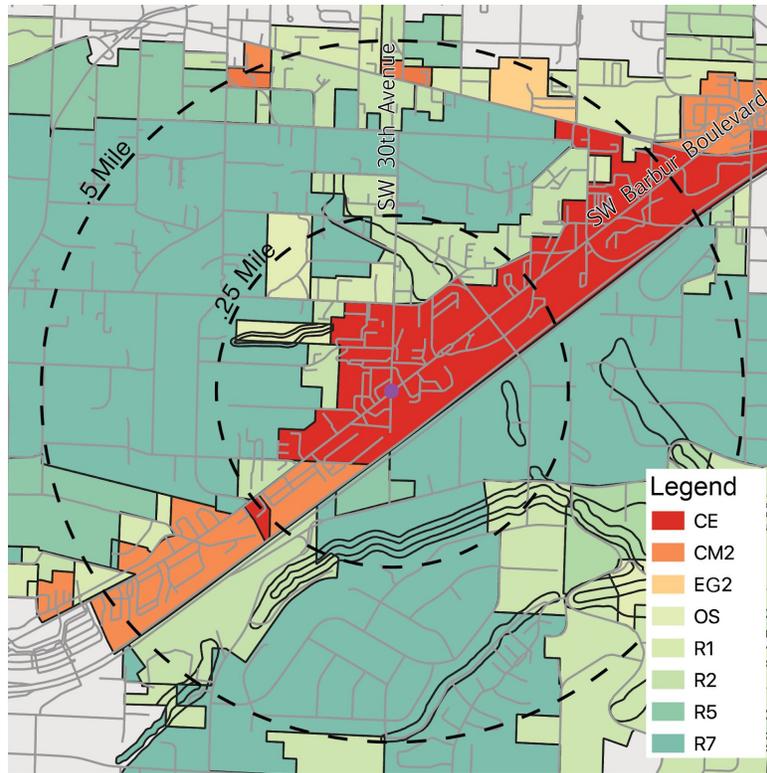
### **Connectivity**

Connectivity to the south of interstate 5 is limited due to the large barrier and one way to get across within the station location's vicinity. Access to the south of Interstate 5 is provided by and underpass SW 26<sup>th</sup> Way. Access is also limited due to the lack of grid in the station location's vicinity. Users of the potential station will likely access platform from 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Barbur Boulevard.

### **Land Use**

The majority of land use in the station location vicinity is auto-oriented development. It includes a mix of small businesses. Buildings are mostly setback to accommodate large parking lots. Land is being utilized as either Commercial or Residential with a small portion of the land use designated mixed use, a combination of the two. The least amount of land in the station location's vicinity is designated Open Space and Employment, General.

Figure 2: Station location vicinity with zoning designations, DATA from Portland Zoning Code



Source: PortlandMaps Open Data site

## Zoning

### CE - Commercial Employment

The CE zone is a medium-scale zone intended for sites along corridors in areas between designated centers, especially along Civic Corridors that are also major truck streets. The emphasis of this zone is on commercial and employment uses. Buildings are generally expected to be up to four stories.<sup>5</sup>

### CM2 – Commercial Mixed Use

The CM2 zone is a medium-scale, commercial mixed use zone intended for sites in a variety of centers and corridors, in other mixed use areas that are well served by frequent transit, or within larger areas zoned for multi-dwelling development buildings.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.130.030.E. (2018)

<sup>6</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.130.030.C. (2018)

## **EG2 - Employment General**

The EG2 zone generally features larger lots and an irregular or large block pattern. The area consists of sites with medium and low building coverages and buildings which are set back from the street. In this zone are generally expected to be up to four stories, except in locations where bonuses allow up to five stories.<sup>7</sup>

## **R1 - Residential**

The R1 zone is a multi-dwelling zone. Housing is characterized by 1-4 story buildings and a high building coverage. The types of new development will be multi-dwelling structures (condominiums and apartments), duplexes, townhouses and row houses.<sup>8</sup>

## **R2 - Residential**

The R2 zone is a multi-dwelling zone. Housing is characterized by 1-3 story buildings, but at a higher building coverage than R3 zones. The types of new development will be duplexes, townhouses, row houses and garden apartments.<sup>9</sup>

## **R5 - Residential**

The R5 zone is a single-dwelling zone which allows 1 dwelling unit per 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The major types of new housing development will be limited to single family houses, accessory dwelling units (ADU) and duplexes on corners.<sup>10</sup>

## **R7 - Residential**

The R7 zone is a single-dwelling zone which allows 1 dwelling unit per 7,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The major types of new housing development will be limited to single family houses, accessory dwelling units (ADU) and duplexes on corners.<sup>11</sup>

## **Conclusions**

The proposed station location is served by heavily by auto centric mix of transportation facilities along with a frequent service bus route 12. There are painted bicycle lanes and some portions are buffered. Portion of the painted bike lanes are inconsistent along major city bikeway SW Barbur Boulevard and are sparser on streets identified as suggested bike routes such as 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Spring Garden Street/SW 26<sup>th</sup> Way.

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<sup>7</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.140.030.A.2. (2018)

<sup>8</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.120.030.C. (2018)

<sup>9</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.120.030.B. (2018)

<sup>10</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.110.020. (2018)

<sup>11</sup> Portland, Oregon, Planning and Zoning, Title 33.110.020. (2018)

Generally, land is zoned Commercial Employment adjacent to rail alignment within the potential station location vicinity. Additionally, there is a portion zoned for mixed use residential and commercial. The land changes zones mostly to residential as distance increases from alignment. Land that is zoned residential typically is higher density the closer it is to the alignment on the north side of Interstate 5. South of Interstate 5 is zoned mostly for low density housing and open space.

### Key takeaways

- Station hub (1/8<sup>th</sup> mile) land use is commercial (office and retail). Land transitions to residential with multifamily as well as single-family units
- Sidewalks lack connectivity. Where present, are buffered by parking lane however, few cars parked there during site visit.
- Portion of the painted bike lanes lack connectivity along major city bikeway, SW Barbur Boulevard. Bike lanes sparser on streets identified as suggested bike routes such as 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Spring Garden Street/SW 26<sup>th</sup> Way.
- The proposed station location is served by heavily auto-oriented mix of transportation facilities along with a frequent service bus route 12.

## Business

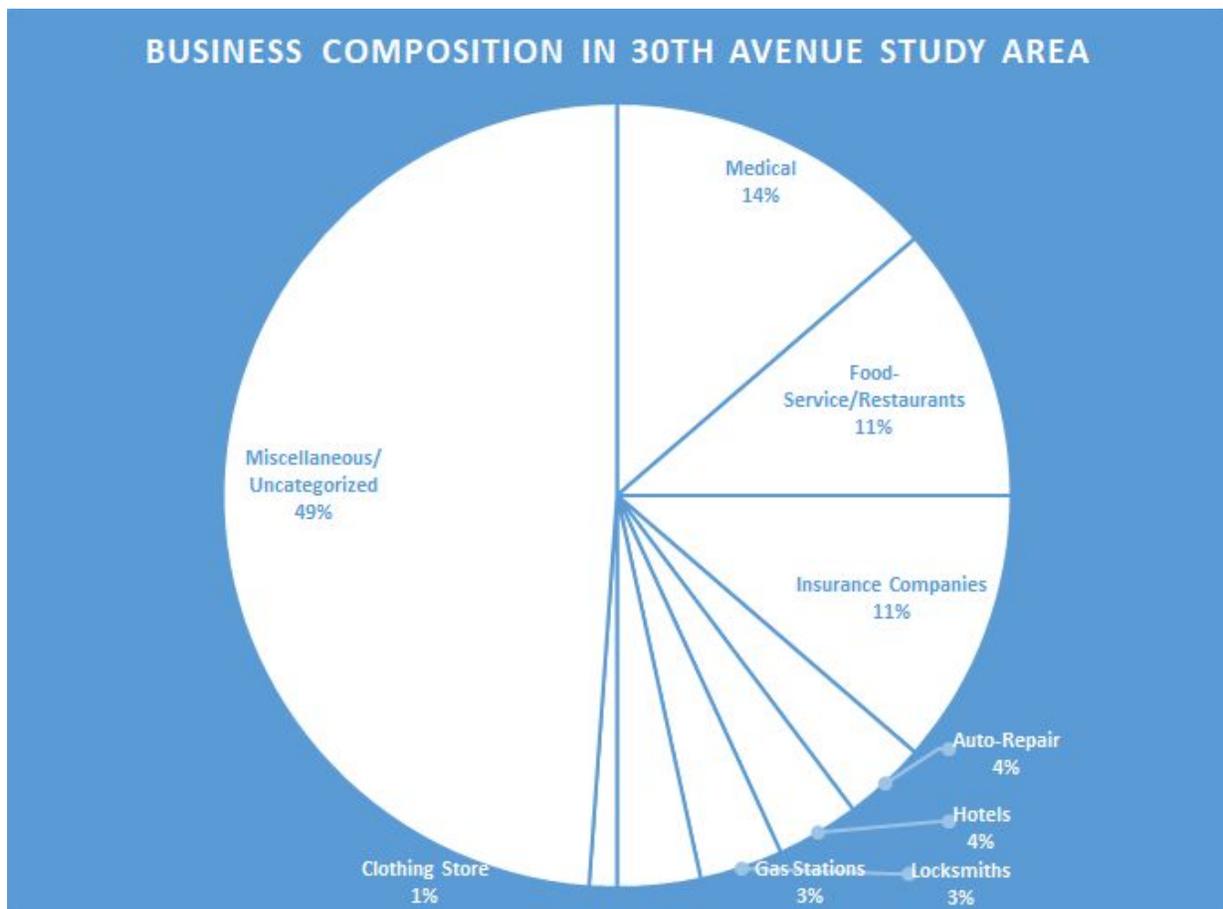
The 30th avenue site location for the proposed Southwest Portland light-rail expansion has 88 businesses within a quarter-mile radius. The quarter mile-radius was chosen for two reasons. First, a quarter mile is the size of the site's walkability radius that is drawn by the BPS's current ArcMap depiction of the corridor, and we wanted to be consistent with their data collection. Second, the location of our site is nestled between the 19th Avenue site, the Multnomah Village site, and the Barbur Transit Center site. If we had expanded out to a half-mile sit location, we would have included more businesses that are in these respective sites than businesses that are not accounted for by any site.

The majority of the businesses in the site area are small in size with one to four employees and bring in less than five hundred thousand dollars in revenue. The primary industries located around the proposed site area are medical and insurance companies, representing approximately 25% of the total number of businesses, followed by food-service and restaurants making up approximately 12%, then a steep drop off in number to hotels, gas stations, and miscellaneous. The miscellaneous category covers a rather large section of the total businesses, but this is due to a high number of niche businesses that do not fit into any other category. The choice to aggregate the

businesses in this way is to allow for some analysis despite the high level of niche businesses in the study area. This way provides at least some data about the general types of businesses that are located in the area as opposed to 60 categories of highly specific businesses.

Businesses in different sectors:	
Medical	12
Food-Service/Restaurants	10
Insurance Companies	10
Auto-Repair	3
Hotels	3
Locksmiths	3
Gas Stations	3
Clothing Store	1
Miscellaneous/Uncategorized	43

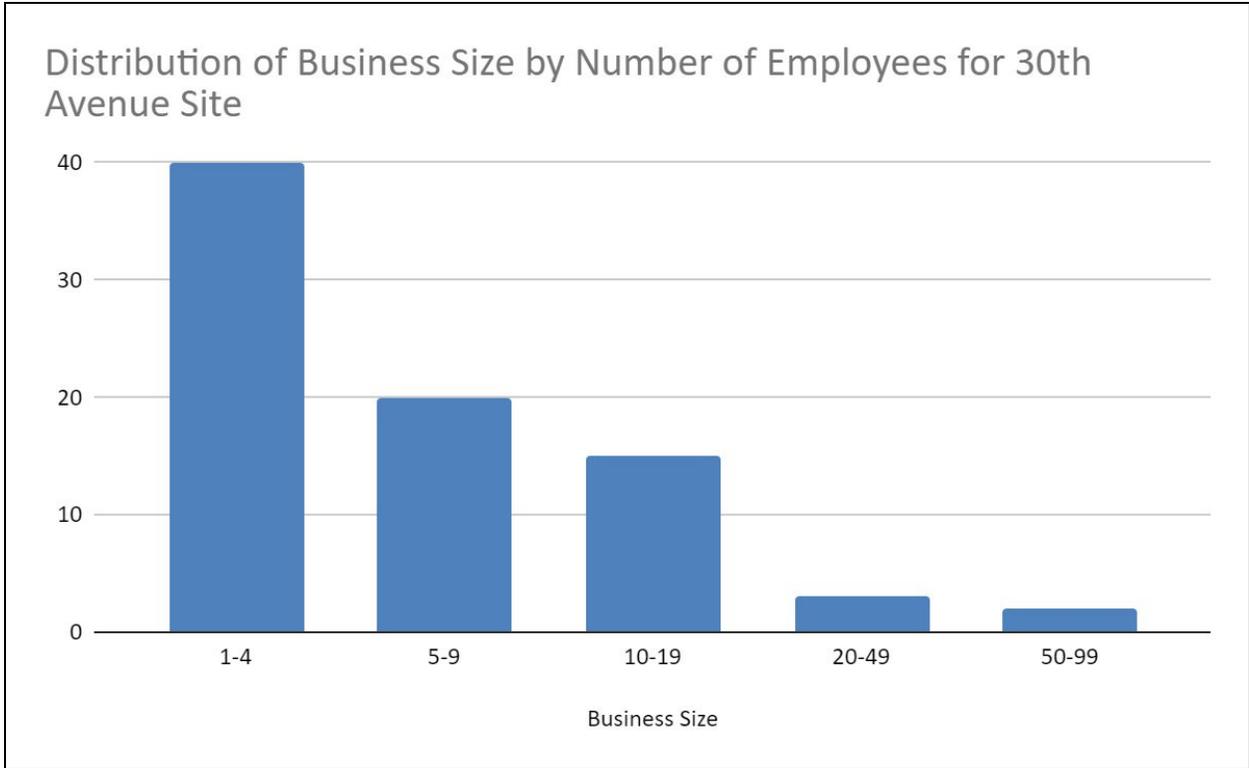
Source: Prosper Portland, ArcMap Online MetaData of Businesses, Accessed October, 2019.



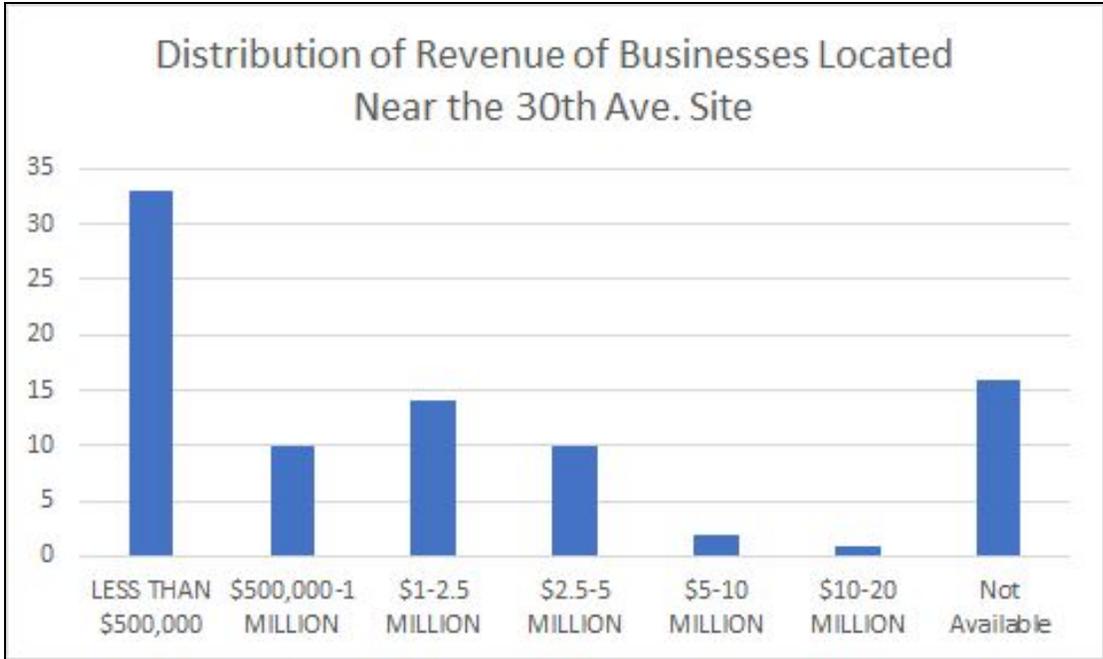
Source: Prosper Portland, ArcMap Online MetaData of Businesses, Accessed October, 2019.

The medical category contains any businesses that would be generally considered healthcare, which includes dental, chiropractic and homeopathic practices. In the same way, the food-service and restaurant section is an aggregate of multiple more specific business categories. Many of these locations are within the small category with somewhere between 1-10 employees that are likely operating with a small local customer base that is located relatively near to these offices. The density of this specific type of medical office is likely due to the high level of residential neighborhoods in the surrounding area. In the same way, the high density of insurance offices is likely a combination of the high amount of residential neighborhoods surround the area coupled with the relatively affordable and pervasive office space along Barbur. The offices are also very small, which allows for cheaper rent to the business, and the office space is located on an arterial road directly adjacent to a freeway allowing for quick access to any customers that need to go in-person for their services.

The next division of the economic zone is food-service/restaurants. A significant note about the composition of food options in the area is that most of them are fast-food restaurants and convenience stores. This location does not have a grocery store within a quarter-mile walking distance but has a Safeway and Fred Meyer further North along Barbur Boulevard that the number 12 bus currently runs between. This is to say that despite the area's lack of a grocery store within direct walking distance, this area would not be considered a food desert because there are affordable means of transit to and from grocery stores within a one-mile range. With the implementation of a light-rail stop in this location, the trip to and from Safeway would be one-stop.



Source: Prosper Portland, ArcMap Online MetaData of Businesses, Accessed October, 2019.



Source: Prosper Portland, ArcMap Online MetaData of Businesses, Accessed October, 2019.

### 30th Avenue's Role in the Region

We can infer based on the high numbers of small scale, low revenue businesses that this area currently contains small scale businesses that provide niche services, exist within industries that require many small locations (ex. Gas), or are offices for local providers of service where the location of the office is not essential to the allure of service (Insurance). As mentioned above, approximately a quarter of the total number of businesses are various forms of healthcare and insurance agencies, which provide either provide service for the local population in the form of neighborhood clinics or dental offices or as small extensions of insurers including individually practicing insurers. Currently, this section of Barbur serves as an affordable rental space to many small businesses with relatively low overall revenue streams and local clientele. There is not a large commercial center that serves this area, which suggests that at a minimum any local residents in this area bus to the mall or to Fred Meyer or Safeway nearby, or, more likely, they drive to larger commercial centers outside of Southwest Portland.

### Considering Existing Conditions and Equity

Equity was considered in collecting historical data of the Native Lands Barbur Boulevard is situated. Additionally, Inherent urban design qualities and lack of sidewalks that make up the existing conditions were considered due to the implications it has on local communities of color and immigrant populations nearby.

# Field Observations

## A Note on Equity

We incorporated equity while conducting field observations mostly through the means of identifying potential businesses owned by people of color to conduct our interviews later on. We also paid close attention to the different ways accessibility could be an issue both on the street and sidewalks, and in parking lots and business entrances, and how this could potentially impact people with disabilities.

## Observations

The 30th Ave station area is divided by Barbur Blvd, which is heavily used in both directions. 4 lane highway with only one traffic signal & crosswalk in our range makes it extremely difficult to cross street at any other location.

Auto centric businesses and several clustered as strip malls. Strip malls are frequent at times situated next to each other. Limited parking in most strip malls aside from Barbur Plaza which seems to have adequate parking in comparison to the amount of businesses located within. ADA accessibility is quite troubling though, and is not very convenient for people living with a disability. Walkability is very low due to sidewalk infrastructure being minimal and not existent in a 500 ft stretch, and the fact that Barbur Blvd is a major thoroughway. This portion of Barbur Boulevard is heavily populated with strip malls that utilize shared parking lots. The biggest takeaway from the field visit is that walkability is difficult for a temporarily able-bodied individual, and is extremely difficult for people with any walking impairment. Additionally, the ADA accessibility between lots varied widely but overall is very poor. Sidewalks as narrow from 8 ft wide north of SW 30th to 4ft or non-existent in some sections on east side of street. A few businesses had a drive-thru window & lane. Almost every business must be accessed by walking through a parking lot. All businesses had their own or shared parking lot.

SW 30th Avenue station location vicinity is filled with businesses ranging from national chains providing basic goods and services, small businesses with more than one location providing services, small locally owned businesses with one location providing goods such as food or professional services such as legal assistance. Majority of buildings were likely constructed 1960's to the 1980's with some built in the 90's

and a very small portion in the 50's and late 2000's. Most buildings were in good shape.

Also there are a few businesses that we made an assumption that they were a ethnically-owned business. Major building management in the Portland Metro region owned two of the bigger strip malls in the area. Another note is that several ethnic-specific storefronts were not listed in google maps or on the Prosper Portland list of businesses. There are several hypotheses for why this is the case: ownership of the stores may have changed hands recently and these lists have not been updated. After completing the spreadsheet and trying to reconcile the data to TriMet, we realized that many of the businesses had closed or changed hands; I think it could be assumed that these small businesses really struggle and open and close fairly quickly.

Some businesses did not have a primary entrance on SW Barbur, but instead had entrances at the back of the building from parking lot. Many of these buildings had temporary door signage and seemed vacant from street. Almost every building had at least one vacancy, some entire buildings vacant. Those empty buildings tended to be in poor condition. The developments on both sides of Barbur were frequently below the grade of the highway - possibly affecting visibility of businesses, perception of safety & impeding pedestrian access.

## Observation Photography



Image 1: Steep entrance into the parking lot with no ADA assisted ramp. Many parking lots do not have practical ADA access, even if they do meet the legal requirement.



Image 2: Large shared parking lots common, most businesses along the corridor exist within similar lot. ADA access located on the sides of the building.



Image 3: Overall low level of maintenance to section of corridor. Many buildings were in worn condition, the sidewalks were in varying states of disrepair, and exposed access panels were vandalized.



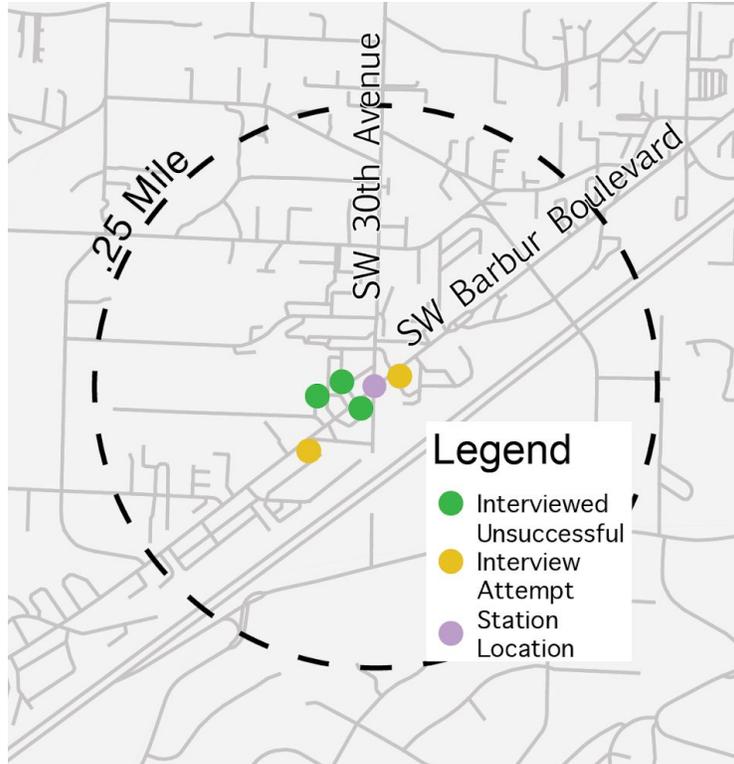
Image 4: Sidewalks along corridor are discontinuous and deteriorating. Extended sections lack sidewalk connection forcing pedestrians into bike-lane (where present).

# Interviews

This section discusses the main themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with business owners within the 30th Avenue site. Four business owners were able to be interviewed. Each business that was selected for an interview was chosen with an equity lens as the primary criterion. As the summaries of the interviews will convey, these businesses are either minority-owned, immigrant-owned, or woman-owned, and have unique perspectives on the corridor and their clientele.

## Summary

Four interviews were conducted with business owners/operators for the 30th Avenue proposed Light-Rail transit stop. We looked to choose businesses that represented a variety of different perspectives on the corridor using location, business type, and cultural background as our criteria. The four businesses that we interviewed are Conin Mexican Cuisine, Halal Market, Brewskie's Coffee, and a small appliance repair company that preferred not to be named. Each interview lasted approximately half an hour and covered a range of the supplied questions on the questionnaire with some variability between shops. There were several common themes that were selected to be highlighted from these interviews. These have been selected due to their prevalence in multiple interviews and based on the described interest or concern that the business owners have expressed when asked about these topics. They are all largely focused around the proposed Light-Rail, although some of them are more broadly interested in maintaining the character of the corridor. The location of the business visited are identified in the ariel below. The business that preferred to remain anonymous is not marked.



Source: PortlandMaps Open Data site

## Businesses

Below is a table identifying businesses interviewed as well as each team member’s role in the interview process. A summary of business concerns is provided on the following pages.

Business	Interview Conductor	Note Taker
Brewskie’s Coffee	Gregory Mallon	Rebecca Rockom
Conin Mexican Cuisine	Francisco Ibara (Conducted in Spanish)	Francisco Ibara /Benjamen Acord-Becker
Halal Market	Benjamen Acord-Becker	Gregory Mallon
Repair Company	Rebecca Rockom / Laura Shumway	Laura Shumway

### Repair Company Summary Preferring to Remain Anonymous

This business is a repair company located along the Barbur corridor. In addition to the owner there is one other employee. The owner’s partner sometimes helps out with

bookkeeping. The owner was hesitant to share with us about the health of his business. The owner described their customer base very diverse. They said that predominantly their customers drive to the shop, and is satisfied with the current amount of parking that is available there. The owner shared that he is concerned about impending construction for the light rail project, particularly the potential reality of only one lane of traffic on Barbur (we gave them Trimet's contact info for more updated statuses on what will actually be happening construction-wise). Connected to the construction issue, they were most concerned about how construction issues could create traffic delays and would make their business less accessible to customers.

### Halal Market Summary

The light-rail project is what he sees as the greatest threat to his business at the moment, and we circle around his more specific concerns several times throughout the interview. Thus the first term I coded was 'train', which was his preferred term for the light-rail project. In order to capture the true total, I also counted several other terms that were discussing the light-rail project. When discussing the prospect of the light-rail, Abdikarim was very clear that he was against the project. Part of his objection stemmed from the general lack of information that has been disseminated to the businesses along the corridor about timelines, the line's pathway along Barbur Blvd., and the accompanied development that will come with the expansion project. In addition to this, he explained that the prospect of the light-rail has already forced him to make challenging decisions about whether to make improvements to the storefront due to the lack of information. He says that they are holding off on purchases because the future is unknown, "We need a lot of stuff, it is going to take time to renew everything. - all the freezers, everything else, but we are taking time because you never know when this train is going to be (built)".<sup>12</sup>

I also wanted to focus on the area of his concern for the project, so I also highlighted his expressions of his personal and communal position on the light-rail project. Abdikarim was primarily concerned about what the development would do to the neighborhoods 'feeling' and change how safe it was for people to walk around, and for his children to walk through the neighborhood. This was a surprising position for him to have on walkability because generally, light-rail infrastructure would encourage more walkability, not less. He elaborated later in the interview that it was primarily because of crime safety that he would not let his children walk around. "I drove a taxi for 15 years, and I drive a medical transport now, and I have seen it. Everywhere that the train goes, there's always fighting, and there are police scenes, always something going on".

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<sup>12</sup> Jama, Abdikarim, In Person Interview, Halal Market.

<sup>13</sup> During the interview, he seemed to be alluding to the homeless population when talking about how the light-rail would make the neighborhood less safe but never mentioned it directly. He expressed that if the light-rail came through the area, he would move further away, “I have to raise my family in the safest place possible”.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, he was concerned with what the light-rail project would do to the traffic in the corridor both during and after construction, and he was concerned with where parking lots would be located for park-and-ride services as well. He brought up that for park-and-ride in the corridor many commuters will need to park in the area, and he was concerned with where the parking lot would need to go which was something that we did not hear from other business owners.

### **Brewskie’s Coffee Summary**

Our interview with Ariel Brimhall, owner of Brewski Coffee was pleasant and positive. Her biggest concern by far seemed to be the lack of information provided by either the City or TriMet. Her current 5-year lease is almost up and she is unsure about signing a new lease. “The last I heard they were planning to take 24 feet from my (east) side of Barbur all the way down, which means all of these businesses will be displaced”.<sup>15</sup> Ariel did attend part of a public Light Rail meeting but would appreciate more communication. “I would love to actually have someone from the city to come down here and talk to us”.<sup>16</sup>

Ariel is very worried about potential negative business impacts and potential safety concerns from the addition of Light Rail transit to SW Barbur Boulevard. “I get a lot of trouble from the buses, not great people and homeless. So I am concerned with it (Light Rail) bringing more riff-raff this way. I also worry about it killing my business during the construction period”.<sup>17</sup> Ariel was wary about how Light Rail construction may affect an already congested boulevard (traffic concerns). “When Barbur gets backed up, the traffic already kills business on those days, so with construction or removing lanes, people will not stop to support my business”.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conin Mexican Cuisine**

The owner of Conin spoke in particular about his business vitality. To him regardless of the proposed SW Corridor light rail project, he worried about the growth of his

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Brimhall, Ariel, In Person Interview, Brewskie’s Coffee.

<sup>16</sup> Brimhall, Ariel, In Person Interview, Brewskie’s Coffee.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

business. He has been in the area since he opened for a total of three years. He currently rents the space in which he operates and his lease calls for five more years. He employs eight workers and although he currently pays above the minimum wage he worries for increasing wage demands and availability of qualified workers. The owner feels a connection to the community. He mentioned how there is a strong and positive relationship with neighboring businesses and the customers. The base of their clientele live in the community and prefer to who walk into the restaurant. Adversely he called out the layout of the area, “The type of area, it is a bit too fast and it affects us a bit because people don’t stop as much. They don’t see, can’t see the businesses”.<sup>19</sup> To the business owner, it was important for his business to be visible to all and the way Barbur Blvd is design doesn’t help him grow his customer base. The owner of Conin specifically mentioned the possibility of customers looking for alternative options, “As everyone around is saying, the construction is going to affect the business. There will be less traffic, and people passing by. More difficult to go eat or shop, perhaps because of traffic or streets close and people will start looking for other options”.<sup>20</sup>

### Key Themes

Key Themes	Interviews Where they were present			
	Brewskie's Coffee	Conin Mexican Cuisine	Halal Market	Small Appliance Repair Company
Traffic Concerns	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Parking Concerns			<b>X</b>	
Safety Concerns	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Position of Light-Rail Path	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Business Impacts	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

### Traffic Issues

The most common concern that we heard during the interviews was centered around traffic. Included within this themes is both traffic concerns during the construction of

<sup>19</sup> Cano, Osvaldo, In Person Interview, Conin Mexican Cuisine.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

the potential Light-Rail reducing or preventing access to their businesses for extended periods of time and the potential for reduced access to their business as the result of the actual path of the Light-Rail location along Barbur Boulevard. All four businesses were concerned with how long-term construction along the corridor would encourage drivers to find alternative paths to take to and from work or downtown.

One of the businesses is entirely based on the drive-by interest for coffee, and she has already observed how a high level of congestion impacts her business; “When Barbur get backed up, the traffic already kills business on those days, so with construction or removing lanes, people will not stop to support my business”.<sup>21</sup> For a majority of the businesses around this potential stop, access to their business from the street is entirely dependent on people being able to pull into their shared parking lots. Among the businesses that we observed and interviewed with, Breskie’s coffee was one of the only businesses that did not share parking with neighbors in a strip mall setting. This was only the case because they were on the abandoned lot of an old locksmith shop, and their cart was in the old parking lot.

Another facet of the traffic issue that multiple businesses expressed concern with is that construction will physically block their parking lots for customers, and effectively close their business for an extended period of time. This fear could be soothed by supplying the “business open during construction” signs along the roads to help them maintain their regular business. The effectiveness of these signs will be variable for the businesses along the corridor though because some of the businesses do not have great visibility from the street and already rely on their plaza signs to help inform passing drivers of their business’ whereabouts.

### **Parking Issues**

Connected to the traffic concern, several of the business owners were concerned with the change in the availability of parking along the corridor. Abdikarim brought up the concern that his business might be removed for a parking structure to increase the availability of parking for park-and-ride commuters. As discussed in the construction concern section, most businesses were worried about the availability of their parking lots to customers with the implementation of the Light-Rail. For both the businesses we interviewed where they shared a parking lot with neighboring businesses, they expressed grave concerns about how the Light-Rail would affect their parking.

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<sup>21</sup> Brimhall, Ariel, In Person Interview, Brewskie’s Coffee.

## Position of Light-Rail path

There was no consensus from the businesses on where they believed the light-rail alignment was currently. Each business believed that their business sits in the path of the tracks, or that it would be located in the center of the road, reducing the total lanes available to one in each direction. There was an air of worry when discussing the light-rail in general with the business owners because all of them were under the impression it was going to “kill” their business. They all expressed a desire to receive updated information from the city regarding the updated light-rail alignment and how the city plans to move forward on the project for several reasons. Abdikarim, the owner of Halal Market, talked about how he has been waiting to invest in new refrigerators for his business because he does not want to install new infrastructure in the building only to have to leave from the Light-Rail.

## Safety Concerns

Whether they described it as “trouble” or “riff-raff”, there was a consensus from the businesses that the light-rail would bring high crime rates with it.<sup>22</sup> Their rationale was varied, one store owner told us a story from lived experience about driving a taxi in Portland for many years and how he always saw the most crime, the highest police prevalence, in areas where the light-rail ran. Another store owner discussed how the only people that come and bother them at their store are those hopping off the busses, and that they were concerned with the increased frequency of public-transit bringing in more people “causing trouble”.<sup>23</sup>

## Reflection

The selection process for the interviewees was conducted methodically, with a heavy focus toward hearing the perspectives of minority business owners and business owners that cater to specific cultural identities in the corridor. The best example of this would be the Halal Market. Although the owner has only been at the shop for two years, the business itself has been in the community for 25 years. The shop has exchanged hands as people move in or out of the community; or reach retirement age, but the shop itself has been catering to the Muslim community in the Southwest corridor for much longer than the tenure of the current owner. Additionally, the owner of the Halal Market is a Somalian immigrant, who lives in the Southwest corridor as well. His family lives and works in the community, his children go to the local schools,

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<sup>22</sup> Brimhall, Ariel, In Person Interview, Brewskie’s Coffee.

<sup>23</sup> Jama, Abdikarim, In Person Interview, Halal Market.

and they pray at the local Mosque. With just one interview we were able to learn so much about a vibrant community in the Southwest corridor, and how invested the community is in maintaining the success of the Halal Market.

### **Applying Equity & Interview Positionality**

Considering most of the businesses we interviewed were POC/immigrant owned/women owned. The positionality of our group was centered around humility and scholarship. We began our introduction by being very clear that we were graduate students conducting research through interviews, we had no authority with the city, or over their property, and we were just trying to get the honest perspective of the business owners on their personal success and the corridor's success economically. From this position, most business owners were inclined to take a few minutes to talk with us if they had the time. It is difficult to ensure honest responses about the businesses because the business owners have no incentive to tell us that they are doing poorly. As one of our interviewees put it " If I tell you I am doing great, then all of a sudden word would get around and more [industry redacted] shops would pop up all over here and run me out of business".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In person Interview, Small Appliance Repair Company

# Case Studies

This section aims to provide some best practices of reduction in displacement effects to local businesses. Three case studies were examined, each case has experienced something similar in regard to the Southwest Corridor in terms of infrastructure investments or attempted to develop strategies for keeping local businesses local.

## Best Practices For East Link Extension Project (Seattle, Wa)

The East Link Extension project (Blue Light) is our focused case study to research best practices to draw up recommendations for the SW Corridor proposed light rail. The East Link project is a 14-mile extension of the Link light rail system running from Seattle extending through Lake Washington, stopping in Mercer Island, expanding east to areas of South Bellevue, Downtown Bellevue and ending at the Overlake station in Redmond. There are 10 stations with service every 6 minutes during peak hours with anticipation to open in 2023. The light rail will be an elevated route traveling over the floating bridge (I-90) and once approaching downtown Bellevue will be connecting through a tunnel.

### East Link Alignment and Stations

Figure 1 East Link Alignment and Stations — Sound Transit



The goal of the East Link is to build a high capacity transit (HCT) to connect east urban centers to the international district in Seattle in aims to achieve a goal of alleviating traffic congestion on the I-90 corridor in both directions. The Sound Transit is the transportation agency serving the Seattle, Washington Metropolitan area. Along with alleviating traffic congestion, the East Link will provide local economies within the new station areas. There are necessary considerations to account for when implementing station areas in order for the surrounding areas to be equitable.

Key actors include three different task forces, one for each major corridor (specifically East Corridor Task Force in the literature we focused on ; Puget Sound Regional Council; Growing Transit Communities Partnership; OTAC; Cities of Bellevue, Redmond, and Mercer Island. Funding has generally come from taxpayer dollars through city, regional, and state transportation funding. Additionally, the project has received a grant from HUD for the Growing Transit Communities Partnership, which aims to “grow and strengthen communities” that surround the transit stations.

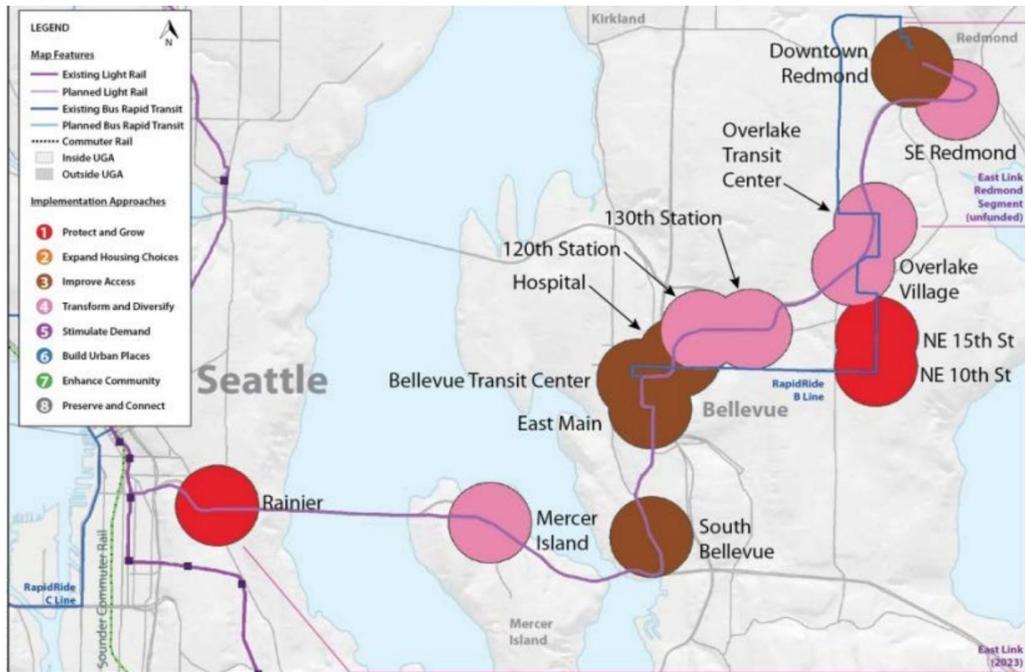
#### **Business Retention Strategies:**

- 1) Intensify activity with transformative plans for mixed-use infill and redevelopment
- 2) Invest in basic infrastructure and public realm to support phased growth
- 3) Full range of tools for new affordable housing production
- 4) Targeted small business support.

Specifically, the strategies aim to retain ethnic and culturally diverse food and business services at stations like the Overlake Village Station (however, they explicitly state that Microsoft Headquarters is near there; because it is an international company, their motives are in creating a consumer community that is inviting to those international employees, rather than for the survival of vulnerable businesses for its own sake). They did this in Phase 2 of the project via a Small Business Incentive Overlay Zone, which required inclusion of smaller increments of commercial space in mixed-use zoning.

Central to these strategies is creating an approach where resources and goals are specific to smaller areas, as seen in the map below from the project’s Business Retention plan.

## East Corridor Context Map



East Corridor Implementation Support “Business Retention and Attraction: Analysis and Recommendations”

### Applicability

As with the proposed light rail project along Barbur, the Eastlink Extension is also a transit corridor extending from a central city to smaller suburbs. The Overlake Village Station Area focus within the larger strategy plan is also closely applicable; it is an area with office retail and food and businesses services, including many that are ethnic and culturally diverse. The strategies are oriented at protecting those vulnerable businesses, just as Prosper Portland and City of Portland would like to do with our own project.

### Strengths

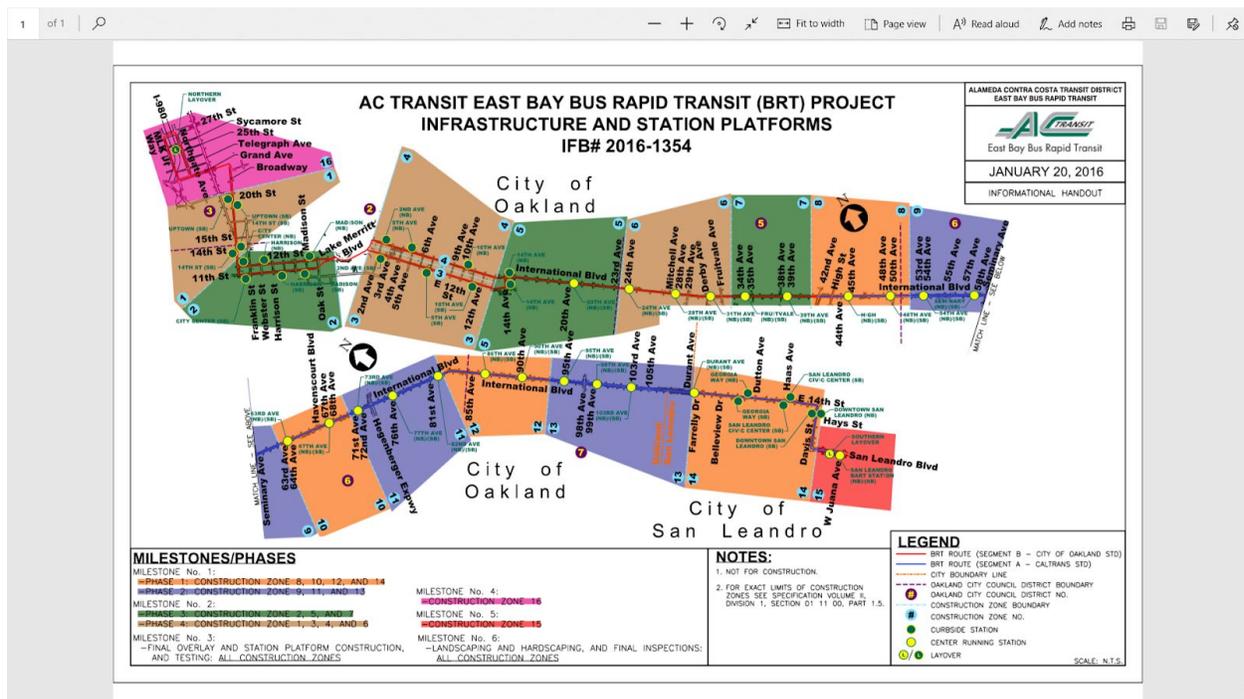
Area Context specific. As discussed with the the East Corridor Context Map, one of the strengths of this programmatic approach is that it takes area context seriously, just as our class’s approach to the corridor’s needs has been to each take an assigned station area and try to best understand the businesses and needs specific to that small area.

### Weaknesses/Recommendations:

When creating area-specific task force, Bellevue and Redmond were included, but Mercer Island was excluded (for what reason is unclear). This is an inherent flaw of an

otherwise valuable approach. If this were to be implemented for the transit project in the Southwest Corridor, Prosper Portland and the City of Portland would want to ensure that there are representatives from all stakeholder cities (Portland, Tigard, Bridgeport, etc). Another recommendation would be for station areas to adopt visions for urban centers. In 2015 Bellevue conducted an area plan of the East Main Station area that was approved by the Bellevue City Council. If the other station areas were to provide guiding principles for implementation strategies early during the project, this could enhance the economic health of already vulnerable local businesses.

## East Bay Bus Rapid Transportation Business Impact Mitigation Plan (Bim-p) Best Practice Evaluation And Recommendations (Oakland, Ca)



In 2011, the City of Oakland adopted the International Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Plan. The alignment along International Boulevard serves the Oakland-San Leandro corridor. The plan outlined a 9.5-mile high-capacity public transportation option for people looking to move from uptown Oakland to San Leandro BART station. As part of the implementation process, PolicyLink was hired as a consultant to conduct best practices research and provide recommendations for business impact mitigation policy and resources. The study included case studies highlighting best practices implemented for similar BRT projects in Seattle and the Twin Cities. As a result, a

business impact mitigation policy strategy was presented to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, City of Oakland, CA, as well as HUD, Sustainable Communities Initiative. The study was funded by a grant of \$20,000 by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

### **Bus Rapid Transit Construction – Temporary Impact Mitigation Allowances**

One of the implementation techniques utilized by Oakland, AC Transit, and MTC was setting up a Temporary Impact Mitigation Allowance (TIMA) fund and program. Informed by the PolicyLink strategy study, the goal of which was to ensure that residents and small businesses in East Oakland along International Boulevard receive equitable benefits from the BRT implementation. TIMA was a tool oriented to small (economically vulnerable) businesses in the corridor. TIMA is funded by AC Transit and the City of Oakland with nearly \$20 million to address temporary construction effects and long term infrastructure effects. They predicted that the Projected Temporary Construction impacts would be \$2,420,000 and Permanent Construction Impacts, \$2,794,000 (Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 2016). Construction and programming started in 2016 and funds activities consistent with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines, to address business impacts during and after construction, as well as technical assistance for the betterment of overall business health.

### **BRT – Oakland Business Sustainability Program**

Another implementation technique utilized by Oakland, AC Transit, and MTC were creating a program to administer funds for Business Impact Mitigation (BIM). Each business could be eligible for up to \$500,000 used for on-site improvements such as driveway cutouts, signage improvements under the new conditions. Another facet to the program was a portion of the funds (2 million dollars) were kept separate from FTA related funds and allocated to specialized city programs. The use of those funds was designated to assist businesses prior to construction in order to develop customized BIM strategies. Some of these strategies included operational assessments as well as provide programs for training and technical assistance to help businesses access other financial programs.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Early communication with business owners directly impacted by the construction of the BRT corridor through flyers cultivated a working understanding of the project within the community (AC Transit). This understanding was expressed by the community at

several information sessions and town hall meetings in the late-stages of the planning process and early stages of construction. One takeaway from AC Transit's method of community engagement is including who will be completing the construction work. AC Transit Provided their contractor's contact information, how they are affiliated to the Bureau responsible for planning, the project management staff, and how to contact any of these parties for business owners and community members.

Utilizing outside consultants and researchers to provide a greater level of context for what kinds of issues arise in transportation development. For AC Transit this took the form of a case study analysis through Policy Link. Policy link provided AC Transit provided recommendations for how to minimize impact to businesses through case study analysis of Seattle's light-rail project and the Twin Cities commercial corridor redevelopment project (Policy Link). Receiving a dedicated case study of similar projects provided them with a road map of best practice strategies for implementing transportation infrastructure.

A practice that AC Transit implemented that focused on minimizing the impact of construction time along the corridor was redirecting and relocating the sewer and utilities prior to the BRT construction to decrease the length of the construction of the project. Creating viable avenues for the project plan to provide impact mitigation services to businesses was included in the earliest stages of development. There was a dedicated section for business impact mitigation in the plan denoted under the "BRT" Business Impact Mitigation Plan (BIM-P) in the draft forwarded to the AC Transit Board and the Oakland City Council (AC Transit).

There are three weaknesses that have been identified during the development and implementation of the project. There is an argument that there is an insufficient sum of money being set aside for business impact mitigation, there is also a cap on money allocation to individual businesses, and the ED organization implementing the impact-fund program is directly only available in English. The first weakness is found from an opinion piece by a member of the community. Jones claims 5 million dollars, set aside by AC Transit for BRT construction impacts falls short of the true impacts to be felt by businesses along Interstate Ave (Jones III). The basis of this argument is that many of these businesses are local "mom and pop" shops that have been in the neighborhood for decades, and should be made a priority in the planning and construction process (Jones III). BIM-P also sets a maximum allowance of \$100,000 for an individual business for impact mitigation, but there was no data readily available from AC Transit that communicated how this number was reached and based on the variability of construction impacts on businesses along the corridor, this quantity may still be insufficient to adequately offset the revenue loss that businesses encounter due

to this infrastructure implementation. The third issue is surrounding the lack of access to the information that AC Transit is providing to people in the area that do not read English. This is likely a result of an incomplete perspective on the equity issues of the BRT construction process and does not take into consideration the business owners and community members interested in understanding what the construction process looks like who do not read English.

### **Applicability and Transfer-ability**

Although BRT and Light Rail are not the same in terms of outcomes and length of construction periods, they both still have significant impacts on businesses in the corridors they enter. A construction mitigation program like seen in Oakland, Seattle and St. Paul, would be applicable in the SW Corridor. The SW Corridor Economic Development partners, such as Prosper Portland and Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, are well-positioned now, years before the project is slated to take place, to implement projects which would mitigate the costs of construction on businesses, helping existing businesses thrive and survive.

TriMet, the Portland Bureau of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) are still in the engineering and planning phase, but like the BRT expansion in Oakland, it will undoubtedly include repaving, driveway relocations, and blockages, as well as intermittent utility interruption.

By engaging with businesses through us, Portland State University Graduate Students, Prosper Portland, and BPS have already begun the groundwork for assessing the needs of the businesses in the impacted communities.

### **Recommendations**

PolicyLink identified several best practices for Oakland to follow, pre-implementation (PolicyLink, 2013), we think these recommendations also stand and have some of our own:

1. Financial assistance must be targeted to the types and needs of those businesses, and business technical assistance should be provided to help businesses access the financial assistance, as well as to help with critical business health overall. We would recommend pre-construction assessment assistance so that when/if access to these funds is needed, the process will not be delayed and the application process can begin in a timely manner.

2. Outreach needs to be done well in advance of construction, it needs to be done by trusted partners and as Prosper Portland does outreach to businesses, if implementing a similar plan, they should use this time to consider the needs of all participants pre-during and post construction, ie, how to best make the application process for funds accessible to all. This includes making the information available in several places online, in languages which will reach the greatest number of at-risk businesses. Additionally, Prosper Portland should work with multiple localized and broader partners including the small business community, community-based organizations, and community development corporations.

3. Because construction timeliness is determined by a great number of factors, including the whim of the weather patterns, ongoing communication with businesses will need to be done in both a realistic and hopeful way.

4. The City should be an invested and enthusiastic leader in follow-through and ensuring businesses are accessing and able to utilize these mitigation strategies.

## Central Corridor Light Train Rail Business Assistance Programs Case Study (Minneapolis, Mn)

Minnesota’s Metropolitan Council’s Central Corridor Light Train Rail (LTR) Project



### Overview:

The case study at hand is in regards to Minnesota’s Metropolitan Council’s Central Corridor Light Train Rail (LTR) Project and their Supplemental Final Environmental

Impact Statement (SFEIS): Construction-related Potential Impacts on Business Revenues prepared by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metropolitan Council. The METRO Green line, as it is known now, opened in June 2014. It is an 11-mile light train rail that connects downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul. The project was funded mainly by the FTA, who provided 50 percent of the overall funding with the Counties Transit Improvement Board (30 percent), the State of Minnesota (9 percent), Ramsey County (7 percent), Hennepin County (3 percent), the Metropolitan Council (1 percent) and the city of St. Paul and Central Corridor Funders Collaborative (less than 1 percent) providing the other half. The SFEIS came about from a court ruling in 2011 from the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota in St. Paul Branch of the NAACP, et. al. v. US Department of Transportation. The lawsuit was filed by a coalition of local businesses, residents and non-profit organizations. It claimed the project violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by failing to adequately analyze potential loss of business revenues during construction of LRT.

In response to the FTA and the Metropolitan Council, (the lead agencies) created a number of programs to minimize the impact of the LRT construction to local businesses. Within overall mitigation measures, the lead agencies created nine Business Assistance Programs to provide financial and technical assistance to small businesses along the corridor that were affected by the on-going construction. Their identification for small business was at those who generated no more than \$2 million in annual revenue.

#### **Strengths of the Business Assistance Programs:**

As mentioned previously, there were nine Business Assistance Programs lead by a variety of local agencies. All in all, most provided low-interest forgivable loans/grants to construction-impacted small businesses. Along with financial assistance, construction-impacted small businesses also had at their disposal business consultation while a “Buy Local” campaign was started by one of the programs. The Business Improvement /Expansion Assistance program targeted local businesses who had significant long-term growth and could become visible anchors, emphasizing minority-owned businesses. Other programs such as the Great Streets and Business Association Assistance Program, provided construction-impacted businesses with marketing and advertising assistance. The Business Marketing Program focused on bringing awareness to the diversity of businesses in the Central Corridor. A small grant provided mitigation consultation to businesses.

### **Weaknesses of the Business Assistance Programs:**

While there was a wide variety of assistance programs at the disposal of the construction-impacted small businesses, including minority-owned businesses, there wasn't a higher focus on racial equity. It demonstrates that lead agencies in the project did not use a racial equity lens to help determine the disproportionate adverse effects minority-owned businesses could face during heavy construction. The argument in defense for why not was because the sole purpose of the SFEIS was to determine the impacts to business revenue due to the construction of the project, regardless of business ownership status. Additionally, a survey done by the Metropolitan Council in 2008 reveal that minority-owned businesses owned 20 percent of businesses within the corridor. A project of this magnitude, some \$950 million dollars was invested into which 50 percent coming from federal money, should have had incorporated a racial equity lens at a bare minimum. To add, many of the minority-owned businesses were aware of the programs and took advantage of them.

### **Applicability and Transfer-ability:**

I can see the same mitigation measures that the Metropolitan Council implemented with the Central Corridor LTR being applicable and a high transfer ability to Portland's SW Corridor project. Both projects share similar facts such as the total distance of the LTR and both are connecting two nearby cities downtown. Furthermore, both regions are comparable in terms of overall population.

### **Recommendations to Prosper Portland and/or City of Portland:**

Recommendation client to look into creating such programs but with the caveat that a racial equity lens is utilized to maximize the benefits that minority-owned businesses can obtain. As seen in previous similar projects, not taking a proactive approach in retaining minority-owned businesses can clearly lead to transit-oriented displacement of such businesses. In addition, while money needs to be dedicated to accomplish such measures and figuring out where to get it from always proves a challenge, undoubtedly though minority-owned businesses provide cultural anchor points that could benefit the overall success of the LTR in the long-term.

## **Case Study Equity Considerations**

The SW Corridor has a number of equity concerns (long standing racism & cultural bias, as well as economic and social disparities, and lack of multi-modal transportation investment) that were not necessarily reflected in the case studies. Any takeaways

from these case studies should be applied through an equity lens when considering strategies for the SW Corridor.

# Conclusion

This section discusses three main summary points BPS and PP to utilize going forward as well lists recommendations, limitations to the study, and next steps.

## 3 Summary Points

### **Information Access**

All of the business owners interviewed reported a lack of official information about the light rail alignment. Many reported they thought it would be impacting their business taking the land of which they were occupying. Local buzz has been the main source of information for many of the business owners we interviewed. This has impacted one business owner already as they are not sure whether or not to invest in new equipment as they do not know if they will need to move in the near future.

### **Cultural Hub**

There seems to be a complex community/cultural interaction occurring at Halal Market. The business has been around for over twenty years and is passed down as one generation is ready to retire. The last handoff happened about 2 years ago, it serves a local population of Somalis. There is a clothing store next door also Somali owned. We have inferred the business owners know each other well, as we saw the business owner enter the clothing store, shortly after we completed the interview. During the interview other (presumably Somalis) people entered the Halal Market. However turned away after seeing the owner was busy speaking to us. The owner said they were coming into check in and chat, which he explained was a very common occurrence. People from the community frequented the business for more than Halal specific goods, it is also a place for them to stay up to date with what is going on in their community.

### **Businesses are concerned about Congestion**

The topic that came up the most during our interviews was traffic and congestion. All of the business owners saw an increase in congestion along the Barbur Corridor as a serious threat to their business' success. Some were concerned that the construction of the Light-Rail would force them to shut down their business, others believed that they would be displaced by the path. In either case, business owners are so worried about the negative impacts of the development side, that they are unable or unwilling to see the benefits of being located directly adjacent to public transportation infrastructure.

## Recommendations

Zoning for mixed-use development along SW Barbur Blvd is an obvious strategy, but redevelopment is a long term effort; much greater than the current financial capacity. And - how do you not lose businesses during the construction phase?

Our first recommendation is tied to the first and third summarized points. If Prosper Portland and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability can find and fund a way to quickly and efficiently disseminate information and updates to the businesses located along the corridor, the businesses could be used as a resource to find the best way for the city to mitigate the construction impacts against the businesses and potentially garner some support from among them for the Light-Rail project. This could include developing some sort of workgroup from among the businesses, or finding a business owner willing to sit as a representative. If the businesses feel as though they have a say in their own destiny, they may be more willing to entertain the project as a positive influence on their businesses. With a group that can consolidate the positions of the businesses along the corridor, Prosper Portland and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability will be able to gain some consensus of how the businesses are doing and where they need support to continue to thrive. We recognize that this is a board recommendation, but this is meant to allow for the resulting affiliation to the businesses to be flexible. What is important is finding a way to establish a connection between the agencies working on developing this area into a connected section of Portland and the businesses along the corridor.

## Limitations

A major limitation of this project is the lack of time to gather data. Due to the short window of time for interviewing business owners, we were only able to interview 4 businesses. In order to create a more complete picture of the perspectives of this stop, an interview should be conducted with at least one business in each sectioned off the parking lot. The entire corridor is a series of dedicated parking lots for a grouping of 5-10 businesses, thus interviewing at least one business in each of these would provide a well-rounded perspective of the business owner's perspective at the 30th avenue location.

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# Appendix

## Interview Transcripts

### Interview 1: Brewskie's Coffee

Interviewer: Gregory Mallon

Note-Taker: Rebecca Rockom

Transcription: Benjamin Acord-Becker

Business: Brewskies Coffee

Owner: Ariel Brimhall

[brewskiscoffee@gmail.com](mailto:brewskiscoffee@gmail.com)

503-730-9543

Do you have any full-time or part-time employees?

"1 part-time employee I am here for the rest of the time"

Employee commutes to work.

Do you know how your customer primarily get here?

"80% of my customers are in this area. Or if they are not, they are coming from Tualatin and heading downtown and pass through here. Almost exclusively driving, in their own vehicles. Some take the bus and walk here. I do not get a lot of foot traffic.

Assess your overall business health:

"Extremely healthy, I have done really well.

What are your business transportation considerations for freight and delivery?

I do not have any freight considerations because I buy all my incoming goods myself through a "cash and carry".

I do not own the property, I lease the spot. I own the building though (food cart).

The owner of the property is an individual, a married couple. Lives in Sellwood.

Coming up on the end of my 5-year lease. Negotiating for resigning. \$800/month  
Planning to stay as long as possible. Positive relationship w/ property owner.

Relationships w/ other business owners: “any relationship I have is basically form the people that work in the surrounding businesses and they are my most loyal customers. Other relationships that I have are the products that I sell, but those are not particularly local. For example, the baked goods I sell are from a bakery out by IKEA.

No existing business associations —> competitors

Interested in pos. Rel. with other businesses in the area> “I love meeting the people that work in the businesses around me because it spreads my business.

Do you see yourself doing business here in 5 years?

“Yes I hope so, I really hope so!”

What challenges do you experience? Do you have a hard time finding employees?>

“No, I have a good employee. No general challenges experienced.

“The development of the condos was good for business. All of those people come down and get coffee.

When you talk about not wanting Trimet to come in, what are your fears about that specifically?

“That they’re going to expand the road so much that I have to leave. And that there will be nowhere for me to go. The last I heard they were planning to take 24 feet from my (east) side of Barbur all the way down, which means all of these businesses will be displaced. Some of these businesses have been here for decades and are hoping to stay as long as possible. We have heard bad things. We have been hearing it is just this side of the road.

I have been to one meeting they had out here, but it was mostly people whose homes were involved, so I left because there were so many people who were very angry. I would love to actually have someone from the city to come down here and talk to us.

How would you see the potential of the Max affecting your business?

“I don’t know, honestly I have mixed emotions about it because I do not use it. In my mind, I envision it causing trouble. I get a lot of trouble from the buses, not great people and homeless. So I am concerned with it bringing more riff-raff this way. I also worry about it killing my business during the construction period. When Barbur get backed up, the traffic already kills business on those days, so with construction or removing lanes, people will not stop to support my business.

Once the line is in, do you worry about displacement?

“Yeah, I do. Right now I am under the impression that I am going to have to leave no matter what. But that is potentially outdated information. I am worried about them telling me that I have to go.

What resources would help to support, expand or improve, or to stay in the corridor during the light-rail era?

“Solid and reliable information on what is actually going to happen in general. Because I could be worrying about nothing, or the wrong things. At the least a contact that has good information. Once it is in, I would just hope that it would improve my business and the amount of people coming here.

## Interview 2: Conin Mexican Cuisine

Interviewer, Note-taker, and Transcriber: Francisco Ibarra

Business: Conin Mexican Cuisine

Owner: Osvaldo Cano

**Conin Mexican Cuisine:**

**Interview Transcript:(Interview originally done in Spanish)**

Francisco Ibarra: Entonces si nos puedes decir su nombre?

**Francisco Ibarra: Alright, can you give us your name?**

Osvaldo Cano: Osvaldo....Cano

**Osvaldo Cano: Osvaldo....Cano**

FI: Um, y usted es el dueño de este negocio?

**FI: Um, and you're the owner of this business?**

OC: Si

**OC: Yes**

FI: Usted es un negocio local or parte de una franquicia?

**FI: Is this a local business or part of a franchise?**

OC: No es local

**OC: It is local**

FI: Y por cuantos años a estado en este lugar?

**FI: How long have you been here?**

OC: 3 años

**OC: 3 years**

FI: Han estado en otros lugares o aqui empezo?

**FI: Did you start here or where you somewhere else before?**

OC: Este aqui empezamos

**OC: We started here**

FI: Y cuántos empleados tiene en este momento?

**FI: And how many employees do you have at the moment?**

OC: 8 empleados

**OC: 8 employees**

FI: Son full time? Part time?

**FI: Are they full time? Part time?**

OC: Unos son full time otros son part time

**OC: Some are full time, some are part time**

FI: Como la mitad y mitad?

**FI: Like half and half?**

OC: Si

**OC: Yes**

FI: Okay, esta siguiente pregunta es sobre, como los salarios, entonces aqui paga lo...el mínimo?

**FI: Okay next question is about, the pay, and well then do you pay the minimum?**

OC: Pago...depende...este pago mas del minimo

**OC: I pay..depending..I pay more than the minimum**

FI: Y de tus empleados, viven en la área o viven en diferentes partes de la ciudad?

**FI: And do your employees live in the area or live in different parts of the city?**

OC: Diferentes partes

**OC: Different parts**

FI: La mayoría de donde?

**FI: The majority from where?**

OC: Sí bueno, del alrededor, no tan lejos como diez o quince minutos, alrededor.

**OC: Well, from close by, not to far like 10 or 15 minutes close by.**

FI: Okay, y sobre de su clientela, son de aqui cerca?

**FI: Okay and your clientele, are they from around here?**

OC: Si, son de aqui cerca

**OC: Yes, they are from around here**

FI: Entonces usted sirve más a la comunidad local?

**FI: Then y'all mostly serve the local community?**

OC: Si, la comunidad

**OC: Yes, the community**

FI: Usted es dueño de la propiedad o rentas?

**FI: Do you own or rent the property?**

OC: No, rento

**OC: No, I rent**

FI: Y sobre eso, cuanto es su lease?

**Fl: Speaking of that, how long is your lease?**

OC: Cuánto tiempo...Cuánto tiempo o cuánto pagó?

**OC: How long...how long or how much I pay?**

Fl: Los dos pues, cuanto dura su contrato y cuánto paga?

**Fl: Well both, how long does it run and how much you pay?**

OC: 5 años...5 años mas

**OC: 5 years..5 more years**

Fl: Si ha escuchado de la propuesta del max?

**Fl: Have you heard about the proposed max project?**

OC: Si

**OC: Yes**

Fl: Con ese proyecto, cuál es el pensamiento de si se puede quedar o se puede mover?

**Fl: With the project, what is the thinking behind whether staying or moving?**

OC: Pues este creo que tal vez nos tendríamos que mover porque si afectaría un poco el negocio, de por si la gente...es muy difícil para estacionarse y pues para mucha gente le afectaría más.

**OC: Well I think that we might have to move since it will affect our business, already many people...it is very hard to park and it would make it much harder for the people.**

Fl: Para usted que sería algo, un tipo de ayuda, que le ayudará en mantenerse en esta lugar? Que es lo que quiere o esperaría?

**Fl: For yourself what would be something, some sort of help, that would help you stay in this place? What is that you want or hope for?**

OC: Pues este..más que nada sería...um...financieiramente porque si nos afecta con el negocio y no podemos pagar los empleados y todo eso..entonces sería una perdida si tal vez nos llevaría a tener que cerrar el negocio.

**OC: Well...more than anything something financial because it does affect our business and then aren't able to pay our employees. It could be a loss if it leads us to close our business down.**

Fl: Si ha asistido a las juntas que tienen sobre el proyecto?

**Fl: Have you attended the meetings regarding the project?**

OC: No, no ha podido, creo que nomas me han dicho de una junta, pero no ha podido ir.

**OC: No, no I haven't been able too, I think I have only been told of one, but I couldn't go.**

Fl: Sobre su relación con los demás negocios aquí (parque de negocios) como esta, esta fuerte o...?

**Fl: Regarding your relationship with the other business here (the business park) how is it, is it strong?**

OC: Si los mismo negocios aquí estamos muy bien, la gente alrededor, los que trabajan alrededor están muy contentos. Si tenemos una buena relación.

**OC: Yes, all of us here are very good, the people around, the ones who work around are very happy. We have a good relationship.**

FI: Pero no es algo formal como una asociación de negocios, es mas informal?

**FI: But it is not something formal like a business association, it's more informal?**

OC: Si no más conocidos.

**OC: Yes informal, we just know each other.**

FI: Aparte del proyecto, que más obstáculos se han enfrentado, para usted como dueño del negocio?

**FI: Aside from the project, what other obstacles have you encounter for you as the owner of the business?**

OC: El tipo de área, que es un poco muy rápida, afecta un poco porque la gente no para mucho. No ve..no alcanza ver los negocios.

**OC: The type of area, it is a bit too fast and it affects us a bit because people don't stop as much. They don't see, can't see the businesses.**

FI: Para usted es trabajoso encontrar empleados que tengan las cualificaciones?

**FI: For you is it difficult in finding qualified employees?**

OC: un poco si, es poco difícil especial con los salarios que están creciendo y mucha gente quiere ganar mucho.

**OC: A bit, it's a bit difficult especially with the salaries increasing and a lot of people wanting to make more money.**

FI: Entonces para usted la prioridad más grande es que los salarios están aumentando?

**FI: Then is increasing salaries the highest priority for you?**

OC: Es parte, si el negocio sigue y esta constante y tenemos gente para comer, gente que viene a consumir, no hay problema pagar los salarios. El problema es si no hay gente, como vamos a pagar un salario de tantos si no dinero.

**OC: Well it is part of it. If the business continues and is constant with people coming in to eat and to consume then there is no problem paying the salaries. The problem is when there isn't people.**

FI: Okay, entonces que es mas de prioridad?

**FI: Okay well what is more of a priority?**

OC: Como todos dicen alrededor, la construcción si afectaría los negocios, habría menos tráfico, menos gente pasando por aqui. Más difícil ir a comer o de compras será por el tráfico o la calle cerrada y la gente empezaria buscar otras opciones.

**OC: As everyone around is saying, the construction is going to affect the businesses. There will be less traffic, and people passing by. More difficult to go eat or shop, perhaps because of traffic or streets close and people will start looking for other options.**

OC: También el tiempo que van a dura

**OC: The time it'll take as well.**

FI: Ultimos comentarios?

**FI: Any last comments?**

OC: Sí piense en permanecer en este lugar, la gente nos conoce muy bien y son buena gente.

**OC: I definitely am thinking of staying here, people know us very well and they are good people.**

### Interview 3: Halal Market

Interviewer: Benjamen Acord-Becker

Note-Taker: Rebecca Rockom

Transcription: Rebecca Rockom

Business: Halal Market / Barbur Square

Owner: Abdikarim Jama

[aresanod@gmail.com](mailto:aresanod@gmail.com)

503-983-5269

November 6, 2019

“When is the train coming through, it’s not next year right?”

**BA:** No, not for several years. They’re still in the process of finding an alignment. I think it’s scheduled to be completed in the next 7-10 years is when they’re looking to have it completed. It hasn’t been approved by voters or anything.

“I hope they do not approve of it. This is a nice community over here because if the train comes in, there will be a lot of businesses gone.”

**BA:** basic information collection

He has owned business for 2 years. But the store has existed for 25 years. One hand to another hand. Locally owned

**BA: How many employees work here? And Full-time?**

2 full-time employees - he and wife. (He also has another job.)

**BA: How would you describe the business health of the market?**

Good business. "I wouldn't say top of the line, but we have a lot of customers around here; we are busy." Lots of local customers both walk and drive to the store. Mosque nearby; sells kosher meat to the Muslim community.

"Everything is halal." The primary customer base is halal specific.

Parking is adequate. Saturday is the busiest day. Goods received by deliveries.

Business is leased through the previous owner's family (daughter). Good communication with owner. The lease is 6 years. Regarding train: "Nobody knows what it is gonna be, so we sign up 6 years."

Relationship with all businesses in the plaza. "We all know each other." "And I have another business on the other side of the city, small grocery store."

No known geographic or culturally specific business association.

Yes, the owner plans to stay in business for the next 5 years. "Most definitely."

Challenge with investment in infrastructure (refrigerators). Holding off on purchases because the future is unknown. "We need a lot of stuff, it is going to take time to renew everything. - all the freezers, everything else, but we are taking time because you never know when this train is going to be."

Traffic is regularly pushed from the freeway to Barbur. "It is just like a freeway here, when the freeway is jammed everyone jump on Barbur". "

Owner has concern with narrowing Barbur will cause immense traffic jam. "When they put one line of cars, it is going to be more jammed more than anywhere else in Portland."

"Everybody is panicking around here. I live in the neighborhood the last 25 years. So we know this neighborhood well. It is hard when they put a train in here."

Owner's commute is a 3-minute drive.

Somalian is his first/preferred language.

Concern that parking lot would be needed for the transit stop. "If the train stops right here, where are the people going to park?"

Concern that light rail “will bring trouble” to the neighborhood. “This is the safest neighborhood; anybody can walk in it.” Afraid city would demolish small apartments and bring high rises and a lot of people. If the LRT is approved, he would move his family out of the area. He has 6 children who go to nearby schools and would have concerns for their safety.

This is a safe neighborhood. They have been talking about a lot of high-rise apartments and demolishing all of the small apartments in the neighborhood. There’s going to be a lot more people out here with the train.

If the train came in, owner would move out of the area. “I have to raise my family in the safest place possible.”

“I drove a taxi for 15 years, and I drive a medical transport now, and I have seen it. Everywhere that the train goes, there’s always fighting, and there are police scenes, always something going on.”

#### **Interview 4: Anonymous Business**

We are not providing transcripts in this report for the repair company interview. This is due to a confidentiality agreement between the business owner and interview team. Including the transcripts could potentially expose identity of business owner.