

Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland

1001 SW 5th Avenue, Room 1300
Portland OR 97204



July 19, 2021

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 230
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Commissioner Hardesty,

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your vision for transportation in Portland with the Bicycle Advisory Committee in May. **First, we want to apologize for our conduct at that meeting.** It was unprofessional, endemic of systemic racism, and unacceptable. We will be holding ourselves accountable.

We also want to make it clear that we recognize the BAC lacks racial diversity and does not holistically represent the community we serve. We will forward conversations that center and take action to foster a committee that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion. Towards accountability and an antiracist future, we commit to a deliberate process for improving on this as a committee – including engaging in conversations this fall to create a series of actions we can take by the end of the year. We will look to the Office of Civic Life and PBOT to actively support us in this work and will provide your office with regular updates as we engage in this process.

Further, we are excited for your leadership at PBOT! We wholly support car-free districts as a priority and are excited that this initiative will create safer spaces for people walking, rolling, and riding transit, while supporting economic benefits particularly needed at this time by small businesses. We also heard your support for the goals we share, and *we want to be your partner in getting there:*

1. No more deaths in city streets.

We strongly support implementing the goals of Vision Zero in equitable ways that increase safety without enforcement. We are excited about the potential for traffic cameras as an alternative method for deterring unsafe vehicle speeds.

Design is another critically important aspect of this initiative. Certain features like wide travel lanes can encourage speeding and other unsafe driving behavior. At the same time, features like bicycle lanes and enhanced crosswalks can reduce dangerous driving behaviors, while also providing separate space that reduces conflict points and crashes for people bicycling, rolling, and walking.¹ More space for people bicycling, walking, and using transit creates a safer travel environment for everyone.

2. Designing streets as safe spaces for everyone.

We recognize that bicycle lanes have typically been an indicator of gentrification and often represent spaces that are not inclusive of people of color. One recent national study has shown

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation. 12 August 2019. Traffic Calming to Slow Vehicle Speeds, <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/Traffic-Calming-to-Slow-Vehicle-Speeds>.

that the installation of bicycle lanes has not been associated with the displacement of people of color or low-income people.² We support the work of Black Girls Do Bike, Bike POC PNW, PDX Unity Ride Collective, the Radical Adventure Riders, Friends on Bikes, Bike Loud PDX, and We Bike that create safe riding spaces for people of color, as well as people who are LGBTQIA+.

Further, we know that “Black residents [are likely to] spend more time in close proximity to fast moving cars than other groups” and experience aggressions or microaggressions while using city streets (e.g., crosswalks).³ That must change. As one small part of a multifaceted approach, bicycling infrastructure that is protected or separated from the street can reduce conflicts between people using the roadway that have greater impacts for people of color. This would be one step toward creating a safer, more inclusive environment for people bicycling that is more welcoming for everyone to use.

3. Increasing access to affordable, healthy transportation options for everyone.

Transportation cost burden is more common for people with low incomes, people of color, and people with disabilities.⁴ Further, nearly one third of Black households do not have a car available, about twice the rate of other groups.⁵ Bicycling is an important aspect of an affordable transportation system that gets people to job centers and social services that increase access to opportunity and quality of life. We support equitable initiatives like Biketown for All and TriMet’s Low Income Fare Program that further expand access and strategies that prioritize equity in investment decision-making.

People of color and people with low incomes are also more likely to experience the fourteen leading causes of death in Multnomah County.⁶ Almost all of these can be attributed to air pollution, traffic injury, and/or physical inactivity. Providing infrastructure that encourages people to walk, roll, and ride bicycles is a powerful tool in preventing this outcome and offer a myriad of other physical and mental health benefits. Our aim is to expand the reach of these benefits by creating a connected network and safe environment that encourages people to ride bicycles.

² Ferenchak, Nicholas N. and Wesley E. Marshall. August 2021. Bicycling Facility Inequalities and the Causality Dilemma with Socioeconomic/Sociodemographic Change. Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1361920921002194>

³ Multnomah County. 2018. “Multnomah County REACH Transportation Crash and Safety Report: At the Intersection of Transportation, Health, Race and Justice.” https://multco-web7-psh-files-usw2.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/20210224_Final-REACH-Transportation-Safety.pdf; Kahn, K. Racial bias in drivers’ yielding behavior at crosswalks: Understanding the effect. National Institute for Transportation and Communities, 2017. Available from: https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/869/Racial_Bias_in_Drivers.

⁴ Small, Rebecca. “You are here: A snapshot of Portland-area housing costs.” 25 October 2016, <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/news/you-are-here-snapshot-portland-area-housing-costs>.

⁵ National Equity Atlas. 2020. Indicators: Commute time. Available from: [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Commute_time/By_race~ethnicity:49816/Portland_City,_OR/false/Year\(s\):2015/Mode_of_transit:All/](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Commute_time/By_race~ethnicity:49816/Portland_City,_OR/false/Year(s):2015/Mode_of_transit:All/)

⁶ See note 2 above; Haggerty, Brendon. 26 May 2021. “Transportation Safety and Public Health.” https://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/metro-events/presentation-slides-safety-forum-part-1_0.pdf.

4. Improving air quality and meeting our climate goals.

Transportation is the source of 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon.⁷ Half of all trips made in Portland are three miles or less, which are well-suited for people bicycling. Achieving a shift in travel mode for these trips would significantly improve air quality. City Resolution 37494 (as amended) from June 30, 2020, which declared a climate emergency, noted that “local transportation emissions are increasing – currently 6% over 1990 levels, and 12% over their lowest levels in 2012, climbing faster than population growth over the same period”. From 2012 to 2017 Portland experienced year-over-year increases in transportation emissions. We support an approach that includes removing barriers for people bicycling, increasing access to protected facilities for riders, and pursuing antiracist strategies for a safe and inclusive environment. Further, we’re interested in fostering connections for people walking, rolling, and riding bicycles to transit and other holistic investments in a multimodal system that fully maximizes climate benefits.

While we may be passionate about how bicycling has benefited our physical and/or mental health or reduced our transportation costs or carbon footprint, we’re not a lobby. We’re just members of the community looking for more and safer ways to go to work, get our kids to school, make trips to the grocery store, meet friends and family, and access public services. But we will do better in representing all of the voices of our community, elevating the perspectives of people of color, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, and people who are LGBTQIA+.

From outer East to North Portland to Southwest and everywhere in-between, we want all members of our community to be able to ride a bicycle (and walk and take transit) to get where they need to go affordably and on routes that are safe and comfortable to use. Combined with antiracist strategies, the *Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030* is the blueprint for making it happen and a critical element in achieving our shared goals toward a safer, more equitable transportation system. We look forward to working together in implementing the plan and new innovative initiatives that make this vision for the future a reality in our city.

Respectfully,



David Stein, Chairperson
Bicycle Advisory Committee



Ally Holmqvist, Vice-Chairperson
Bicycle Advisory Committee

⁷ Portland Bureau of Transportation. 11 February 2010. “Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030.”
<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/44597?a=379130>.