

# Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

*Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland*

1001 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 1300  
Portland OR 97204



November 27, 2023

Commissioner Mingus Mapps  
City Hall  
1200 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland OR 97204

Dear Commissioner Mapps,

The Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) is a City-Council appointed volunteer committee charged with monitoring the activities of other jurisdictions as they affect bicycling in the city and advising the City of Portland on matters related to bicycling. As regional plans have a large impact on Portland's transportation funding and improvements made on Portland's roadways of regional significance (often not owned by the City), it is important to offer our comments to you on the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the METRO meeting this week on November 30.

Portland's renowned success in promoting bicycle use has been largely due to a concerted effort to build high quality bikeways. But this formerly successful strategy has not been working for nearly ten years - measured commuter bicycle ridership in the city has been declining since 2014. **We are moving in the wrong direction. We are very concerned about this and the region should be too.** The 2023 RTP must do more to ensure that regional mobility and climate goals are met and that this decline does not continue.

The City's Bureau of Transportation has noted that if Portland does not meet its policy goals, *it would need the equivalent of 23 Powell Boulevards to handle traffic in 20 years if Portlanders travel the same way we do today.* Yet as the death of Sarah Pliner on October 4th last year proved yet again - urban arterials like Powell Boulevard are not safe. As noted in the City's latest vision zero report: **63 people died in traffic crashes in Portland in 2022 at a rate consistently increasing to a higher death toll than we've seen in at least three decades.**

The 2023 RTP does include many wonderful projects for walking, bicycling and transit, many within the City of Portland in fact. But the investment strategies are still skewed toward improvements for automobiles, as walking and bicycling only total 4% of capital spending. Further, there aren't enough of these projects improving the safety for people walking, bicycling and taking transit on urban arterials where many deadly crashes occur.

We should use all of the tools at our disposal to limit the number of people who die on our roadways. Our region deserves better. To set us on the right path toward realizing regional goals for safety, equity, mobility, climate and economy, we join other advocates in the region - BikeLoud PDX, the Street Trust, Andando en Bicycletas y Caminando, Community Cycling Center, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Oregon Walks, Getting There Together, and Verde - in requesting the following changes to the 2023 RTP:

- Shift more walking and bicycling projects forward to the 2030 investment strategy, better advancing the near-term goals of the 2023 RTP.
- Shift to a strategic investment strategy and/or delay throughway projects (particularly auxiliary lane additions) and megaprojects that do far less to advance regional goals and redirect those financially-constrained dollars toward projects that best advance our regional goals currently in the strategic investment strategy.
- Require ODOT to unbundle their safety and operations buckets (#12095, #12299) and identify specific active transportation projects employing proven safety countermeasures on urban arterials. ODOT is still a highway department at heart - the dashboard for measuring ODOT's progress toward their 2021-23 Strategic Action Plan Outcomes<sup>1</sup> includes measuring congestion relief but not safety improvement. Unfortunately, as documented in our [November 2022 letter](#), there are just too many examples where congestion relief and/or

<sup>1</sup> ODOT Strategic Plan Dashboard, <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Pages/SAP-Dashboard.aspx>

vehicle movement is prioritized at the expense of safety, even when analysis and/or partner staff point toward proven countermeasures instead. We need these commitments institutionalized in the regional plan.

That said - there is so much to love in the 2023 RTP. We applaud Metro Council for upholding our regional goals and making changes to take them to the next level. We celebrate the policy changes that further support equity, climate, and transportation alternatives - particularly a new mobility policy that better supports the outcomes we are striving for with the regional vision. But with the mode shift and safety challenges we are facing - intensified by our recent history with the COVID-19 pandemic - it is imperative that the 2030 and 2045 investment strategies go further. We need to ensure we stay headed in the right direction toward a system providing the transportation options that support efficient use of land and resources, clean air, compact development and quality of life envisioned in the 2040 Growth Concept.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to the greater Portland region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Perez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "P".

Joseph Perez  
Vice Chairperson  
Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee