

# City plans Gibbs Street pedestrian bridge

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

City planners are at working designing a new pedestrian bridge along Southwest Gibbs Street, underneath the Oregon Health and Sciences Center aerial tram.

When completed it would provide pedestrian and bike access from the Lair Hill neighborhood to the South Waterfront, help to re-unite a neighborhood torn apart by large roadways, and help mitigate the presence of the tram on the historic neighborhood.

As Jody Yates of the Portland Office of Transportation told the Portland Design Commission last month, the designers have abandoned their original notion of having the bridge slant downward from west to east.

Instead, they now plan to have its deck remain level. This will make the bridge itself easier to negotiate by foot, bike or wheelchair, but also means its eastern end will be 60 feet above the ground.

While there will be a stairway, most people will use a pair of elevators, which will be large enough to accommodate bikes. Design work for the west

end is not complete, but the bridge will have to "nestle into a developed community," consultant Kevin Peterson told the commission.

The bureau is also working on a pedestrian path, with crosswalks, which will allow people and bikes to continue upward to the tram terminus on Marquam Hill.

Commission member Andrew Jansky was skeptical about this last idea. Noting that the proposed path will have to cross Southwest Barbur Boulevard he said, "Traffic calming is great, but not when people are in a hurry, and that's what you'll have here."

Instead, Jansky said, the city should build "one great bridge" that will take people all the way from the South Waterfront to Marquam Hill with a Lair Hill access point. Commission chair Lloyd Lindley urged the design team to make the span wider than 15 feet.

Commission member Gwen Millius agreed, saying the bridge will be used in a future when "the cost of gasoline is causing more and more people to use these facilities. I'd hate to perpetuate the idea that riding your bike is about personal virtue and nothing more. Make it something that doesn't look horrible and works really well."



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