

Councilor Stacey says primary goal of Metro is less driving, more transit

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

“Metro is a feast for me,” Metro Councilor Bob Stacey told the South Portland Neighborhood Association last month. “It’s not where citizens look for services, but it’s the center of planning.”

Stacey is newly elected to District 6, which includes Southwest Portland from downtown to Southwest Barbur Boulevard.



Metro Councilor Bob Stacey (District 6)

His background includes time spent as Portland Bureau of Planning director and executive director of the land use advocate group Thousand Friends of Oregon.

“My self-appointed job is to preserve the (existing) Urban Growth Boundary,” Stacey said. “We can either push it further out into the countryside, or we can be sensible and accommodate growth within it.”

“The reason we have potholes, don’t have sidewalks and don’t have other amenities is because we’ve invested so much on the urban edge.”

Another problem is that the Oregon gasoline tax, a chief source of transportation-related revenue, is decreasing. “Oregonians are driving less and driving more fuel-efficient cars,” Stacey said. “We need to push our dollars further or find new sources of revenue.”

A primary goal of Metro is for people to drive less, Stacey said, “and we can drive less if we have choices that let us do it.”

Metro is seeking to create such a choice through the Southwest Corridor Plan, which will create a light rail or bus rapid transit route along Highway 99W from downtown Portland to Sherwood. Stacey is on the project’s Steering Committee.

A map associated with the project contained a series of red circles denoting major destinations. South Portland board member Bill Danneman noted that Oregon Health and Sciences University occupied such a circle.

Stacey responded, “What the map was intended to convey is that this is

an area that we need to have a plan for serving. It doesn’t mean that this facility needs to be served directly.”

“There are lots of circles, they don’t all fall under one option, and you couldn’t serve them all with one option,” said Stacey. “What you need is a network, with the rest served by buses. For OHSU, the question is how you do that. There are open minds on the committee.”

Another board member, Jim Gardner, questioned the use of Southwest Naito Parkway in some options. Gardner has long been an advocate of the South Portland Circulation Study.

The 35-year-old plan would remove much of the roadway near the Ross Island Bridge, shrink Naito back to a local street, and use the land thus reclaimed for other uses.

Gardner said he feared the proposed route would interfere with this. He was also concerned about the assignment of certain “bundles” of improvements to certain options.

“I wouldn’t discourage you from making that point,” Stacey told Gardner.

According to Stacey, “We made a purposeful decision to put some projects in some bundles to make comparisons. We don’t have the money to do everything on the project list. If you say that this needs to be revised, you need to make that point.”

The Southwest Corridor Plan process has also been criticized by others, including Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. board chair Marianne Fitzgerald. “Marianne made a strong point that people didn’t see the draft bundles until the day before,” Stacey said.

“They showed intense work by staff rather than more inclusive engagement of the community. But every one of the projects had been vetted with the public in the past.”

“What about projects left out? Well, no irrevocable decision has been made not to include such projects. It’s fair criticism, there wasn’t enough time for people to dive in and dig. Hopefully, there’ll be more later on.”



Southwest 26th Avenue and Barbur Boulevard is one of the potential light rail or rapid transit stations in the Southwest Corridor Plan. (Post file photo by Don Snedecor)

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