

Multnomah parents fed up with navigating busy Capitol Highway

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

It’s been in the works for almost two decades. The Capitol Highway Plan, which was implemented in 1996, was a blueprint to improve pedestrian and bicyclist access and safety the entire length of Capitol Highway. Originally the road to the state capitol in Salem, present day Capitol Highway extends from Southwest Barbur Boulevard (north), through Hillsdale, Multnomah Village and the Barbur Crossroads (south) all the way to the Sylvania campus of Portland Community College. More than half of the improvements along Capitol Highway have been completed. But the “Garden Home” section from Southwest Garden Home Road south to Taylors Ferry Road is still unfunded. Besides getting more dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists, there has been an increase in traffic, speeding, and estimated costs: the project has skyrocketed to over \$19 million. A

two-phased project comes in at approximately \$23 million. Due to changes in city of Portland environmental codes since the mid-1990s, the price for such projects has gone up dramatically. No longer can just sidewalks and bike lanes (“streetscapes”) be installed; stormwater facilities, like the recent green street project in Multnomah Village, must be factored in. Approximately \$6 million, which had been earmarked for the Garden Home segment, has been redistributed to fund other sidewalk and bike lane projects in Southwest. Multnomah residents Jessica Wade and Rob Gardner have been documenting their difficulties navigating Capitol Highway as pedestrians since becoming parents two years ago. Their options for walking along the two-lane road are mud, weeds, rocks, or other dangerous obstacles. “Last summer, we had to maneuver around parked cars blocking the public right of way,” explained Wade. “We were forced to push our daughter in (Continued on Page 6)



Rob Gardner attempts to navigate Southwest Capitol Highway with his 18-month-old daughter. Along with vehicles parked on the side of the road, he encounters mud, weeds, and uneven gravel. (Photo courtesy of Jessica Wade)



Courtney Kreutz is coordinating the development of a new playground to replace the old structures at Hayhurst Elementary School. Courtney's son, Calan, is a kindergartner and hopes the project is completed before he leaves Hayhurst. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

Hayhurst PTA seeks to raise \$100,000 for natural play structures

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Elizabeth Hayhurst Elementary School has a playground that has seen better days. The wooden climbing structure, built in 1984, is rotting, the slide is cracked and dirty, and the monkey bars are oxidized. The whole area leaves little for the imagination or active play. But that is all about to change. Courtney Kreutz is on a mission: she’s a parent of three young children, one who attends Hayhurst, and two who soon will be. Kreutz is coordinating the effort to raise funds and awareness for a new playground. The Dream Big Project is a collaborative effort of Hayhurst School children, parents, teachers, and the surrounding communities, working together to design, raise funds, and build an innovative, imaginative, and durable playground that will replace the existing structures. According to Kreutz, the school will be welcoming approximately 90 additional students when the Stephens Creek Crossing housing development in Multnomah is completed this year. Under the guidance of Principal Deanne Froehlich, teachers, and staff, the students of Hayhurst have thrived academically. “A playground that engages and strengthens students’ imagination, physical well-being, and social skills,” Froehlich articulated, “will be a benefit to the entire community.” Many parents and children wanted a

castle or pirate ship to materialize but according to one of the teachers, this would limit the imagination. Having a natural play area will spawn pirates and princesses as well as explorers and much more. “The principal has already secured a \$5,000 matching donation for the project,” Kreutz exclaimed. “That means we need to raise an additional \$5,000 in direct donations to receive the matching donation.” Kreutz guesstimates the entire project could cost over \$100,000. With new city codes and Portland Public School requirements, the tan bark chips must be replaced with rubber tiling. “The rubber mats and chips nearly eat up half of that budget,” Kreutz explained as she opened a folder with drawings, play equipment catalogs, and notes. A raffle will run the last week of January. A wide assortment of community businesses including Old Market Pub, Lucky Lab, Baker & Spice, Anastasia Salon, and numerous others, have donated items for the raffle. (See the website for the entire list and where tickets will be sold.) Tickets are \$10 per ticket, 6 for \$50, and 13 tickets for \$100. “We are working on setting up a PayPal account so that people can donate online,” Kreutz said. “Portland Public Schools doesn’t have money to replace old play structures, add new ones or even maintain them.” Kreutz, who recently moved from the NE Alameda neighborhood, didn’t realize how much work this would (Continued on Page 6)

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