

Dear City Council: A prescription for healthy streets

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CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

The following is the second in a two-part article. This first part outlined a set of guiding principles for Healthy Streets and was published _____. This piece offers specific implementation solutions.

Now that the swearing in ceremonies are over and budgets are being written, I offer specific implementation solutions to build a balanced and healthy transportation system. First let me quickly recap the guiding principles offered in the first letter:

1. Our streets have the potential to transform our communities.
2. Transportation is regional.
3. Collective action is stronger than individual action.
4. Good transportation policy transcends demographics.
5. A truly multimodal network is a balanced system that meets many shared goals.
6. Deliver results
7. Change behavior through encouragement and education
8. Confront reality and let data drive decisions.
9. Tell it straight.
10. Be bold and unique
11. Hire and recruit the best people who can implement this vision.

With these strong guidelines rooted in our work, let's go out and build a great network while maintaining our current transportation system.

1. In keeping with campaign promises and with the needs of our communities, let us maintain the current system. Let's set standards for turnaround from when a pothole is reported and when it is repaired and keep our citizens informed about the status. Maintenance is more than just filling potholes, however; we need to keep our markings visible, our signs up and signals working.

2. Our network is not complete. We need to raise money to fix what needs fixing and build what is lacking. We should not be satisfied until every resident of Portland can travel on a safe sidewalk with adequate access for wheelchairs and strollers to their bus stop that is properly sheltered and lit. We need streets that are "unimproved" to be upgraded so that all travelers can safely move around their neighborhoods.

3. Let's make bold plans to dramatically increase the share of biking, walking and transit by building great networks. The city should announce a schedule for completing the next five years of key transportation projects, including the creation of 100 miles of new protected bike lanes that separate bicyclists from motorized travel and builds a buffer between nervous bicyclists and nervous drivers, while simultaneously giving pedestrians key space and right of way. At a minimum, we should begin to plan right now for major protected bike lanes running east/west, north/south and diagonally throughout Portland that carry through downtown. Certainly if Washington, D.C. can build a protected bike lane right down Pennsylvania Avenue, we can find the leadership to make this happen. Just like other cities have found, we will also find that it is good for business, good for safety and good for freight.

4. Let's slow traffic speed down, particularly in business districts and residential areas. We have the opportunity to install 20 MPH signs on neighborhood greenways and the city should join the

Bicycle Transportation Alliance's legislative drive to lower residential speed limits from 25 to 20 mph throughout the state.

5. We have an opportunity in areas with unimproved streets to pilot new and exciting designs that prioritize play space, pedestrian and bicycle travel with low impact construction techniques modeled after Europe's Home Zones. The city should pilot two of these designs in the next two years.

6. We should take what works well and make it work better. Some of what the city built ten years ago now needs updating. Three-foot bike lanes no longer provide adequate safety and should be expanded to five feet with buffer zones. Some key intersections need signalization to help us cross safely. Finally, there are gaps that need filling for a variety of reasons.

7. Sunday Parkways is one of the best things going for Portland and it can be even better. New York City closes Park Avenue, an iconic street that runs down the middle of Manhattan from Central Park all the way to the Brooklyn Bridge. Portland has wonderful opportunity to look at piloting a large scale Sunday Parkways event on an iconic street like Burnside from the West Hills all the way to 82nd Street. Let's borrow from San Francisco's event and have a major concert at one of our iconic parks and truly celebrate!

8. Launch a collaborative task force to build a new model for funding a balanced transportation system. Call upon leaders from freight, downtown businesses, suburban employment campuses, labor leaders, transportation advocates and real estate developers to join together. This work will be hard but we can expect less, not more funding from the federal government.

I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and help you see this prescription to reality. Thanks for listening.



HEALTHY STREETBEAT

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Healthy Streetbeat is a monthly column for Street Roots written by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA). Our contributors are Rob Sadowsky, executive director, and Margaux Mennesson, communications director.

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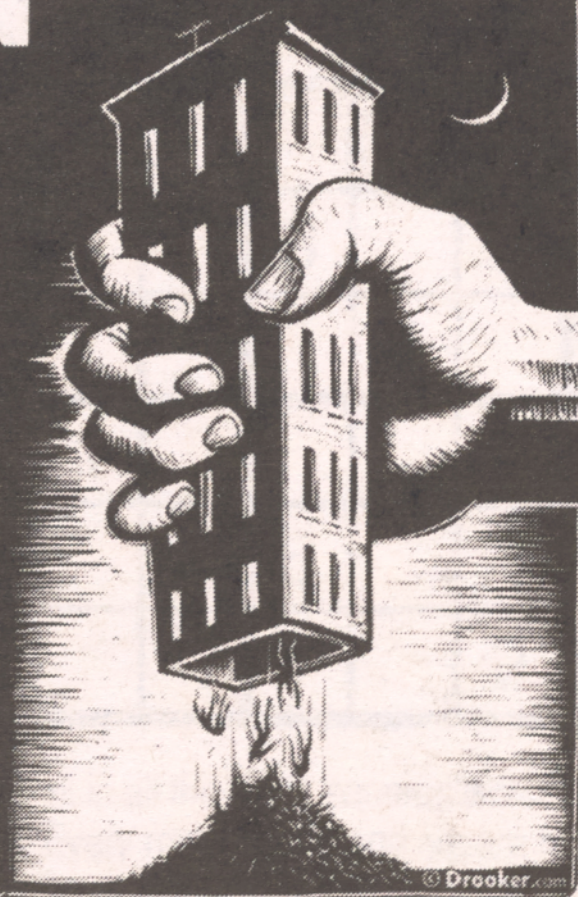
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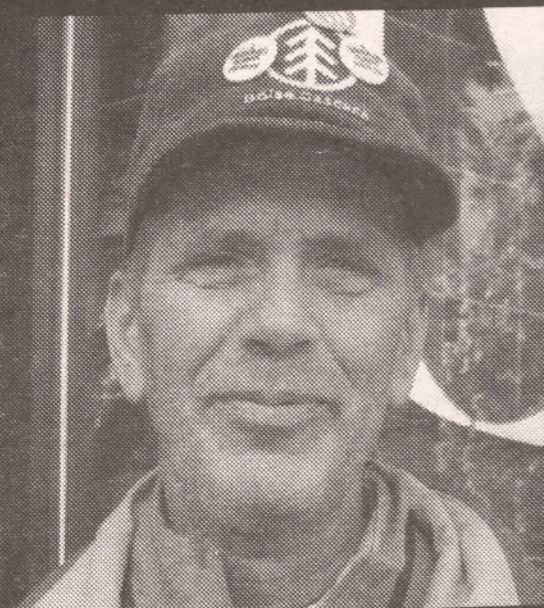
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