

REVIEW AND ALTERNATE  
PROPOSAL OF "MULTIPLE USE AND  
JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF I-405,  
I-505 FREEWAY CORRIDOR."

prepared by  
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Association

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A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF THE I-505 FREEWAY  
CORRIDOR PROPOSED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION,  
AND AN ALTERNATIVE

Although the Highway Department assumes most of the direct costs involved in land acquisition and freeway construction, there are significant costs, both direct and indirect, which are imposed on the City when it agrees to a particular freeway route. These costs must be considered and compared to the benefits accruing, and the resulting benefit-cost ratio for each reasonable alternative solution to the specific traffic and environmental problem should then be evaluated; generally, preference should be given to the proposal with the highest ratio of benefits to costs. It is the contention of this study that the Planning Commission has not adequately analyzed the relevant dimensions of the problem in its study of the proposed I-505 Freeway Corridor.

In the following discussion, we shall confine our analysis to the projected freeway link between the new Fremont Bridge off-ramp and St. Helen's Road (I-505). This would require a two-block wide segment of land between N. W. Thurman and Vaughn running from approximately N. W. 18th to N. W. 29th, plus the properties in the corridor as it swings down in front of Montgomery Ward.

(1) Direct fiscal loss: This is measured by the value of the properties (land and improvements) removed from the tax rolls by the freeway corridor. Here we shall record only the net loss which would result from adoption of the Planning Commission Report over the smaller loss resulting from our own proposal suggested below. This involves loss of the properties from N. W. 22nd to 29th and those involved in the swing over to Wards. Using the data from the 1970 assessment books, we find that about 220 properties would be lost, with a total assessed valuation of \$3,534,750 and therefore a perpetual tax stream loss with a present value well in excess of this figure, given the tendency of both assessed valuation and tax rates to rise over time.

(2) Employment and Income Loss to the City. A large percentage of the properties in the proposed corridor are commercial and industrial establishments. According to the Commission Report, there is not sufficient space in the Northwest area to accommodate all those who will be displaced. The past experience with businesses displaced by freeways and urban renewal indicates that (a) some of them re-locate, but outside the city, thus shifting the locus of employment and income generation, with benefits accruing to other cities; and (b) a certain percent of the establishments forced to close are either neighborhood oriented, and therefore don't start up again, or are small proprietorships which don't or can't make the effort to relocate at all. All such cases represent a real economic loss to the city. Nowhere in the Planning Commission Report do we find that a survey has been made to estimate the loss.

(3) Indirect economic and fiscal loss through neighborhood deterioration produced by massive freeway structures, truck and auto noise, and air pollution. The proposed I-505 runs along a residential neighborhood which includes the area known as Willamette Heights. In the last five or six years, this neighborhood has undergone a remarkable revitalization reflected in one of the sharpest upswings in assessed values anywhere in the city. The 1970 assessed value for this residential enclave just beyond the Thurman Street bridge at N. W. 31st is \$5,195,190. (Willamette Heights Addition). A sample of properties in this area indicates that the new assessed values, effective 1971, have increased by a staggering 70 percent. Yet, large parts of this area are shown in the Planning Commission study as being within the area of adverse impact of the proposed I-505 Freeway. No doubt because of this, the single family residential area on Thurman Street and below, from the bridge at N. W. 31st up to Thurman and Gordon are projected for re-zoning for multiple-use. Given the nature of the terrain sloping down like a funnel into the freeway corridor, areas even beyond the three blocks indicated in the report, would be adversely affected by freeway noise and air pollution. This would undoubtedly result in a sharp reversal of the upward trend in property values, with consequent tax losses to the city and amenity losses to the residents of the Willamette Heights community.

Despite the attempt to gloss over adverse effects by bland talk of multiple use corridors, no realistic proposal exists for accomplishing this.

#### BENEFITS: COMPARISON OF TWO PROPOSALS

As noted above, the I-505 Freeway Corridor proposed in The Planning Commission Report imposes high economic and social costs on the city, and has adverse environmental effects on Northwest and Willamette Heights residential areas. Despite these high costs, it is a poor solution to the traffic problem. It uses a freeway solution best suited to the movement of thru-traffic, when most of the traffic channelled into the proposed freeway corridor is bound for various points within the northwest industrial area. The limited access inherent in the proposed freeway plan would impose severe penalties on business firms in the area. (It is known that a number of such firms have even talked of leaving Portland should this freeway proposal be adopted.) Let us summarize these conditions:

1. Auto traffic flow pattern does not warrant a freeway.
  - a. - 68% of the traffic is destination oriented to the NW Industrial.
  - b. - 32% thru traffic to St. Johns.
  - c. Very little increase in traffic to the NW industrial sector is expected.

The Willamette Heights Neighborhood Association alternative plan is shown on the accompanying map. It has the following advantages:

1. Its basic concept is to de-centralize auto-truck traffic (see attached map.)
2. Establish a system of one-way traffic couplets to offer a series of alternate on-grade routes in all cases and establish control of the traffic flow from the Fremont Bridge to eventual destinations (not a trial and error freeway traffic weaving pattern).
3. Alternate proposal saves over 3-1/2 million dollars in land acquisition costs from 22nd to 29th.
4. Vaughn and Upshur would become an east-west couplet. 21st and 22nd would become the north-south couplet. Front St., Nicolai St. and Yeon would become the arterials connecting the couplets together providing a multiple-route system to any destination.
5. The "multiple-route" system of de-centralizing traffic offers the possibility of separating truck and auto traffic.

6. Increased access points throughout NW industrial area.

No re-zoning of Willamette Heights residential area above the bridge (North of Macleay Park) and, the consequent danger of deterioration and a decline in tax revenues.

7. Multi-use of area adjacent to couplet (i.e. light manufacturing, retail business, etc.)

8. Allows more scope for a re-examination of re-zoning issues and development of south side of Thurman Street.

9. Opens up the possibility of government grants and funding programs; for example:

- a. Parks and beautification grants,
- b. Housing grants,
- c. Highway beautification grants.