

November 25, 2008

Metro
600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97212

Congestion, climate change, burdensome fuel costs, lack of funding to even maintain roads, concern about making sure our transportation investments build, rather than harm, communities – these challenges make it plain to each of us in our daily lives that the times are changing.

*–The Case for an Integrated Mobility Strategy,
Metro Blue Ribbon Committee for Trails, 2008*

Dear Metro Council and JPACT Members,

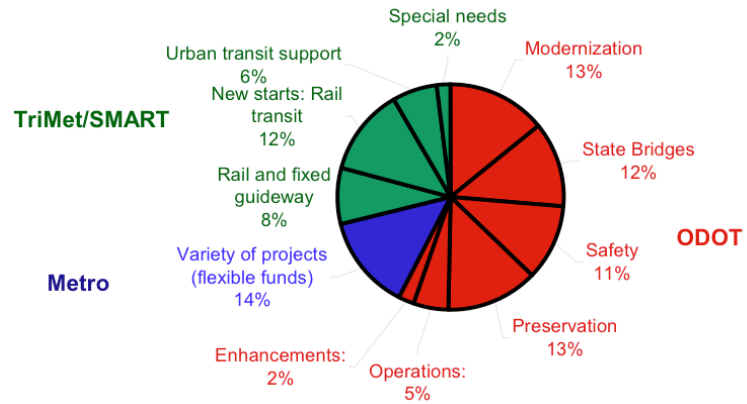
We write today in regards to the allocation of Regional Flexible Funds to local projects, as part of the 2010-13 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program. We appreciate the opportunity to engage in this very real demonstration of the region's transportation priorities.

It is by now clear to most of our region's leaders that we cannot collectively afford the costs – to the environment, to our governments, to our health – of the transportation system we have inherited from an earlier era. In light of the current economic turmoil and of recent fuel price shocks, it is now also clear to many of the residents of this region that, individually, they cannot afford the transportation choices they've made in the past.

Times have changed, and we have been slow to catch up. Just as our transit system can barely contain the legions of people who want – and need – to use it, our active transportation system is woefully inadequate.

Next summer we should expect to see even more people who, for budgetary reasons, will be trying to make trips on foot or by bicycle; we can barely envision the numbers who will do the same in 2013, at the end of the MTIP funding cycle in question. For those legions of new bike- and walk-commuters, what kind of system will greet them when they turn to it?

The Regional Flexible Funds (RFF) are the only funds available for core improvements to our active transportation corridors. The whole of MTIP is primarily devoted to the expansion and rehabilitation of auto and freight roadways, and to a lesser degree to the development and support of a great regional transit system.



This graph (taken from the MTIP 2010-13 policy report) shows historical averages for the relative amounts of funding distributed in the region.

The BTA believes that the RFF local projects list should be, at its core, focused on investments in active transportation.

All of the projects on this list are good projects. Even road-capacity-increasing projects now include sidewalks and bike lanes. But great regional active transportation will not come in dribs and drabs at the margins of bigger projects; it *is* the big project, and we hope that JPACT will assemble a project list to reflect this.

Below is our ranking of the active transportation projects on the RFF list that we believe will have the biggest impact (due to the breadth of their effect or the quality of the experience they will offer, or both) and that should be fully funded in this cycle. These projects represent approximately \$11,185,000 in requests, just over half of the total Regional Flexible Funds available for local projects.

We hope that JPACT agrees that the RFF should be focused on active transportation projects that do not receive funding elsewhere. Devoting at least half of RFF project funds to these projects is entirely consistent with that focus. We recommend that the remaining available funds be used for transit, pedestrian and mixed-use projects that enhance and encourage active transportation in other ways.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,

Scott Bricker
Executive Director

Recommended projects:

Projects marked with an asterisk () are in the BTA's Blueprint for Better Bicycling.*

1. *NE/SE Twenties Bikeway (Portland)
2. *Westside Trail (Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District)
3. *Willamette Greenway Trail (Portland)
4. French Prairie Bridge (Wilsonville)
5. 40 Mile Loop (Fairview)
6. Council Creek Trail (Forest Grove)
7. Red Electric Trail (Portland)