



January 7, 2010

Dear Public Official and Elected Representative:

In response to the ongoing discussions concerning expected traffic changes due to the proposed Milwaukie Portland Light Rail Project, and specifically the Tacoma Street Park and Ride, Ardenwald/Johnson Creek Neighborhood Association is writing to express our unified support in keeping existing traffic controls on the section of SE Johnson Creek Boulevard within our neighborhood boundary. Thank you for taking the time to thoroughly read this letter while considering the residents who are directly affected by any decisions you make regarding this issue. Our concerns focus on safety and livability for the neighborhood residents.

Issue: In response to the expected traffic changes due to the proposed Tacoma Street Park and Ride, potential traffic mitigation has been identified* on SE Johnson Creek Boulevard (SE JCB) and all intersections along the boulevard between SE 17th Avenue and SE 45th place which includes replacing stop signs at SE 32nd and SE 42nd with traffic signals and removing the stop sign at SE 36th. The two proposed traffic lights/signals would be timed to allow for maximum traffic volume on the stretch of SE JCB that runs through our neighborhood. This proposed traffic mitigation is currently being reviewed by Tri-Met, the cities of Portland and Milwaukie, Clackamas and Multnomah Counties, Oregon Department of Transportation and Metro.

Neighborhood Response: Reduce traffic speeds to legal limit (25 mph) in order to support safe traffic speeds and volume limits along the impacted area of SE JCB and nearby streets. We are not interested in increasing the volume of traffic through the neighborhood at the expense of safety and livability issues. Slower traffic will be an incentive for drivers to use other routes as well as making SE JCB safer for drivers/pedestrians/people exiting their houses along SE JCB as well as being a preventative measure against the current damage to fences, mailboxes and other property along SE JCB.

Recommendations:

1. Leave existing traffic signage AS IS.
2. Review Milwaukie's Transit plan and to make sure that the goals are keeping with the overall goal of the plan and not picking and choosing the pieces that are

beneficial for one area but harmful to another.

3. Prioritize new southbound traffic flow off of SE JCB/Tacoma near the Kasch's Garden Center location. This would be a major safety and traffic improvement for more than half the expected traffic to the Tacoma Park and Ride and encourage the movement onto major roadways and instead of the neighborhood.
4. Change SE JCB's current emergency vehicle routing designation from fire trucks and other emergency vehicles to routing primarily for police cars. This would allow some traffic calming measures (bumps, islands etc) and slow down traffic.
5. Implement traffic calming devices that provide visual and aural cues to alert drivers of speed zones. Devices to be studied may include changes in pavement color and texture used in interesting and visually attractive ways, rumble strips, turnarounds, signs indicating traffic speed or kept up bike lane and pedestrian striping.
6. Implement the proposed right turn lane on SE JCB westbound at the intersection of 32nd and SE JCB.
7. Maintain additional mitigation at 99E Southbound off-ramp.
8. Improve safety of Springwater Corridor crossing on SE JCB near SE 45th place by putting up a crosswalk signal or ped/bike overpass. This would also encourage alternative transportation to the park and ride.
9. Improve pedestrian experience and bike access to the Park and Ride by improving lighting and access routes - namely the Springwater Corridor and SE JCB between SE 17th and SE 32nd.

Background:

The reason traffic issues are so important to Ardenwald/Johnson Creek Neighborhood residents is that there is an anticipation of increased traffic from the use of the proposed Tacoma Park & Ride - a park and ride equal in size to the largest park and ride structures within the entire Tri-met system and the largest park and ride within the Portland city limits. Even if this large structure were not built, Metro models indicate that traffic through our neighborhood will increase as the metro area grows.

According to the DKS study*, most of the traffic using the park and ride is expected from the south but a significant percent is expected from the east and west using SE JCB/Tacoma. The obvious goal of the area traffic planners, as well as many city, county and state staff working on this project, is to implement the proposed traffic mitigation measures thus encouraging the increased volume of traffic through the neighborhood.

Speeding is already a problem on SE JCB - Why improve traffic flow on a neighborhood street with an existing speeding issue, when the potential changes are only needed for a few hours of the day and in the end do little to slow speeding traffic?

According to study used by Tri-Met to calculate the park and ride traffic impact, as well as other studies, SE JCB already has a speeding problem with the speed of the 85th percentile being 34 mph. The current posted speed limit is 25 mph. According to the study, the traffic mitigations currently being reviewed will reduce the 85th percentile speed by 2 mph. Even the Milwaukie Police Chief noted at the January 2010 AJC neighborhood meeting that an informal traffic survey by a seasoned officer on his force indicated that the removal of the stop signs will increase traffic speeds significantly on the section of SE JCB indicated in this less. This means that even with the traffic mitigation, traffic safety on SE JCB will remain a major issue.

With increased traffic on a street that will continue to have speeding issues, the neighborhood will end up dealing with additional accidents, property damage, difficulty in getting out of driveways, noise and air pollution and increased road wear.

The main reason for the proposed traffic mitigation involves the "failure" of intersections at SE 32nd and SE 42nd primarily during morning and afternoon rush hour traffic. Outside these few hours per day, there is no "failure" at the noted intersections.

Previous Traffic Issues/History:

Adding to the current tension is a long history of Ardenwald/Johnson Creek Neighborhood residents feeling that promised traffic calming measures on SE JCB weren't delivered despite having "failing" intersections; acknowledged speeding; inappropriate emergency route designation; and overall unsafe conditions for SE JCB's classification. Whether the promises and results were misinterpreted or unfulfilled, this underlying skepticism is strong, especially since many of the residents have lived on SE JCB through several projects.

Emergency Routes:

Currently Emergency Route designation stands in the way of the possibility of most traffic calming approaches on SE JCB. However, the curvy nature of the section of SE JCB that runs through our neighborhood, the current congestion at several times of the day puts into question the functionality of SE JCB as an emergency vehicle route. And if there is such concern regarding traffic calming on emergency routes, why does SE 32nd, which leads to a hospital, police station and fire station, have speed bumps?

Pass Through Traffic:

It would be ideal if the pass through traffic (currently and in the future with the Park & Ride) went someplace else. The obvious alternative is highways 99 and 224 which are expected to carry most of the traffic from the south. As a result, all deliberate traffic engineering efforts must be made to keep that traffic on those highways. Other possibilities to look at are SE King or Railroad Avenue. However, these routes have their own neighborhood concerns and physical obstacles that must be considered.

From the perspective of Ardenwald/Johnson Creek Neighborhood, why should we degrade our neighborhood by improving traffic flow for area residents who have chosen a

lifestyle that requires longer commute times. If our community were a destination or business center, it would make sense to invite this traffic, but we are primarily a neighborhood. And, if the goal of light rail to get people out of their car, why are steps being taken to encourage people to use their cars?

**The Ardenwald/Johnson Creek Neighborhood Association
Milwaukie and Portland, Oregon
Approved Tuesday, January 12, 2010**

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Milwaukie-Portland Light Rail Citizens Advisory Board
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon U.S. Senator Jeffery A. Merkley
Oregon U.S. Senator Ron Wyden
Oregon U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer
Oregon State Senator Diane Rosenbaum
Oregon State Representative Carolyn Tomei

****The proposed mitigation referred to in this letter, is outlined in the document prepared by Alan Snook of DKS Associates and dated Oct. 12, 2009, and presented at several stakeholder meetings involving neighborhood residents and government representatives. Additional information including the library with notes from the Tacoma Station Planning meetings and CAC meetings, may be found on the Tri-Met website under the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail subsections.***