

September 20, 2016

To: the Powell-Division Transit and Development Steering Committee Co-chairs
Bob Stacey and Shirley Craddick

And the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project
Metro
600 NE Grand Ave
Portland, OR 97232

Attn. Elizabeth Mros-O'Hara
Investment Areas Project Manager, Planning and Development

Attn. Noelle Dobson
Project Engagement Lead

Attn. Dana Lucero
Senior Public Involvement Specialist

Dear Steering Committee and Project Leads,

On behalf of the SE Uplift membership, the SE Uplift Neighborhood Coalition Board is writing to voice our opposition to the current Powell-Division BRT project proposal. While transit improvements are much needed along the Powell and Division corridors, the current proposal on inner Division does not represent an improvement in service and further, may inadvertently result in a reduction in ridership. We recommend pursuing other solutions that would better serve the community and better meet the project goals of well-being, equity, efficiency, and safe and convenient transportation.

The SE Uplift Board has adopted this position following recommendations from their Land Use and Transportation Committee. In July, the LUTC heard a presentation on the project from Elizabeth Mros-O'Hara followed by a Q&A. Several Board members were present. In August, The Powell-Division Transit and Development Steering Committee rep from SE Uplift, Kerry Rowand, brought this topic for additional discussion, clarification and recommendations. The concerns of the LUTC and the Board include:

- Division is a poor choice, given its narrow streets and only one lane each direction. This letter to the editor reminds us that Division was not the first choice of route for BRT -- and for good reason: <http://portlandtribune.com/pt/10-opinion/317524-196303-letters-powell-preferred-as-commuter-corridor>
- Buses on Division would not be rapid. There is much skepticism of the data that suggests otherwise.

- This could lead to a reduction in ridership (example of Austin, Texas: <https://austinrailnow.com/2013/09/22/why-metrorapid-bus-service-is-not-bus-rapid-transit/>).
- Fragile passengers (seniors, school children, and the disabled) may need to travel farther, at times uphill and in inclement weather, to the bus if stops are spaced further apart.
- The longer, articulated buses do not have a strong performance record. Past failures are referenced in this article: <http://southeastexaminer.com/2016/08/division-preferred-for-rapid-transit/>
- The current plan does not address transit on the Powell corridor.

In place of the current plan, we propose exploring other options including:

- Address "problem areas" of extreme congestion, ex. intersection with train tracks around 11th/12th (cars wait a long time for freight trains to pass; bike/pedestrian elevated path lost when Max orange line built), or under the overpass on Powell around 17th
- Create flex lanes
- Use express and local buses (instead of one route with reduced stops); perhaps express buses for outer SE residents
- Build light rail
- Introduce park and rides
- Perhaps keep the 4 line on Division and put BRT on Hawthorne to replace where the 14 line used to go
- Consider a plan that does not have a straight alignment

If the current plan moves forward despite objections, we would like to at least see a test done of BRT as proposed on Division, before committing to fund and implement the full project.

SE Uplift does support sidewalk and service improvements on outer Division and also supports servicing more passengers who are currently passed up by full buses. We share your commitment to the city and its residents, and are confident that, despite barriers, better solutions can be found.

Sincerely,

The Board of SE Uplift
Robert McCullough, Chair

cc: The Powell-Division Transit and Development Steering Committee