

**S.M.I.L.E. GENERAL MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007; SELLWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM**

**<http://www.SellwoodMoreland.org>**

Officers and Directors present: President Reid Kells, Vice President Teresa Pucik, Treasurer Pat Hainley, and Secretary Eric Norberg; Directors Nancy Walsh, Dana Beck, Austin Pritchard, Teresa Dunbar, Phil Krain, Jim Friscia, Julie Wallace, and Katie Dunham.

President Reid Kells called this special General Public Meeting to order at 7:46 pm, in the gymnasium of Sellwood Middle School, and began by introducing the invited special guests: Metro Councilor Robert Liberty, State Representative Carolyn Tomei, County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey, and City Commissioner Sam Adams. He then introduced Kevin Downing, former SMILE President, to address with the help of a PowerPoint presentation the purpose of the special meeting -- which was to acquaint all present with the SMILE-sponsored, city-adopted, Metro recognized "Tacoma Main Street Plan", and explore how that plan, which establishes Tacoma Street as a "district collector" street, limited two two lanes of traffic, relates to the planning process for the new Sellwood Bridge, which includes options for a three or four lane bridge. He gave with affectionate detail and anecdotes the history of the plan, and of transportation in the neighborhood.

Following Downing, John Fyre addressed the crowd of attendees, (counted by Board member Dana Beck as 166), to comment, as the SMILE member of the Sellwood Bridge Citizens Advisory Task Force. He recollected past victories of SMILE, such as retaining the Sellwood Branch Library and eventually seeing it sited in a better location with much more space....getting an unwanted electronic sign removed from Tacoma Street when the city found itself unable to accomplish that....turning aside a planned major corporation distributing facility....and more. John said that in his opinion, four lanes on the Sellwood Bridge would go against the Tacoma Main Street Plan, and he added that if additional capacity is needed for Clackamas County commuters, that county should be called upon to solve the problem within the county's borders. "The power is here with you, and if you relinquish the power, you lose it," he counseled the crowd.

Mike Pullen next appeared, representing the owner of the bridge, Multnomah County. He praised the presentations by Downing and Fyre -- "they are strong advocates for the neighborhood" -- and noted that the Citizens Advisory Task Force process is well over halfway through, at this point. He went on to explain that process. The draft environmental impact statement is in the works, and the next step is narrowing the options for the bridge to four or less. The Portland City Council, the Metro Council,

and Multnomah County will all have equal votes in developing the "preferred alternative". Impacts of the alternatives upon the community will be part of the criteria considered in making the final decision, he said.

Pat Hainley, acting as Moderator, then turned to the stage, on which tables and chairs had been set up for the invited dignitaries, and invited each to make an opening statement. Each did, welcoming questions. Sam Adams went so far as to pledge his "immovability" in support of the Tacoma Main Street Plan. He added that, as Transportation Commissioner of the city, he is very familiar with the tedious process the County is pursuing with its task force in order to get federal money for the bridge -- but, he said of the open task force meetings on which all options are considered by representatives of all users, "it is essential that the decision not be made in a smoky back room."

At this point questions were now posed by Hainley from question cards which had been distributed to the audience as they signed in. To Robert Liberty, he posed the question: Can you comment on the recommendation in Metro's South Corridor Plan a decade ago that the Sellwood Bridge remain two lanes? Liberty responded, "the Metro Council is still on record as supporting that, and I won't support a four-lane bridge."

Of Sam Adams, the question was posed, is there any way to harmonize a four-lane bridge with the Sellwood-Moreland Neighborhood Plan, which the city recognized and adopted? Adams responded, "it's hard to support four lanes, but I don't want to risk the process and federal funding by making firm statements now. I do fully support the Tacoma Main Street Plan."

To Maria Rojo de Steffey, a request to comment on the current process. She responded, "to get federal funding, we must at least consider a variety of options before deciding on any."

Of Carolyn Tomei, the question was posed about why the impact of a four lane bridge would not be evaluated until it is selected... Given this backwards scenario, if a four lane bridge is selected, would considering its impact and a negative decision on it necessarily mean the process must be begun and run through again? She responded, "we are required to consider all options; of Clackamas County commuter needs, these do not have to be addressed with one bridge -- they can be addressed through many options, such as Inner Southeast Light Rail".

Liberty added his response to that question, saying that he doesn't agree with federal guidelines on this point -- impact evaluation SHOULD come before the final decision is made.

Finally, of Adams, the question: What would be the impact on

community safety goals be, of a four-lane bridge? Pat Hainley added the comment that he understood that most of the options chosen at the last Citizens Advisory Task Force meeting were four-lane options. Barbara Barber, in the audience, introduced herself as a member of that task force, and said that although one choice made at the meeting was four lanes, the majority were two lane options. Pat then apologized for his misstatement.

President Kells next picked up a wireless "crowd microphone" and took live questions from attendees. A resident asked what happens to the 30,000 cars-a-day "elephant in the room" if the Tacoma Main Street Plan prevails...how about putting pressure on Clackamas County to find a place to build a bridge? Rep. Tomei commented that it is "extremely hard to site a new bridge, with all the development along both sides of the river". To that, another attendee questioned whether siting a new bridge would really be that difficult. Tomei: "I don't disagree with you, but it is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future."

Robert Liberty noted that there is not enough money available to build new bridges, and he believes that the first priority should be to build a stronger community in Clackamas County, to get more jobs close to where people live; another bridge could actually be counterproductive to that goal.

A woman arose to worry that the county's online bridge survey could be "hijacked by special interests", since it appears one can take it over and over as many times as one wants. Mike Pullen responded that the online poll is not intended to be scientific, but the Internet address of every participating computer is noted and retained, and "multiple responses from the same computer will be thrown out" during tabulation.

A man in the audience worried that "smaller alternatives" for the Sellwood Bridge had not been well considered; Maria Rojo de Steffey responded by urging everyone to make sure their representative on the Citizens Task Force knows how they feel.

Another man asked if the closing of the bridge to auto traffic permanently had been considered -- how about having just a bike and pedestrian bridge? Robert Liberty said that such a choice would effectively mean no bridge at all. Maria reminded that if the current bridge were to deteriorate further, it could be closed to auto traffic in any event.

Another man asked how the federal government fits into the planning process? Sam Adams responded that "whatever we come up with in the end will almost certainly earn federal funding -- if we follow their process criteria", as is now being done.

Barbara Barber again arose, as a Sellwood resident, to say that she commutes daily across the Sellwood Bridge herself, to reach

the restaurant she owns elsewhere in the county. She chooses this bridge to avoid the "crazy access" onto the Ross Island Bridge. Cut-through traffic is a problem in Sellwood, she added; solutions for that are needed, she said.

Responding to those comments, Sam Adams said that PDOT is working out priorities now to deploy and increase resources to fix and improve the roads and infrastructure, but "we gotta deploy first to the worst areas -- all of which are east of here."

Jay Wilson, an engineer commuting to Salem daily from Sellwood, arose to say he hoped that some way could be found to help Clackamas County build an alternate route. Liberty responded, "few areas are as dynamic and constructive as Sellwood-Moreland, but I am hopeful about Clackamas County, because of recent changes in leadership there. Inner Southeast MAX is progressing because of those changes -- and that will help."

Teresa Pucik brought up a newspaper article in the "Southeast Examiner" she had just seen which mentioned Liberty's leadership in getting the Mt. Hood Freeway project cancelled. Liberty said that the newspaper had gotten it quite wrong, but that he had been successful in fighting the "western bypass".

A submitted question was asked about whether Spokane Street might be at risk of becoming "Tacoma II". Adams responded that a bridge decision must consider not only the number of lanes, but also the on and off ramps and traffic flow.

Another question referred to the new building built on the north side of the east end of the Sellwood Bridge recently, and about the permitting process for it, asking, "what happened??" Adams responded, "I think that was a huge mistake". That should not stand in the way of our decision-making, he added.

A question asked about truck capacity on the new bridge; Maria Rojo de Steffey said that the new bridge would have the weight capacity to carry them; Sam Adams responded "improving transit service is our way to get traffic down".

Finally, Hainley said, "if money is a concern, why not consider a toll bridge?" Adams noted that in public surveying, only 4% supported that option -- "it's not a popular option".

With SMILE members identified at sign-in and given a red card with which to vote, SMILE member Kaarin Thompson proposed a motion: Should SMILE support a two-lane option, or a four-lane option?" The motion was seconded by Reid Kells; in the vote the preference for a two-lane bridge was completely unanimous.

The business of the meeting ended, it was adjourned at 9:37 pm.