

September 18, 2022

Re: Safety Improvements on Lower 7th Avenue

Dear Rep. Earl Blumenauer, Mayor Ted Wheeler, Comm. Joann Hardesty, Comm. Mingus Mapps, PBOT Director Warner, Mr. Sziegethy, Ms. Peirce, Mr. Falbo, and other PBOT Capital Projects decision makers:

The undersigned petitioners are Portland residents who live near the intersection of NE 7th Avenue and NE Tillamook Street.

We thank PBOT for meeting with our community and appreciate the ongoing commitment to working with us going forward. We have reviewed the changes that PBOT has included in its near-term plans for the intersection. We appreciate the addition of two speedbumps south of the intersection to help calm traffic. Unfortunately, given the reckless car speeds we already see on Lower 7th Avenue, we know this intersection will remain dangerous (and likely more dangerous), with the removal of the island, even with the proposed changes.

By PBOT's own admission, the island removal is not aimed at reducing car volume or the speed of traffic, which is at the root of the problem for this intersection. The traffic island, although not ideal by any standard, has been the finger in the hole of the dam. Removing it exposes the underlying design flaws on Lower 7th Avenue. This inevitably will result in a flood of high speed traffic through our neighborhood. We know that speedbumps alone will not correct these flaws. The current speedbump just north of the island has done very little to calm traffic. Drivers frequently launch over the speedbump continuing to advance their speed around the island at rates averaging 29 miles an hour, only to increase their speeds as they progress down the hill to NE Broadway or turn right on Tillamook.

The underlying issue is that drivers commuting through northeast Portland improperly use Lower 7th Avenue as an alternative throughway to avoid the traffic signals on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, just one city block to the west. PBOT has recently estimated that traffic volume on Lower 7th Avenue is **three times** greater than the outer limit range for a residential neighborhood street. This is just not safe. Aggressive drivers regularly ignore speed limits, endanger local residents, scream and honk at pedestrians and cyclists, and make it impossible for children in our community to safely cross the street. And this has been going on for decades! PBOT does not need to wait for yet another traffic death in our neighborhood. The agency can start planning for real safety improvements now.

We appreciate that PBOT made a sincere effort in 2018 to address the needs and concerns of communities farther north on 7th Avenue, including African American owned businesses and community leaders near Fremont and Alberta. Our neighborhood is not yet aware exactly what the concerns were of our neighbors to the north, but we are open to learning more. We would also like to remind PBOT that this neighborhood is interracial and primarily working class, with elderly people, young children, and multigenerational households. Lower 7th Avenue was historically a Black neighborhood, and there are still African American families who have lived in this neighborhood for many generations and who have signed this very letter. Across the spectrum, the concern of this neighborhood is to reduce the speed and volume of cars at the intersection to make our community safer, including for elementary school children attending Irvington Elementary, middle school children attending Harriet Tubman, and preschool children going on classroom outings to Irving Park.

We very much appreciate that PBOT is willing to revisit its decision about the larger project connecting northeast Portland communities to the new Blumenauer Bridge. As part of this process, we would like PBOT to take a more nuanced look at the project in appreciation that Lower 7th Avenue has unique safety challenges and risks. We understand the 7th and Tillamook intersection will be closed to through traffic for nearly two months during construction. After just one week of closure, we have observed that traffic patterns are already shifting as drivers in northeast Portland become accustomed to the change. Seven days in, very few cars are trying to use our neighborhood as an alternative throughway to MLK. Our community members and school children and passing cyclists are safer, and something special is happening – long-time neighbors are congregating on the street in the evenings and making connections we've never made before. The environment has already shifted and our neighborhood actually feels like a *neighborhood*.

This is an opportunity for PBOT to pilot a study on the effects of diversion at this intersection – on our community, on adjacent communities, and on our neighbors to the north. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in outreach discussions with our neighbors to the north to understand their unique concerns and challenges and how we can support one another with compassion.

Sincerely,

Residents of the Lower 7th (NE 7th and Tillamook Street)



Robbyn Peters Bennett
7th & NE Tillamook

It says something when the entire neighborhood is alarmed by the removal of the traffic island. We already live in a state of vigilance with cars honking and yelling at us. We don't need it to get worse! It is no surprise that most of my neighbors retreat to their backyards. The sound of this neighborhood is distinct – revving engines, yelling and tires speeding by. Sadly, what is absent is the sound of children playing and neighbors laughing. If PBOT would install diverters, neighbors could venture out to the front yard. Its already happening with the temporary barriers. Diverters would help us feel safe. That would be amazing!



Kristen Pender
Resident, NE Tillamook St.
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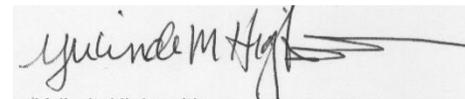


Rose Francis



Steven Nakana
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808-769-7713

We want our brown skinned daughter to be able to walk across Tillamook Street without living in fear that someone will run her over.



Yulinda and Duane Highsmith
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I don't want a life to be taken and PBOT to realize afterward it was a mistake. We can't get that life back once that life is taken.

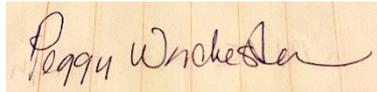


Sally Blatner
2041 NE 7th Ave.
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As a neighbor with a bird's eye view of the intersection, I witness reckless travelers – both cars AND cyclist all day, every day. There is no question that without some speed diversion, that more accidents will happen. Both cyclists and cars ignore the stop sign and directional signage constantly with many of the bikes carrying children and animals which is upsetting. For the most part, the traffic circle has been an obstacle. I've seen cars racing down the street in the same direction. I've witnessed countless verbal alterations and seen far too many accidents – mostly car versus bicycle. I personally do not think the circle has or is in any way slowing traffic. I have reached out to PBOT several times requesting speed bumps or any speed diversion to no avail. People drive up and down the street like it's a raceway. While the accidents are unfortunate, it's both parties being reckless. They put themselves in jeopardy racing to their destination. However, what I am most concerned about are my neighbors – my friends and myself trying to cross the street safely. People are out walking their animals, children playing on bikes and scooters. I watch people in wheelchairs wait hoping they are seen and often wait some time. I've had 2 animals hit as well as other peoples' animals. It's horrible. It concerns me that while PBOT is focused on making it safe for cyclists passing through, they are forgetting about the people that actually live in the neighborhood. Please don't discount the safety of the wonderful people in this great neighborhood. I invite you to join me on my porch and see for yourself. It's quite eye opening. Thank you for your consideration.



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Peggy Winchester
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/s/Claude Monette
Claude Monette
602 NE Tillamook St.



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Ari and Michael Steinberg-Lake
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We implore the City of Portland to consider additional measures to make 7th Ave. a safer street for everyone to use but with particular attention paid to pedestrians and cyclists who are particularly vulnerable when walking or biking along the street. As currently designed, the street has too many cars to safely be utilized by cars, bikes, and pedestrians simultaneously. Short of implementing traffic diverters at key locations to limit traffic to local use only, PBOT should consider taking all measures possible to truly slow traffic down to safe speeds so that safety of pedestrians and cyclists are prioritized.

Kevin Duquette
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Bill LeFors and Ann Shelton
635 NE Thompson St.

Linda Kading
2600 NE 7th Avenue

Laura Kading
2157 NE 7th Ave.

Mollie A. Hart
Resident of NE Tillamook St.
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I took this picture today of the speed bumps you put up at NE 31st between Stanton and Knott Street. If you are going to put speed bumps up, these are the speed bumps you need to put up. Not the little calm hills you've been using in our neighborhood, because that slows nobody down.

Sam Ortega
2204 NE 7th Ave.

Natasha Bond
NE Stanton St. and 9th Ave.



Gayle Heffernan

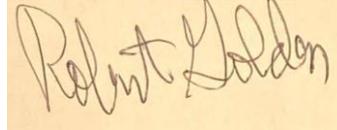
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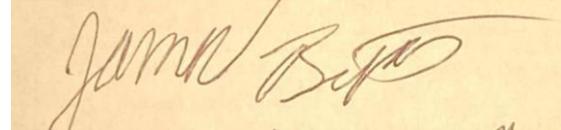
Jamie Mustard
612 NE Tillamook St.
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Dale Harrison Miller
2263 NE 7th Avenue
*Speed bumps do nothing. They are not a solution.
It's a waste of concrete. We need stop signs.*



Robert Golden



James Brittle



Justin Waddell
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Ruth Rowland

Ruth Rowland
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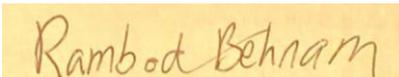
Helen Spencer-Wallace
637 NE Tillamook St.
My front porch is right on the corner of NE 7th and Tillamook streets. I don't sit out there as much as I would like, because the traffic is so loud and stressful. I am extremely concerned about the current design of the plan because of the lack of real traffic calming. The neighborhood is rallying around this and we will continue to attend to this issue. Please take our concerns seriously and use this moment of change as an opportunity to truly do the best thing for our neighborhood and our city.



Sabra and Jonah Stagg
532 NE Tillamook St.
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I agree with my neighbors that safety issues are big concern by removing the roundabout. As a family with a young child, I am already worried about speeding cars down our street. There are many families with young children that live on these blocks. Many people go well over 35 miles per hour down our street with speed bumps. There has already been a death of child and many pets on 7th. By removing the barriers that protect our neighborhood from being a highway it will increase speeding and make our street a cut through street for aggressive drivers in the name of gentrification. It seems quite ridiculous that the 7th and Tillamook roundabout is the only one being removed. There are many black families that have lived on 7th and Tillamook for generations. With Portland's ugly history I was shocked to hear the PBOT representative telling my neighbors of color that have lived here for generations that they were doing this in the name of their community! I hope that PBOT can come to a safe solution that doesn't put this streets families at risk.



Zac and Caitlyn Wheeler
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Rambod Behnam
7212 N Portsmouth
The tree serves as beautification and traffic calming. Keep the tree!