

# S M I L E

SELLWOOD MORELAND IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE  
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May 16, 2018

Tom Hughes  
Metro Council President  
600 NE Grand Ave  
Portland 97232-2736

## **RE: Our Regional Transportation Bond Needs Funding for the Reedway Ped/Bike Overcrossing**

Dear President Hughes:

The Reedway Overcrossing ([reedway.org](http://reedway.org), RTP project #11819 and TSP project #70049) would address a critical connectivity gap in the biking and walking network in Southeast Portland. Last year, a coalition including the Brooklyn Action Corps, Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association, Reed Neighborhood Association, Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League, Woodstock Neighborhood Association and Southeast Uplift (SEUL), jointly identified this project as a top priority and requested that PBOT staff prioritize the project in the city's Transportation System Development Charge (TSDC) Capital Project List as part of the current TSDC update process. Recognizing the need for this project, PBOT placed it on the TSP's financially constrained project list and adjusted the project timeline from 10-20 years to 1-10 years. While this project would be built in an area of Portland experiencing rapid development, the project is unlikely to be fully funded with TSDCs. Meanwhile regional funding is lagging, with the RTP listing the project for years 2028-2040.

With the prospect of a Regional Funding Bond in 2020 or beyond, now is a great time to prioritize regional funding for this project. The project would be a great asset to the region, and it fits squarely in the project criteria:

- **The overcrossing would solve one of the worst connectivity problems in the entire city:** The stretch between current crossing options at Holgate and Bybee Boulevards is over 1 mile. Solving this connectivity gap would provide access to a plentitude of destinations, including Reed College, Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden, Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge, hundreds of family wage jobs in the Brooklyn Industrial Area and thousands of homes and apartments in the Westmoreland, Brooklyn, Reed and Eastmoreland neighborhoods. This poor connectivity results in lengthy, out-of-direction travel and encourages driving instead of walking and biking. For example, a resident of the new apartment building at 22nd & Reedway would have to travel 1.7 miles to reach a job at industrial employer Wayne-Dalton on 26th Avenue. With a Reedway Ped/Bike Bridge, that person could walk a quarter mile to work.
- **Existing Holgate and Bybee viaducts, along with the roads leading to them, are at best substandard, and at worse, dangerous and hostile for pedestrians and bicycles.** Holgate is a four-lane auto-oriented

viaduct hosting 15,000 vehicles per day and significant freight traffic with no bike lanes and with sidewalks impeded by utility poles and street lights. Bybee/28th is a curvy, hilly roadway with narrow four-foot bike lanes that are perpetually covered in debris. Both routes would require major reconstruction to become marginally safe and comfortable for people not in cars, and even then they would still be busy driving routes. The Reedway Overcrossing would provide a far superior “low stress” connection.

- **The overcrossing would directly serve neighborhoods that are experiencing rapid and intense development.** As a result of high-density zoning, over 500 apartments have been recently completed, are under construction or are proposed in the immediate walking vicinity of the overcrossing. Most contain no car parking. Further to the south and north (but still a quick bike ride away), over 1,400 apartments are proposed. Meanwhile, Reed College has constructed new dorms for 125 students at the northwest corner of its campus, a quarter mile from the overcrossing site. Union Pacific and other industrial employers are at full employment. All of this growth translates into travel demand, creating an ever-increasing need for a connected network for walking and biking.
- **Transit service has been degraded in the area of the overcrossing.** In anticipation of the Harold Street MAX light rail station, which would have been built adjacent to the Reedway Overcrossing, this area was zoned for high-density residential and mixed use. However, construction of the light rail station was postponed indefinitely, leaving residents with a 20-minute walk across 99E to the nearest MAX station. A fully-connected biking and walking network will address the need for transportation options that the Harold Street MAX station left unmet.
- **The Region is forging ahead with at least three other major pedestrian/bicycle bridges.** Sullivan’s Crossing (NE 7th Avenue over I-84) and NW Flanders over I-405 look to be funded and moving forward, and the demolished Brooklyn Pedestrian Bridge near Clinton MAX station will be funded using leftover funds from the MAX Orange line. These are all good projects, but each crossing is located just a few hundred feet away from other bridges and crossings where people can walk and bike today. The Reedway Overcrossing is two thirds to one mile from the nearest crossings and would serve an area with poor connectivity relative to the Central City. Without Regional Funding, we will be leaving one of the largest gaps in our biking and walking network even as we move to close smaller gaps.

By funding the Reedway Ped/Bike Overcrossing, the Regional Funding Bond could help deliver a marque biking and walking project that would transform connectivity options in Southeast Portland. We urge Metro to consider including this project.

Sincerely,

Joel Leib, President  
Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League  
Board of Directors

Cc: Mayor Ted Wheeler, City of Portland  
Dan Saltzman, Portland City Commissioner  
Leah Treat, Director, Portland Bureau of Transportation