

In 1968 I was relatively new to Portland but I knew that the quickest way to access downtown was to zip along the west side of the Willamette on the 4-lane Harbor Drive Freeway. ODOT was proposing to widen it to make it even zippier. More seasoned Portlanders like the late, great Jim Howell, envisioned replacing the freeway with a park. Today, Portland enjoys the fruits of their vision at Tom McCall Waterfront Park. Salmon Street Springs, the gorgeous cherry trees, the Japanese Memorial, and the many concerts, fairs and other events that enrich our city would not be possible if ODOT had achieved their vision,

56 years later, ODOT again wants to widen a freeway. The I-5 Rose Quarter project is back on their agenda thanks to the nearly half-billion dollar Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant. But that grant is not intended to enable the widening of a freeway. It's intended to undo some of the violence that was done to a vital Black community in NE Portland. Building caps over the I-5 Freeway is a great idea and restorative justice. But building the caps does not require the widening of I-5. Building the caps will create opportunities for many generations of Black Portlanders. Widening the freeway will burden my grandchildren with congestion, debt and an unlivable climate. It will move us backwards to the 20th century concept of designing cities for the rapid movement and storage of motor vehicles. It will also squander resources that should be used to help us heal the mistakes of the last century. Resources that should be used for the transition to the sustainable transportation system Portland requires to avoid climate catastrophe—busses, trains, bike routes, sidewalks and walkable neighborhoods. Please don't move us backward. Rather take us forward to a new and thriving community that will be some compensation for a past wrong. Build the cap but please don't widen the freeway.