North Portland Road and North Columbia Boulevard Intersection Development Project

Technical Memorandum No. 3 Background Planning and Policy Guidance

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Preface

The intent of the North Portland Road/North Columbia Boulevard Intersection Development Project is to evaluate the feasibility of redesigning the N. Portland Road / N. Columbia Boulevard intersection and connecting ramp structures to channel southbound trucks traveling on N. Portland Road onto N. Columbia Blvd as the preferred route to the Rivergate Industrial area and the St. Johns Bridge. This project supports the policy objectives of the Portland Freight Master Plan and the St. Johns Truck Strategy by providing a continuous and improved route for trucks instead of using the neighborhood street system.

This intersection links two Priority Truck Streets which are identified in the City’s Transportation System Plan (TSP) as principal routes for truck mobility in and between industrial districts. This intersection also provides direct access to major regional multimodal freight facilities which include the Port of Portland Terminals 4, 5 and 6, the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad’s Wilbridge Yard and Lake Yard and the Union pacific Railroad’s Barnes Yard. This project supports the goals identified in the City’s TSP and the St. Johns Truck Strategy by providing a continuous and improved route for trucks instead of using the neighborhood street system.

This memorandum describes the governing policy and background planning that has advanced the project to this development phase. These prior efforts were developed in collaboration with representatives of the St. Johns neighborhood and local businesses, shippers and motor carriers who travel through St. Johns for access to the Rivergate industrial area, the City of Portland, Port of Portland, Metro and the Oregon Department of Transportation. In addition, they are identified in the Portland Transportation System Plan as future projects.

Other documents being completed for the North Portland Rd/North Columbia Blvd Intersection Development project are:

- Technical Memorandum No. 1 – Public Engagement Program, Background and Public Involvement Plan
- Technical Memorandum No. 2 – Existing and Future Traffic Conditions
- Technical Memorandum No. 4 – Load Rating Assessments of Columbia Blvd Bridges
- Technical Memorandum No. 5 – Opportunities, Constraints and Project Needs
- Technical Memorandum No. 6 – Preliminary Transportation Options and Solutions
- Technical Memorandum No. 7 – Definition of Alternatives
- Technical Memorandum No. 8 – Alternatives Analysis
- Technical Memorandum No. 9 – Recommendations
- Final Summary Report

This study is funded by the City of Portland. Its findings will be discussed with the project’s Technical Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Committee.
Aerial view of St. Johns Neighborhood Streets – North Portland Rd/North Columbia Blvd Intersection Development Project study area indicated in red circle.
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I. Introduction

The purpose of the North Portland Rd / North Columbia Blvd Intersection Development Project is to evaluate and develop alternatives for reducing the volume of through truck traffic using St. Johns residential streets, and directing them to designated truck streets in the area. The project also requires that an assessment of three bridges at and adjacent to the intersection be completed, and that these analyses and the alternatives development process be conducted with the guidance and input of both a Technical Advisory Committee and a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

This effort to produce the “North Portland Road and North Columbia Boulevard Intersection Development Project” will be guided by adopted policies and plans, the area’s development history and patterns, and visions for the future. This paper documents those events and activities.

The most directly relevant plans that have led to this “intersection development” phase are:

_Columbia Corridor Transportation Study._ This 1999 study identified problems such as auto and truck speeding, volumes, vibration, cut-through traffic, and conflicts between modes. Several of its recommendations have been implemented or constructed, while others are considered more long-term improvements (e.g., a full interchange at I-5 and NE Columbia Boulevard).

_St. Johns Truck Strategy (2001)_ - The focus of this strategy was to reduce the volume of through traffic using neighborhood streets. The effort led to the designation of truck streets, improved truck street connectivity with freeways and industrial areas, traffic calming measures and bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements in residential and commercial areas, and treatments to discourage through trucks from using non-truck streets, and improve freight mobility around St. Johns.

_St. Johns/Lombard Plan (2004)_ The St. Johns/Lombard Plan is the blueprint for establishing town center and main street designations of the 2040 Growth Concept. It addresses Comprehensive Plan and zoning changes and other land use changes, along with transportation issues for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists.

_Freight Master Plan (2006)_ The Portland Freight Master Plan provides a roadmap for managing freight movement and commercial delivery of goods and services in the City of Portland. The FMP is centered on three main objectives (mobility, livability, and healthy economy) and establishes the policy framework for the freight network classification hierarchy of streets.

II. Neighborhood History

Settled as an eight block town site in 1865 by James Johns, and annexed into the City of Portland in 1915, St. Johns today is a diverse and lively community of 15,500 residents that maintains a charming, small town feel to it. Its main street hosts a post office, cafes, breakfast places, restaurants, movie theaters, and grocery stores. St. Johns neighbors several interesting natural habitats and parks, including Cathedral Park, Pier Park, the Columbia Slough, Kelley Point Park, the Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area and Forest Park. Sightings of Bald Eagles and other birds of prey are common. To the north of St. Johns is the Linnnton neighborhood and the Rivergate Industrial District including the Port of Portland’s Terminal 5 and 6.

The St. Johns neighborhood’s population grew by 22% between 1990 and 2010 – about 30% higher than Multnomah County as a whole\(^1\) – and has been experiencing revitalization and redevelopment of its

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\(^1\) Calculations derived from U.S. Census 1990, 2000 and 2010 for census tracts 41.01, 41.02 and 42, and Multnomah County
commercial core. New homes are being constructed and existing homes upgraded, as word gets out that the neighborhood continues to be a very desirable place to live, work and visit.

III. Area’s Land Use

As shown in Figure 1, the St. Johns Plan District includes a mix of single- and multi-family residential, neighborhood and storefront commercial, mixed residential/commercial, industrial, and open space land uses; each of which is intended to reinforce St. Johns role as the commercial and civic center of the North Peninsula. The district includes the St. Johns town center and the Lombard main street –both of which include regulations for enhancing the pedestrian environment, such as outdoor cafes and exterior displays. In addition, the area includes Smith and Bybee Lakes, remnants of the wetlands and marshes that used to border the Columbia River, and the second-largest natural area in the City. In fact, the St. Johns Plan includes the following requirement: “Support the Willamette greenway and opportunities to celebrate the Willamette River as a unique element of the urban environment.”

Figure 1 -- St. Johns Neighborhood Land Use

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Immediately to the north and west of St. Johns neighborhood is the Rivergate industrial district, which is served by both the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad (with its nearby Wilbridge Yard and Lake Yard) and the Union Pacific Railroad (with its Barnes Yard). In addition, there are multiple marine facilities (docks, piers, etc.) for handling goods transported on the Willamette and Columbia rivers, warehouses, offices, and related equipment and facilities for shippers, carriers and other industrial area uses.

Finally, the St. John Plan District regulations reference the Riverfront District and how there ought to be a “transition to an urban mixed-use area that is well integrated into St., Johns...to protect industry, and encourage development of housing and office uses only where appropriate.”

IV. Relationship to Adopted Policies Guiding the Project

The policy guidance that has led to the North Portland Road and North Columbia Boulevard Intersection Development Project involves policies established at the federal, state, regional, and city levels. Each has informed the development of the City’s Comprehensive Plan which contains all City of Portland goals, policies and objectives which set the direction for programs, capital investments, and funding. A more detailed description of transportation policy is found in the Portland Transportation System Plan, which is guided by neighborhood plans, studies and initiatives.

Policy Framework

Portland’s policies are required to be compatible with and complement the framework established at higher levels of governance.

Federal Government Policies

*Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA)* The latest federal transportation funding legislation provides a national policy directive toward the development of a national intermodal transportation system.

*NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM (NHS)*- Established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the NHS is a 161,000 mile national network of interconnected roadways that link primary intermodal facilities. In Oregon, the NHS is comprised of three classes of designation: Interstate Highway - NHS, State Highway - NHS, and NHS Intermodal Connectors, which are primarily attached to county and city owned roadways. The Portland area NHS routes are found in Appendix A, Exhibit 1.

*NATIONAL NETWORK* - The Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) of 1982 requires states to allow larger vehicles on a national network of roadways comprised of the Interstate Highway System and non-Interstate Federal Aid Primary System. The act also specifies the legal limits for height, length, width, and weight of trucks using the National Network roadways. Jurisdictions are required to provide reasonable access for STAA legal-sized vehicles on their networks.

State of Oregon Policies

*Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 12* - Statewide Planning Goal 12, Transportation is Oregon’s policy umbrella for transportation planning at the State, regional, and local levels.
Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) - The TPR is the implementing rule for Goal 12, Transportation. It establishes mandates for linking land uses and transportation planning activities including the identification of needs for movement of goods and services to support planned industrial and commercial development.

Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) - The OTP is the state’s transportation system plan, providing guidance for policy and long-range planning for the multimodal transportation system.

Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) - The OHP is a subset of the Oregon Transportation Plan. It focuses specifically on Oregon’s state highway system and includes policies and objectives that direct how the system should function for freight. The plan also identifies a freight system network, which incorporates the National Highway System designations.

Metro Regional Government Policies

2040 Growth Concept and Regional Framework Plan - The 2040 Growth Concept defines how the region should grow and develop over a 50-year planning horizon. The concept directs growth into higher density mixed-use centers and corridors supported by a multi-modal transportation system. Industrial areas are a primary component of the concept and are maintained as sanctuaries for long-term industrial activities. The St. Johns commercial district is a designated town center in the 2040 Plan.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) - The recently adopted RTP (2010) is the Portland metropolitan area’s policy and investment guide for the multimodal transportation system. The plan recognizes the importance of a sound multimodal freight system to support the region’s economic and livability goals. The RTP identifies and defines a regional freight system. Several of the roadways in the St. Johns area have a regional street designation – see the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, June 2010 http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/2035_rtp_final_document_as_submitted_to_dlcd_usdot_web.pdf

City of Portland Policies

Portland Comprehensive Plan - There are several goals, policies and objectives in the City’s Comprehensive Plan that are directly relevant to the project.

Goal 6 Transportation\( ^3 \) (selected excerpts)

Policy 6.9 Freight Classification Descriptions
Designate a system of truck streets, railroad lines, and intermodal freight facilities that support local, national, and international distribution of goods and services. (see Appendix A: Exhibits 2-8 for all of the functional classification designations on St. Johns neighborhood streets)

Policy 6.13 Traffic Calming
Manage traffic on Neighborhood Collectors and Local Traffic Streets, along main streets, and in centers consistent with their street classifications, classification descriptions, and desired land uses.

Objective C. Encourage non-local traffic, including trucks, to use streets of higher traffic and truck classification through design, operations, permitting, and signing.

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\( ^3 \) Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies, City of Portland Bureau of Planning, November 2003, pages 45-74, ftp://urban.csuohio.edu/utility/simons/611capstone%20spring%202009/transportation/bike%20paths/PORTLAND%20COMPREHENSIVE%20PLAN%20GOALS%20AND%20POLICIES.pdf
**POLICY 6.30 TRUCK MOBILITY**

Develop, manage, and maintain a safe, efficient, and reliable freight street network to serve Freight Districts, commercial areas, and neighborhoods.

*Objective A.* Prioritize transportation investments in the freight street network that improve connections between Freight Districts and Regional Truckways.

*Objective B.* Accommodate truck travel on designated truck streets through improvements to facility design and operations that address the dimensional needs of trucks.

*Objective C.* Encourage through-truck traffic to use Regional Truckways, Priority Truck Streets, and Major Truck Streets for mobility and Truck Access Streets and Local Service Truck Streets to access local destinations.

*Objective D.* Develop and implement street connectivity plans for Freight Districts to improve truck circulation and access to industrial land uses.

*Objective E.* Develop and implement a signage plan for designated truck routes and major freight destinations.

*Objective F.* Designate and maintain preferred routes to accommodate over-dimensional freight movement.

*Objective G.* Employ intelligent transportation system measures to reduce delays and improve travel time on Regional Truckways, Priority Truck Streets and Major Truck Streets.

**POLICY 6.31 TRUCK ACCESSIBILITY**

Improve truck access to and from intermodal freight facilities, industrial and commercial districts, and the regional freight system.

*Objective B.* Upgrade bridges to remove load limits and vertical clearance restrictions on designated truck streets.

*Objective F.* Implement design guidelines for truck streets that meet the dimensional needs of trucks, particularly for Freight Districts, while balancing the needs of other transportation modes in the right-of-way.

**POLICY 6.35 NORTH TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT**

Reinforce neighborhood livability and commercial activity by planning and investing in a multimodal transportation network, relieving traffic congestion through measures that reduce transportation demand, and routing non-local and industrial traffic along the edges of the residential areas.

*Objective A.* Improve truck and freight movement in North Portland through changes to the street system, street classifications, and signing to enhance the economic vitality of the area and minimize impacts on residential, commercial, and recreational areas.

*Objective B.* Support efficient functioning of the N Marine Drive/ N Lombard (west of N Philadelphia)/N Columbia Boulevard loop as the truck and commuter access to the Rivergate industrial area and adjacent industrial areas.

*Objective C.* Direct industrial traffic onto N Columbia Boulevard, while allowing limited access from residential neighborhoods and mitigating for unacceptable traffic impacts.
Objective P. Encourage the use of Columbia Boulevard as the primary route for over-dimensional truckloads while ensuring the role of N Lombard (west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) as an interim route until such time as improvements are completed that allow North Columbia to accommodate all types of over-dimensional truckloads.

Portland Transportation System Plan⁴ - Portland’s Transportation System Plan (TSP) is the 20-year guide for planning and investment in the City’s multimodal transportation system. The TSP demonstrates how Portland’s efforts and programs meet federal, state and regional goals, and describes the specific policies, infrastructure needs, street design, and management actions that lead to an integrated and well-functioning transportation system. It provides maps of street designations (see Appendix A: Exhibits 2-8) for St. Johns area street designations, and the proposed and committed infrastructure improvements. The North Portland Rd/North Columbia Blvd Intersection Development Project is listed in the TSP and described as follows:

(Project No. 300070). “Columbia BI/Portland Rd, N: Intersection Improvements “Redesign of intersection could include realignment of travel lanes, channelization, signalization, signage, and new sidewalks and curbs. Project reinforces through-truck movements on truck streets and minimizes neighborhood cut-through traffic.”

The Needs Assessment of the TSP contains the following statement:

“Residents have long had concerns about truck traffic ... especially near major industrial areas such as ... the Rivergate Industrial District... Many of the non-local trucks that travel between I-5 and US 30 (St. Helens Highway) now regularly use Fessenden Street and other residential and retail/ commercial streets as truck routes. The 1992 Transportation Element identified the need for a study to evaluate North Portland truck routes and mitigation for truck traffic in St. Johns and other North Portland neighborhoods.”

The TSP also leads to several modal-oriented plans (i.e., Freight Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan) and community and neighborhood plans.

Portland relies on a multimodal classification system to describe the design and function of a street or other transportation facility. There are seven classification categories: Traffic, Transit, Pedestrian, Bicycle, Freight (as described in Appendix A: Tables 1 to 8), Emergency Response, and Street Design. When funding, designing, or operating a facility all modal classifications are considered.

Portland Zoning Code - The Portland Planning and Zoning Code provides the regulations and guidance for truck loading and parking areas, truck loading permits, over-dimensional vehicle routings, and other related truck mobility factors.

V. Community and Neighborhood Plans

A primary component of the City’s regular planning processes is the development of community and neighborhood plans which contain specific policies, strategies, and action items for improving local areas. Better management of truck activity in neighborhoods is an important directive in these plans generally, but particularly in the St. Johns Truck Strategy, Columbia Corridor Transportation Study, and the St. Johns-Lombard Plan.

Columbia Corridor Transportation Study

The Portland Office of Transportation completed this study in 1999, which was recommended in the 1992 Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The area of this 1999 study extends between N Portland Road and NE 185th, and was guided by the following objectives:

- “Develop an interconnected intermodal and multimodal transportation network that will efficiently and safely serve all travel modes and trips within the region, as determined by land use designations and related transportation needs.
- “Determine if the transportation network will be able to accommodate the planned levels of development, based on comprehensive plan designations. Given that analysis, determine whether land use designations should be modified to reflect the capacity of the network.
- “Improve efficiency and access along and between NE Columbia Boulevard and NE Lombard Street (aka NE Portland Hwy, US 30B) to primarily serve intermodal goods movement using these arterials.
- “Determine environmental impacts and neighborhood mitigation/protection for residential areas close to NE Lombard Street, which may result from increased truck traffic.
- “Develop a strategy to improve NE Marine Drive which will enhance regional recreational opportunities in the Columbia Corridor area.”

The study’s purpose was to address the concerns of residents living east of I-5 had of reducing the impact of both auto and truck traffic, as well as to assess the concerns of pedestrian and bicycle advocates. Further, the study was also intended to provide a transportation system to support development of an industrial corridor. The identified problems were auto and truck speeding, volumes, vibration, cut-through traffic, and conflicts between modes. The study identifies a number of improvements, primarily between I-5 and 185th. The study recommendation for the St. Johns area was to conduct the “North Portland Peninsula Truck Circulation Strategy”, which was later titled the St. Johns Truck Strategy.

St. Johns Truck Strategy

In May 2001 the Portland City Council adopted the St. Johns Truck Strategy which charged the Portland Bureau of Transportation with analyzing strategies to: 1) reduce the amount of truck traffic using neighborhood streets, and 2) identifying improvements for truck travel to and from the commercial and industrial properties, the freeway system, and the St. Johns Bridge. These concerns were noted in the

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1992 update of the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, and further noted in the 1999 Columbia Corridor Transportation Study.

A 17-member advisory committee guided the study and was made up of six citizens (including citizens representing local businesses), five representatives of the trucking industry, three City of Portland staff, and one individual each from Metro, ODOT, and the Port of Portland. The Portland City Council established the following parameters for the study:

- “Utilize the existing local and regional street system;
- “Be a short-term (2-5 year) solution;
- “Not include more than $10 million in solutions;
- “Coordinate with other North Portland projects; and
- “Carefully analyze solutions so as to not shift a problem to a different location.”

The committee reviewed 47 separate concept alternatives, several of which did not meet the Council’s parameters (e.g., costing more than $10 million) and others that were forwarded on to Metro, ODOT and the Port of Portland for review in the regional transportation planning process and other planning initiatives. The committee did recommend eight (8) specific transportation projects (see Figure 2) that met the Council’s criteria, ranging from traffic calming and bicycle/pedestrian safety projects to re-design of three intersections and a street segment, truck street designations, signage, traffic education and enforcement and others as described below:

**Recommendation 1: Traffic Calming and Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety Projects:**

- Lombard from Pier Park to St. Louis
- Fessenden from Columbia Way to St. Louis
- St. Louis from Fessenden to Lombard
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety changes on Columbia Boulevard from Portland Road to Rivergate.

**Recommendation 2: Roadway Redesign/Freight Mobility Projects**

- Redesign and reconstruct the Lombard/St. Louis/Ivanhoe intersection.
- Redesign and reconstruct the Ivanhoe/Philadelphia intersection.
- Redesign and reconstruct the Columbia Boulevard/Portland/Columbia Way intersection.
- Redesign and reconstruct the street segment of Burgard and Lombard from Rivergate entrance to Terminal Road.

**Recommendation 3: Restrict local deliveries to a maximum of 18,000 lbs gross vehicle weight (GVW).**

**Recommendation 4: Future study of the hazardous materials movements and the routings used for hazardous materials.**

**Recommendation 5: Future follow-up study of the success of St. Johns Truck Strategy recommendations.**
Figure 2 – Eight (8) Recommendations from St. Johns Truck Strategy
Recommendation 6: Creation of education and enforcement program associated with truck issues and regulations.

Recommendation 7: Install and maintain a citywide truck signage program.

Recommendation 8: Designate a combination of segments of Lombard St, St. Louis Ave and Ivanhoe St as Major Truck Streets.

Several of the Recommendations (i.e., recommendations 2 and 8) projects have been implemented or are being evaluated, including this North Portland Rd/North Columbia Blvd Intersection Development Project. Recommendations 3 and 4 may conflict with federal and/or state regulations, and in the case of hazardous materials routings (Recommendation 4) is already addressed in the Portland City Code. Finally, there are no ongoing education and enforcement programs (Recommendation 5) for truck issues and regulations, though ODOT, emergency services, trucking interests and others often engage the public in these issues.

St. Johns/Lombard Plan

This Portland Bureau of Planning effort was initiated in the fall of 2001 in collaboration with the community and led to implementation of the St. Johns town center and North Lombard main street designations conceived in the 2040 Growth Concept. The plan addressed zoning changes and other land use changes, along with transportation issues for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists; and considered the needs of transit passengers, bicyclists and walkers through the design of street cross-sections and intersections and by identifying locations for crossing opportunities. The Plan study area included the “St. Johns town center (downtown St. Johns, the hillside of Cathedral Park, and the Willamette riverfront), and North Lombard Street from Columbia Park to downtown St. Johns; and encompassed parts of four neighborhood associations: the Friends of Cathedral Park, The Community Association of Portsmouth, St. Johns, and University Park. In addition, the plan covers areas claimed by two business groups: the St. Johns Boosters and the North Portland Business Association.”\(^7\)

The plan, which was adopted by the Portland City Council in 2004, incorporated the findings and recommendations of the St. Johns Truck Strategy, and recommended the following:

1. “Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and zoning maps, and Zoning Code regulations. These amendments will result in changes to the area’s development pattern over time, and are designed to:
   - “Create distinctive, identifiable places for pedestrian-oriented retailing, neighborhood-scaled retail and mixed use, and areas that accommodate automobiles.

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\(^7\) St. Johns/Lombard Plan, Portland Bureau of Planning, May 2004, page 3, 
http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?a=65700&c=34248
• “Provide places for additional housing and mixed-use development in downtown St. Johns, near the river, and along the main street to help support community-serving businesses and further the plan’s housing goals.
• “Improve the design quality of new development around the St. Johns town center to build upon the existing small town character of the community, and strengthen its relationship with the Willamette River.
• “Retain places for employment and industrial land uses that contribute to the regional economy and provide jobs.”

2. “Balanced transportation improvements designed to improve circulation and safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and transit users. The improvements emphasize a better pedestrian environment, while facilitating traffic flow and freight movement in a way that furthers the area’s livability.”

3. “A series of ongoing and future actions to strengthen economic development, environmental quality, community amenities, and the sense of history, community, and identity already evident in the area.”

4. “Recommendations for subsequent planning efforts to evaluate environmental resources,” and development patterns and potential near the Willamette River, an asset to both the peninsula community and the city.”

The St. Johns/Lombard Plan also spells out “Action Items” for implementation associated with the St Johns Truck Strategy:

“Truck access to the St. Johns Bridge – short term; support implementation of the entire St. Johns Truck Strategy. The improvements should control vehicle speeds consistent with the posted speed limit and ensure adequate signage to control trucks near Reno/Lombard pedestrian crossing. Evaluate potential for special surface treatments and signage to direct freight traffic to appropriate routes. Ensure the completion of the St. Johns Truck Strategy projects to improve freight capacity (TC1 and 2 and improvements to the Burgard Bridge) on the designated Lombard/Burgard/Columbia Blvd freight route to handle volume and physical loads before implementing traffic calming and safety elements (TC/S 2 and 3) of the St. Johns Truck Strategy.”

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Exhibit 1: Portland Area National Highway System Routes

National Highway System: Portland  Oregon
Exhibit 2 – Traffic Classification Designations in St. Johns
Exhibit 3 – Transit Classification Designations in St. Johns
Exhibit 4 – Bicycle Classification Designations in St. Johns Neighborhood
Exhibit 5 – Pedestrian Classification Designations in St. Johns Neighborhood
Exhibit 6 – Freight Classification Designations in St. Johns Neighborhood
Exhibit 7 – Emergency Response Classification Designations in St. Johns Neighborhood
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