

# Community Walks

The Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project team conducted five community walks from November 2014 to February 2015 within the project study area. The purpose of these activities was to engage the diverse population of the area in project planning and solicit feedback on existing roadway conditions and possible improvements. The community walks were held in different languages and in the following order – Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese and English.

The first four community site walks were arranged with the help of a community organizer from each cultural group. Each organizer was provided a stipend from the project budget with an agreement to arrange a corridor tour with 15-20 non-English speaking community members. These tours utilized one or more translators to help the project team communicate with group members. Translated fact sheets with project information in each language were provided to the participants. The project team members used two large passenger vans to transport the groups to various locations along the corridor. At each location the group would stop and either take a short walk or commune in a safe location along the roadway to discuss personal experiences or concerns with the project corridor. At the conclusion of each translated tour, participants were provided small incentives as a “thank you” to compensate them for their time. This included safety sashes and blinking lights provided from ODOT, transit or community center passes provided by TriMet and Portland Parks, and \$10 Safeway gift cards provided by HDR, the project consultant. The incentives proved to be popular with participants, who expressed appreciation for the consideration of their time and feedback.



The last community site walk was spoken entirely in English and widely publicized as an “all-comers” event. For this community walk, three information stations were set up at different locations along the corridor where the public could stop by to talk and go for a short walk with project team members and/or get information about the project.

A summary of each Community Walk event and feedback received can be found below.

## CHINESE-SPEAKING COMMUNITY WALK

The first community walk was held in the morning on Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Project team members and participants convened in the McDonalds parking lot at the corner of Powell Blvd. and SE 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Participants joined project team members in two passenger vans and drove down to several locations along the corridor to discuss the project and engage in conversation about the study area. This event was attended by 21 Chinese-speaking members of the community. Group feedback was as follows:

- Participants pointed out ponding water at various bus stops including bus stop location east of SE 108th in front of Church of the Korean Martyrs.
- Would be good if there were crosswalks near bus stops. Often the cross walks are not close to bus stops and the pedestrian has to walk much further down and back in order to cross safely.



**Figure 1. Chinese-speaking community members gather at the corner of SE 108<sup>th</sup> and Powell to discuss road conditions and personal experiences.**

- It is often difficult to see when kids near Ed Benedict Park are crossing the street, thus the cross walk signs with blinking lights would be good here.
- There are some fairly sharp curves along Powell making it difficult to see and react in a timely manner.
- Need better lighting – streets are not well lit, not only lack of lights but low lighting along streets makes it difficult to read street signs.
- Pavement is not good and needs improvement.
- Bus stops are too spaced out, would like more stops and higher frequency of buses. It does not feel safe to have to wait a long time for another bus to come and/or have to walk a long distance in poorly lit areas with no sidewalks.
- Left-hand turns take a long time because there are so many vehicles going in both directions – turn lanes would be good.
- Group expressed concern for lack of sidewalks – there are a lot of kids and elders walking close to traffic and vehicles often drive too fast.
- Kids walking to and from school or bus stops have difficulty crossing the street due to lack of crosswalks.
- It is unsafe walking along the side of the road with no sidewalk – would like to see more and improved crosswalks with signage.
- People drive very fast – would like to see lower speed limits.
- Business owner of the hair salon at 10738 Powell Blvd. (corner of SE 108th Ave.) said it is difficult for customers driving westbound to turn left onto SE 108<sup>th</sup> to reach her business. She also said people park along the street in front of the salon on Powell Blvd. It is difficult and unsafe for people to get in and out of their cars. She used to have a fence there but it was taken away.
- People feel unsafe walking down the street due to the lack of sidewalks and several pot holes and dirt holes filled with water forcing pedestrians to walk around these obstructions, often further into the roadway.
- While walking along the road the group expressed that they felt “exposed” to vehicles driving fast.
- Difficult to get in and out of church due to lack of turning lanes and bus stops with nearby crosswalks. Closest bus stop and crosswalk is a significant walking distance that feels unsafe due to lack of sidewalks and poor lighting; afraid other drivers cannot see them.
- Poor drainage – the paved roadway is bordered with dirt causing divots and puddles during rainy season. Again, bikes and pedestrians are forced to go around.
- Section from SE 122nd to SE 148th was considered the most dangerous section along the corridor by the group.
  - A lot of trees and poor lighting in this section. Trees are often blocking what little light is there.
  - It is very dark at night in this section and people will often take Division to avoid the feeling of danger (of cars and/or people that may try to harm them).
- The group was asked if they would prefer more traffic lanes or sidewalks. The group stated the people under the most danger are kids and elders, who are often walking or taking the bus. Thus, sidewalks are a significant priority.



- Several participants stated they attend St. Timothy Lutheran Church because of the social services they have available to their community. Sidewalks, bus stops and properly lit signs and crosswalks would be good in this area.
- One person pointed out that the bus stop along north side of Powell Blvd. at SE 145th Avenue feels exposed and dangerous, and is difficult to get to and from.
- Section from SE 122nd to SE 135th was considered by the group the darkest and most poorly lit despite having a high frequency of pedestrians. There are also no sidewalks in this section.
- The group stopped at the Pham Chiropractic Center at SE 128th Avenue, where Dr. Pham offers translation services in six different languages to his patients. He expressed his concerns for better lighting and sidewalks. He followed by saying he thinks more middle lanes to help people access businesses and apartments more efficiently and safely are important. He also pointed out that trees can be an issue relating to poor street illumination.
- There were a few bicyclists in the group who expressed that it feels unsafe to ride their bikes along the corridor due to inconsistent bike lanes and lack of signage throughout the corridor.

### SLAVIC COMMUNITY WALK

The second community walk was held in the evening on Thursday, November 20th, 2014. Project team members and participants again convened in the McDonalds parking lot at the corner of Powell Blvd and SE 92nd Avenue. Participants joined the team in two passenger vans and drove down to several locations along the corridor to discuss the project and engage in conversation about the study area. This event was attended by 22 Slavic community members (Russian and Ukrainian). Group feedback was as follows:

*The group first stopped at the Imperial Euro Market at the Powell Center (11050 Powell Blvd).*

- This group is concerned with what may happen to the undeveloped land between the market and Reo's Ribs at the corner of Powell and SE 112th Avenue. The Slavic community has interest in some day having a Community Center in this area and possibly using the extra space for parking or another building.
- Large concern about no sidewalks or bike lanes in the project area. When traffic increases, and the road is congested, cars start to use the shoulder area to go around stalled vehicles. This is a big concern for pedestrians and bikers that use the shoulder area and could be hit.
- One of the participants shared that he almost accidentally hit a kid running across the street because there was a large tree blocking the blinking crosswalk sign (rapid flashing beacon). The road and sidewalks should be better lit and there should be better lighting for crosswalks.
- One person noted it is scary to drive Powell in the evenings because it is so dark and he fears accidentally hitting someone he is unable to see.
- The group suggested better lighting near apartment buildings as there are usually a lot of people walking to and from them.



**Figure 2. The Slavic group met in the evening, which offered a different perspective about the environment along Powell Blvd. at night.**

- Someone noted there is a large tree obscuring a stop sign at SE 111th Ave.
- SE 122nd Avenue to SE 136th Ave is considered the most dangerous stretch of road for this group. Top concerns for this area are sidewalks and better lighting.
- Participants noted the space provided for vehicle lanes, walking and biking are all too narrow. There needs to be adequate and clearly designated space for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The group was asked if they had concerns about tree removal – many stated that they like the trees, however if removing a tree contributes to improving safety then they support it. It is more important to the group that people are safe than the tree remaining.
- It was noted the large, mature trees are causing a lot of debris on the road which can also be dangerous.

### SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY WALK

The third community walk for the project was held on the morning of Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup> 2014. Project team members and participants convened this time at the corner of Powell Blvd. and SE 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the parking area outside La Autentica restaurant. Participants joined Project team members in two passenger vans and drove down to several locations along the corridor to discuss the project and engage in conversation about the study area. This event was attended by 17 Spanish-speaking members of the community with several translators helping, including from ODOT and HDR. Group feedback was as follows:

- A common theme heard from the participants was fear for their safety while using Powell Blvd. Many indicated it is too dark and there are no sidewalks in many places along Powell.
- Homeless or street people sometimes intimidate pedestrians and cyclists.
- The transit system is lacking along the corridor.
- Better transit to the skate park at Ed Benedict Park is needed especially since no sidewalks exist for strollers and it is a popular destination for youth.
- Participants indicated they do not think the corridor is heavily used by bicyclists, however when bicyclists are seen they appear to be at risk along Powell.
- It was noted that motorists often use the roadway shoulders, especially around school times to get around those turning left or when traffic is queued.
- Potholes are very large along Outer Powell. They often accumulate lots of water during rainy weather.
- Several participants indicated they do not drive along Powell at night due to safety concerns.
- A participant noted that vehicles tend to veer into the shoulder when coming around curve near SE 164th and Powell.
- Stores and other vendors often use sidewalks to peddle their goods particularly the tire sales businesses.



**Figure 3. Spanish-speaking participants gathered in front of Gonzalez Brothers Mini Mart for a group photo.**

- Bus drivers often leave the back end of their buses out in traffic in order to block the roadway so that they can merge back into traffic. Otherwise, they have difficulty merging back onto the roadway in order to finish their route.
- The new Walgreens is an appreciated amenity, however, the access in and out is terrible especially during highly congested times. The intersection is often blocked where Walgreens is and it takes motorists two to three light cycles to cross the intersection.
- While there are signs that indicate a pedestrian crosswalk, there is often no striping on the asphalt to show where the pedestrians should cross. This can cause further danger.
- One participant stated that she believes it is unfair that residents who live closer to downtown Portland receive much better infrastructure than those in outer East Portland. She wanted to make sure that everyone understood that residents living in outer East Portland are also valuable members of the city.
- Shelli Romero of ODOT asked the kids in attendance what they think would improve Outer Powell. Several indicated that they do not feel safe walking or riding their bikes along Powell Blvd. One young man stated that he thinks speed bumps would help. Another youth indicated that many motorists and cyclists do not follow the rules and that police do not seem to monitor Outer Powell Blvd very well.

#### VIETNAMESE-SPEAKING COMMUNITY WALK

The fourth and final translated community walk was held on the morning of Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Project team members and participants convened at the Vietnamese Community Center of Oregon, located above the Pho Corner Restaurant at NE Sandy Blvd. and 62<sup>nd</sup>. The meeting began with a translated introduction of the project over refreshments provided by the Center. Approximately 42 Vietnamese community members were present for this portion of the event. Several translators were in attendance. Thirty-five people joined the corridor tour in two passenger vans and passenger cars. The group first stopped at the Safeway at the corner of SE 122<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Group feedback was as follows:



**Figure 4. Vietnamese participants gathered at a local community center before heading out to the corridor. Majority of participants expressed need for sidewalks along Powell.**

- Several participants commented that 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue provides more reasons for them to visit this area of east Portland than does Powell. The Buddhist temple at SE 148<sup>th</sup> and Powell is the most popular location on Outer Powell for their community.
  - It was pointed out that this area near the Safeway at 122<sup>nd</sup> is too narrow for how much traffic goes on here.
  - Powell needs more sidewalks throughout the corridor.
  - Powell needs better and safer bus stop locations with enough space for buses

to pull out of traffic lanes while passengers board.

- Participants said they would like more turning lanes.
- Participants said it is very dangerous to walk along Powell Blvd. due to lack of sidewalks.
- The group said they would like to see more crosswalks, and it would be best to have them near bus stops.
- It was noted that lighting is very poor along Powell and it feels dangerous to walk at night. Most people avoid walking on Powell at night entirely.
- One of the participants said he has been driving Powell almost every day for the past 14 years to visit his parents on SE 136th Avenue, and has seen a lot of traffic and dangerous situations. He feels the road is very narrow with poor lighting and lacks sidewalks. He also said people are constantly crossing the road without crosswalks and it is difficult to see them.
- Very crowded and dangerous section from SE 122nd to SE 136th; also lacking sidewalks.
- Several people (elders in particular) attend the Buddhist Temple near SE 148th Ave. Participants noted it would be good to have a bus stop and crosswalk nearby since elders primarily take a bus for transportation.
- One person noted they typically will take Holgate instead of Powell to avoid the traffic congestion on this narrow road.
- Another person stated people need to be better educated about safe and appropriate bike and pedestrian behavior. People often do not follow safe walking and biking habits and cause danger to themselves and drivers.
- More center turning lanes would be good.

#### ALL-COMER COMMUNITY WALK

The fifth and last community walk for the project was conducted in English and held on the morning of Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. This event featured three information stations set up along Powell Blvd – at the corner of SE 111<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the La Autentica Mexican Restaurant parking lot; at the corner of SE 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in the Safeway parking lot; and at SE 145<sup>th</sup> Avenue in front of St. Timothy Church. ODOT and HDR consultant team members staffed each location. The public was encouraged to attend the

corridor walk through flyers provided to the Community Advisory Group (CAG) and available on the project website, a news release sent to area media, and email sent to the project mailing list. The advertising noted that members of the CAG and project Decision Committee would be available to walk a portion of the corridor with the public. ODOT Region 1 Manager Rian Windsheimer and Portland Commissioner Steve Novick were among the participants. A group of about 20 people walked from 122<sup>nd</sup> to 136<sup>th</sup> and back. Group feedback was as follows:

- SE 130<sup>th</sup> would be a good place for a turn lane.



**Figure 5. Members of the ODOT Project Team, Community Advisory Group, and Decision Committee (including Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1 Manager, and Portland City Commissioner Steve Novick) joined the public for a Community Walk on the morning of Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup> to observe road conditions firsthand.**



- Bus stop at SE 145<sup>th</sup> has problems with bus pulling completely off the road.
- At SE 134<sup>th</sup> Ave., buses are able to pull entirely off the road, however they don't always do this, causing traffic to back up behind the bus. Vehicles and bikes then go around the bus on the left causing unsafe situations.
- Recent improvement at SE 136th seems backwards. They put in a right turn lane but it would have made more sense to provide a left turn lane since it is much easier to make a right turn than a left turn.
- Someone noted all the residential properties along the corridor, which he had not recognized fully since he only drives the corridor. He affirmed how densely populated the area is with housing properties and pedestrians.
- A bicyclist noted his dislike for the newly added rumble strips in certain sections of the corridor. This actually creates more of a danger for him on his bike when he accidentally rides over them.
- Sidewalks all along Powell would be great!
- Participant noted there was a hit and run fatality at SE 124th in 2014.
- The group walked by numerous puddles along the corridor and pointed out the danger of having to walk around the puddles and potentially into the roadway to avoid them.
  - ODOT Project Manager Mike Mason noted that stormwater management is a part of the project and team is looking into these kinds of issues.
- Rapid flash beacon crossings have been beneficial.
- Participant expressed concern for not having a crosswalk at SE 125th Ave.
- Someone pointed out that SE 130th Avenue is one of the few throughways to Holgate.
- Participant asked how property access is assessed.
  - ODOT team member said that each property has a permit and their right of access is identified within that permit. These permits are taken into consideration as the design is assessed in order to minimize potential impacts
- Powell within Portland is a state highway. Is the project really going to improve conditions? Need to improve conditions for moving traffic. SE 92nd east to Highway 26 should be a freeway; can't impede people needing to get to/from work. Need two lanes each way and left turn lanes. Understand safety for pedestrians and right of way would be needed. Holgate had a lane taken away and hardly any bicyclists use it. Not a long-term solution. City needs to be clearer about where taxes and fee revenue is going.
- People often go around the right side of vehicles waiting to take a left-hand turn by going into the shoulders where people are walking. There is no lighting on south side of Powell, which makes it hard to see. There are bus stops at SE 125th and SE 127th but no crosswalks, making it unsafe for transit users. I witness people passing in the parking lot in front of Veterans Charities. I like the median traffic barriers, however bikes and pedestrians try to cross and stop at the barriers like it's a median! I support turning lanes, but would like an open turn lane at SE 127th (no raised barrier); have to wait a long time for a break in traffic in order to turn. Traffic really is not that bad. The turn lanes on SE 122nd need to be extended with traffic separation. Top priorities are lighting, crosswalks, location of bus stops and turn lanes. I like the trees along the road, if the project has to remove them, then they should be replaced. People are still parking in front of the Smoke Shop where the parallel spots are; if this becomes a take, it wouldn't be a loss to the neighborhood; some businesses draw the wrong crowd.
- Create sidewalks for families using buses and getting to destinations because it is dangerous; striping helps a little. People use bike paths to walk which causes problem for bikes. Some places along Powell are very dark. Need crosswalks at SE 148th and SE 122nd. Sidewalks on Powell are number one, then more flashing crosswalks, and make it look nicer. Make it more family



friendly. Strip clubs detract from neighborhood. More families and more low income out here – City is not prepared. People should feel the neighborhood is safe for their kids. Kids wait for the bus in unsafe conditions. East side of SE 136th from Division to Powell is very bad.

- I like smooth lanes, lane markings and pedestrian lights. Trouble spots include westbound at SE 154th – hard to turn left. Light that goes into Meadowlands Shopping Center is not synched with SE 174th. Glad Powell is not widened to four lanes. Try not to impact property owners. Holgate Bike Blvd. did not work. Foster two lane project is not good either. Gas tax for street fee is a good idea. Increase education and enforcement for bike, pedestrian and car interactions.
- Look at SE 82nd Avenue and Division intersection. Three things to work on – sidewalks, center turn lanes, and signage to push bikes to SE Bush Street. Speed is the biggest issue; mark it to 30 mph. Storm water puddles in bike lane near SE 140th.
- Bus stop locations at SE 145th are misplaced.
- Interchange fix at SE 144th and SE 145th – try to do without taking too much property from church; ensure access to Powell.
- Green house at SE 144th is derelict.
- Need set-back information to replace sign of church at St. Timothy.
- In the SE 145th area there is a lot of foot traffic.
- Transit stop at SE 98th does not go to Gresham Town Center. Rent is too high and displacement is occurring. I like having shopping options in this area.
- A TriMet driver shared that safety is very important to him. After dark there are a lot of pedestrians on street and bike lanes. Bike lanes on the left side of one-ways like on N. Williams Ave. are a big plus for bus drivers. Pedestrians are not wearing reflective lights. Turn lanes work well, most of the time. BRT – since Metro has been leading this effort there has not been much collaboration; TriMet must be at the table; frequent service every six minutes. Rush hour gets very backed up during construction. Light sequencing – how will Powell Blvd. be timed? Pull-outs must be clearly signed otherwise drivers ignore.
- One woman who lives on the corridor noted that she regularly observes Portland Police vehicles going around stopped cars on the right and into the bike lanes as well. “If law enforcement isn’t going to set the example, who will?” She said she has reported this behavior to the Police Bureau.