

Focus Groups Summary

(Faith Community, Senior Housing and Social Service Organizations)

Seven focus groups were conducted by Joan Brown-Kline in fall 2014 for the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project. The meetings consisted of 218 participants representing diverse faith communities, a senior living facility and a social service organization, including a large group of church youth, and a group of senior residents at Powell Plaza on SE Powell Boulevard. Below is a list of the focus groups, their locations and the number of people in attendance:

1. Holgate Baptist Church, 113th and SE Holgate: 7 attended. No translation required.
2. Assembly of God Family Worship Center, 5001 SE Powell: 100+ youth and 14 adults attended. No translation required. Fact sheets in English provided.
3. Powell Plaza retirement community, 1330 SE Powell: 24 attended. Staff with Powell Plaza translated the meeting in Russian and Spanish for members of the audience. Fact sheets in English, Russian, and Spanish were provided.
4. St. Timothy Lutheran Church, 14500 SE Powell: 27 attended. No translation required. Fact sheets in English provided.
5. IRCO Africa House, group of immigrant seniors, 8523 SE Stark: 19 attended. Staff with Africa House translated the meeting in Somali for members of the audience. No fact sheets provided.
6. IRCO Africa House, English as Second Language adult class: 15 attended. Staff with Africa House translated the meeting in Somali and Amharic for members of the audience. No fact sheets provided.
7. The Church of the Korean Martyrs, 10840 Southeast Powell: 12 attended. Meeting was translated in Korean by church leaders. No fact sheets provided.

The following is in Joan's own words.

The Holgate Baptist Church focus group was held immediately following choir practice and just before Tuesday evening service. Focus group members consisted of all males, who were excited to share their experiences and observations traveling on Powell Boulevard.

The Assembly of God Family Worship Center amazed me with their 100+ young people and 14 adults. The community room was wild with excitement, but the youth became serious when our topic of Powell



Figure 1. Joan Brown-Kline lead a focus group with the Powell Plaza retirement community.

Boulevard surfaced.

Powell Plaza, a diverse senior citizen community, had very vocal residents who spoke of challenges on Powell Boulevard, including the death of a fellow tenant who was killed crossing Powell right in front of their complex last year.

I attended the Sunday morning service at St Timothy Lutheran Church, and conducted my fourth focus group after the service. The focus group followed a brief business meeting after the service. Although we went over time, the members seemed reluctant to leave after giving their

input about Powell Boulevard. All focus group participants thoroughly enjoyed participating and provided significant input about the subject.



Figure 2. Attendees associated with IRCO Africa House were encouraged to share experiences and concerns about traveling the project corridor.

There were also two focus groups held at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) Africa House in outer east Portland. Africa House is a multilingual community-based center providing access to multiple services through a one-stop family-focused service center model. The first group was with (19) seniors, (17) women and (2) men, who visit the center weekly for a social knitting group. The group spoke three primary languages that included Oromo, Amharic and Somali. The second focus group was an English as a Second Language Class that had (15) members consisting of people from Ethiopia, Somali, Hong Kong and Nepal.

Finally, I conducted a focus group at the Church of the Korean Martyrs with (12) participants including eight parishioners, three nuns and the Catholic priest. This was a benevolent committee of the church, serving members of the congregation.

The following is a breakdown of common themes heard from focus group participants:

- **Common Themes: These issues came up multiple times at multiple focus groups.**
1. How frequently do you travel on Powell Boulevard (project study area) and for what reason?
 - **Daily/Weekly travel on Powell Boulevard is a toss-up.** Participants travel on Powell Boulevard frequently. Their destinations include shopping at Fred Meyer and Safeway, visiting health clinics, and going to bus stops.
 2. Are there specific segments of Powell Boulevard that present a greater challenge than other stretches?



- Curve at SE 136th is dangerous and left hand turn and flashing red light on SE 136th is also considered a hazard. There is no regulation at intersection at SE 98th and Powell. Additionally, 98th has freeway problems, cannot go east when getting off the freeway from the southbound off-ramp. There are no crosswalks between 122nd and 136th.
3. Tell me about your fellow parishioners', friends' or others' experiences when traveling on Powell Boulevard.
- **No sidewalks for pedestrians, heavy traffic, poor lighting and crime activities are concerns on Powell Boulevard.** Crossing Powell at non-crosswalk locations and drainage problems after rain were areas also identified.
4. What are your top three greatest concerns about Powell Boulevard?
- **No sidewalks for pedestrians, poor lighting, and not enough crosswalks as the three greatest concerns on Powell Boulevard.** Speeding, congestion and crimes, such as prostitution, drugs and drunkenness were also identified.
5. What are the best ways we can keep you and your members informed and involved as this project moves forward?
- **The use of church websites and/or church email addresses** are popular ways to keep participants informed about the project.

A more detailed breakdown of question responses by focus group is provided in Appendix A.



Appendix A. Question Responses by Focus Group (FG)

1. How frequently do you travel on Powell Boulevard (the project study area) and for what reason?

FG (1)

- 6 daily
- 3 once a week

FG (2)

- 40 daily
- 50 once a week

FG (3)

- 4 daily
- 6 infrequently
- 7 once a week

FG (4)

- 16 daily (majority of participants travel daily on Powell Blvd)
- Places visited include Safeway, bus stops, health clinic, shopping, and to take walks.

FG (5)

- 6 daily
- 19 once a week

FG (6)

- 5 daily (travel Powell Blvd daily going work, hospital and visiting friends)
- 7 infrequently
- 4 frequently
- Remainder of participants did not know where Powell was located

FG (6)

- 9 weekly



- 3 bi-weekly

FG (7)

- 7 weekly
- 3 bi-weekly

2. Are there specific segments of Powell Boulevard that present a greater challenge than other stretches?

FG (1)

- Two lanes merging into one lane at 174th near the 7-Eleven is causing accidents
- Confusing median near Powell and Taco Bell (near SE 182nd)
- Drug activities day and night on 82nd and Powell

FG (2)

- Flashing yellow lights should not continue at SE Bush and SE 122nd
- People do not use sidewalks at SE 182nd and Foster; the crosswalk light flashes yellow when button is pressed but should be red.
- Intersection at SE 136th and Powell is dangerous. There are no sidewalks.

FG (3)

- The blocks of SE 133rd to SE 136th are particularly bad
- There are no crosswalks between SE 122nd and SE 136th. Many drivers speed and large trucks move fast.

FG (4)

- Powell in front of their complex is bad
- The left turn at SE 136th and Powell has a flashing light (recently installed) for cars turning left. This has made it more difficult for pedestrians, because cars speed through the intersection around the vehicles waiting to turn, to avoid a possible delay.

FG (5 and 6)

- Poor visibility at SE 148th
- SE 122nd and SE 98th have freeway problems
- No regulation at intersection at SE 98th and Powell



- Curve at SE 136th is very dangerous
- Left-hand turn out of parking lot on SE 145th and Powell is dangerous

FG (7)

- Right turn (SE 108th) out of church parking lot is dangerous
- Cannot make a left onto Powell from I-205, you have to make a right on Division and wrap around to Powell.
- Dangerous in front of church on SE 108th and Powell
- Coming out of church parking lot is awkward and crowded on Sunday

3. Tell me about your friends' or others' experiences when traveling on Powell Boulevard.

FG (1)

- Heavy traffic
- No sidewalks
- People walking on the side of the road
- Unlit crosswalks near Wal-Mart
- Need more lanes on each side
- Heavy jaywalking activity
- Gang activities
- Crimes and prostitutes frequent the area
- People walking who are intoxicated
- Three accidents due to jaywalking
- Powell Boulevard needs more light. When it rains and is dark outside, it is difficult to see.
- When it rains, there is a drainage problem. A lot of standing water on highway.

FG (2)

- Bottlenecks at intersections
- Congestion
- Gangs and shootings



- Bumper to bumper traffic
- Pedestrians crossing against red lights
- Cars running red lights
- Lack of sidewalks for pedestrians
- Low visibility due to poor lighting
- Not enough lanes
- People do not use crosswalks
- Emergency vehicles have problems traveling on Powell because of congestion
- Traffic on Holgate is bad. We do not need bike lane, we need additional car lanes.

FG (3)

- Crime, drugs, gangs and prostitutes
- Dangerous traffic conditions that make it unsafe to get around
- Crossing Powell Blvd and having to walk along the road with no sidewalks are big concerns.
- Poor lighting at dusk and at night makes it difficult to see
- Trees are large, with heavy foliage, making the road darker. Trees obscure lighting.
- Drivers speed frequently making it unsafe.
- Accidents are frequent.
- More crosswalks would be very helpful.
- Drivers illegally drive around cars waiting to turn left.
- Residents would like a designated turn signal into their apartment complex, as well as a crosswalk in front of the property. In addition, flashing lights to warn drivers to slow down would be helpful.
- Transit stop to the east of Powell Plaza would get more use if it were located in front of the complex, rather than farther east.
- Romanian resident would like to have the speed lowered to 20 mph.

FG (4)



- Left-hand turn out of parking lot on SE 145th and Powell is dangerous.
- Need cameras at intersections
- Poor bike lane visibility
- No sidewalks
- Rapid vehicular speed
- Need more left hand turns off Powell

FG (5)

- Lack of sidewalks for pedestrians
- Low visibility due to poor lighting
- Not enough lanes
- People don't use crosswalks

FG (6)

- Lack of sidewalks for pedestrians
- Poor lighting
- A lot of traffic
- Speeding
- Don't feel safe due to high activity of speed, people walking and crime in area

FG (7)

- Stretch of Powell in front of Church of the Korean Martyrs does not feel safe on Sundays and days of special events because of high traffic and number of cars in lot.
- I-5 congestion, need proper turning lane onto Powell
- Need brighter streetlights on Powell. Adjust traffic lights to keep safe traffic flow.

4. What are your top three greatest concerns about Powell Blvd?

FG (1)

- Need one additional lane in each direction on Powell
- There is poor lighting on Powell



- There are no sidewalks on Powell

FG (2)

- Not enough crosswalks
- No sidewalks and people walking on sides of road
- Need better lighting on Powell Boulevard

FG (3)

- No sidewalks
- Lots of speeding and reckless driving
- Congestion

FG (4)

- More crosswalks are needed and placement closer together
- Need more bus shelters
- Increase bike lane and widen roads
- More defined roadway

FG (5)

- More public transportation and more timely
- Busses are crowded and not on time
- Add additional lanes
- No sidewalks and people walking on side of road

FG (6)

- No sidewalk and people walking on side of road
- More crosswalks are needed
- A lot of traffic and street is busy

FG (7)

- I-5 congestion, need proper turning lanes onto Powell
- Need brighter streetlights on Powell. Adjust traffic lights to keep safe traffic flow.



- Stretch of Powell in front of Church of the Korean Martyrs do not feel safe on Sundays and days of special events because of high traffic and number of cars in lot.

5. What are the best ways we can keep you and your members informed and involved as this project moves forward?

FG (1)

- Use our website (Holgate Baptist) to keep us informed.

FG (2)

- Use our Website. They will get the information to us.

FG (3)

- Let property manager know and she will provide project information to residents.

FG (4)

- Use church email to keep us informed about this project.

FG (5 and 6)

- Inform Africa House, about the project and they will tell us.

FG (7)

- Use our website (Church of the Korean Martyr) to keep us informed.

6. Additional Comments:

- Suggestion: Can we put in one two-way, two-lane bike lane, instead of one on each side of the road? (Suggestion from a resident who was also concerned about the road being widened closer to the complex and her unit specifically).
- People feel that there have been un-kept promises to add sidewalks and improve safety in the past.
- The City and ODOT need to pay more attention to Powell.
- Romanian resident would like to have the speed lowered to 20 mph.