

Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland

1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 800
Portland OR 97204



6 July 2010

The Honorable Mayor Sam Adams
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 340
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Adams,

I am writing you in regard to the July 8 meeting of the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation. The Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee asks that you support a funding split for Regional Flexible Funds that sends a minimum 75% (seventy-five percent) of available funding to active transportation projects.

Even at that level, the amount of funding that will flow to bicycle and pedestrian improvements is still likely to be less than has been spent in recent funding cycles and less than is necessary to achieve your, and the region's stated goals in regard to bicycle transportation. The rest of this letter explains why we urge you to take this position, though those reasons boil down to two:

- over the past 15 years only 2% of transportation funding (two percent) in the region has been dedicated to active transportation projects, Regional Flexible Funds represent almost 30% of that two percent, and
- even a 75% allocation this cycle does not guarantee maintenance of historic levels of funding for active transportation as other project categories—notably boulevards, green streets and bus stop development—will also compete for those funds

At the July 8 meeting, JPACT will make recommendations about how to allocate approximately \$24 million in regional flexible funds for the 2014-15 funding cycle. In considering the important task of how to allocate this \$24 million, it is necessary and relevant to put it into the context of overall regional funding for transportation. As Chart 1 (created by PBOT with Metro source data) displays, Regional Flexible Funds represent only a small fraction of overall regional transportation funding. Of the almost \$6.6 billion spent on transportation from public sources in the region over the past 15 years, only \$411 million—slightly more than six percent—has come from Regional Flexible Funds. Though small, these funds have been disproportionately important to active transportation projects as they represent almost 30% of the \$153 million spent on such projects over the past 15 years.

By contrast, Regional Flexible Funds represent less than 3% (three percent) of the \$4.2 billion spent on roads, bridges and freight over the past 15 years. A large source of the roads, bridges and freight funding in recent years has come from the Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA I, II and III) and Connect Oregon I and II, which together poured almost \$700 million into the region—most of that within the past 10 years. As you know, the main purpose for OTIA has been to increase lane capacity and improve interchanges, replace and repair bridges and repave state highways and local roads. OTIA III, developed with the trucking industry and other stakeholders and based on the 2003 Economic and Bridge Options Report from ODOT, has been focused on bridge repair, replacement, roadway maintenance and preservation and modernization.

Similarly, the percentage of overall regional funding for transit represented by Regional Flexible Funds is less than 8%. We believe that most of the more than \$2 billion spent on transit in the Portland Metropolitan Region over the past 15 years has come from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Of course, the reason Regional Flexible Funds represent such a small fraction of road, modernization, freight and transit projects and such a significant portion of funding for active transportation projects is because other sources available to fund transit and road projects absolutely dwarf the funding available for active transportation projects. Since 1995, more than \$4 billion has been spent in the Portland Metropolitan Region on preservation, road modernization, automotive capacity expansion, clearing freight bottlenecks and other projects considered to improve capacity, reduce congestion, provide greater access, elevate automotive mobility and generally make travel lanes flow smoother. Of that total, only 2.9% (\$121 million) came from Regional Flexible Funds (an amount that nevertheless exceeds the sum total of Regional Flexible Funds spent on active transportation during that same time period).

Similarly, transit projects have also received tremendous funding in the region throughout the past 15 years. More than \$2.2 billion has gone to transit, of which only \$160 million (less than 8% of the total) has been from Regional Flexible Funds.

By contrast, bicycle, pedestrian and trail projects have received only \$153 million dollars throughout the region, from all sources, over the past 15 years. Regional Flexible Funds provided 29% of that total. It is the second largest source of funding in the region for active transportation projects, right behind Transportation Enhancement funding administered by ODOT.

For these reasons alone, the Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee urges you to support that a minimum of 75% of Regional Flexible Funding be allocated to active transportation projects. Unfortunately, even this level of funding does not guarantee that active transportation projects will receive the amounts of funding they have in the past. This is because of two factors. The first is that 75% of funding available for the 2014-15 funding cycle would still be less than the more than \$20 million allocated for the 2012-13 funding cycle (see Chart 2, created by PBOT with Metro source data). Second is the inclusion of project categories that had previously been considered separately from pedestrian, bicycle and trail projects within this “active transportation” category. This includes green street boulevard retrofit, and bus stop development categories. Under this scenario it is conceivable that pedestrian, bicycle and trail projects could receive significantly less than they have in the past. In our minds, this simply strengthens the argument that the active transportation category should receive as much funding as possible.

Beyond the simple issue of how important Regional Flexible Funding is to active transportation projects, the 25:75 redistribution proposed by the Port and the 60:40 compromise that has recently surfaced reflects a poor understanding of how bicycling benefits not just “the usual suspects” but freight as well. Assuming that congestion is one enemy of freight, how effective has bicycling been in replacing single occupancy vehicles? An answer to that is informed by looking at levels of bicycle commuting and transit commuting from the US Census and American Community Survey for the City of Portland. In 1990, some 2,453 Portlanders identified the bicycle as their primary means of transportation to work and another 23,475 people identified transit as their primary means of transportation to work. In 2008, the latest year for which data is available, 17,365 identified the bicycle as their primary means of transportation to work and 36,666 people identified transit. For bicycling, this represented a growth of 14,912 people, and for transit a growth of 13,191 people.

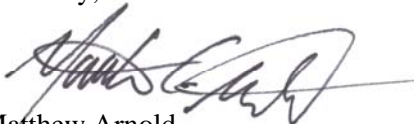
Both numbers reflect decreased reliance on personal motor vehicles, which is helpful for congestion in general and thus for the movement of freight. However, because transit infrastructure is necessarily more

expensive than bicycle infrastructure, this increase in transit use cost 14 times more than it did to generate a higher increase in bicycle users over those 18 years. Transit, of course, is an essential element to an active transportation network and contributes significantly to the ability of people to rely extensively on walking and bicycling. However, we contend that if reducing congestion is a goal for freight, then the freight community should not suggest drastically reducing one of the more successful and cost-effective tools we have for doing so. We count on you to effectively deliver that message. Active transportation provides a tremendous bang for the taxpayer buck.

We also recognize the importance of freight-specific projects. However, we also contend that much of the \$4.2 billion invested in roads, bridges and freight over the past 15 years contributed significantly to improving conditions for freight movement. We encourage the region to work with freight and business interests to ensure that the copious levels of funding available for road projects are directed in a manner that addresses specific bottlenecks. We also hope that you can impress upon freight and business interests the value that increased investment in active transportation provides to them as well. Removing the active transportation tool from the region's quiver—as had been proposed by the Port—would essentially eliminate what has proven to be in Portland the most cost-effective means of keeping people off the roadways during the busiest and most congested times of day.

The City of Portland's Bicycle Advisory Committee strongly urges you, as Portland's representative to JPACT, to first maintain the level of funding for active transportation projects of previous years, but to also work to increase that proportion, particularly in light of active transportation's highly cost-effective ability to reduce roadway congestion.

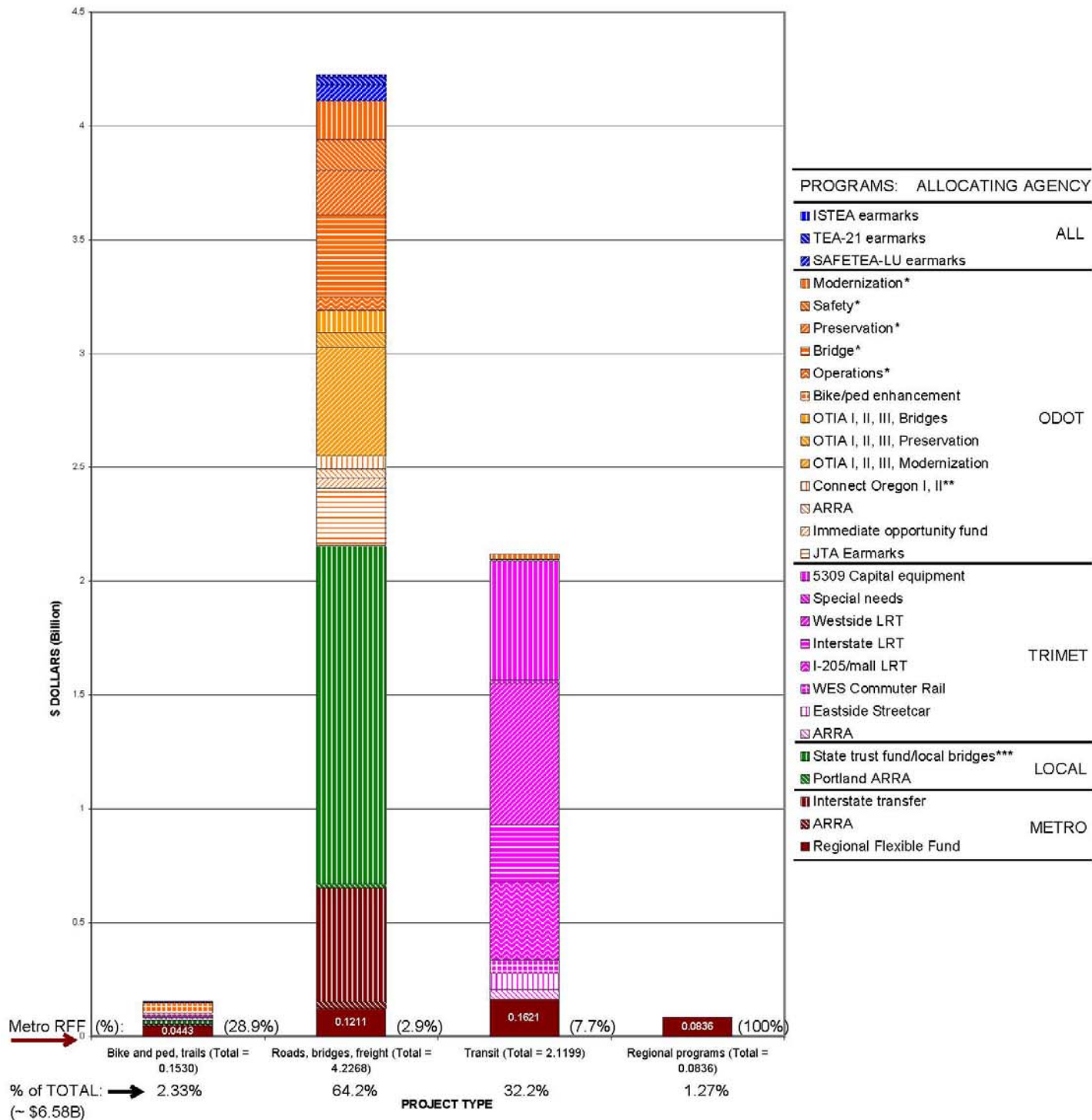
Sincerely,



Matthew Arnold
Chair, Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Cc: Commissioner Nick Fish
Members of the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation
Paul Smith, Portland Bureau of Transportation
Corky Collier, Chair, Portland Freight Committee
David Aulwes, Chair, Portland Pedestrian Committee
Gerik Kransky, Bicycle Transportation Alliance

1995-2010 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING



NOTES/CAVEATS:

This graph is based on funding estimates prepared by Metro to establish a ballpark estimate of the 15-year history of all known funding (by program and project type) for regional transportation projects from state/federal sources. This information represents the best available data. Note, listed below are a number of caveats attached to the data. The result is a rough estimation - often based on an average annual amount that was applied to a 15 year time period.

* Average allocation based on 2010 through 2013 allocation. Actual allocations over past 15 years will vary. The proportion of bike/ped improvements not confirmed.

**Connect Oregon amounts do not include awards to aviation projects or Connect III projects.

***Average allocation based on 2010 through 2013 allocation. Actual allocations over past 15 years will vary.

Chart 1. 15 Years of Regional Transportation Funding

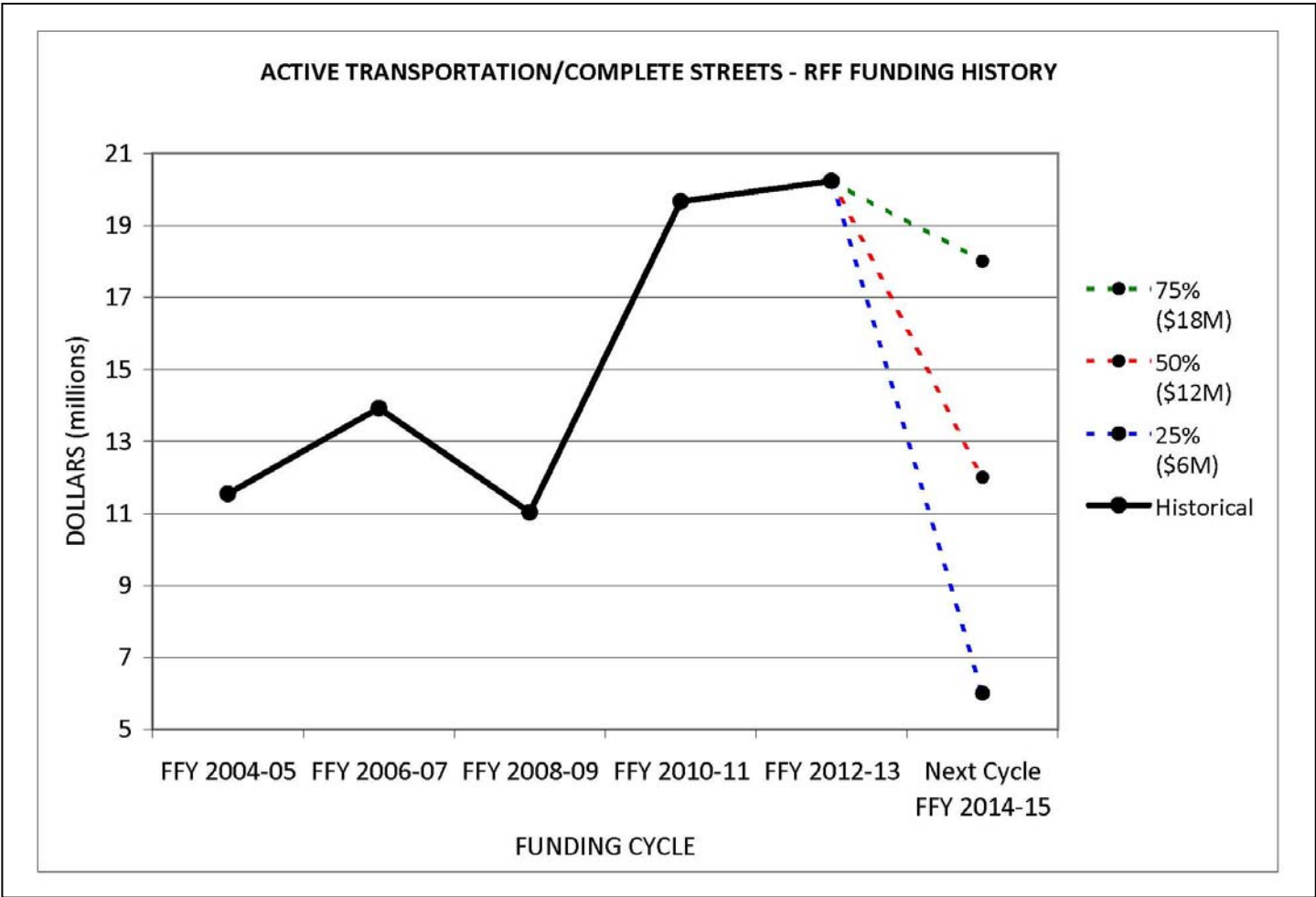


Chart 2. Regional Flexible Funding for Active Transportation in Last 5 Funding Cycles (with projections for current)