

MAYOR'S COMMENTS ON BUDGET

I WANT TO ADDRESS THE OPPOSITION TO FULLY STAFFING OUR REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER AND LAUNCHING THE LONG-PLANNED ROUTE TO THE CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER VIA SMART.

LET'S BEGIN WITH THE CLAIM OF SAFETY CONCERNS.

I'VE LIVED HERE FOR 17 YEARS. THE DATA—AND MY LIVED EXPERIENCE—SUGGEST THAT WHEN CRIME OCCURS, IT IS OFTEN COMMITTED BY INDIVIDUALS DRIVING OFF I-5, TARGETING VEHICLES OR PACKAGES, AND THEN LEAVING.

THESE AREN'T TRANSIT USERS—THEY'RE USING PRIVATE CARS. YET SOMEHOW, TRANSIT GETS BLAMED.

THIS PLAYS INTO A LONG-STANDING AND DEEPLY FLAWED NARRATIVE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "CRIME TRAIN" TROPE.

THIS TROPE SUGGESTS THAT TRANSIT EXPANSION BRINGS CRIME—ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT TRANSIT SERVES WORKING-CLASS OR RACIALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES.

BUT THE EVIDENCE TELLS A DIFFERENT STORY: THERE IS NO CAUSAL LINK BETWEEN INCREASED TRANSIT ACCESS AND INCREASED CRIME. IT'S A MYTH ROOTED IN FEAR, NOT FACT.

IN OREGON, WE'VE MADE TRANSIT SAFETY A PRIORITY WITH SENATE BILL 1553, RECENTLY PASSED, WHICH ENHANCES

LEGAL PROTECTIONS AGAINST INTERFERENCE WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

AND BEYOND THAT, WE ARE WITNESSING HISTORIC DECLINES IN CRIME NATIONALLY, ACROSS THE BOARD. CRIME OVERALL BEGAN TO FALL IN 2023, GAINED MOMENTUM IN 2024, AND IS ACCELERATING THAT DECLINE IN 2025.

PERSONAL VIOLENCE IN 2024 AND INTO 2025 IS FALLING FASTER THAN AT ANY POINT IN RECENT HISTORY—APPROACHING LEVELS NOT SEEN SINCE THE 1960S.

THERE'S AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE BY DR. JOHN ROMAN TITLED "EXPLAINING THE COVID VIOLENCE SPIKE AND THE ROARING DECLINE" THAT BREAKS THIS DOWN. CHIEF WURPES SHARED IT WITH ME WHEN I ASKED FOR BACKGROUND. MY TAKEAWAY IS THIS:

THE HARD WORK OF FULLY STAFFED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, STRONG SCHOOLS, ENGAGED LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND INVESTMENT IN YOUTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE—including TRANSIT—HAS PAID OFF. AND IT MUST CONTINUE, ESPECIALLY HERE IN WILSONVILLE, WHERE IT HAS BEEN A TRUE SUCCESS.

SO LET'S BE HONEST: THE OPPOSITION FRAMED AS A "SAFETY CONCERN" IS NOT ONLY UNSUPPORTED BY DATA—IT RISKS PERPETUATING OUTDATED, BIASED FEARS AND DELAYING VITAL SERVICES.

OUR REGIONAL PARTNERS—INCLUDING CLACKAMAS COUNTY AND THE CITIES WITHIN IT—ARE RELYING ON OUR LEADERSHIP TO GET THIS DONE.

NOW LET'S LOOK AT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

THE WILSONVILLE–CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER ROUTE AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER HAVE BEEN LISTED IN ADOPTED BUDGETS GOING BACK TO FY 2022–23. I SHOULD KNOW—I'VE SERVED ON THE BUDGET COMMITTEE FOR FOUR OF THOSE CYCLES.

THIS PROJECT WAS ALSO THOROUGHLY EXAMINED IN THE TRANSIT MASTER PLAN UPDATE ADOPTED BY THE PREVIOUS CITY COUNCIL IN 2023. THAT DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE ON THE CITY WEBSITE. I URGE YOU TO REVIEW PAGES 38, 39, 146, AND 147, WHICH SPECIFICALLY COVER ROUTE D. HERE IS A PORTION OF THAT DESCRIPTION:

ROUTE D – LEGACY MERIDIAN / OREGON CITY / CLACKAMAS:
ROUTE D IS AN IMPORTANT NEW REGIONAL CONNECTION FOR SMART THAT FILLS A GAP IN CONNECTIVITY IN THE SOUTH METRO AREA. ROUTE D WOULD ESTABLISH SERVICE FROM WILSONVILLE TO CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER USING I-205, STOPPING IN WEST LINN AND OREGON CITY. IT WOULD RUN AT LEAST ONCE PER HOUR, ALL DAY ON WEEKDAYS AND SATURDAYS, WITH ADDITIONAL FREQUENCY AT PEAK TIMES. IT WOULD USE I-205 SHOULDERS TO BYPASS CONGESTION, AND CONNECT TO TRIMET AND RIDE CONNECTION AT MULTIPLE POINTS.

AT THE JUNE 19, 2023 HEARING ON THE TRANSIT MASTER PLAN UPDATE, THE PLAN PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, 5–0. AT THE SECOND READING, IT PASSED AGAIN, 4–0 WITH ONE COUNCILOR ABSENT. NO CONCERNS ABOUT WILSONVILLE–CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER ROUTE AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER WERE RAISED.

AT THE JUNE 17, 2024 CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION, STAFF AGAIN PRESENTED THIS ROUTE AS PART OF THE STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND (STIF) PLAN FOR BIENNIUM 2026–2027. NO CONCERNS ABOUT WILSONVILLE–CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER ROUTE AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER WERE RAISED.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT TWO OF OUR 5 CURRENT COUNCILORS SERVED ON THAT COUNCIL AND WERE AT ATTENDANCE AT THE JUNE 19, 2023, AND JUNE 17, 2024 MEETINGS. THESE PLANS HAVE ALSO BEEN PRESENTED TO THE COMMUNITY IN MANY WAYS OVER THE YEARS & PRIOR TO REACHING COUNCIL.

BUDGETS THAT HAVE REFERENCED CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER ROUTE AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER WERE RAISED APPROVED YEAR AFTER YEAR, BY MULTIPLE COUNCILS AND BUDGET COMMITTEES. THERE HAS BEEN NO RECORD OF OBJECTION—NO ALTERNATIVE PLANS OR REQUESTS TO REVISIT IT UNTIL RECENTLY.

IN MY OPINION, THAT AMOUNTS TO A DECISION BY ACQUIESCENCE.

A DECISION BY ACQUIESCENCE MEANS A DECISION OR OUTCOME IS ACCEPTED WITHOUT PROTEST OR OBJECTION, EVEN IF NOT EXPLICITLY AGREED TO. IN GOVERNMENT, THIS HAPPENS WHEN:

- A PROPOSAL IS NOT FORMALLY CHALLENGED OR VOTED AGAINST.
- SILENCE OR INACTION IS INTERPRETED AS CONSENT.
- A DECISION PROCEEDS BECAUSE NO ONE OBJECTS, EVEN WITHOUT FORMAL APPROVAL.

SOME OF THE RECENT OBJECTIONS RAISED BY SOME COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND SOME MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL SEEM TO BE MORE ABOUT POLITICS THAN SOUND POLICYMAKING. OUR COMMUNITY DESERVES BETTER THAN THAT.

NOW, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE FISCAL CONCERNS.

I'VE REVIEWED EVERY CITY BUDGET FROM FY 2021–22 THROUGH FY 2025–26. I SERVED ON FOUR OF THOSE BUDGET COMMITTEES AS A CITIZEN, AND NOW AS YOUR MAYOR.

IN EVERY ONE OF THOSE YEARS, OUR CITY STAFF—IN PARTNERSHIP WITH A CITIZEN-LED BUDGET COMMITTEE—HAS PRODUCED RESPONSIBLE, BALANCED BUDGETS. AND DURING THAT TIME, OUR TRANSIT FUND HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY STRONG AND STABLE.

IN CONCLUSION:

THIS HAS BEEN YEARS IN THE MAKING—PLANNING, DISCUSSION, SUPPORT. WE ARE NOT RUSHING THIS. WE ARE IMPLEMENTING A WELL-VETTED, COMMUNITY-INFORMED VISION.

TRANSIT IS NOT A LUXURY. IT'S A LIFELINE—FOR WORKERS, STUDENTS, SENIORS, AND FAMILIES.

REFUSING TO STAFF KEY POSITIONS AND EXPAND SERVICE IS NOT FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE. IT IS FISCALLY SHORT-SIGHTED. IT LEAVES RESIDENTS STRANDED, BUSINESSES UNDERSERVED, AND DISPROPORTIONATELY HARMS THOSE ALREADY MARGINALIZED.

THIS COUNCIL HAS A CHOICE:

YIELD TO UNFOUNDED FEARS AND DIVISIVE POLITICS—OR LEAD WITH FACTS, FAIRNESS, AND A FUTURE-FOCUSED VISION.

I BELIEVE OUR COMMUNITY IS BETTER SERVED BY THE LATTER.