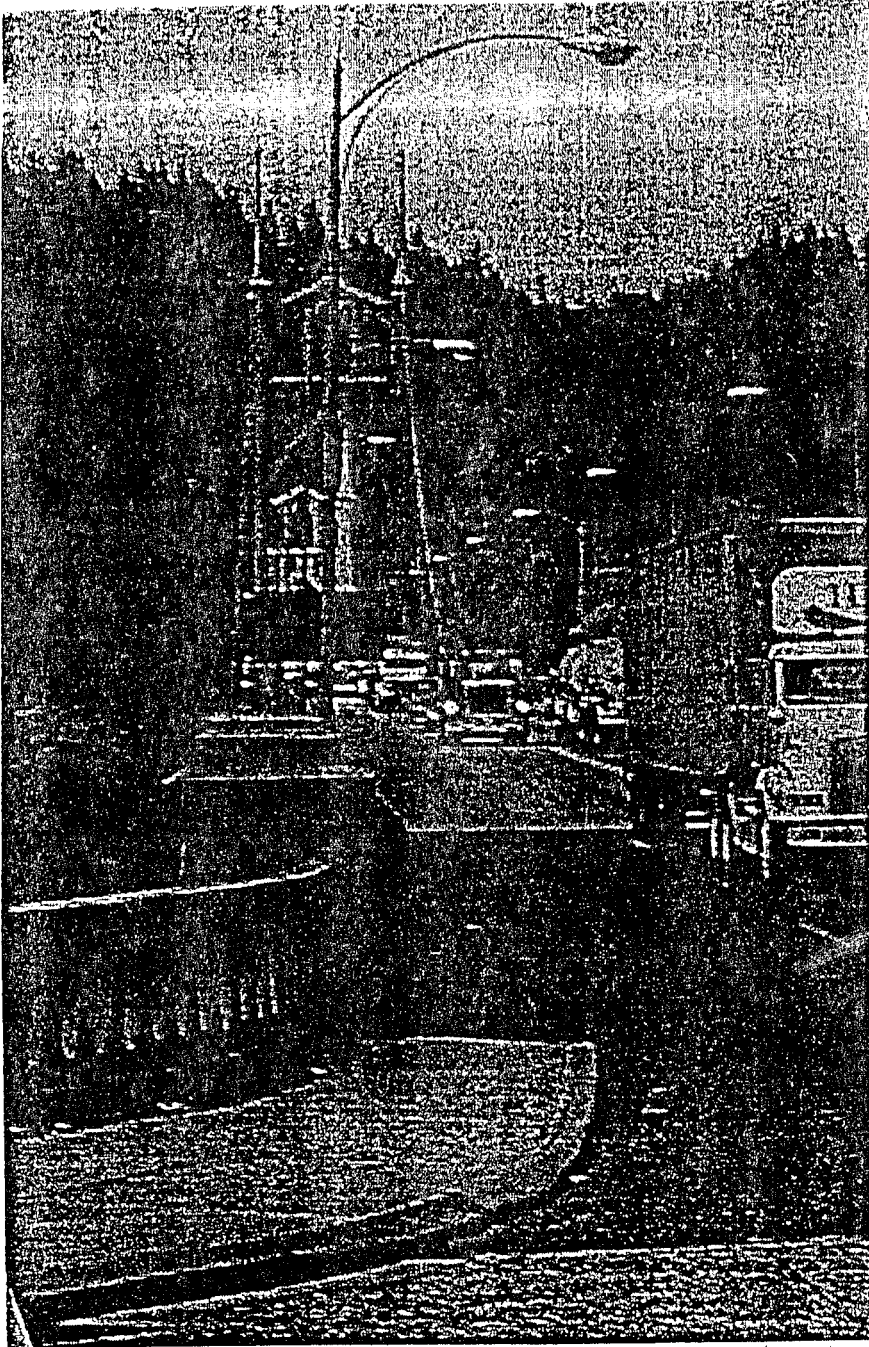


# ST. JOHNS TRUCK STUDY



**The Citizens Report and Recommendation  
AND  
Portland State University Pedestrian Study**



JUST  
SAY  
NO  
TO  
TRUCKS  
OVER  
18,000 Lbs.

Henderson's Law: If you have enough meetings over a long period of time, the meetings become more important than the problem the meetings were intended to solve.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD:**

- **REPAIR THE ST. JOHNS BRIDGE NOW;**
- **NO LARGE TRUCKS ON ST. JOHNS BRIDGE;**
- **ESTABLISH WEIGHT LIMITS OF 18,000 LBS. ON THE BRIDGE.**

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NOTE: Photographs in this document were taken by Ellie Piltz on one single day between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m.

## INTRODUCTION:

The authors of this report were tempted to make the deaths of small children at the corner of Ivanhoe and St. Louis a theme in this report. Children run over by the rear wheels of trucks that don't quite make the turn. Looking for the pathos derived from the fact that in one instance the driver of the truck was unaware of the fatality and the driver was never found. Instead this report will dwell on the benefits to the community to be derived from ending the practice of large trucks taking a short cut through St. Johns on their way to southwest Washington to avoid congestion on the I-5 Freeway.

The majority of the committee on the Truck Study consists of representatives of agencies such as the Portland Department of Transportation, the Port of Portland, etc. This Majority opinion began and ended this Study with the intent to decide upon one proposal whether the citizens of the neighborhood agreed or not. That proposal was a plan to construct road improvements that would direct and speed the truck "short cutters" through the middle of the neighborhood. The intent of the Study's strategy was to confine these impacts to one residential neighborhood, St. Johns, while making concessions to the other neighborhoods in North Portland. The other neighborhood representatives far outnumbered the impacted neighborhood, St. Johns, so the City's fore-ordained proposal became the majority proposal.

Safety was not an issue. **The majority committee refused to consider safety, but the St. Johns neighbors think safety is the most important issue.** Our families live in St. Johns, so we **MUST** think about the safety of the proposals. Increased truck speeds through our downtown neighborhood is contrary to planning for safety.

The small-town neighborhood feeling of downtown St. Johns would be sacrificed to make way for trucks that are contributing nothing more than air and noise pollution to the

neighborhood. They speed through our little downtown with little regard for increasing, concentrated weight loads and speeds far greater than intended by ODOT.

**The simplest solution is to Just Say No. The “no build” option is the best option. Simply closing the St. Johns Bridge to large trucks will accomplish what we want.**

The neighborhood citizens of St. Johns chose between alternatives in a meeting last fall. **The citizens of the impacted area chose the lower cost, “no build” alternative by an impressive 90 to 1 tally.** This alternative helps renew a historic neighborhood character and feeling of being able to be a community through the simple act of crossing a downtown street to greet a neighbor.

The St. Johns Bridge is falling down. Those living under the bridge have pieces of concrete literally falling about their ears whenever large trucks cross the bridge. Those who live beneath the bridge feel that the real priority should be to fix the bridge before a piece of falling concrete causes a fatality. Year after year fixing the bridge is moved to the next year, and is now scheduled for Spring 2002. **The City should– at a minimum – stop the heaviest of trucks, those over 18,000 pounds.**

Trucks with their heavy weight loads have been key in ongoing degeneration of the St. Johns Bridge. Even after the bridge repairs, trucks will continue to defile the bridge and the downtown neighborhood unless a minimum weight restriction is imposed.

During peak hours one out of three trucks crossing the St. Johns Bridge is a gasoline tanker racing through residential neighborhoods on their way to Southwest Washington. These historic neighborhoods existed prior to the development of the Port on the peninsula!

Gasoline tankers have no business in a residential neighborhood. They should travel instead in recognized transportation corridors such as I-5. **Closing the bridge to large trucks would accomplish this.**

The citizens of St. Johns have often scoffed when the Port of Portland claimed its intent was to make Marine Drive and Columbia Boulevard its entrance, or “gateway.” Closing the St. Johns Bridge to trucks over 18,000 lbs. would make that claim a reality. Only 15% of trucks crossing the Bridge are headed for North Portland Port terminals.

A St. Johns Truck Strategy Open House was held on May 6, 2000. When the people at the meeting were given a choice between the Majority recommendations or getting the trucks out of the neighborhood and off the bridge, there was *one vote* for the Majority recommendations and 90 votes for ending the trucks’ degeneration of the neighborhood.

If a bicycle route is included on the St. Johns Bridge, the turning radius is not sufficient for the National Highway Net. The Transportation Department has elected not to have a bicycle lane on the St. Johns Bridge in order to facilitate truck traffic. In making these choices it is important to ask who gains and who loses?

**Report from Mr. Ray Piltz**

Mayor and Councilmen,

I am Ray Piltz, the Land Use Co-Chair for the St. Johns Neighborhood Association and the neighborhood representative on the St. Johns Truck Strategy Advisory Committee. This is a general view of this advisory committee's recommendation as put forth by Portland Department of Transportation and the trucking industry and Port of Portland versus the citizens of North Portland.

**Truck turning onto the bridge blocks across all of the lanes on St. Louis St.  
Bicycle lanes crossing the Bridge are non-existent,  
prohibited by the turning radius onto and off of the Bridge.**



With very few exceptions, the people of St. Johns did not think the bulk of the recommendations were wrong. Among the several things the residents did not want were spending tax monies to straighten out two intersections, giving truck traffic the ability to increase their speed through our neighborhood. These dollars could be better spent by the City in the long range planning to get the large trucks off our historic bridge. The St. Johns Neighborhood Association members have expressed their preference to do everything possible to protect the St. Johns residential area from the intrusion of large trucks and all the noise and pollution that they bring with them.

At the same time we realize the surrounding terminals, warehousing and businesses on the peninsula need to move products in and out of the north end. The intersection of Ivanhoe and St. Louis, Lombard, being revamped to let trucks move through at a greater speed does not sit well with the county, as the new low-cost Health Clinic will be finished this summer and have told the Advisory Committee they have no intention of relinquishing the new ½ block to the City for this. This also deviates from the parameters of utilizing the existing highways and not coordinating with other North Portland projects also shifting the problems to another location. All these things were set forth by the City Council to be considered by the Advisory Council at the very start.

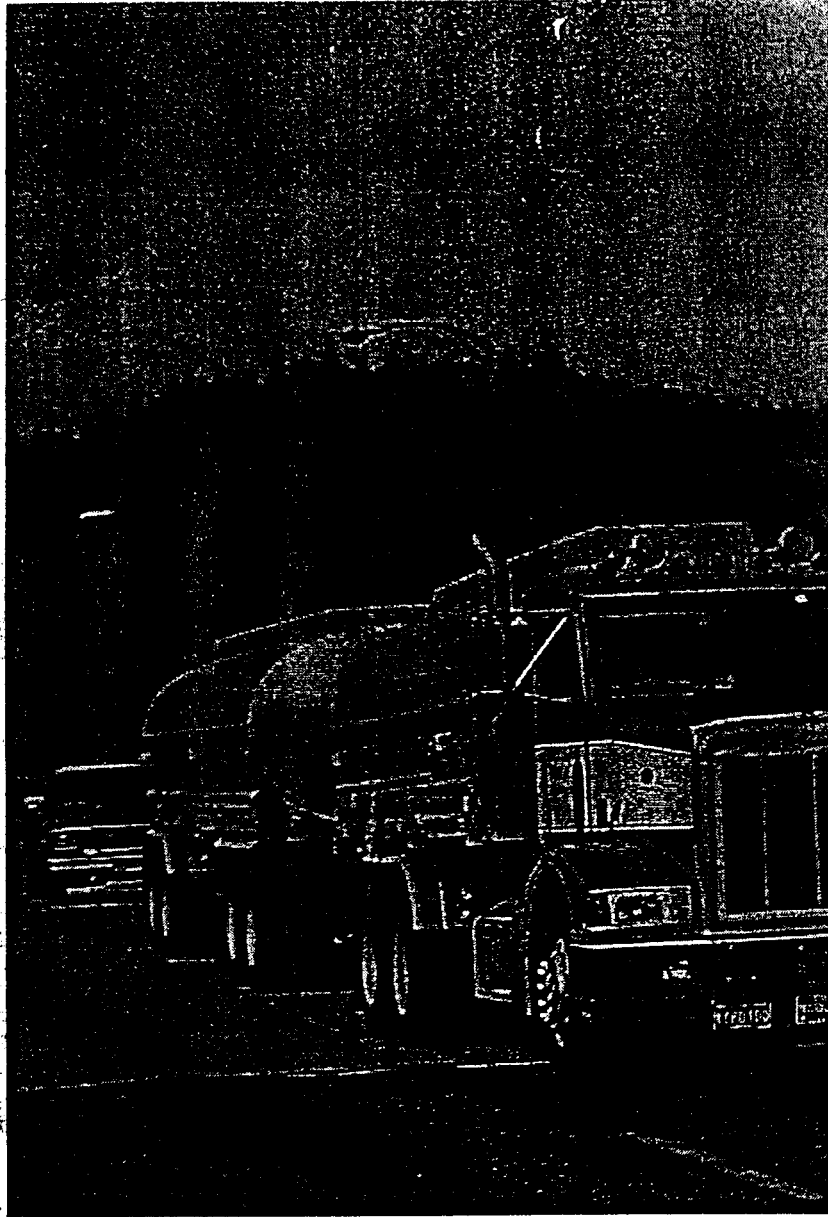
The recommendation of the membership of the St. Johns Neighborhood Association is to use what monies are available for signage and setup and enforcing large trucks off our historical bridge and out of our neighborhoods.

We have confidence in your knowledge of other similar problems involving traffic with large trucks invading small neighborhoods, and hope you would understand our concerns.

The St. Johns Neighborhood Association would recommend using what is available in the near future (closing or one-lane traffic on the Bridge when it is being repaired) as a "wake-up call" to both car and truck traffic. Your decision to wait until all the problems have been seen will be in the best interest of all the people involved.

Sincerely yours,  
Ray Piltz (503) 286-5444





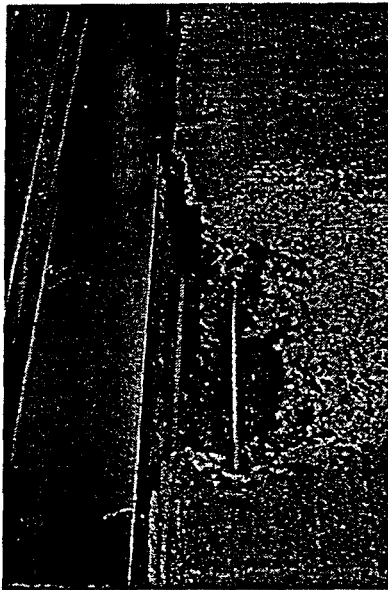
**At peak hours one of three Trucks on the St. Johns Bridge is a gasoline tanker headed for southwest Washington through residential neighborhoods.**

Portland, Or. June 26, 2001

*Regards of the truck study for St. Johns Bridge and North Portland*

*In 1985 ODOT started the final downfall of the St. Johns Bridge. ODOT removed the blacktop overlay exposing the concrete, now there are definite grooves in the concrete. ODOT removed the steel plates over the expansion joints. Then the concrete started falling off from under the sidewalk, and the supports under the bridge.*

*I wrote the editorial that appeared in the Oregonian and the St. Johns Review about the vibrations caused by the big trucks and where the vibrations were going, and ten days later ODOT replaced most of the steel plates, and periodic trips to the underside of the bridge show a markedly decreased amount of falling concrete.*



**The sidewalks are crumbling away. Some suspension cables need to be repaired**



**The bridge deck is badly worn and rutted and needs to be replaced.**



**The bridge drainage stem is clogged and broken and no longer functions.**

*In 1993 Mr. Austin Brown wrote you a letter concerning this. In 1995 ODOT had the money to repair this bridge, but, were not going to do so till 1998. Now we are told that this work would be done in 2002 and again we hear there will be another delay. Every delay costs we the taxpayers more money.*

*The St. Johns Truck Study as put out by the City is flawed so badly. Not one of you have listened to what we the people want. No trucks over 18,000 lbs. on that bridge. If this happens that bridge will last three times longer without a huge cost of repair. In the book on the truck study, page 24, appendix F:*

*A- Two hundred million \$ plus to repair this bridge.*

*A-3 \$60,000 to put up signs. They must be gold plated.*

*B- Longer green lites for trucks.*

*H- No*

*I- That was done in 1996. Restrict 53 ft. vans to I-5 – Marine Drive or Columbia Blvd. Neither Fessenden Street nor N. Portland Way are listed by NHS as truck routes.*

*Analysis, Page 13- You are showing Columbia Blvd. as Bypass 30.*

*At the present time I have correspondence with Portland ODOT office and NHS to get bypass signs removed on Lombard Street eastbound from St. Johns bridge and put up signs "No Thru Trucks over 18,000 Lbs."*

*Sincerely,*

*Lee H. Rennells  
9816 N. Leonard St.  
Portland, Or. 97203  
503-286-1571*

November 5, 1993

Dear Sirs,

My name is Austin Brown.

I am with the neighborhood associations in the St. Johns District. We definitely need a new bridge from Highway 30 North of Linton over the Willamette River to the Rivergate area of the Eastside of the River, being that they have funds for all the other large projects *FOR* the city. This would be the more important need.

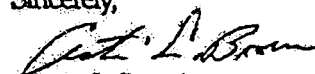
In the past and the present the St. Johns Bridge is decaying and large chunks of cement continue falling from the Bridge. Several people already have had nearby mishaps from the debris. A contractor sandblasting the bridge and painting said there could be a lawsuit if someone got hit by one of these chunks of concrete under the St. Johns Bridge.

Also, there are alot of other safety issues involved with the average of 192 trucks an hour on the St. Johns Bridge and into our neighborhood. Enclosed is an article from the Oregonian Newspaper, definitely showing that we need another bridge.

We would like our governments to concentrate on North Portland in the near future for the safety of our citizens.

Please consider this proposal. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Austin L. Brown  
9846 N. Syracuse Street  
Portland, Oregon 97203

(503) 286-3570

Member of  
St. Johns Neighborhood Association  
Cathedral Park Association  
St. Johns Cathedral Park Traffic Committee  
North Portland Neighborhood Office

**Large trucks destroy the pleasure and ambience of walking along the streets in our once-charming downtown**



**We are asking for a safe and peaceful walking access to our downtown. St. Johns neighborhood's historic character can and should be restored. Large trucks should travel on freeways, not through our little downtown.**

## Report from Dave and Laurie King

### WHAT'S IT'S LIKE LIVING UNDER THE ST. JOHNS BRIDGE

In a word, it's noisy. We are three houses from the top of Cathedral Park on the down river side of the park.

I awoke from a dream at 4:15 this morning. I had been dreaming that a monster truck like they have at fairs was crossing the bridge, but in place of one of the tires it had a five-sided sheet metal wheel that crashed on the concrete bridge deck each time one of the sides slammed down. When I awoke, the dream faded, but the noise continued. Jim Barnas who lives two doors down thinks he remembers the same noise in the night. That kind of racket is not unusual for us who live under the bridge, but thankfully, it's not constant.

What is constant is the roar and rumble of a steady stream of 200 trucks an hour straining up the bridge's grade, going through their gears, and then coming down the grade, down-shifting and braking as they approach the light at the police station. Despite the signs prohibiting their use, we hear the heavy machine-gun sound of "jake" brakes.

We have a wonderful view out of our living room window of the most beautiful bridge in the world against the backdrop of sky and forest. We really enjoy it and guests are impressed. But in summer during working hours you have to raise your voice slightly to be heard over the steady noise of trucks on the bridge. When one hits the "jake" brakes, you pause til the racket stops. These are not pleasant sounds like train whistles and we wonder how much they contribute to stress in our lives.

I have emphysema and I wonder what the diesel fumes do to my lungs. Also we have a big garden that we eat out of all year and we wonder what kinds of additives are in our soil and drifting onto our broccoli from the engine and the brakes overhead.

Some years ago, the neighborhood became alarmed at the chunks of concrete that are falling into the park from the underside of the deck. We thought it would help to limit heavy truck traffic on the bridge, but that traffic has only increased as the Rivergate Industrial District is built up.

We have a really nice neighborhood here. We've gotten the drug houses out and we've been through a lot together. We'd all really like to get rid of some of the heavy traffic and send them to Interstate 5 by way of Marine Drive, like they should. But my experience on the truck traffic committee several years ago was to be ignored by city staff in favor of facilitating more truck traffic to the neighborhood and over the bridge.

Sincerely,

Dave King  
8728 N. Edison  
Portland, Oregon

# Pedestrian and Bike Impacts

by Trevor Nelson

In order for the St. Johns Truck Study to begin to attain citizen credibility, the following issues need to be considered: pedestrian safety, neighborhood connections, neighborhood character, and pedestrian and bicycle funding equity. The following text outlines the most basic pedestrian and bike issues.

## I. Basic Pedestrian Bike Safety

- a. Eye contact can only be maintained at driving speeds of less than 25 mph
- b. Significant jump in severity of injuries as impact speed rises above 20 mph
- c. Schools and kids
  - i. Sitton Elementary School is less than three blocks from the proposed Truck Route.
  - ii. George Middle School is located directly adjacent to Columbia Blvd.
  - iii. The combination of truck route and current Hwy 30 Bypass have cut off the entire Cathedral Park neighborhood from the four schools located in St. Johns.
  - iv. Increasing truck speeds through the neighborhood was the same philosophy that previously "improved" Lombard @ Richmond. It is now revered as the most dangerous and problematic corner in St. Johns
  - v. Recent movement for "Safe Routes to Schools" seems to be sidestepped by this study.
- d. Elderly and disabled residents
  - i. The elderly living in Shrunken Tower is now and will be increasingly cut off from important goods and services.
  - ii. Long crossings at the stoplights due to wide radii make slower moving pedestrians uncomfortable and many times fearful if they are not aware of the lights' timing.
- e. Residential areas
  - i. High density multi-family zoning(which flank the proposed truck route)
    1. Kids have no yards and often use the street for recreation
    2. On street parking heavily utilized and often puts people dangerously close to drive-lanes.
  - ii. Further drives down property values
    1. Heavy traffic reduces appeal to would-be renters
    2. Many families will leave because of safety concerns

3. Leads to less upkeep and more slum-like conditions
- iii. The new Truck Route will form a “barrier” between higher-density residential areas in Cathedral Park and St. Johns Business District.
  1. Many residents have no cars and must walk to necessary services and shops.
  2. In the large housing development near Columbia and Pier Park, the Truck Route will continue to be a barrier to safety in the area.

## II. Neighborhood Connections

### a. Political boundaries

- i. Before the bypass, there was only one neighborhood association
- ii. The bypass created a physical separation, therefore demographic separation was inevitable

### b. Kids, elders and services

- i. The Truck Route and Bypass cumulatively impose an East-West barrier on the St. Johns community. The map, which follows this outline, shows how the assets/amenities are distributed on either side of this barrier.

### c. Businesses and the traffic they need

- i. Traffic, like water, follows path of least resistance. Hence, if you give trucks a faster and more direct route through an area, the rest of the traffic will follow as well.
- ii. The ideal plan for local business is to bring traffic through **S L O W L Y**, and allow the passers-through to be enticed by the merchandise. That’s hard to do if they’re going 35 mph—even harder if they don’t drive by at all.
- iii. Many districts now rely on pedestrian traffic, but walking has become increasingly difficult as automobile-oriented businesses thrive.

### d. Access to parks and open spaces

- i. As of now, most folks drive to the parks, not because of the distance but because of how uncomfortable it is to walk there. St. Johns has a diversity of parks but poor pedestrian/bike access to them. Judging by response in other areas of town, “if you build it they will come” applies here in textbook (or legislative) fashion. [See ORS 366.514-- the "Bicycle Bill"]
- ii. Access to the Cathedral Park and Forest Park are compromised as it is—this truck route designation will only make that access worse.
- iii. As it stands, ODOT will be making no bike/pedestrian improvements as they “maintain” the St. Johns Bridge to the tune of \$200 million. What more can be said...?



### **III. Neighborhood character**

- a. St. Johns is primarily a “blue collar” community with an enviable main street structure intact
- b. CS Zoning with adjacent CN Zoning designations could support strong pedestrian tendencies in and around the Business District.
- c. St. Johns has retained the “small town feel” long after (and despite?) the City of Portland annexed it.
- d. There is a multi-ethnic and diverse age distribution.
  - i. Fastest growing region of Portland among Latino population
  - ii. Age demographic is high over 60 and under 35
  - iii. Local ethnic businesses are thriving.
- e. Urban village
  - i. Mayor Katz herself is excited to see St. Johns regain its “Urban Village” vitality. That will be severely hindered by increased truck traffic, severing the Business District from the waterfront.

### **IV. Pedestrian and Bicycle Equity needs consideration**

- a. Most Transportation money in North Portland is spent on trucks
  - i. Projects focusing on trucks:
    - 1. Lombard overpass
    - 2. Marine Drive improvements (some pedestrian/bike improvements)
    - 3. Columbia Blvd. Improvements (some pedestrian/bike improvements)
    - 4. Hwy 30 improvements
    - 5. St. Johns Bridge repairs
  - ii. Projects on Bikes/Pedestrian:
    - 1. St. Johns Town Center/Lombard Main Street Plan
    - 2. Improvements on Fessenden, and Smith bike lanes and traffic calming
- b. Bike and Pedestrian improvements are usually the first to be cut and generally miniscule in comparison to full projects (maintenance for autos)
- c. Everyone qualifies as a pedestrian, yet cars dominate in the public realm

## Talking Points

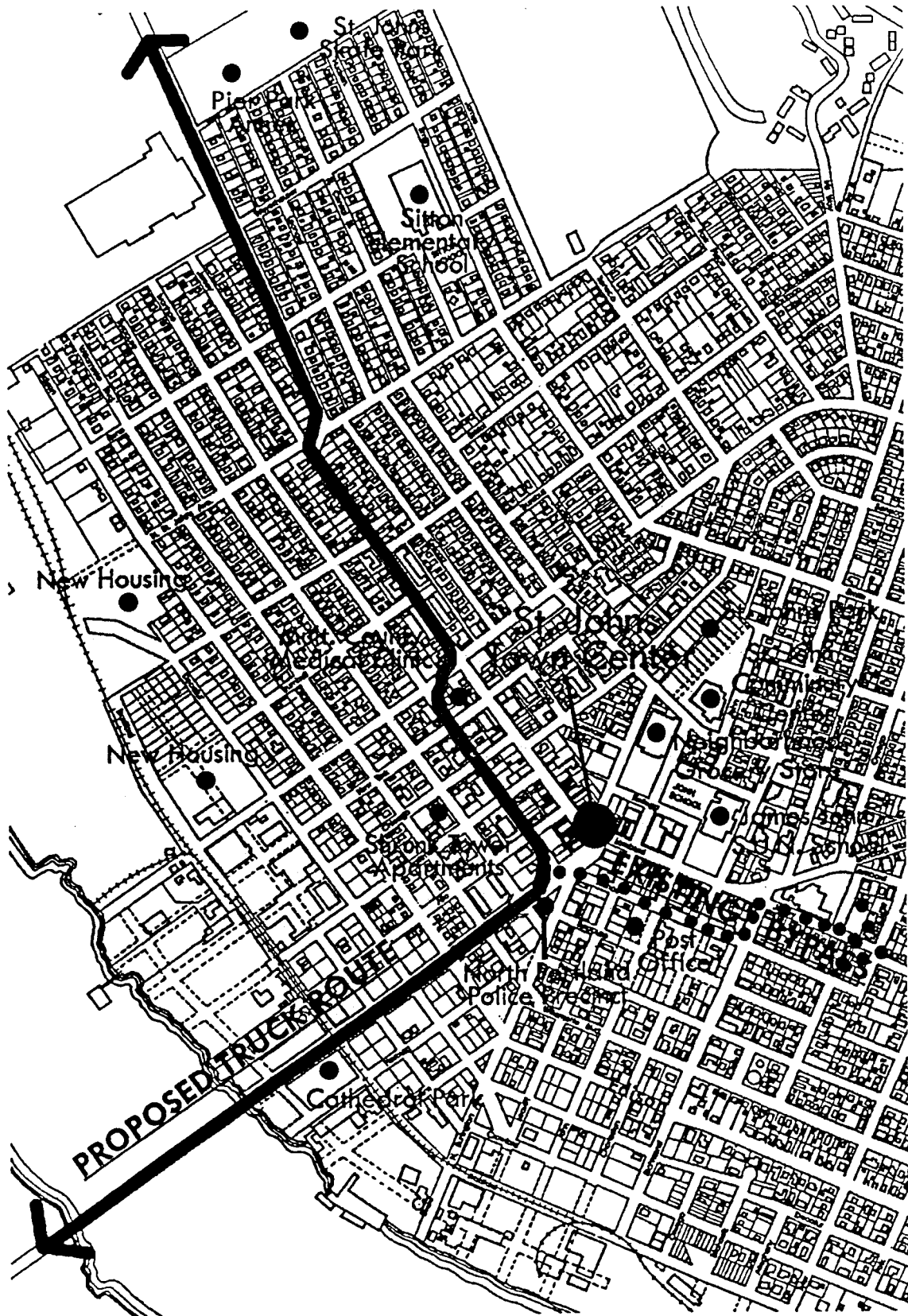
- The study and recommendations done by the “Majority Opinion” (Portland Department of Transportation, Port of Portland, Trucking companies, etc.) are well intended, but go too far in scope without really focusing on primary user of public right of way – the pedestrian.
- According to ODOT and Kittleson & Assoc. (Transportation Engineers), less than 12% of total traffic across the bridge is truck traffic--yet \$10 million would be spent to ensure their “ease of use.”
- The severity of traffic injuries spikes sharply as the impact speed ranges past 20 mph (the human skull can usually only survive about a 30 mph collision).
- The ability to make eye contact with pedestrians, cyclists or other drivers is lost at 25 mph.
- Certain “bottlenecks” are okay. If the trucks don’t like it, they can go another way. This is a PEDESTRIAN DISTRICT! We don’t bother them in the Industrial Districts, do we?
- Of the 17 members of the TAC, the two neighborhoods most impacted are not satisfied in the least. There is something wrong with that – either the process or the intent of the TAC. The citizen involvement needs to be less of a public relations ploy and more informed discussions or public mediation. Where is the give and take? Where is the two-way dialogue?
- Clearly this is a case of political manipulation on the part of the trucking industry, the Port of Portland and PDOT. Any emphasis on bikes or pedestrians is merely to justify their ill-conceived notions of priority.

As the City of Portland begins its own Planning Study in the St. Johns Town Center, the industrial interests have pointedly forced their own interests in front of those of the rest of the community, significantly compromising local livability.

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*Mr. Nelson is a volunteer who lives in St. Johns. As past chair of the St. Johns 21<sup>st</sup> Century Committee, a participant in the ODOT St. Johns Bridge Traffic Mitigation Plan Study, a member of the Metro North Portland Enhancement Committee, AIA Urban Design Committee, and an active local pedestrian and bike advocate. His background is architecture, urban design and regional planning and has been heavily involved in building local connections between diverse organizations.*

# A NEIGHBORHOOD DIVIDED



**NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES ARE DIVIDED**

**South**

- Developable land (most)
- Higher density housing
- Post Office
- Cathedral Park
- Shrunk tower (HUD)
- Auto-oriented businesses
- Most transit stops (bus)
- Upper income demographic that is key to supporting local business
- Police Precinct



**North**

- Schools (all)
- Community center
- Medical clinic
- Child care (most)
- Business district
- Doctors' offices
- Most churches
- Pier Park
- YWCA
- Fire Station

# CITIZEN FACTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## FACTS:

- During peak hours 85% of trucks on the St. Johns Bridge are short cutting I-5 to SW Washington.
- During peak hours 33% have hazardous cargo, most are gasoline and chemical tankers.
- Present truck traffic is very dangerous to school children and the elderly pedestrians.
- The present truck traffic has a Negative impact on business and neighborhoods.
- Truck traffic will double in the next decade.
- There are many viable alternatives beside th recommended bandaid approach.
- Closing the bridge to large trucks will keep the truck traffic to 15%.

## RECOMMENDATION:

- **REPAIR THE ST. JOHNS BRIDGE NOW;**
- **NO LARGE TRUCKS ON BRIDGE;**
- **ESTABLISH WEIGHT LIMITS OF 18,000 LBS.**

Please consider all the alternatives and alternative routes. For example:

1. Build a new bridge from Highway 30 to Rivergate.
2. Construct a water level route from I-5 – Swan Island – University Portland – Railroad cut to Columbia Blvd.
3. Build a water level route into Swan Island from Terminal 4.

IN OTHER WORDS, put all the marbles on table when this problem is addressed.

- Allow process to be guided by objective design/planning firm who will keep scope broad and equal among users and residents.
- Allow all transportation changes to be discussed in public eye and as part of whole picture.
- This esential cost free alternative will end hazardous cargo trucks from our neighborhood. Make our streets safe.
- Help local business recapture resident shoppers through “More Safe Streets”.

**SHOULD THE CITY NOT ACCEPT THE SAFEST AND COST FREE ALTERNATIVE (No trucks over 18,000 Lbs. on the St. Johns Bridge), THE CITIZENS' RECOMMENDATION WOULD THEN BE AS FOLLOWS:**

- Implement the recommendations in the attached "Study of the Pedestrian Realm and Multi-Modal Access in the St. Johns Town Center" master plan in full, not just for the purpose of speeding trucks through the neighborhood. (Pedestrian Safety should have been considered in the majority report. Safety and Pedestrian should have been addressed first, then the majority report should have considered the health and viability of the community.)
- Establish maximum speeds on Ivanhoe, and implement pedestrian safety improvements. For example:
  - Maximum 20 mph (enforced all hours) from St. Johns Bridge past Pier Park Annex. (West)
  - Maximum 25 mph (enforced all hours) from St. Johns Bridge past Oswego. (East)
- Pedestrian activated crossings at Philadelphia and Ivanhoe, St. Louis and Lombard, Baltimore and Lombard, Reno and Lombard
- Pedestrian activated crossings also at Charleston and Ivanhoe and Charleston and Lombard
- Shorter crossing distances, or provide alternate at Philadelphia and Ivanhoe (both sides!)
- Square up corners (min 15' radius)
- Build roundabout off bridge at Philadelphia and Ivanhoe. (At least it will allow visitors to see how to get into St. Johns Business District), and provide a safe place for tourists to take photos of our beautiful bridge without getting killed.
- Make it easier on the pedestrian to cross the public right of way within the Pedestrian District.

**Thank you for taking the time to consider our neighborhood.**