Highway Teardowns

*Portland: A Case Study*

Reinventing Older Communities Conference

“How Does Place Matter”

Philadelphia, PA

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Portland Then and Now

Historic precedents
- 1903 Olmstead Plan
- Street patterns (1840s – 1940s )
- Wagon trails (1840s – present)

The Robert Moses Plan (1940s) – a radical vision
Historic Precedents | Wagon Trails to Streetcars

1840s-1940s

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Courtesy Oregon Historical Society
Map showing original grid of 200 foot square blocks
Historic Precedents | 1903 Olmstead Plan

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Historic Precedents | Light Rail System

Portland Regional Light Rail System

Legend
- MAX
- Interstate MAX (open 2004)
- South Transit Corridor
- Future Corridors & Extensions
The Robert Moses Plan (1940s)
Three Case Studies

The freeway:
- Avoided
- Removed
- Relocated
The Freeway Avoided

Proposed Mount Hood Freeway (1968)

- Proposal
- Citizen activism
- Political leadership (local/state/federal)
- Funds converted to first light rail system
- Influence on shape of region
The Freeway Avoided | Proposal

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The Freeway Avoided | Citizen Activism
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The Freeway Avoided | Light Rail System
The Highway Removed

Downtown Waterfront (1973)
- Historic development of waterfront
- 1972 Downtown Plan & the urban renaissance
- Political leadership (local/business/governor)
- Downtown waterfront today – urban “front yard”
- Water quality/watershed values
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The Highway Removed | Leadership
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The Freeway Relocated

The Central City Loop (1990 – 2025)

- The Loop System
- Present conditions
  - Rush hour on Marquam Bridge
  - East Bank Esplanade
- 2004-05 Study
  - Findings
  - Alternatives/costs
  - Development (?)
  - Challenges & next steps
The Freeway Relocated | Loop System

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The Freeway Relocated | Present Conditions

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The Freeway Relocated | 2004-05 Study

- The Freeway Loop should remain even if major design changes are made to accommodate increased travel demand and other community objectives.
- The Loop’s ability to move people and goods is critical to the economies of Portland, the region, Oregon and the West Coast.
- The current design of the Loop hinders high quality urban development.
- Long-term transportation, environmental, and land use decisions must be coordinated.
- Without major improvements, the Freeway Loop cannot meet future regional travel needs.
- System improvements will require significant investments unavailable from existing resources. Costs could range from several hundred million to several billion dollars.
The Freeway Relocated | Alternatives

Modest Improvements

$275-$450 million

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Full Tunnel
$3.0-5.8 billion
The Freeway Relocated | Alternatives

One-Way Tunnel
$450 million

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The Freeway Relocated | Development Opportunities

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The Freeway Relocated | Development Opportunities

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Challenges and next steps

- Freight priority/incremental fixes
- Costs/federal share, local share/urban renewal
- Need for new federal program