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Subject: Testimony re streets, and pedestrian/bikes (5/20/19 agenda items for WACP)

Planning Commissioners,

I serve as the Coordinator for the Housing Committee of the Aging in the Gorge Alliance, and wish to offer the following testimony for your consideration of the WACP's Streets Framework and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Framework.

The AGA is a Gorge-area grassroots group whose mission is to promote and foster the wellbeing of elders, people with disabilities, and their caregivers; and to promote and foster education and advocacy about elders, people with disabilities, and their caregivers." Established in 2015, the AGA works with governments, businesses, nonprofits, faith communities, and others to enhance planning and services for elders, people with disabilities, and caregivers residing in the Columbia River Gorge area. The focus of the Housing Committee is specifically low-income elders.

In consideration of streets in the WACP, we advocate for non-major neighborhood streets to be "friendly" for pedestrians and bicycle use, and major area streets to be planned for future fixed-route bus service. One of the guiding principles for WACP is to "plan land uses and transportation facilities so the area may be served by fixed route transit in the future," and we endorse this principle. We also endorse using neighborhood traffic management tools for "traffic calming" – maybe lowering the number of cars taking a given route, and lowering the speed of cars to be safer and more inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Regarding pedestrian & bicycle issues, we want the Westside area to be safely walkable and bikeable, with on-street and off-street paths connecting neighborhoods to local green spaces and services. The "Vision & Guiding Principles of the WACP," approved at the beginning of the planning process in 2016 by both the Project Advisory and Technical Advisory Committees, calls for "streets, trails, and paths that are walkable, connected, and green." This is part of a high "livability" scenario that we want to see in the WAP, as it promotes a healthy lifestyle, and accommodates the many people who don't drive – children, teens, older adults, disabled, those who can't afford a car, and those without a license. In addition, pedestrian connection to commercial/mixed use areas is good for both residents and nearby businesses, and lessens car traffic and parking problems.

Thank you all for your consideration of this testimony, and for your important work on the planning for the Westside area.

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