

# The Oregonian

EDITORIAL A change in gears to boost **freight** savvy for the long haul  
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SUMMARY: It's not glamorous, but it's essential

for the city to plan for more efficient truck traffic

You know, of course, that Portland is a walking town, a biking town and a light-rail-takin' town. These are visible parts of Portland's success, all of which attract tourists and newcomers and boost our city's razzle-dazzle personality as well as its day-to-day functioning. What you may not know is less glamorous, but no less crucial:

Portland is a trucking town.

Although our **freight** industry involves far more than trucks, of course, expeditious truck travel is vital to the city's prosperity. Yet recently, even Portland transportation planners have sometimes failed to take the dimensions of trucks into account.

Even today, too few government officials recognize that our economy depends on the bread-and-butter jobs that the region's **freight** and transportation industries provide. A new **freight** strategy, developed with help from private-sector **freight** professionals and scheduled for adoption by the Portland City Council this week, delivers an impressive new shipment of facts:

\* Portland has long been an important trade center. Today, only the Los Angeles, Seattle and San Francisco areas rank ahead of Portland as West Coast hubs for international and domestic trade.

\* Economically, Portland depends far more on the swift dispatch of **freight** than most American cities do. One out of nine jobs in our region is tied to **freight** and transportation-related industries.

\* Demand for **freight** shipments is increasing each year, with Internet sales only boosting the demand, not decreasing it. By 2030, the value of shipments into, out of and around the Portland area is projected to surpass \$800 billion, up from \$350 billion in 1997.

As gas prices hit \$3 per gallon, it's not just individual motorists rethinking their way of getting around the region. Businesses are, too. And as an understanding of the region's **freight** economy dawns on more Portlanders, more will awaken to the inefficiency of gratuitous single-occupancy vehicle trips, chewing up road capacity that the economy

needs.

That's what the Netherlands concluded many years ago, driving the country to create a bike-friendly system, taking cars off the roads, freeing precious road capacity for trucks that are vital to the economy. In Portland, some motorists and bicyclists still view each other as adversaries. Last year, when a Portland delegation visited the Netherlands, Dutch officials found that baffling.

Why be at odds? In the Netherlands, people view the transportation system as all working, or maybe we should say rolling, together.

There's no question Portland needs to do a better job of prioritizing transportation improvements that help to move **freight**. But it would be wonderful if the city's new **freight** plan also helped change our gears, and our minds, in other directions, too.

It should increase our sophistication about how all the region's transportation modes, glamorous and nitty-gritty, fit together --and enhance each other.

ILLUSTRATION: Photo by The Oregonian

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