



METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT
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Mike Burton
COUNCILOR
DISTRICT 12

"In My Opinion" Editor
The Oregonian
1320 S.W. Broadway
Portland, Oregon 97201

Dear Editor:

Enclosed is an article for your editorial
consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Burton
Mike Burton

OPINION

There are times when the Columbia River between Portland and Vancouver looms as wide as the Pacific Ocean. Cooperative efforts on one part of government and business in the Portland and Vancouver metropolitan area is often, at best, an afterthought. Yet both "sides" of the river are inevitably linked and is, in fact, one regional area which must begin to find ways to address common problems. I recently completed chairing a Bi-State Task Force to examine congestion problems on Interstate 5 between Portland and Vancouver and to look at the possibility of building a third bridge in the corridor. The Task Force was made up of elected and appointed officials from Oregon and Washington appointed by their respective Governors. The transportation system (I-5 and I-205) is the most obvious link between the two sides of the river. But it became evident from the beginning of the work of the Task Force that there were other common interests and concerns.

As the Task Force began to examine the transportation problem they also had to look at population growth patterns, potential economic development and commercial growth. This in turn forces consideration of land-use regulations and zoning, effects on air quality, and the potential for delivery of urban services--which in turn raises the issue of financing capital investments to provide the necessary services.

Out of these discussions several factors became evident:

- Vancouver and Clark County will experience high growth over the next decade. In spite of Mount St. Helens,

available land for both residential growth and economic expansion places the Vancouver/Clark County area in a positive growth situation.

- The area with the greatest potential for economic and residential growth on the Portland side is in East Multnomah County. This will place pressure for greater interstate cooperation for services (transit systems and others) along the I-205 corridor.
- Because of the growth, almost as many people will eventually travel from Portland to Vancouver to work as now travel from Vancouver to Portland to work.

This is not especially new information. Planners and government officials on either side have long been aware of these potentials. Unfortunately, in spite of this basic knowledge, the two sides operate more in a competitive mode than a cooperative one. For example:

- Each "side" has its own Metropolitan Planning Organization; thus, competing for much of the federal funds available to the area.
- We have the odd experience of two, essentially competing ports (Port of Portland, Port of Vancouver) within a home run hit distance of one another. (Some might argue that this competition is healthy, but with the real competition being Seattle, wouldn't the people of this region be better served through cooperation?)

The situation also creates inequities:

- The requirement for a long distance toll call between Portland and Vancouver--a shorter distance than between Portland and Hillsboro which is not a long distance call.
- People who live in Washington but work in Oregon must pay Oregon income tax. Oregon residents who shop in Washington do not have to pay Washington sales tax on certain items purchased there. Oregon residents working in and earning income in Vancouver must still pay Oregon income tax.

And, there are many other examples.

Many of these issues could be resolved if officials on both sides would begin to address them as common issues. An example may be cited in solid waste. Presently both the Vancouver area and Portland area are faced with a crisis: The rapidly deminishing availability of landfill for solid waste. A proposed resource recovery plan (to produce energy) is on the drawing board for the Portland area. But, the amount of waste to make the plant economically feasible is about 150,000 tons per annum short. A resource recovery plant for the Vancouver area is some years in the future, yet that area creates about 150,000 tons per year. The potential for cooperation here is evident.

But just as no one wants anyone else's garbage, no one seems willing to share anyone elses potential economic growth. Still, it is evident to anyone that the people of Vancouver/Clark County and the Portland metropolitan area are people of one region. They share a common economic base, labor pool, transportation linkage, recreational areas, airshed and many other concerns. Cooperation is

occurring in some areas: addressing the Columbia Gorge question and transportation issues are examples.

Many problems, not the least of which are two sets of laws, must be addressed before total cooperation can be achieved. But many examples of such cooperation exist in other states and much can be learned by such examples.

The fact is that the citizens of Vancouver/Clark County and the Portland metropolitan area would be better served if their elected and appointed officials worked on a much more cooperative basis. I am not suggesting we plunge in and begin dismantling existing laws and structures, but I feel we must recognize that we are inexorably tied to one another's apron strings. We share a common destiny and must begin to find ways to address those issues which affect all of us.

Mike Burton

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