

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS | December 2008

Robert Liberty
represents
District 6, which
includes portions of
Northeast, Southeast
and Southwest
Portland.



After a century of waiting we have another urban President

When was the last time we had a President with a real urban background, someone who lived in, and cared about, cities?

We have to go back a century to Teddy Roosevelt, who grew up in the Gramercy neighborhood of New York City, represented a part of Manhattan in the New York State Assembly and was a Republican candidate for mayor of New York.

But the US was a far more rural country when Teddy Roosevelt was President. Today most Americans live in urban regions with populations of 1 million or more.

Barack Obama grew up in the cosmopolitan city of Honolulu. His university studies took him to Los Angeles, New York and Boston. Obama moved to Chicago to become director of a nonprofit organization working to spur development in poor urban neighborhoods. The rest of his legal and political career was made in Chicago.

As a Presidential candidate Barack Obama, issued an urban policy white paper that promised to “implement a regional development agenda that utilizes and strengthens the considerable assets of our urban centers. These investments will bolster America’s long-term competitiveness in a globalized economy, and ensure long-term prosperity for all Americans.” (<http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/UrbanFactSheet.pdf>)

Obama stated what many of us have known, but few Federal officials (with the notable exception of Congressman Earl Blumenauer) have stated publicly: “...many federal programs inadvertently undermine cities and regions by encouraging inefficient and costly patterns of development ...”

He promised to “re-evaluate the transportation funding process to ensure that smart growth considerations are taken into account” and to “ensure that more Metropolitan Planning Organizations create policies to incentivize greater bicycle and pedestrian usage of roads and sidewalks...” He will “re-commit federal resources to public mass transportation projects across the country.”

Obama also endorsed the creation of a National Infrastructure Bank and supports “an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to develop affordable housing in mixed-income neighborhoods.” To coordinate these efforts, Obama has promised to create a “White House Office of Urban Policy to develop a strategy for metropolitan America,” an office that will report directly to him.

Our President-elect faces an economy in crisis, two foreign wars and the continuing threat of terrorism. He will have only limited time - and money - to devote to metropolitan issues.

But finally, after a century, we have a President who has a strong intellectual and emotional connection to the urban places where most Americans live and work. I trust him to gather people of like mind to address the challenges and opportunities in our nation’s urban regions.

Our own region, like the nation, will be the better for it.



www.oregonmetro.gov

The sweating polar bear

For the past three years I have enjoyed playing the role of Rocky the Mountain Goat for a night or two as part of the Zoolights holiday event at the Oregon Zoo. In my silent, but animated role as Rocky, both children and adults have said and done things that amused, astounded and confounded me.

Alas, Rocky's hide and head must be retired (perhaps I wore them out). I will miss Rocky, who reminded me of the alpine regions of the Cascades that I love.

This year I will be a polar bear, an impressive and elegant white-haired giant. It is certainly a flattering role. On the other hand, Oregon Zoo Director Tony Vecchio tells me that the outfit is extremely hot, whereas Rocky's thin and tattered coat was quite comfortable in December's brisk breezes.

I will simply have to embrace my new role - a sweating polar bear - as a good symbol of the threat of global climate change.

Happy Holidays.

– Robert Liberty



High Capacity Transit System Plan enters screening phase – District 6

Feedback from residents, businesses, community organizations and elected officials identified 192 potential connections in approximately 55 corridors around the region. Suggestions were requested as part of the update to the Regional High Capacity Transit System Plan. Metro is currently working to screen and evaluate viable corridors for the next phase of public review and input.

The system plan will help to prioritize high capacity transit investments in new corridors and changes to existing corridors over the next 30 years, and informs Metro where the best locations for major rail and bus transit capital investments based on evaluation criteria derived from the Regional Transportation Plan are.

During July through November, more than 50 stakeholders were interviewed, more than 150 people attended public workshops and more than 200 people were informed about the project and offered suggestions at farmers markets and other public events. More than 200 people participated in an interactive questionnaire on Metro's web site from Aug. 12 to Oct. 1, 2008. District 6 was represented by online survey respondents; participants at the Lents International Farmers Market; and interviews with the Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations, Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland Community College, Portland Public Schools and Elders in Action.

In spring 2009, Metro will share evaluation results with the public and begin discussing tradeoffs, choices and priorities. An interactive web survey and other public outreach events will happen at this time.

To learn more about the system plan or to sign up for project updates, visit www.oregonmetro.gov/goingplaces.

Beijing impressions

At the end of October I traveled to Beijing to address 50 mayors and vice mayors from around China about aspects of the Portland metro area's planning experience, courtesy of the Harmony Foundation of Vancouver BC. My impressions from that trip as well as some photos of China's second largest city can be found on my website:

<http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=15765>.

Metro Councilor Inauguration invite

Please join in attendance at the Oregon Zoo for the Metro Council Inauguration of Councilors Liberty, Collette, Burkholder and Hosticka on January 8, 2009 from 4 to 6 p.m. For more information, please call the Metro Council Office at 503-797-1540.

Councilor Robert Liberty contact information

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232
503-797-1552 | 503-797-1793 fax
robert.liberty@oregonmetro.gov

Ina Zucker, policy coordinator
503-797-1543
ina.zucker@oregonmetro.gov

About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

Your Metro representatives

Metro Council President
David Bragdon

Metro Councilors
Rod Park, District 1
Carlotta Collette, District 2
Carl Hosticka, District 3
Kathryn Harrington, District 4
Rex Burkholder, District 5
Robert Liberty, District 6

Auditor
Suzanne Flynn