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METRO'S FUTURE

Thank you, Chair Myers, for inviting me to discuss Metro's future with you and your colleagues.

As a former Metro councilor, and currently a commissioner for Multnomah County, I have participated in the workings of regional political systems for ten years. The only conclusion a thinking person can make, if they have been directly involved in regional problem solving, is that the current system is slow, expensive, and incapable of dealing with the explosive growth facing the metropolitan area.

My best advice to you is give Metro sweeping power to define and solve regional problems. Trust the voters to elect wise people with regional vision and empower them to find regional solutions. To do less, is to invite disaster.

Why Metro? Only Metro speaks for every voter in the region. And, Metro executives and most councilors quickly develop a sense of responsibility for the entire region. Simply put, it is their job to do so and most rise to it. Local officials have a completely different job, and that is to address local problems and concerns in a cost effective, timely manner. To expect them to expend time, effort and treasure SOLVING REGIONAL ISSUES that are of a low PRIORITY IN THEIR LOCALITY, IS NAIVE and UNREALISTIC.

The nature of regional problems is that they seldom impact the whole region at the same time, or to the same degree. Transportation issues are currently critical in Washington County, but are minor in North Portland. On the other hand, crime and gang violence are major concerns in city neighborhoods. Both problems have, however, serious regional implications. But, local officials are reluctant to deal with "other peoples' problems" until there is enormous impact across the region. By then, the issues are much more expensive to handle, or worse -- unsolvable.

The new Metro Charter must be flexible so Metro can define regional problems and issues as they occur. No one, at this

time, is advocating that Metro play a major role in the field of public health. However, AIDS may necessitate a regional strategy. Could Metro save lives by working with local health agencies to create a functional plan for AIDS prevention? Are other approaches viable? Perhaps -- but don't preclude Metro as the possible agency for solution to any problem.

Would Metro abuse its authority? Why? If local government can solve a problem, it will. Metro will and should have plenty to do. But let Metro with its regional vision and responsibility judge what is truly of regional import, rather than local officials who are charged to look only within their limited boundaries and budgets.

My great-grandparents arrived in Washington County one hundred, twenty years ago. My grandfather helped dig Lake Oswego. As a boy, my father delivered The Sunday Oregonian by pony cart from Hillsdale to Scholls -- he had twenty-seven customers. The Tigard Grade School District had to add a second school bus the year that I started first grade. Just thirty years ago, Tigard, Beaverton, Gresham were very separate entities; Portland had defined limits. This is no more. From Forest Grove to Troutdale, from Orchards to Oregon City, one entity has emerged ... One economy ... One set of problems, albeit in differing degrees ... One set of common resources.

Metro, and only Metro, can bring together all the region's resources and focus them on COMMON PROBLEMS. This REGION WILL GROW, and if HISTORY REFLECTS the future, the growth will be unimaginable. The PROBLEMS, TOO. But, IF YOU CREATE A STRONG METRO, WE CAN BRING ABOUT THE CREATIVE ENERGY OF THE ENTIRE REGION TO MANAGE OUR INEVITABLE GROWTH, AND TO SOLVE URBAN PROBLEMS WHILE THEY ARE STILL SOLVABLE.



Testimony of Sharron Kelley

Metro Charter Committee

August 22, 1991

I would like to share with you some principles which I believe should guide your view of how Metro fits into the arrangement of local governance and some examples of how these general principles apply to the division of services.

It is useful to divide local public services into two primary categories. The first category consists of those services which address public safety and social problems: this category includes police, fire, jails, community corrections, prosecution, juvenile detention and probation, health services, and social services such as alcohol and drug treatment, mental health, and aging services.

The second category consists of those services which maintain and enhance the quality of life or development of the community: this category includes economic development, the zoo, the library, the arts, parks, open space, land use planning, transportation, water, sewers, and solid waste.

This division of services represents a useful approach to some of the issues this committee faces because there is a compelling logic to segregating at an organizational level the local public agencies which focus on the public safety package from the local public agencies which focus on community development and quality of life services. Such a division promotes organizational unity of purpose - which would be either community development or public safety. It also permits the resources set aside for each purpose to be focused on the steps which will best advance the objective.

The problems of the absence of such an organizational division include some very difficult apples versus oranges decisions that local elected officials face, and the risk faced by certain services such as parks and libraries, as they must compete at the city level with police and fire, and at the county level with jails and human services.

The current array of services that Metro provides -- the zoo, spectator facilities, growth management and solid waste -- identify Metro as an agency of the second category, providing

services directed primarily at quality of life and community development.

My experience with Multnomah County, a county with a disproportionate share of the social service and public safety burden within the region, has led me to the firm conclusion that the region and the county with both benefit if Metro expands its role as a community development provider, allowing the county to focus its resources on addressing social problems.

Under such an approach, Metro should maintain its current responsibilities and take on the following related roles: first, the funding and development of a regional park system; second, the funding and enhancement of the three-county library system; third, regionwide emergency planning; fourth, the funding of the arts; and fifth, land use planning responsibilities outside the urban growth boundary. This would give Metro an array of services consisting of growth management planning, emergency planning, transportation planning, land use planning, solid waste, the zoo, regional parks, open space, libraries, the arts, spectator facilities, and the Convention Center.

The recommendation that Metro play a role in land use planning within the three counties outside the urban growth boundary is not commonly made and merits further justification here. In Multnomah County, its department of land use planning is very small and this has inspired suggestions that it merge into that of a city. The primary function for the land use planning department at Multnomah County is the maintenance of resource lands outside the urban growth boundary, a function which is not a primary purpose of city or urban land use planning agencies. This is a function which matches the land use planning activities of the other two counties outside the urban growth boundary, and fits well with the role of Metro in setting the urban growth boundary. The responsibility of Metro for growth management and the protection of open spaces can logically extend to include the preservation of farm and forest uses. Further, Metro can provide direct, elected representation for the affected rural areas, which would prevent the disenfranchisement that would occur if the counties contracted with the cities for land use planning. One interim approach to such a role for Metro would be to consolidate staffing for these land use approvals while initially leaving the actual land use decisions to the counties.

Let me conclude by noting that our land use patterns have created a single Portland metropolitan region whose borders are of far more significance than those which divide the cities and

the counties. The future of this region will be promoted best by a government, Metro, whose boundaries reflect the region.

The need for a regional government is more clear and immediate in Multnomah County than in Clackamas or Washington counties; this factor has always posed a significant barrier to some who say that, at least initially, the distribution of the services mentioned in my testimony would be inequitable. But I would not let such arguments derail you; figure out the services that it makes sense for the region for Metro to provide, and in the long run, the distribution of these services within the region will be equitable, as Metro responds to the needs.

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