

April 23, 2020

Jeff Schumacher
SCAN chair, 2019-20
1945 W Nob Hill St. SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

Re: *Motion from Councilor Nordyke regarding a potential trail connection between Rural and Hoyt Avenues S in the vicinity of the Pioneer Cemetery.*

The South Central Association of Neighbors supports a pedestrian connection between upper Rural and upper Hoyt. This connection is mentioned in the City's Transportation System Plan as needing further study to determine the final location and design - *SCAN supports the City undertaking this further study now with the ultimate goal of connecting the Fairmount Hill neighbors with the Candalaria neighbors.*

In my time on the SCAN board - about six years - the vast majority of our board members have supported the possible connection of Rural Avenue to Hoyt Street along the western border of Pioneer Cemetery. Most recently, SCAN passed a motion of support for this connection at our November 13, 2019 meeting. There were ten votes in favor and zero against this motion.

I've also been asked to convey the support of many individual Fairmount Hill neighbors. When this request was made we were anticipating an in-person hearing rather than a virtual meeting with no live testimony (and our goal was to avoid repetitive testimony). However, I will still briefly summarize some of the many points supporting this connection through City property that will benefit two neighborhoods.

Initially, it is worth noting that this issue has come up before. I haven't been around for the entire history but my sense is this issue has been resurrected because a connection between upper Rural and Hoyt has long-standing support from many neighbors and it is inherently a good idea.

We should have safe, convenient ways to move around our City without driving. This connection would allow parents in Candalaria to easily access Fairmount Hill Playground. It would allow Fairmount Hill neighbors easy access to the commercial corridor - from the FedEx Office store to Roth's Vista Market to Venti's and more. The connection may not make a

measurable difference in traffic counts along Commercial Street but it would have a measurable impact in quality of life for those neighbors in Candalaria and Fairmont Hill that would enjoy convenient walking access to a few of Salem's amenities.

Currently, if a neighbor travels between Fairmount Hill and Candalaria without a car there are no great options. Walking along Commercial Street is thoroughly unpleasant, and made extra unpleasant if you have kids. Being near fast moving cars - while on foot - is uncomfortable for many people, and the road noise makes conversations difficult or impossible. Another option, and one that has been cited by opponents of this connection at Pioneer Cemetery, is the Fairmount Park trail. This trail heads west from Fairmount City Park and drops down to Crestview (just above River Road). This trail is hardly a substitute for a connection at Pioneer Cemetery as it is neither a direct nor convenient connection between Fairmount Hill and the heart of the Candalaria neighborhood (to say nothing of connecting Fairmount to the Commercial corridor).

Regarding Pioneer Cemetery, I should point out that every person I spoke to who wants this connection along or through Pioneer Cemetery has a deep appreciation for the Cemetery. It is universally admired, and its preservation is incredibly important to these neighbors. However, preserving the Cemetery is not necessarily contrary to also wanting to improve the Cemetery. It is important for our neighborhoods to evolve - even historic neighborhoods. We shouldn't put old things in a time capsule, and we can preserve Pioneer Cemetery while still increasing access to it in a way that both benefits its adjacent neighbors and also adds awareness and vitality to the Cemetery and its important role in our City's history.

In regards to Pioneer Cemetery's historic status it is important to consider some context. First, it is surrounded by a chain link fence that was installed in the 1980s. As I understand it, this fence was installed as a reaction to some serious vandalism. Second, there is a road for cars into the Cemetery. In fact, the road does a loop through the Cemetery. Adding a connection for pedestrians - which would allow a north/south connection from Hoyt to Rural - may upset some people that value keeping Pioneer Cemetery exactly how it is but I would submit the Cemetery has always been subject to change. And allowing people to traverse it on foot strikes me as far more historically accurate than allowing cars or installing chain link fences.

Finally, I think it is important to acknowledge that some of the risks mentioned by those opposed to this connection have cited do exist. There are risks to headstones toppling over, there are risks to encroachment onto grave sites, there are risks of vandalism. All of these risks currently exist, and if pedestrians are allowed to cross into Pioneer Cemetery at that northwest corner it is possible that those risks would be increased. But those risks are also being managed - there is no reason to think we cannot continue to effectively control and mitigate those risks.

And there is a chance that increased access to Pioneer Cemetery would actually decrease the risks; more people using a gate through the Cemetery could mean more people would help keep inappropriate behaviors at bay. And just as importantly, increased access could mean more people will learn about Pioneer Cemetery, its important place in our City's history, and the value to our community in preserving it.

The City staff should determine what options are available to make this connection a reality.

On behalf of SCAN and neighbors in support of this connection, thank you for your consideration.



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