

• S M I L E •

SELLWOOD MORELAND IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE
8210 SE 13th AVENUE, PORTLAND, OR 97202
STATION 503-234-3570 • CHURCH 503-233-1497

August 22, 2019

Director Chris Warner
Portland Bureau of Transportation
1120 SW 5th Avenue, Suite 800
Portland, OR 97204

Rian Windsheimer, Regional Manager
Oregon Department of Transportation Region 1
123 NW Flanders St
Portland, OR

RE: Request to Close SE Eastbound Insley Street at Highway 99E (SE McLoughlin Boulevard)

Dear Messrs. Warner and Windsheimer:

On behalf of residents of the northernmost portion of the Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood in Portland, the Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League (“SMILE”) Board of Directors hereby requests that vehicular access between SE Insley Street and southbound State Highway 99E (SE McLoughlin Boulevard) be closed permanently due to serious safety and livability concerns as further described below:

- **Regional cut-through traffic has increased significantly** on SE Insley Street, which is designated by PBOT as a Local Service street. The secret is out is that southbound traffic from SE Milwaukie Avenue in the Brooklyn neighborhood can access Highway 99E south and avoid nearby traffic signals by cutting down SE Insley Street. In fact, Google Maps and other wayfinding applications are routinely sending traffic this way, regardless of traffic conditions (Figure 1). This ever-increasing cut-through traffic includes passenger vehicles, work vans, and even semi trucks (Figure 2). This cut-through traffic threatens the safety and livability of our neighborhood’s northernmost residential street.
- **Inadequate sight distance** at SE Insley Street and Highway 99E means that anyone who chooses to exit the neighborhood onto the highway here is putting their and others’ lives at risk. SE Insley Street terminates at an inside curve in the state highway, which has a posted speed limit of 45 mph (Figure 3). Making things worse, the southbound highway lanes merge from three lanes to two shortly after SE Insley Street, encouraging highway drivers to jockey for position. In fact, we often witness drag racing here as motorists pass the final traffic signal in the City of Portland (at SE 17th Avenue) and enter three miles of open road. Add in turning vehicles from SE Insley Street and SE Harold Street one block south, and it’s a recipe for disaster, especially if the pavement is wet or icy.

- **SE Insley Street is a neighborhood greenway** recently improved by PBOT to host family-friendly biking and walking on what is supposed to be a low-traffic, low-speed, low-stress street. As part of the larger 19th Avenue Greenway project, PBOT installed speed bumps and wayfinding on SE Insley Street between SE Milwaukie Avenue and SE 20th Avenue. Unfortunately, traffic and speeding has only worsened since the completion of the project, and greenway users are put at risk mixing with car commuters looking to save a few seconds by zipping down the street. These vulnerable users include not just regular bike commuters but an influx of families with children that now live on SE Insley Street. The north end of Sellwood-Moreland is seeing exceptional growth and development as apartments and duplexes fill in the multi-family zones here. These new residents are walking and biking on the SE Insley Street greenway, but many also own cars and are adding to the traffic exiting onto Highway 99E southbound.
- **ODOT extolls the virtues of access management** in numerous policy documents from the Oregon Highway Plan to the Oregon Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit. Reducing or consolidating local accesses to a major state highway has safety and efficiency benefits to users of the transportation system. Closing SE Insley Street at Highway 99E would be no exception, and would follow in the footsteps of another nearby local street access closure: ODOT closed access to Highway 99E northbound from SE Long Street in the Brooklyn neighborhood after similar safety and livability concerns from local residents. In the case of SE Insley Street, plentiful access to and from Highway 99E would remain in the area after our recommended closure, including from SE 18th Avenue, SE 19th Avenue, SE 20th Avenue and SE Harold Street. It should be noted that SE Harold Street also has dangerous sight distance at Highway 99E, but has the benefit of a traffic signal that could be augmented with a “no turn on red” sign for added safety.

For these reasons and others, the SMILE Board of Directors respectfully requests that PBOT and ODOT work together to close the SE Insley Street access to and from southbound Highway 99E. This request came to the SMILE Transportation Committee from concerned residents of SE Insley Street, and was discussed and approved at the June 2019 meeting of the SMILE Transportation Committee and the August 21, 2019 meeting of the SMILE Board of Directors. All of the above meetings were open to the public and widely advertised with this topic on the agenda, and no known dissent has been heard. We believe this is a common sense “Vision Zero” solution that will protect the lives of not just our neighborhood residents but also tens of thousands of regional commuters every day.

Sincerely,
Tyler Janzen



President, SMILE Board of Directors

Motion approved, 8-0

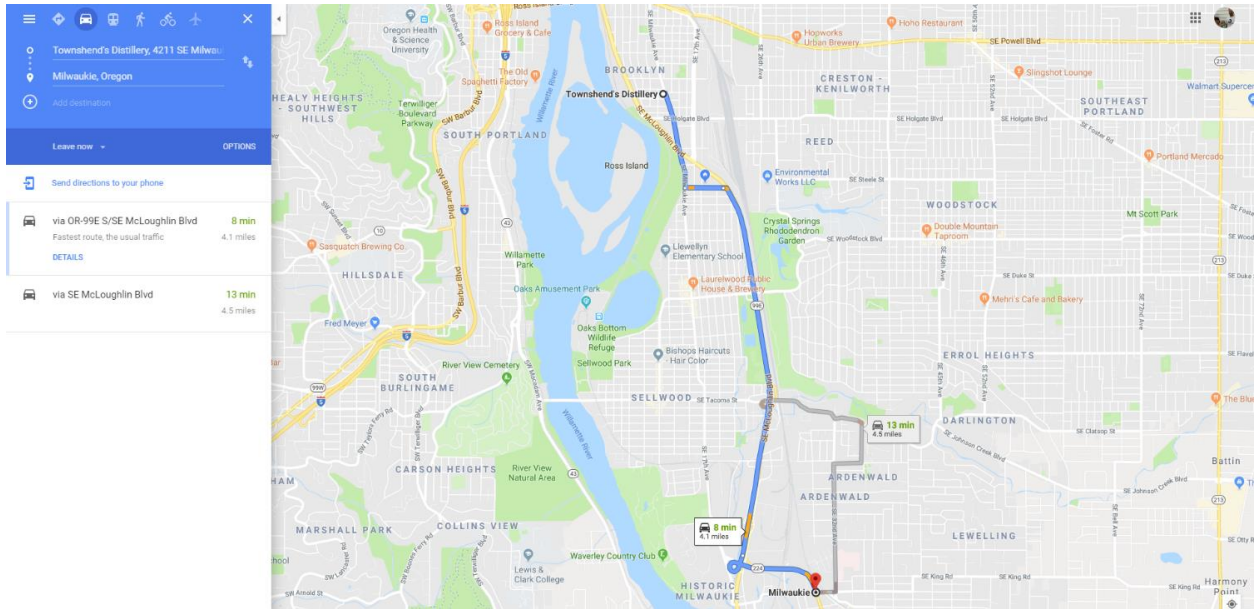


Figure 1: Google Maps routinely sends traffic from SE Milwaukie Avenue down SE Insley Street to reach southbound Highway 99E.



Figure 2: A big rig attempts to turn onto SE Insley Street from SE Milwaukie Avenue, potentially following navigation software to reach Highway 99E southbound.



Figure 3: Sight distance is poor for motorists pulling onto high-speed Highway 99E from SE Insley Street.