Proponents of Portland’s land use policies have suggested that:

- The core is gaining population share due to the policies. *In fact, the core is losing population share.*

- The core is gaining employment share due to the policies. *In fact, the core is losing employment share.*

- Traffic volumes are declining due to the policies. *In fact, traffic volumes continue to rise at least as strongly as would be expected in an economy as stagnant as Portland’s.*

**Population: Little Growth in the Core:** Between 2000 and 2004, the central city of Portland gained approximately 4,000 residents, compared to 132,000 in the suburbs. Portland’s share of growth was 3 percent, while the suburbs accounted for 97 percent of the growth.

**Employment: Most Growth is in the Suburbs:** US Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicates that since 1995, the greatest job growth has been in suburban Washington County and Clark County Washington. In 1995, the core Multnomah County, which includes the city of Portland, had 39 percent of the area’s employment. From 1995 to 2004, Multnomah County accounted for only 11 percent of the employment growth. Suburban areas accounted for 89 percent of the new employment. Since 2000, the Oregon side of the area has lost 20,500 jobs, of which 16,300 have been in Multnomah County. Clark County, Washington has gained 8,500 jobs. Clark County is exempt from Oregon’s land rationing (so-called “smart growth”) laws, which have been associated with skyrocketing housing prices and reduced affordability.
Traffic: Slower Traffic Growth Mirrors Depressed Employment Market: After having experienced extraordinary per capita automobile travel increases to the late 1990s, the rate of traffic volumes increased has declined. Nonetheless, traffic volumes continue to increase. Since 1990, Portland’s traffic congestion has deteriorated at a rate faster than all but four of the 38 urban areas with more than 1,000,000 population. The slowdown in traffic volumes appears to be directly related to Portland’s depressed economy. Traffic growth has continued to be above the rate of job creation (or loss). At the same time, the modes of travel that proponents of the Portland planning model favor, transit and walking, have lost market share. From 2000 to 2004, US Bureau of the Census surveys (the American Community Survey) indicate that in the three Oregon counties served by the Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District, the share of work trips on transit has declined from 7.6 percent to 7.2 percent. Walking has declined from 3.2 percent to 2.2 percent.
Population Growth
PORTLAND METROPOLITAN AREA: 2000-2004

Share of New Population
Data from Census Bureau

Suburbs: 97%
Portland: 3%

Share of Employment Growth
PORTLAND AREA: 1995-2004

Share of New Employment
Data from BLS

Washington Co.: 43%
Clark Co. (Washington): 43%
Clackamas Co.: 11%
Multnomah Co. (Core): 3%
Core v. Suburban Employment
PORTLAND: 1990-2004

Year on Year Change
Data from BLS

Employment & Driving from 1990
PORTLAND AREA

Change from 1990
Data from Texas Transportation Institute & USDOL BLS
Employment & Driving: Annual Change
PORTLAND AREA: 1990-2003

Year on Year Change
Data from Texas Transportation Institute & USDOL BLS

Employment & Driving

Driving →

Employment: →

Transit & Walking Work Trips
PORTLAND AREA MARKET SHARE: 2000-2004

Share of Work Trips: Oregon Only
Data from ACS

2000
2004