

Mel Packer

In 1965, I arrived in Pgh to study acting at Carnegie Tech, now CMU. I knew nothing about Pgh when I arrived, but even after quitting CMU, I knew Pgh was my home and bought my first home on Hazelwood Ave in 1972.

As a community activist, I learned early on that it is the rare public figure/politician who truly cares about the average worker, and this project simply reinforces that truth.

The Mon-Oakland Connector is a scam perpetrated by, run by, owned by, and sold to us by an unelected government, the wealthy foundations that make up Almono and aided by salespeople Bill Peduto and Karina Tricks.

Nothing about this project makes sense unless you are a wealthy educational/medical institution or a real estate developer. Our city is facing a massive budget shortfall and unless you live in Donald Trump's fantasy world, you know it's likely to get worse. But despite the clear need to redirect a vastly reduced budget to human needs, my city insists on spending almost \$20 million on a boondoggle that no community favors.

It costs too much to build. It eats up green space. It carries users at a cost per rider WAY beyond what it would cost Port Authority to extend and expand public transit service to Hazelwood residents. It's being executed without any democratic process except to ask residents which lights it would like on the roadways. It's called a trail when we all know it's a road. It's already too small to serve its planned capacity so, like the drug dealer who originally promises to only do small deals on one corner, we will very soon hear demands for expansion.

But lastly, if DOMI, the Foundations, and the Mayor had a single ounce of honesty in their being, they would admit that the bottom line of this project is to destroy The Run and the Panther/Junction Hollow communities to aid developers who will build upscale housing for some and student housing for others. Their secret plan is that gentrifying real estate developers will come along and buy out the families in those stable neighborhoods and/or that the city will use eminent domain to nibble away at the edges until residents give up and both communities become another Pgh Disneyland of shiny objects without a soul.

I tell you now that this is one Pgh resident who will do whatever it takes to prevent that from happening. And if that means joining with others to lie down in the paths of your bulldozers, so be it. I pledge to you. This.... shall not pass.