



Open House Comment Summary

May 12, 2004

5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

BF Day Elementary School
3921 Linden Avenue North

On May 12, 2004, the Seattle Department of Transportation hosted an evening Open House to update community members on the project's progress, share new information on community support measures, and provide an opportunity for residents and business owners to ask questions and provide feedback.

More than 120 community members did just that. SDOT collected comments on multiple project topics including bicycle and pedestrian issues, signalization and detour routes, aesthetic preferences and parking concerns.

Highlights

Bridge Design

- Public is generally supportive of the design work.
- Project should be viewed as an opportunity to improve bike and pedestrian access and safety.

Priorities

- Continue working on community support measures for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Improve signalization, turn lanes and lane striping to benefit cyclists and pedestrians.
- Provide adequate signage and notification of detours and bridge closures.
- Ensure adequate parking for residents and businesses during construction.

Concerns

- Reach out more to bicycle and business communities.
- Loss of parking could have negative impact on businesses.
- Construction should not interfere with events such as the annual parade.

Executive Summary

Signals and roadway

- Lengthen and more frequently activate the pedestrian phase at key intersections.
- Frequently cited intersections and roadways include:
 - 36th & Dayton – pedestrian signal timings are too long.
 - 36th & Evanston – pedestrian signal timings are too long; how will driveways of new building interact with new signal?
 - 36th & Fremont – need a traffic signal ASAP.
 - 34th & Fremont (northbound) – unsafe for cyclists due to left-turning vehicles; needs a striped bike lane and elimination of left-turn option.
 - 34th & Stone – unsafe for cyclists; the pedestrian crossing signals don't work; make bike lane a permanent fixture.
 - 36th – add traffic calming to accommodate side effects of new signals.
 - 99N – difficult to access from any part of Fremont west of Aurora.
 - Florentia & bridge – blind corner with cyclists and vehicles switching through lanes.

Detour routes and bridge closures

- Extend detour routes the entire length of the closure area.
- Put a striped bike lane north along Fremont to clarify cyclists right-of-way.
- Reduce bridge closures as much as possible with no bridge closures during December.
- Provide a water taxi rather than a shuttle during bridge closures.
- Create “no entry” to Evanston & 36th.
- Improve accommodations for increased bicycle use at 34th & Fremont.
- Keep the left-turn plan for 39th & Fremont temporary.
- Address what will happen to alley west of Whitman.
- Block detour traffic from Warren off Florentia. Drivers will cut through Warren via Queen Anne Drive to reach Aurora.
- Detour route down Westlake unworkable – Dexter and Denney are already congested.
- Direct traffic using detour routes to business district.

Signage

- Place signs on Queen Anne hill and Phinney Ridge to alert cyclists when bridge is closed so they can detour onto Aurora.

- Change “No Parking” signs on 34th between Fremont and Evanston to “No Stopping” to prevent loading/unloading in bicycle lane.
- Include directional signage to business district.
- Display signage on bridge telling people to turn cars off while bridge is up.

Aesthetics

- Support for “period” lighting option A.
- Point lights downwards to minimize light pollution.
- Improve pedestrian safety by installing pedestrian-level lighting.
- Support for Option B with a Jersey barricade to allow decorative railing, though there was concern this option would narrow the sidewalk.
- Use a local artist for decorative rails.
- Concern that a Jersey barricade might narrow roadway and sidewalk.
- Provide for hanging banners from the light poles.
- Consider a “night-sky” lighting option or solar-powered lights.
- Include artwork on the new maintenance building and in the sidewalk.

Parking and local access

- Do not eliminate parking and load/unload zone on 36th.
- Mandate contractors to park off-site/off-street.
- Put up signage to prevent vehicles from detouring through neighborhoods.

Summary Appendix

Transcriptions from comment forms and easel pads

Bike and pedestrian support measures

Detour and roadway suggestions

- Detour route for bicycles should extend the entire length of the closure area. Bicycle and right-hand turn conflicts at Florentia & Fremont need to be further addressed with clear markings providing bicycles the right-of-way through right-hand turns. At 34th & Fremont a striped bike lane north along Fremont to provide a right-of-way and clarity to bikes!
- Need to improve bike v. pedestrian conflict points: Fremont & 34th southwest corner and along 34th west of there; Fremont & 34th east side northbound.
- The bike commute across the bridge to Dexter needs to remain available. Left turn at 34th northbound already backs up. Please continue to restrict this turn after work project is complete.
- Regarding 34th & Fremont – the westbound signs are out-of-date, puzzling and ignored. This should be partially mitigated by the “bicycle box” during construction, but particular attention must be paid to car-bicycle interaction during construction and for permanent regulation post-construction.
- At present, the westbound north curb lane of 34th is the only lane permitted to continue westbound on 34th & Fremont Ave. This creates a conflict with the parking lane on 34th Ave between Fremont & Evanston. Meanwhile the left lane westbound on 34th is required to turn left, while a sign requiring vehicles in this lane to yield is ubiquitously ignored, and eastbound bicycles on 34th are constantly cut off by left-turning vehicles. The cars heading westbound and not turning must swerve around the parked cars west of Fremont. It appears to me that this traffic pattern was established when 34th between Fremont & Evanston was still two-way, but the signs were never changed after that block became one-way westbound. It should be changed as follows: the curb lane westbound should be right-turn only, so that cars in their lane must turn north onto Fremont Ave, and the left lane should be signed. This will remove the swerving around the parked cars and it may make the requirement to yield to a bicyclist more likely to be obeyed.
- Bicycles – What is happening on the new approach surface? Bike lanes? Ramps? Separation of modes of transport? What is happening at the corner of the bridge & Florentia? That corner is deadly to cyclists. Blind corner with cyclist and cars weaving lanes. Idea – abandon Florentia and make cars turn at Nickerson. The corner of Stone & 34th is unsafe for cyclists now. The ped/cyclist crossing lights don't activate for Burke-Gilman users. You are proposing more crossings of 34th – are the lights going to accommodate this? The overwhelming choice now for cyclists is an illegal crossing west of Stone.
- Thanks for considering the westbound bike lane on 34th, but consider the increased crossing of 34th at Stone. Make bike lane a permanent fixture.

- Use a warning light for vehicles southbound to be aware of bikes/peds crossing from Bridge to Dexter, before the vehicles take the right (west) on Florentia.
- Need to see the plan to address bicycle use combined with foot use during the NINE MONTH SINGLE SIDEWALK period. Just saying “East Sidewalk Open” is totally insufficient – need to see how the traffic flows are being planned. I hate being run down or crashing!
- Please keep Florentia open. You have addressed the cyclist crossing concerns very well by 1) more signage to warn motorists, 2) wider sidewalk, and 3) removing vegetation which blocks view of intersection.
- Dexter – northbound, just south of Nickerson-Westlake: widen/open up curb lane for room for bikes. Move transit shed or go east of shed. Also, push-button signals do not get decent compliance. Can’t find button? Don’t know button push needed.
- Please address bicycle/pedestrian traffic southbound on bridge’s west sidewalk where it crosses Florentia. Currently, bicycles are forced to enter the car lane right at the intersection of Florentia & Fremont Ave.
- Bikes must have a lane all the way to Fremont and across to the dinosaur. That area is far too congested for all the cycling activity and cars and parking. Bikes need to be protected. Bikes need to also be able to turn onto the Fremont Bridge.
- Totally inadequate accommodation for the dramatically increased bicycle use at Fremont & 34th. This is a key transportation route. Need to provide safe passage both eastbound and westbound across Fremont Ave. Current plan is inadequate.
- Can bike lane crossing bridge northbound be connected to 34th Street by widening existing curb line to accommodate bike lanes?
- Please provide good bikeways – many people commute to work on bikes via the bridge.
- Need to paint the bicycle lane on Fremont Ave northbound!
- Currently bicycles crossing Aurora northbound veer left onto Whitman to head north, but that would be blocked! Don’t do it.
- How are bicyclists supposed to get onto southbound Aurora sidewalk from Bridge Way west?! You are changing this intersection to be like 47th which is terrible for bicyclists crossing under Aurora from east to west!
- How can you remove eastbound bicycle underpass for bicyclists? Bicyclists must be able to have eastbound crossing under Aurora on a street or bike lane. Sidewalk is not good enough.
- Sweep sidewalks on Aurora Bridge.

- Keep the crosswalk at Fremont Place.

Water taxi

- Please have contractor budget for a water taxi. Costs will be minimal, i.e., staff and fuel if an existing taxi service is hired (Argosy?)
- Water taxis are a great option for bicyclists and pedestrians when bridge is closed.
- Gondola Project – We would like a foot ferry to cross the canal because the shuttle over Aurora will add an hour to each trip across the bridge.
- I would take a water taxi.
- Maintain pedestrian access on closure weekends with a water taxi.

Design suggestions

- Bicycle access on bridge approaches has not been adequately addressed.
- Going northbound at the north bascule, place candlesticks for the first 50-feet to protect northbound bicyclists from traffic diverging northbound toward 34th St ramp.
- Add bike ramp from southbound bike lane onto bridge sidewalk at bridge. Remove jersey barrier.
- Currently bikes must get onto sidewalk at old driveway ramp – moving access to straight-on ramp at bridge would be an improvement.
- Has the project team considered locating a pedestrian staircase on the south approach structure (southwest corner)? There are presently two staircase on the north approach structure but none on the south. I understand that the City has requested that the two existing staircases be replaced with wider staircases (to allow bicyclist to walk their backs down to the bike trail). Why not have a staircase on each end of the bridge? There are people who would like to get down to the Ship Canal Trail from the south end of the bridge. The existing concrete stair on the east side is in bad condition and the ramp on the west side (next to Ponti's) is a block away and not evident from the bridge.

Signalization

- Pedestrian light timings are too long at 36th & Dayton. Re the new signal at 36th & Evanston – this will be ignored by half the pedestrians who will ignore any red light condition and cross anyway. Needs signal interrupt at 90-120 seconds for pedestrians and bikes.

- Extend the walk signal going west bound on 34th so bikes can cross bridge before cars.
- Most decisions fairly good, other than pedestrian cross times. All are designed for low traffic old days, not the current, high-traffic times we live in.
- Signal at 34th & Stone does not work for pedestrians.
- Lights at 36th & Dayton and new light at 36th & Evanston are on too long. Pedestrian (and bike) overrides – more than half of all pedestrians crossing north to south and south to north ignore the red light/no walk and cross against the light. This is a high-volume pedestrian area and needs a 90-120 second pedestrian and bike override, not the 3+ minute ped signal that has a vehicle (car ?) interrupt for 90 seconds.
- Need faster 90-second bicyclist/pedestrian crossings for lights more like the vehicle override timings (also at 39th & Dayton).

Signage

- 34th between Fremont and Evanston change “No Parking” signs on south side (one-way bike lane) to “No Stopping” to keep delivery, cleaning and other trucks from “stopping or “loading” for 10-30 minutes in bike lane.

Other comments

- More focus and consideration is needed regarding bike and pedestrian access, improvements and additional benefits to make it easier for existing walkers and bikers, and to encourage more people out of their cars and onto bikes or their own two feet. This is a great opportunity.
- Was there any research into pedestrian and bike use of the bridge and adjoining intersections? If so, what changes are being planned, particularly the dangerous right turning cars at Florentia? The planned improvements are a step in the right direction, but have all alternatives been considered?
- Where is the data from your traffic study? How many cars use these intersections? How many cyclists use these intersections? Peds? How do these user groups use this place and how are you accommodating each group?
- Improve safety for bicycles!
- More focus on bikes and pedestrian use, and improvements in the twelve years I have lived here in Fremont I have seen a tremendous growth in combustion engine traffic growth and congestion. While during this time bike lanes and the Burke-Gilman Trail have been closed down due to car access and construction area staging. Focus on bikes! Get people out of cars and onto busses, bikes and their feet!!
- Bikes, walker, bus riders, pedestrians and local business focus and concentrate attention. Effort and “resources” to them. This is a great opportunity. Please make the best use of the approach improvement project.

- Please work closely with Cascade Bicycle Club representatives!
- Concerned that you are “still exploring bicycle improvements.” How can we make this, improvements, a reality?
- Bicyclists need to be accommodated all the way past PCC and Sound Mind & Body.
- How about a board showing bike routes, lines and trails? Focus attention on bike access, use and benefits.
- Where’s the bike plan (or street configuration) for the bridge approaches? We need to see the lane configuration.
- Bike, bike, bike, bike, bike... thank you for working to make it easier, better and accommodating to bike riders.
- General repair for cyclists: Improve catch basins – correct grates, raise to grade.
- Trim island at SE corner of bridge – it pushes cyclist into traffic.
- #15 all pedestrian walk? What is the meaning of this? Need direction signs to Fremont business district.

Aesthetics

General comments and suggestions

- Spend more money on safety and less on aesthetics.
- Need column structure to help define the corridor. Sculpture at the entrance. Define entrance to the bridge on ramp by columns, structures, art work.
- May have some art work on new maintenance building and in the sidewalk.

Lighting

- Lighting should be provided at human height for a feeling of neighborhood safety.
- The more artistic they can be, the better. The more surface lighting, the better. The more trees, the better. Slow traffic, control traffic and get people out of cars. Make it easier and better for pedestrians and bikers, and more will follow.
- Lighting should allow banners to hang. Period lighting is better.
- I like lighting Option A.
- I like lighting option C.
- I like the option to only have one type of lighting for sidewalk and roadway.
- Historic light fixtures!? Much preferable to cobra lights.
- Like those "period" light fixtures!!
- Prefer option A for lighting.
- Option A more pleasing for lighting.
- Install lights on the bridge on the structure or large light to show off the bridge for marine traffic and other.
- Light poles - need to be able to hang banners from them.
- I like option A with a more "period" feel.
- Need bright lights at bicycle/auto conflict points (e.g. Florentia & Fremont).
- Reduce light pollution – lights should face down.
- Lighting options – prefer combining street metal halide light from "A" with pedestrian light at curb from "C;" is it possible to attach ped light arm to street light on option "A"?; please use full cutoff fixtures and prevent light pollution.

- Lighting options: Option A is best of those offered. Prefer if would consider a “night sky” concept.
- Lighting options: I prefer C or A. A night-sky option (mentioned above) is worth considering. Solar-powered lights?
- Lighting option A is best complement to bridge style.
- Please do not put cobra head street lights on the approach structures. They will detract from the historic character of the bridge itself. Find a light fixture that is in character with the bridge.
- Is it necessary to put street lights on the bridge? How about just using pedestrian lights that are incorporated into the side railings for the approach structures?

Railing

- I like railing option B.
- Need flag/banner stanchions. Should have artistic and/or “old” feel.
- I like railing option B. Thanks for the info!
- Prefer option B for the railing with the barrier between the road and sidewalk.
- Jersey barricade with decorative fence makes sense from points of pedestrian safety and aesthetic value. Would it make sense to put decorative rail out for bids in local arts community? (See decorative rails outside Pete’s Coffee House)
- Option B appears better-looking as well as safer (railing).
- Don’t decrease the width of the sidewalk. It is heavily used by bikes and peds.
- Option B for railing more “decorative” is very good. What color? Silver or trim color. How about adding a “decorative” element to the “Freemont Bridge” sign? If sign must be retained due to its historical significance, how about framing it with a repeat of the “decorative” railing? Something that looks much better than this (what currently exists).
- Railing option B would make the sidewalk too narrow. Already the sidewalk is barely wide enough to avoid bike/pedestrian conflicts.
- Railing options – prefer option “B” maybe with ped light from lighting option “C” sitting on jersey barrier.
- I like the concrete barrier to protect pedestrians and cyclists from traffic.
- I don’t like the concrete barrier as a motorist; it makes me feel hemmed in and prone to colliding with it or ongoing car. Also, utilitarian concrete barrier takes away from historic feel.

- Barrier options: Prefer C.
- I like A for rail. Not fussy – utilitarian/simple.
- I would prefer a more decorative bridge railing as long as it isn't significantly more expensive than other, plainer options. One thing the city of my birth lacks is a sense of beauty in her permanent structures. Often they are utilitarian and drab. Look to older cities (East coast? Europe?) for examples of structures that please the eye as well as being function. Thank you!

Construction schedule

- No weekend closures during November or December – retail will greatly suffer.
- No closures at any time please except 12 midnight-6 a.m.
- Can weekend closings be minimized by evening work? During holidays (Jan/Feb best for retail)?
- No weekend closures during the month of December in consideration of holiday sales for local businesses.
- “Weekend” should be Monday-Tuesday during holiday season – who CARES about boaters???
- ♦ The Ship Canal is a federal waterway and boaters must be accommodated as well as commercial vessels. The marinas certainly care about boaters!!!
- ♦ Where will the parade floats under the north end of the bridge go and when do they return?

Construction impacts

Process and outreach

- ◆ Please work with businesses in a more open, honest manner than you did for the Westlake Project.
- ◆ Information kiosk: perhaps reader boards pointing out points of interest (on impervious surface – enamel or such).

When Mid-Mountain was doing the construction work on Westlake North -- a year-and-a-half-long project that caused continued disruptions in parking and traffic flow -- they handled the situation extremely well (after an admittedly rocky start) by appointing a neighborhood liaison officer. This officer then had an e-mail list of one representative for each address along the work site, and sent continued updates as to what disruptions and parking bans would be in enforcement when. Just as important, he explained why. The representative for each address then forwarded the email bulletins to everyone at their address. Thanks to this, what could have been a horrendous year and a half for those of living along Westlake North was made tolerable, while Mid-Mountain found it much easier to do their work with a cooperative neighborhood community. I would highly recommend using this system for the Fremont Bridge project.

Parking

- ◆ Mandate the contractor and sub-contractor they provide parking for all vehicles of workers and contractor truck so as not to overflow in business area and neighborhood.

Neighborhoods

- ◆ Clearly, traffic will back up on Fremont Avenue. The driving access to my condos and other condominiums and townhouses located SW of 39th and Fremont Avenue is the alley that is parallel with Fremont. This is a very steep, narrow two-way alley. We have found that when traffic backs up, people use our alley to avoid the "line". I'm concerned that our alley could become a thoroughfare during the repair period. Is it possible to put a "local access only" sign (or something similar) at the entrances to this alley?
- ◆ It seems you have no plan to address the cut through traffic on North Queen Anne. Specifically, Warren Ave North, which is the one street that can be used to go straight from Nickerson all the way to Queen Anne Drive and then to Aurora. This street is not an arterial and already faces a major traffic issue. I live on Warren and my neighbors have already been hard at work, conducting a traffic study, working with the city, Seattle Pacific University, and Seattle Country Day School to come up with a mutually agreed upon solution. Of most interest to you, we just completed a traffic study. The results are not yet in, but I'm sure they will be any day now. You can check our web site, www.qattraffic.com <<http://www.qattraffic.com/>> for the latest info. Please tell me if you would like more information about this issue. I can point you in to the correct folks who are in charge.

Design work

- ♦ Thanks for resisting the temptation to redesign it! It looks good now – just do a nice re-creation!
- ♦ I am visually impaired. I and others with various physically handicapping conditions need the temporary construction revisions to the sidewalks to be smooth, ramped, and easy to figure out. Please ensure that all this is handicapped accessible.