

January 4, 2021

To the Beacon Hill Bike Route Project Team:

Thank you for presenting the Beacon Hill Bike Route designs to SBAB on November 4th; your diligence in keeping us up to date with this project is appreciated.

We are pleased that bike infrastructure is being added to Beacon Hill, as it's been underserved and lacking a safe connection for the community. After reviewing the presentation, riding this stretch of road, and conversing with neighborhood residents, we have outlined a few considerations we feel are important for SDOT to take into account as the project progresses. Our primary concerns lie around using the Center Median Path as a bike route in Segments 2 and 3 (from S Ferdinand to S 39th).

### Project Principles:

The first two statements in the project purpose are to (1) “create bicycle facilities that connect people to businesses and community destinations in Beacon Hill” and (2) “create a safe and comfortable place for people to ride to get where they want to go”. In addition, one of the stated goals of the project is to meet the community need to “provide a better north/south bike connection in southeast Seattle.” Keeping these in mind, we have concerns around the intention of the shared use path.

Currently, the Center Median Path serves a wide variety of users, including walkers, joggers, dog walkers, families and strollers, elderly residents, kids learning to bike, and commuters. As it stands, this trail is a highly valuable asset to residents, many of whom are vulnerable users (elderly and small children).

In the Beacon Hill Bike Route design, SDOT proposes routing people riding bikes onto this Center Median Path between S Ferdinand St to S 39th St. Adding bikes to the Center Median Path crowds a trail that already has a wide variety of users, which **has the potential to take this asset away from community members** or make it more dangerous for community members. In addition, routing bikes onto this Center Median Path **does not facilitate biking as a mode of transportation**, for reasons we outline below. The current design prioritizes vehicular traffic and parking. SBAB would like to encourage SDOT to be forward thinking and creative.

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Meredith Hall  
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Emily Paine  
Maimoona Rahim

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the city on matters related to bicycling, and the impact which actions by the city may have upon bicycling; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the city's planning processes insofar as they relate to bicycling.

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### SBAB's Ask:

In order to preserve this existing asset, SBAB encourages SDOT to explore two options when proceeding with project planning:

1. **Option 1: Analyze the option of adding protected bike lanes to the street and maintaining the Center Median Path for walkers/runners/families.**

- SDOT should prioritize building bike infrastructure as a means of transportation, not just as recreation. The Center Median Path is not suitable for biking as a means of transportation.

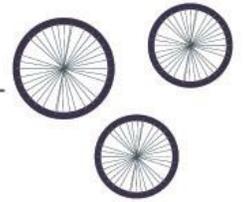
The Center Median Path:

- Is narrow - though the proposed design shows 12 feet, this will be shared with many other users. Due to the trail running over a big water main line, there is little opportunity for widening or tree changes.
  - Is curvy - because the path runs over a water main and is surrounded by trees, there is minimal opportunity to straighten out the path. The current curvy path is slow to navigate by bike.
  - Is bumpy - while the project will make spot repairs, the experience on a bike is unpleasant.
  - Contains frequent curb cuts - users biking on the trail must slow down to navigate many curb cuts along the entire route, making it a slow option. We recognize that the project proposes to reduce the number of intersection crossings, which would improve safety for all users.
  - Has sections at significant steep grades, especially between S Graham St and S Myrtle St which will increase the speed of bicycles on the trail.
- SBAB would like to request SDOT perform a parking study and more in depth analysis on the potential of adding bike lanes on the street.
    - SBAB has discussed how successful the bike lanes are on Ravenna Boulevard, where they are next to the park median rather than on the outer lane:

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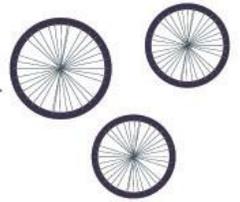
*A Biker EB on NE Ravenna Blvd towards University Ave NE ([SDOT Blog](#))*

2. **Option 2: If bike lanes are entirely ruled out as an option, SDOT should explore all creative possibilities for enabling ALL users to share the Center Median Path in a safe, comfortable, intuitive way.** This might include:

- Utilizing different path surface materials to designate space for walkers, runners, and cyclists should position themselves - such as a soft / gravel path for runners.
- Incorporating paint on the path to indicate where walkers, runners, and cyclists should position themselves (like the Westlake Cycle Path has).
- Adding signage.
- Incorporating plentiful opportunities to pull aside to let other users pass.
- Per the Ravenna example above: routing bicycles from the trail onto shorter protected bike lanes next to the median in areas where the route is projected to:
  - i. be highly used (such as between S Ferdinand St and S Myrtle St),
  - ii. at a steep downhill grade (Southbound between S Graham St and S Myrtle St),
  - iii. and/or where the city can accommodate alternative parking options for residents.

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SBAB is excited about the potential for this project, as there are limited connections from downtown to Beacon Hill/Rainier Valley and few projects on the horizon to provide this key missing connection. We hope SDOT will do the due diligence on this project and aim for a design that moves Seattle towards a bike network that is approachable for all ages and abilities and does not force the most vulnerable road users to fight over the smallest piece of the pie.

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board  
Sincerely,

Sarah Udelhofen  
Co-chair

Patrick Taylor  
Co-chair

Andrea Lai  
Secretary

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