



## APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**Ed Murray**  
Mayor

**Diane Sugimura**  
Director, DPD

**Marshall Foster**  
Planning Director, DPD

**Tom Nelson**, Chair

**Osama Quotah**, Vice Chair

**Bernie Alonzo**

**Brodie Bain**

**Lee Copeland**

**Thaddeus Egging**

**Megan Groth**

**Shannon Loew**

**Martin Regge**

**Ellen Sollod**

**Ross Tilghman**

**Michael Jenkins**  
Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Nicolas Welch**  
Planner

**Joan Nieman**  
Administrative Staff

**March 20, 2014**  
Convened 10:00 am  
Adjourned 3:00 pm

**Projects Reviewed**  
Arboretum Loop Trail

### Commissioners Present

Tom Nelson, Chair

Osama Quotah, Vice Chair (excused at 1:00 pm)

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Megan Groth

Martin Regge

Ellen Sollod

### Non-Voting Commissioners Present

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

### Commissioners Excused

Shannon Loew

Ross Tilghman

### Staff Present

Valerie Kinast

Nicolas Welch

Joan Nieman

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**March 20, 2014**  
**1:00 – 3:00 pm**

**Project:** Arboretum Loop Trail  
**Phase:** 90% design  
**Previous reviews:** 5/3/2012; 11/1/2012

**Presenters:** Jason Henry                      Berger Partnership  
                          Andy Sheffer                      Seattle Parks and Recreation  
                          Andy Mitton                                  Berger Partnership

**Attendees:** Bob Hoshide                      Hoshide Wanzer Willams  
                          Anne Knight                                  Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks  
                          Mike Schwindeller                      Seattle Parks and Recreation

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### **Recusals and Disclosures**

There were no recusals or disclosures.

### **Purpose of Review**

The purpose of this meeting was to review the 90% design of the Arboretum Loop Trail. The 30% and 60% designs for the Arboretum North Entry and Multi-Use Trail were reviewed May 3, 2012, and November 1, 2012, respectively. Since then, the two components have been separated and the North Entry will move forward in the future when design for SR 520 proceeds. As a result, today's review encompassed only the trail. The area of the Graham Visitor's Center has been added to the scope of the project since 2012, and construction is expected to start in 2015.

### **Summary of Proposal**

The project intends to connect the north and south entries of the Washington Park Arboretum with a multi-use trail that runs parallel to but apart from Lake Washington Blvd E. It is meant to serve pedestrians and recreational cyclists. By connecting at the north and south end with Arboretum Drive, a road closed to most vehicle traffic along the eastern side of the park, the project creates a loop within the Arboretum.

The Loop Trail is not intended to be a primary bicycle thoroughfare akin to the Burke Gilman Trail. Though designed with pedestrian and bicycle users in mind, many cyclists are expected to continue using Lake Washington Blvd E as their primary route, as well as Arboretum Drive.

In a typical section of the Loop Trail, there is a 10' wide asphalt trail with 2' wide shoulders of crushed rock on either side. This condition changes at several points, however. Certain curves may have a striped centerline to separate users. There are several bridges along the trail and benches every 400'. In a change from the 60% design, the proposed bridges now have 2' concrete planks and vertical slats designed to create transparency and encourage people not to linger.

At the trail's southern terminus at E Madison St, improvements are planned to connect the trail to the neighborhood and beyond. At the north end of the trail, improvements are planned to the Graham Visitor's Center. Just south of its midpoint, the trail intersects Azalea Way, and the existing pond will be

restored. A new bridge, furnishings, and interventions in the historic plantings intend to create a heart for the trail. Furnishings include standard historic benches, bollards, bike racks, and trashcans.

### **Summary of Presentation**

Jason Henry introduced the project. Andy Sheffer described the public process and feedback that has informed the design. Mr. Sheffer noted that Parks is collaborating with SDOT on their 23rd Avenue work and has met with many stakeholders, including Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks and Cascade Bicycle Club.

Andy Mitton gave the presentation dated March 20, 2014, available on the available on the [Design Commission website](#). Mr. Mitton shared some of the questions and input the public has provided through the design process, specifically concerns about multimodal use of the trail, pervious or rough materials for traffic calming, and connections to and from Montlake across Lake Washington Blvd E. Though today's review focuses solely on the multi-use trail, the project is being designed with connections to the North Entry in mind.

Mr. Mitton noted that by providing a safe route for recreational cyclists, improving connections to Foster Island, reconfiguring Arboretum Drive, and creating a terminus at Azalea Way, the project fulfills elements of the Arboretum Master Plan. The proposal also serves several broad goals of the Plan including safety, habitat awareness, and access to and use of the more remote sections of the Arboretum. The Seattle Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans have also informed the design and alignment of the trail.

Providing access into the Arboretum to visitors from the west is a primary concern for the team; currently there are few points of entry and the surrounding connectivity is inadequate. The design team proposes to install signage at several points along the trail, some of which will point commuters towards other, more direct routes. The trail alignment is constrained by Arboretum collections and curvilinear as a result, so signage in these areas is intended to warn users. Centerline striping is proposed to help control bicycle speeds.

Mr. Mitton described a typical trail cross section, which is 10' wide with 2' gravel shoulders on both sides. The surface is intended to provide vibration that encourages cyclists to slow down. Site furnishings will follow the language of what's currently in the Arboretum. The team proposes benches every 400 feet. The plant palette primarily reflects vegetation native to the Northwest. Other species will be used as part of the wetlands mitigation.

Mr. Mitton then focused on the six elements that comprise the trail, starting at the north end with the Graham Visitor's Center, where traffic calming is proposed to slow vehicles headed to the north Broadmoor entrance and address a problematic blind spot for pedestrians crossing towards Foster Island. Since it is landmarked, the proposed design does not alter the Wilcox Bridge, though signage would provide wayfinding for pedestrians and instruct cyclists to dismount.

Through The Knolls, the Loop Trail would follow existing trails. The trail would then enter Wetland D, or The Flats, and at Boyer Ave E the team proposes to improve the pedestrian connection. SDOT is considering a three-way stop at this point. The team intends to daylight Arboretum Creek and diversify plantings at the area near Larch Bridge, one of several bridges in the proposal designed to encourage users to pass through and not linger. Each bridge is intended to have its own character. The team

proposes transparent and durable cast-iron pickets lining three of the bridges and plans to accommodate distinct site conditions at each bridge through a combination of steel and concrete elements. In the current proposal, the two sides of each bridge would be differentiated in design and alignment.

At Hawthorn Bridge, the team proposes a “heart” for the Loop Trail and a new terminus for Azalea Way. The existing 24-vehicle parking lot would expand to 39 and provide ADA access. An earthen stone bridge would allow the team to raise the level of Azalea Pond 18”, a longtime goal of the University of Washington, and include a runnel to highlight the movement of water. A new wall would address the wetness currently pervasive in this section of the Arboretum. The team has sought to be mindful of the fact the Azalea Way has historically not had cyclists passing through it.

Because of certain site constraints, the trail narrows to 8’ with 2’ gravel shoulders at the Stone Cottage Entry. The proposed design would provide new space behind the Stone Cottage for the UW graduate student that lives there, improve the connection between the Cottage and Washington PI E, and create a curb bulb at Arboretum Drive to shorten the crossing across Lake Washington Blvd E. The team is working with SDOT on the connection at 31st Ave E; one option is to eliminate the slip lane from E Madison St to reduce from four to three the number of crosswalks a trail user requires to continue south along Lake Washington Blvd.

### **Summary of Discussion**

The Commission commended the design team on a comprehensive presentation and proposal that thoughtfully addresses a number of challenging elements. Through many public meetings and a thorough explanation of how the project connects to the broader bicycle network and surrounding neighborhoods, the design team demonstrated a holistic approach that the Commissioners appreciated reviewing. Their discussion focused primarily on design aesthetics, material use, and questions of safety and access for both cyclists and pedestrians.

There was agreement among the Commissioners that a more minimalist approach to bridge design with thin, elegant cast-iron pickets was superior to an approach that combines metal and stone materials. While they acknowledged the intention to evoke the Olmstedian design idiom and to incorporate the views of Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks, the Commissioners felt that mixing the two vocabularies weakens both. A simpler design would subordinate the bridge in relation to the plantings. Without the stone pilasters, the bridge would become a less prominent feature and instead simply serve its purpose within the greater landscape.

The safety of the trail’s southern terminus at 31st Ave E occupied much of the discussion. Though alternatives such as terminating at the north end of Washington PI E or on the other side of Lake Washington Blvd E at Washington Park are constrained by large trees that would require removal, the Commission strongly encouraged both the design team and SDOT to prioritize safety at the trails connection to E Madison St given the challenges a southbound cyclist would face to continue south along Lake Washington Blvd E. While the Commission acknowledged the difficulty of resolving this intersection and that SDOT may have plans for this segment of the Madison corridor, there was consensus that either signage, temporary closure of the slip lane at Madison, and/or significant streetscape improvements at the intersection of 31st Ave E and E Madison St are necessary to maximize safety and accessibility for users of the Loop Trail.

Finally, the Commissioners discussed the removal and replacement of trees associated with constructing the Loop Trail, the challenge of and approaches to stabilizing steep slopes so that herbaceous plantings can take root, and the degree to which the Loop Trail's connection to Azalea Way is sufficiently inviting to visitor's using the Arboretum's primary parking lot.

### **Agency Comments**

None

### **Public Comments**

Anne Knight, Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks, commended the design team on their efforts to integrate the trail into the Arboretum. Her organization intends to follow the selection of materials and details of the walls and railings as the project moves forward. She encouraged minimal signage through the Arboretum and discouraged using the standard curve symbol given the intentional curvilinear nature of trails in Olmsted Parks. She finds warning largely unnecessary if bicycle speeds are as slow as intended. At Azalea Way, she prefers the rustic rocks already bordering the north side of the pond for the walls and draining infrastructure. During the Commissioner discussion, she expressed support for the stone pilasters at the bridges since, as they age, they would blend into the landscape as the current stone elements in the park do.

### **Action**

The Design Commission thanked the design team for a comprehensive presentation on the 90% design of the Arboretum Loop Trail. The Commission particularly appreciated the thoroughness of the proposal and commended the team's careful consideration of grading and circulation challenges. The design maintains the Olmsted legacy while supporting the University of Washington's goals for the development of the Arboretum Collection and responding to the mitigation requirements set out in the framework of the SR 520 replacement project.

The Commissioners took particular interest in two fundamental elements of the project design. First, the Commission was very concerned about the E Madison St intersection, particularly for southbound cyclists on the Loop Trail. The current design does not provide a clear and safe route for these users to cross E Madison St and continue along Lake Washington Blvd E. Second, the Commission strongly prefers the thin cast-iron bridge rails and guardrails and finds the stone pilasters incompatible within the overall design.

With a **vote of 7 to 0**, the Design Commission approved the 90% design of the Arboretum Loop Trail with the condition that the project **return for an administrative review** when the design has been finalized for the two aforementioned issues: 1) the trail's southern terminus at 31st Ave E and the E Madison St intersection and 2) the bridges and their associated rails and guardrails.

The Commission also provided the following recommendations as the team refines the final design:

1. The segment of the trail between the intersection with Arboretum Drive and E Madison St should continue as designed, but consider adding signage at Arboretum Drive to direct southbound commuter cyclists using the Loop Trail to move to Lake Washington Blvd E in order to cross E Madison St more safely. While the Commission understands the trail is multi-use and not commuter oriented, options should be offered until a permanent solution is found for the trail's convergence with the Madison intersection.

2. Relatedly, the Design Commission encourages SDOT to 1) expedite the resolution of the Madison intersection so that safety is maximized and 2) emphasize and prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety at this intersection as planning of this corridor proceeds. To that end, the design team and SDOT should coordinate and consider either a temporary closure of the slip lane that allows southbound vehicles on E Madison St to turn unimpeded onto Lake Washington Blvd E or other temporary or permanent solutions that would achieve the same purpose.
3. Continue to develop the connection of the Arboretum Loop Trail and Azalea Way to help park users understand the latter's significance in the trail system.
4. In bridge design, avoid mixing the historic and modern in jarring and incongruous ways. Do consider the termination of the rails both at bridges and where they occur elsewhere. Consider slipping the ends of the rails past one another, but do not differentiate the two sides of the bridge.