



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Seattle Transportation Grace Crunican, Director

*Seattle
Bicycle
Advisory
Board*

6 April 2007

Grace Crunican, Director
Seattle Department of Transportation

Brian Dougherty (Chair)

Subject: Stone Way North Update (29 March 2007)

Sean Ardussi

(Vice-Chair)

Rodney Rutherford

(Vice-Chair)

Deborah Kuznitz

(Secretary)

Emily Allen

Dongho Chang

Stephanie Innis-Frans

Brian Lee

Heather Reed Bioren

Catherine Staunton

Natalie Gulsrud

Dear Director Crunican,

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board (SBAB) was surprised by and is strongly opposed to the revised proposal for Stone Way North announced by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) on its website on 29 March 2007 (see attachment of the project webpage with highlighted references). This update proposes a three-lane cross-section for motor vehicles, one lane in each direction plus a center turn lane, for the segment of Stone Way North between North 40th and 50th Streets. On this segment, SDOT now proposes a northbound (uphill) bicycle climbing lane but only shared pavement markings ('sharrows') in the southbound direction. For the segment between North 34th and 40th Streets, there would remain four motor vehicle lanes, two in each direction, and only 'sharrows' would be added for bicyclists in both directions. Two curbside parking lanes would remain for both segments. A crosswalk will be removed at N 38th Street.

This update is a significant departure from the proposal presented at the project open house in October 2006. At that time, SDOT indicated from its own analyses that there was sufficient curb-to-curb width along the length of Stone Way North, between North 34th and 50th Streets, for two bicycle lanes, three motor vehicle travel lanes, plus two curbside parking lanes. This calls into question why there would not be a southbound bicycle lane between North 40th and 50th Streets. Furthermore, the City's traffic counts revealed that the total traffic volume and the proportion of heavy vehicles using this roadway were low enough to make it a good candidate for rechannelization. In fact, the project webpage still maintains that SDOT is "confident that roadway capacity can be maintained with three lanes of traffic" (p. 2 of the attachment) and that it "does not believe that the proposed lane changes will be problematic for truck traffic" (p. 3 of the attachment). This contrasts with SDOT's claim, on the same webpage, for the segment between North 34th and 40th Streets in the updated proposal, of "maintaining four motor vehicle lanes in recognition of the volume of freight along this route" (p. 1 of the attachment). Echoing SDOT's own reasoning for a three-lane configuration, the SBAB strongly calls for a motor vehicle lane reduction and the addition of two bicycle lanes for the entire length of Stone Way North. Not only would this benefit bicyclists and general motor vehicle traffic by providing both groups with their own dedicated travel space, but it would also allow the crosswalk to remain at 38th Street, would reduce the number of motor vehicle lanes that pedestrians must cross, and help freight vehicles accessing local businesses make safer left-turns to and from this route.

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.

City Council Resolution
25534



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The SBAB views this updated proposal as being in conflict with the high priority that the Mayor gave to bicycle facility improvements in his State of the City address in March 2007. Additionally, this update conflicts with the recommendation for Stone Way North in the Bicycle Master Plan (BMP), which at minimum calls for a climbing lane in the northbound direction from North 34th to 50th Streets. As recognized in the BMP, this route is an extremely important link between the urban centers of Green Lake and Wallingford to the north and Fremont to the south. Further, this route connects the Green Lake and the Woodland Park Zoo to the Burke-Gilman Trail, Gasworks Park, and Lake Union. The revised proposal provides suboptimal facilities for bicyclists. Repaving this roadway is a golden opportunity that may not come again for decades. It would be tragic for the city to miss this opportunity in the same year as the adoption of the Bike Master Plan.

We recommend the city adopt a three-lane cross-section for motor vehicles, one lane in each direction plus a center turn lane, including full bicycle lane facilities in both directions, for the entire length of Stone Way North from North 34th to 50th Streets.

Thank you very much for your attention. We look forward to continue working with you all towards a safer and more equitable multi-modal transportation system for the City of Seattle!

Best Regards,

Brian Lee
Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, Member

Brian Dougherty
Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, Chair

Deborah Kuznitz
Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, Member

Cc: Jan Drago, Chair, Seattle City Council Transportation Committee
Cc: Wayne Wentz, Director, Traffic Management, City of Seattle

Stone Way North Project Webpage (captured 6 April 2007):

SDOT Pedestrian Program: Crosswalk Projects: Stone Way North: North 34th Street - No... Page 1 of 4

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A vibrant Seattle through transportation excellence. Grace Crunican, Director

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Stone Way North Update; March 29, 2007

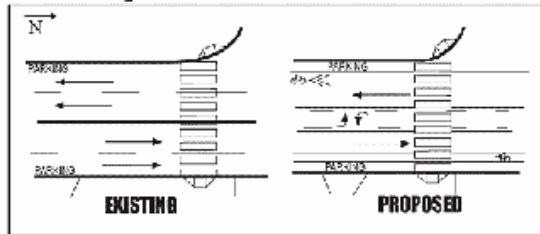
- Pedestrian Home
- Crosswalk Projects
 - 4th Avenue South
 - Admiral Way SW
 - Airport Way South
 - Ballard
 - Boren Avenue
 - California Avenue SW
 - North 36th Street
 - North 105th Street
 - Rainier Avenue South
 - South Lander Street
 - Stone Way North**
- Background/Policies
- Completed Projects
- Tools to Improve Marked Crosswalks
- Reference
 - Pedestrian Links
 - Policies Online
 - Common Pedestrian Needs
 - Pedestrian Law
 - Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) recently announced a decision regarding lane channelization on Stone Way N. The decision aims to **balance motor vehicle, bus and freight traffic with pedestrian and bicycle traffic.**

Northern Section: N 40th St - N 50th St

On Stone Way N between N 40th Street and N 50th Street SDOT will be reducing the number of motor vehicle lanes and adding an **uphill bicycle lane** (a "climbing lane"). The new roadway configuration will include one lane in each direction, a center turn lane. In recognition of the fact that this corridor is a bicycle route, special lane markings called **"sharrows" will be painted in the downhill lane.** Sharrows are arrows that remind drivers to share the road with bicyclists. All marked crosswalks on this section of the corridor will be maintained.

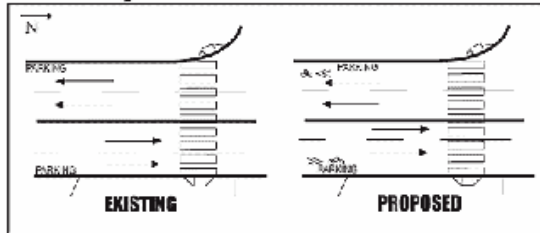
Stone Way North of 40th Street



Southern Section: N 34th St - N 40th St

On the section of Stone Way N between N 34th Street and N 40th Street, SDOT will be **maintaining four motor vehicle lanes** in recognition of the volume of freight along this route. Sharrows will be installed both uphill and downhill to maintain this link in the bicycle network. The marked crosswalk at N 38th Street will be removed.

Stone Way South of 40th Street



Timeline

An SDOT repaving project will begin work on the section of roadway between N 34th Street and N 45th Street in June. Changes to this part of the corridor, including removal of the marked crosswalk at N 38th Street, will occur once the

roadway is repaved. SDOT crews will make the channelization changes north of N 45th Street this summer in coordination with the repaving project.

This decision reflects input from more than 400 individuals and groups, resulting from SDOT's outreach. The department mailed flyers, posted signs and held numerous meetings and an open house with neighborhood and business groups.

Background

SDOT introduced the proposal to reduce the number of lanes on Stone Way North in order to improve four marked crosswalks along this corridor. This proposal also responds to neighborhood requests to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and access on Stone Way North.

There are four marked crosswalks along this corridor:

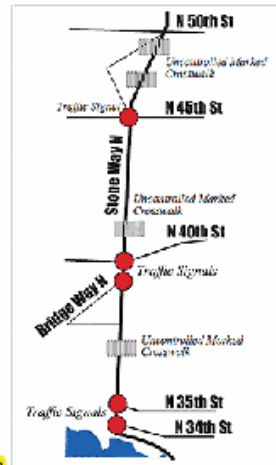
- North 38th Street
- North 41st Street
- North 47th Street
- North 48th Street

These marked crosswalks no longer meet our recommended guidelines for placement of a marked crosswalk alone (that is, one without an accompanying traffic signal). The first thing we consider for improving marked crosswalks is a reduction in the number of motor vehicle travel lanes a pedestrian must cross.

Benefits of a change to the number of lanes

The current lane configuration on this portion of Stone Way North is four motor vehicle travel lanes with parking on both sides of the street.

The proposed lane configuration would be two motor vehicle travel lanes and one center turn lane, with parking and striped bicycle lanes on both sides of the street.



An example of the shared-lane marking referred to as a "sharrow"

This change in the number of lanes will benefit all roadway users. SDOT has studied this corridor and is confident that roadway capacity can be maintained with three lanes of traffic. Motor vehicle travel lanes will be widened. The addition of a center turn lane will improve access to and from Stone Way North for vehicles and may reduce the number of collisions occurring when motorists turn left.

A reduction in the number of lanes would benefit pedestrians crossing Stone Way North. By reducing the number of lanes a pedestrian must cross, the chance of a pedestrian-vehicle collision is reduced. This

is largely due to the decrease in the likelihood of a multiple threat collision, where the motorist in one lane stops, but the motorist in the next lane does not and a collision results. Striped bicycle lanes can also be added as part of a road diet.

While three motor vehicle travel lanes will be in place on the northern section of the Stone Way North corridor, four lanes of travel will be maintained at, and in advance of, the intersections of N 39th St/Bridge Way North and N 50th Street in order to maintain adequate traffic flow in this higher volume and high turn movement section.

Here's what we heard

Frequent Concerns and Questions on this Proposal

Why can't signalized crosswalks be added on Stone Way North?

When evaluating changes to marked crosswalks across four lane roadways, SDOT typically looks at reducing the number of lanes on the roadway or installing a traffic signal. Because Stone Way North is a corridor, with four uncontrolled marked crosswalks, a signal solution was not initially recommended as it would be a spot improvement. Since SDOT has no indication that a signal warrant could be met at any particular location, the only option short of removing the marked crosswalks was to explore a change in travel lanes. The three-lane proposal was selected as an alternative to crosswalk removal because it provides a pedestrian safety solution along the entire corridor rather than at spot locations where a signal might be installed.

Why can't in-pavement flashing lights be installed at the marked crosswalks?

SDOT has given very careful consideration to the idea of in-pavement flashers, and has decided at this time not to install the devices. These flashers are a fairly new technology. We have looked into them from the perspective of both effectiveness and the cost, not just of installation, but maintenance as well. As these flashers are not in common use, there have not yet been studies done to validate installing them. In other words, they have not been proven to reduce collisions, nor is there established criterion for use to determine when it is appropriate to install them at a particular location.

The University of North Carolina is considering taking on a study of these in pavement flashers, which will provide some of the data that is now missing. Until that time, the lack of documented benefits coupled with the significantly high cost of maintenance has led SDOT to the decision of not using these without further information. There are two locations within Seattle that have these devices, both of which were paid for by private parties. Both locations have suffered significant maintenance problems. Therefore, it does not seem appropriate to invest in technology that we know will be costly, without knowing what, if any, benefit will be derived from it.

In addition, if we do in the future decide to implement the devices, we believe they will be extremely popular - the potential demand from citizens who will want one in their neighborhood is expected to be high. It is important that a standard set of criteria be developed so that if we decide to put these in, we will do so in a fair and equitable manner throughout the City, and not just provide them on a first-come, first-served basis as citizens request them.

Can't bicyclists be rerouted to use Woodland Park Avenue North as a bicycle route instead of being encouraged to use Stone Way North?

Bicyclists and pedestrians may currently use Woodland Park Avenue North as an alternate connection to Bridge Way North. Signing this roadway as an official non-motorized route alone would not result in a change in how many pedestrians or bicyclists use this route. There are two reasons for this. First, there are currently no signalized crossings where this road crosses arterial streets, making travel slow, inefficient and uncomfortable for some users. There are six such crossings between North 34th Street and North 50th Street.

For Woodland Park Avenue North to appeal to pedestrians and bicyclists as a comfortable alternative to Stone Way North, changes would have to be made at these six intersections. Without providing established crossings of these streets, which in at least one location would require a traffic signal, we do not anticipate that non-motorized traffic would choose to use Woodland Park Avenue North at this time. Further, changes to these six intersections would quite possibly slow east-west motor vehicle traffic and thus impede the motor vehicle connections we hope to maintain. Another factor to consider is Woodland Park Avenue North does not provide a direct connection north of North 50th Street.

How will heavy trucks that use Stone Way North be impacted by a change in the number of lanes?

Adding a center turn lane will make it easier for trucks to make left turns into adjacent businesses. SDOT does not believe that the proposed lane changes will be problematic for truck traffic on Stone Way North or for the motorists around them. Recent speed studies of truck traffic going uphill found that 50 percent of the trucks were traveling 28 mph or faster and 85 percent of the trucks were traveling 23 mph

or faster.

Where will load/unload activity occur? Won't trucks use the center turn lane to load?

The key to avoiding the use of the center turn lane by vehicles that are loading/unloading is to provide adequate load zone space along the curb. SDOT will continue to work with businesses to establish curbside loading zones in locations that meet the needs of businesses.

Will curb bulbs or median islands be installed as part of this proposal?

The proposed changes to the number of lanes on Stone Way North would consist largely of signs and markings. No significant changes to the physical infrastructure are planned or are included in the budget. As parking will be maintained on both sides of Stone Way North in all options, curb bulbs are likely feasible at many intersections along the corridor. Funding for neighborhoods, such as the Neighborhood Street Fund, may be used for such improvements. Should a center turn lane be added, median islands could be considered at spot locations once adequate time has passed in order to evaluate whether the changes were successful.

Can natural drainage be incorporated into the Stone Way North repaving project or the proposed change to the number of lanes?

The planned repaving of Stone Way North between North 34th Street and North 45th Street would involve changes to pavement and will have a drainage element that has already been determined by Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). While SPU works with SDOT in implementing natural drainage systems, it is SPU that administers the prioritization and funding of such projects. In this case, SDOT has determined that traditional drainage is the most appropriate treatment for Stone Way North.

Since the repaving project on Stone Way North ends at N 45th Street, any changes made to the number of lanes on Stone Way North north of N 45th Street would be implemented as a separate project. The changes to channelization north of 45th Street would not trigger any drainage requirements. The funding available to implement road diet proposal is not large enough to consider construction of curb bulbs or any other features of a natural drainage system at this time.

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