

MEETING SUMMARY
ROOSEVELT PARKING WORKGROUP
MARCH 6, 2006
CALVARY CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY
7:00 - 8:30 PM

ATTENDEES

Tad Bigelow, resident	Bess Steiner, resident
Renee Davis, resident	Brad Steiner, resident
Michele DeAnda, Whole Foods	Megan Hoyt, Seattle Department of Transportation
Lani Johnson, The Johnson Partnership	Pauh Wang, Seattle Department of Transportation
Pam MacRae, resident	Randy Wiger, Seattle Department of Transportation
Jim O'Halloran, President, Roosevelt Neighborhood Association	
Mike McKinney, resident	
Andy Reay-Ellers, Vice-President, Roosevelt Neighborhood Association	Notes prepared by Randy Wiger

IMPROVING BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY

At the request of parking workgroup members, one more meeting of the workgroup was scheduled to address the bicycle and pedestrian elements in the draft Roosevelt Parking Action Strategy. Workgroup members specifically requested an educational presentation that would help them better understand what options are available from the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) that could be used to improve safety and ease of travel for bicyclists and pedestrians in the Roosevelt area. Pauh Wang, of the SDOT Bicycle Program (684-8562), and Megan Hoyt, of the SDOT Pedestrian Program 684-5124), attended and conducted the presentation.

BICYCLE LANE TREATMENTS IN SEATTLE

Pauh Wang presented a range of lane treatments that improve the safety or ease of travel for bicyclists with slides that illustrated each of the examples. Some of the treatments are in use in Seattle, some are in use in other states or countries (but not in use in Seattle), and some are being considered. A summary of these treatments is at the end of these meeting notes. Workgroup members posed the following questions during the presentation.

Question: Are bike lanes always marked to show which direction of bike travel is allowed for bicyclists using a particular lane?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Motorists don't always understand pedestrian right-of-way markings, let alone bicycle markings. Is it possible to add bicycle questions to the WA State Driver's Test?

Answer: Some bicycle questions have been added to the Driver's Test. The Bicycle Alliance of Washington worked to have those added, and they would be the best organization to engage to work to have more added (www.bicyclealliance.org or 206-224-9252).

Question: Is there any data on the effectiveness of bike lanes (in increasing the number of people bicycling)?

Answer: No, the City of Seattle has no Seattle-specific data one way or the other. Portland, OR has done some data collection, and they find there is a correlation between the date of when a bike lane was installed, and an increase of bicyclists using those streets. The "Bikes in Portland" presentation is available online at www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=34816 and the slides relevant to question above start at page 51, "Measuring Our Success."

Question: One person commented that the main hazard for bicyclists are curb bulbs and "dooring" (where a motorist opens the driver's side door to get out of their parked car right in front of bicyclist, and the bicyclist doesn't have time to stop and runs into the door).

Answer: Generally speaking curb bulbs are only installed on streets that have parking lanes, and the curb bulbs are typically no more than 6 feet wide, so they do not protrude past the edge of the parked cars and so should not present a problem for bicyclists. "Dooring" is a risk, and SDOT prefers bike lanes to be 5 feet wide when adjacent to parking. Since doors typically extend about 3 feet from the vehicle when open, that leaves 2 feet for bicyclists to use in avoiding an open door. SDOT encourages bicyclists to ride on left side of installed bike lanes for this reason.

Question: In the (draft) Roosevelt Parking Action Strategy, the community has listed several locations to consider for installation of bike lanes. Does a more comprehensive assessment of the area for more locations for possible bike lanes, etc., have to be done before proceeding to look into the possibility of installing bike lanes in the locations already listed?

Answer: No.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TREATMENTS IN SEATTLE

Megan Hoyt presented a range of treatments that improve the safety or ease of travel for pedestrians. Generally speaking, the greater the volume and visibility of people walking and crossing a street, the slower motorists drive and the more aware drivers are of watching out for pedestrians. Drivers learn to anticipate pedestrians and change their driving behavior in locations that consistently have a higher volume of people walking.

There are a wide variety of controls used throughout Seattle to improve pedestrian safety and visibility. The main question is always, "How do you get people who are driving motor vehicles to obey the law and use common sense." The other central issues is to know what traffic control treatments actually are effective, and in what situations.

Curb bulbs can improve pedestrian safety by increasing the visibility of the person wanting to cross the street in the eyes of the motorist. They bring the pedestrian out from behind any parked cars. Additionally they shorten the distance of the crossing by the length of the curb bulb(s).

When considering an intersection for a marked crosswalk, there are several factors to consider. One factor is the number of lanes to be crossed. When there are two or more lanes (where cars travel the same direction) the risk increases that a car in first lane may stop while a car in the second lane may not stop at all. When there are three lanes (moving in the same direction) such as Roosevelt Way N. during rush hour, there are two chances of the above situation occurring: first with lanes one and two, and then with lanes two and three.

Another factor SDOT considers is where motorists are looking when they approach an intersection. Sometimes the most logical location for a crosswalk based on pedestrian demand is in a spot where motorists would likely not be looking. For example, if motorists are approaching an intersection with a one-way street, they will likely be looking all the time in the direction of the oncoming traffic, and will hardly look in the other direction. Therefore placing a marking that would indicate to a pedestrian that a preferred place to enter or cross a street is in a location that a motorist would most likely never be looking provides little benefit to pedestrians. Workgroup members posed the following questions during the presentation.

Question: Why does 40th Avenue in the View Ridge neighborhood (by the PCC there) have a speed limit sign and sign saying "residential neighborhood?" Can Roosevelt have similar signs?
Answer: SDOT will need to investigate the circumstances, and follow-up with the workgroup.

Question: Do you ever install raised crosswalks (such as on Roosevelt Way N. or 12th Avenue N.)?

Answer: Generally speaking, no. A raised crosswalk is considered to be a traffic-calming device, and SDOT does not install traffic-calming devices on arterial streets (such as on Roosevelt Way N. or 12th Avenue N.). SDOT has installed one on 9th Avenue by Harborview Medical Center. SDOT does allow textured crosswalks at signalized intersections. These are not traffic calming devices, but may help alert motorists to the presence of pedestrians. (The example cited of textured crosswalks is on 12th Avenue between E. Madison Street to E. Yesler Way along Seattle University.)

Question: Does SDOT ever install pedestrian "islands" (in the middle of wide streets with multiple lanes)?

Answer: Yes, SDOT does install "median islands." Typically drivers don't like them if they restrict turning movements. If there is community support for installing one at a location, SDOT will consider doing so because they can improve pedestrian safety.

The pedestrian presentation concluded with a general comment that all of Seattle's Urban Villages will experience increasing tension between pedestrian mobility and the arterials that run through every Urban Village neighborhood. As the density of these neighborhood increases, the pedestrian volumes will increase and present challenges for maintaining the ability of arterials to move people and goods from one area of the city to another.

NEXT MEETING

This is the final meeting of the Roosevelt Parking Workgroup. Workgroup members briefly discussed what kind of items to include in the Parking Action Strategy, as well as what happens

once the Strategy is finalized. The next step is to review and revise the Roosevelt Parking Action Strategy and present it at the Community Forum scheduled for March 28, 2006.

There was some discussion by workgroup members of a perceived lack of responsiveness by SDOT to community goals. While workgroup members felt good about the Making the Parking System Work program, members noted that the Roosevelt Neighborhood Plan (adopted in 1999) included multiple pages of pedestrian-related improvements. Many of these items appear in the Plan's Adoption and Approval Matrix, yet the community is unclear how many of these items SDOT has implemented (if any) and, if an item is not able to be implemented, why not.

Workgroup members expressed some frustration over previous efforts to engage SDOT through the years and questioned whether creating yet another prioritized list (via the Making the Parking System Work program) would result in any concrete actions.

Meeting Adjourned

TYPES OF BICYCLE LANE TREATMENTS

Width of Parking Lanes - SDOT prefers for parking lanes (which are typically immediately adjacent to the curb) to be a minimum of 8 feet wide, although 7 feet is acceptable.

Width of Bicycle Lanes - SDOT prefers for bike lanes (which are typically between the parking lane and the first travel lane) to be minimum of 5 feet wide when adjacent to a parking lane, or 4 feet wide if there is no parking lane (and the bike is adjacent to the curb).

Location of Bike Lanes - Bike lanes are typically on the right hand side of the street, but on one-way streets it is acceptable to place them on the left side.

Bike Lane Edgeline Markings - On streets where the bike lane and/or parking lane is less than the ideal width SDOT has installed a painted edgeline separating the parking lane and bike lane (typically only the edge between the bike lane and travel lane is marked). It is now SDOT's policy to install a painted edgeline on both sides of a bike lane regardless of whether the width is less than ideal or not. (The example cited of a double-striped bike lane on 12th Avenue between E. Madison Street to E. Yesler Way along Seattle University where the parking lane is 7' wide.)

Contraflow Bike Lanes - On some one-way streets SDOT has installed a contraflow bike lane that allows only bicycles to travel in the opposite direction of the (one-way) general purpose travel lanes. (The example cited of a contraflow bike lane is on N. 34th Street between Fremont Avenue N. and Evanston Avenue N. in front of the PCC Grocery in Fremont.)

Bicycle Slip Lanes - SDOT installs these types of bike lanes in-between a main travel lane and a dedicated right turn lane. This helps to prevent conflicts between bicyclists who wish to travel straight through an intersection and motorists who wish to make a right turn (this assumes there is a bike lane along the right hand side of the street on the preceding block or blocks). A variation of this type of bike lane is where a bike slip lane is placed on the left of the main travel lane to avoid conflicts between bicyclists who wish to turn left and motorists who wish to travel straight through an intersection. (The example cited is on Ravenna Boulevard at N. 50th Street which has a left turn-only bike lane.)

Shared Lane - SDOT installs shared-lane marking on streets that are too narrow to mark a bike lane. They are intended as visual cues for drivers to share the roadway with bicyclists. The examples cited were E Union St., and Pike St. On Union where the roadway width was too narrow for bike lanes on both sides of the street, the centerline was shifted over to accommodate a standard bike lane on the uphill side of the street, based on the fact that bicyclists will be moving at a significantly slower rate of speed than motorists. On the downhill side, a "Denver Symbol" (an outline of an arrow with a bike image inside of it) is installed between the travel lane and parking where there is a smaller difference in travel speed between bicyclists and motorists. SDOT has plans to install the San Francisco "Sharrow" (a symbol of a bicycle with two chevrons above) in the middle of a travel lane where the lane widths are even narrower to encourage bicyclists to take the whole lane.

Floating Bike Lanes (San Francisco, CA) - This type of lane has been installed on a street with peak period parking lane restrictions. When the restrictions are in effect, the bike lane is immediately adjacent to the curb. During non-peak hours, the bike lane is in the typical location between the parking and travel lanes (refer to the relevant slide for an example of the type of markings used to indicate this type of lane).

Bicycle Boulevards/Bicycle Exemptions (Berkeley, CA) - Some residential streets in Berkeley are signed, marked, and treated in a manner to improve the mobility and accessibility of bicycles (and emergency vehicles). Treatments restrict motor vehicles from moving through the street but exempt bicycles from the same restriction. Seattle has implemented a similar measure at Broadway Avenue E. at E. Edgar Street, although the accommodation for bicycle through-travel is not as formalized as the Berkeley example – the street is closed off but a cut-through is installed that is wide enough for bicycles to use. Other examples of bicycle exemptions in Seattle include gaps in C-curb (a raised "c-shaped" curb device placed down the middle of some streets) - on NE 95th Street at Ravenna Avenue NE. bicyclists may continue straight across Ravenna Avenue NE but motorists are required to turn right onto Ravenna. Another example is the right turn-only lane on 8th Avenue NW as it intersects with NW Market Street – here northbound bicyclists (and buses) are exempt from turning right but other vehicles must turn right.

Shared Bike-Transit Lanes (Scotland) - There are some travel lanes in Scotland designated for exclusive use by buses, bicyclists and/or taxis (all in the same lane). While Seattle does not have this type of designation, currently Third Avenue downtown during peak hours is a bit like this. During peak hours, travel on Third Avenue from approximately Stewart to Yesler Way is restricted to only buses and bicyclists (although cars may travel on Third Avenue for no more than one block before turning off onto a cross-street).

Blue Bike Lanes (Europe and Portland) - This type of treatment is where a section of the pavement is painted bright blue to highlight an area of conflict between cars and bicycles, such as when a car may need to make right turn across a bike lane. The brightly colored pavement helps raise awareness of the conflict area while accompanying signage requires motorists to yield to bicyclists traveling in the blue area. SDOT is currently considering this type of treatment for use on Second and Fourth Avenues in downtown, but no decision has been reached.

Bike Boxes (Victoria, B.C. and Europe) - This treatment is a box painted on the pavement right at the front edge of an intersection where a vehicle would normally be first in the queue line while waiting for the light to change. The square or box is typically the width of the travel lane and long enough for a bicycle to fit within it. The bike box is usually connected to a bike lane that is placed on the right side of the street and which continues up to the front edge of the intersection. The bike box provides space for bicyclists to queue in front of stopped motor vehicles, which is particularly helpful for left-turning bicyclists to avoid conflicts with motor vehicles that may be traveling straight through the intersection – instead of being on the right-hand side of the street where the bike lane is located, and then having to cross one or more general purpose lanes to make a left-turn, the bike box allows the bicyclist to be better positioned to make a left turn.