

Sam
Adams
Mayor

Tom
Miller
Director

**North Williams Traffic Operations and Safety Project
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting**
February 21, 2012, 12:00 noon – 2:00 p.m.
Oregon Red Cross, 3131 N Vancouver Ave, Training Room 11
Meeting Notes

Action items from this meeting:

- In response to a question from Michelle DePass, Ellen said she would try to send some links to information about research on how the brain works as it relates to transportation.
- For the next meeting the project team will bring a matrix showing how each option is expected to perform measure by measure for all measures of the top ten outcomes.
- The project team will report back at the next meeting on four added options:
 1. A “2C” option that is a hybrid of 2B and 3, with a buffered bike lane and single motor vehicle travel lane in the lower reaches and two motor vehicle travel lanes in segments 4 and 5;
 2. An alternate 2B, 2C or 3 with peak hour parking restrictions on the right side so the parking lane would act as an overflow bike lane;
 3. A strategy that addresses the Rodney neighborhood greenway as an addition to North Williams improvements; and
 4. A ‘crazy’ option that draws on European lessons with reducing speeds by creating shared spaces, possibly including center diagonal parking.

Committee members present:

Allan Rudwick, Neighbor	Pastor Matt Hennessee, Vancouver Baptist Church
Ben Foote, Neighbor	Melissa Lafayette, Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest
Caitlin Wood, Disability Rights Oregon (by telephone)	Michelle DePass, Neighbor
Debora Leopold Hutchins, Sistas Weekend Cyclers (Committee Chair)	Mychal Tetteh, Village Market at New Columbia
Diana Moosman, MOSI Architects	Nathan Roll, Metropolis Cycle Repair
Gahlana Easterly, Property owner	Noni Causey, Neighbor
Pastor Jerrell Waddell, New Life Christian Center	Paul Anthony, Humboldt Neighborhood Association
Jrdn Freeauf, Eddie’s Cabinets	Shara Alexander, Neighbor
Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, Boise Neighborhood Association	Susan Peithman, BTA
Laurie Simpson, Eliot Neighborhood Association	Joe Clinkenbeard, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition alternate

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Committee members absent:

Dwight Terry, Terry Family Funeral Home
Irek Wielgosz, King Neighborhood Association
Jana McLellan, Port City Development
Jazzmin Reece, Urban League Young Professionals

Kenneth Doswell, Betty Jean Couture
Pamela Weatherspoon Reed, Legacy Emanuel Hospital
Steve Bozzone, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition (represented by alternate Joe Clinkenbeard)

Members of the public present:

Amy Lubitow
Angela Kremer
Charles Ewing
Scott Lieuallen
Ed Abrahamson, Irvington Neighborhood Association

Russ Willis
Jonathan Maus
Cathy Galbraith
Stephen Lamb

City and project staff present:

Ellen Vanderslice, PBOT, Project Manager
Rob Burchfield, PBOT, City Traffic Engineer
Peter Koonce, PBOT, Signals and Streetlighting Manager

Dan Layden, PBOT
Rich Newlands, PBOT
Adrian Witte, Alta Planning and Design
Chloe Ritter, PBOT

Detailed Meeting Notes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Committee Chair Debora Leopold Hutchins called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm, welcomed everyone, and facilitated introductions.

2. Check-in (Debora)

- a. Review agenda.

Debora solicited comments or questions about the agenda. There were none.

- b. Michelle DePass reported on the activities of the Honoring History Working Group.

This is a subcommittee charged with honoring the history of the North Williams corridor. So far they have held two meetings to brainstorm ways to highlight people and places in this project. The group has developed ideas for two projects – one interim/short-term, the other longer term. They have developed a list of resources for the longer-term project and established criteria to judge the success of the project, including: does it bridge a cultural gap and is it accessible to

both ‘old-timers’ and ‘newcomers’. The group will hold two more meetings in the next month, dates are to be determined.

c. SAC Member Announcements, Questions and Comments

Shara said that Project Grow (www.growinginalldirections.org) is hosting a jazz event on February 22 (she brought posters). The event highlights Sweet Baby James and is the last in a series of events discussing the history of jazz in this neighborhood.

Laurie said that the Eliot Oral History project (www.eliotoralhistories.com) which began two years ago has posted several interviews with long-time residents of the neighborhood.

Susan shared her reflections after witnessing a pedestrian-car collision (not in the Williams area). It made her think about the opportunity this committee has to make an impact.

Jerrell said that he received information that another 5-story apartment building is being built at the northwest corner of N Williams and Beech but does not include parking. He is concerned about the outcome of this project related to N Williams. Debora clarified that this is a third development on the corridor.

3. Overview of plans and policies relevant to North Williams (Ellen)

At the last meeting, the committee discussed existing conditions in corridor segment by segment, agreed on the top ten outcomes, and discussed possible tools to achieve these outcomes. To augment this information, Ellen presented some of the existing plans and policies, including the Transportation System Plan adopted in 2002 (updated 2006), the Albina Community Plan adopted in 1993, and the Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030 adopted in 2010. *(Ellen shared the plan maps on a poster. The slide projector was not working; the slide presentation with this information has been posted online as “SAC Packet No. 1.”)* The Albina Community Plan called out the North Williams and Vancouver corridor as routes for bicycle and pedestrian travel (and also noted Vancouver as a horse carriageway).

The Transportation System Plan (TSP) street classifications reflect the City’s understanding of community aspirations for how each street in the city should function. For traffic, North Williams is classified as a Neighborhood Collector, which is one step up from Local Service Street (the lowest traffic classification). For comparison, I-5 is a Regional Trafficway, which is the highest classification for traffic, and MLK is a Major City Traffic street, the next highest classification. The higher classifications are more appropriate for motor vehicle trips through the area, while a Neighborhood Collector is intended to serve trips that begin or end in the area.

For transit, North Williams is classified as a Transit Access Street, which is relatively in the middle of the hierarchy of transit classifications. Bicycle classifications in the TSP are currently not very hierarchical; a street is either a City Bikeway or a Local Service Bikeway. For pedestrian travel, North Williams is classified as a City Walkway between Fremont and Alberta and is included in the Eliot Pedestrian District from Fremont south and in the Killingsworth Pedestrian District from Alberta north. The pedestrian classifications determine the sidewalk

width that is required during redevelopment. Most sidewalks on North Williams are 10', but a developer would likely be required to dedicate additional right-of-way to make a sidewalk corridor of 12' where the classification is City Walkway and 15' where the classification is Pedestrian District.

For freight travel, North Williams is classified as a Local Service Truck Street. For Emergency Response, the classification is Minor Emergency Response (all streets that are not Major Emergency Response are Minor). Finally, in the Street Design classifications North Williams is a Community Corridor, which is a classification that emphasizes the importance of balancing all uses.

The Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030 includes a recommendation to make a little bit more hierarchy in the bicycle classifications by creating a new classification Major City Bikeway. North Williams is recommended to be classified this way when the TSP is updated to include the bike plan recommendations.

SAC Member Questions or Comments

Debora asked when the slides that could not be shown would be posted. Ellen replied this afternoon.

Jerrell asked whether, given the ongoing development of Williams, is it possible the street is misclassified? It's starting to look more like a major traffic street. Staff replied that a Neighborhood Collector is intended to serve the destinations on street, not through traffic, so the classification is appropriate. Also, the development is consistent with the zoning and Comprehensive Plan, which is considered in the traffic classification.

Shara asked for examples of Neighborhood Collectors in other parts of town. Staff replied that Belmont and Alberta are both Neighborhood Collectors. The next step up, District Collectors, are streets like Hawthorne and 33rd. A Major City Traffic Street (such as Cesar Chavez or MLK) is more likely to accommodate through traffic and to have zoning that allows development like big box stores.

Michelle DePass asked whether there are examples in Portland of other streets like Williams, that have a bike lane through a neighborhood commercial district. Staff agreed there are not very many examples. Most neighborhood commercial districts have two-way motor vehicle traffic in a 36'-wide roadway, which means installing bike lanes would require removing parking, which is not usually feasible in a high-use neighborhood commercial district. North Williams, by comparison, has a 40' roadway (with 10' sidewalks), which is why there was room to stripe a bike lane in 1997. There are a few examples such as NW 14th or inner SE Belmont that might be somewhat similar. Dan Layden noted that another example might be the inner Broadway/Weidler couplet around NE 15th: in the 1990s this one-way couplet was converted from four motor vehicle lanes in each direction to three motor vehicle lanes with a bike lane and wider sidewalks.

Shara commented that Williams is a default north-south long distance route for bikes. Ellen noted that, with the City Bikeway classification, any bicycle trips, even through trips, are appropriate, compared to the Neighborhood Collector traffic classification, where through motor vehicle trips are not really appropriate.

Mychal pointed out that many of the Neighborhood Collectors mentioned as examples have parallel greenways on an adjacent street (instead of bike lanes on the main street). Solutions must be customized based on the location.

4. Presentation of concept alternatives to achieve top ten outcomes (Ellen and project team)

The SAC was provided a handout with overviews of four alternatives (Options 1, 2a, 2b, and 3). The options are numbered in the order that staff thought best addressed the SAC's Top Ten Outcomes as adopted unanimously at the previous meeting. Each overview sheet shows how that option responds to the outcomes, but this is rather preliminary, and by the next meeting, staff will look at the outcomes and measures in more detail. Ellen emphasized that the SAC is not tasked with making a decision today. The goal today is to discuss the options and ask questions of staff.

All of the options include a base level of improvements aimed at pedestrian crossings and crash safety. The number one safety improvement, assumed in all options, is a signal at Cook and Williams (and Cook and Vancouver). The City is working with potential partners to identify funding for traffic signals at these locations. Also, pedestrian crossings are at the top of the SAC's outcomes list, so a package of pedestrian crossing improvements at six intersections is included with every option.

Option 1 showed a left-hand cycle track with one motor vehicle travel lane and turn lanes in Segments 2-5. Option 2A showed a right-hand buffered bike lane with one motor vehicle travel lane and turn lanes in Segment 2-5. Option 2B showed a right-hand buffered bike lane with one motor vehicle travel lane and turn lanes in Segments 2 and 5 and two motor vehicle travel lanes in most of Segments 3 and 4. Option 3 shows two motor vehicle travel lanes in Segments 2-5 with spot improvements (such as bike boxes and transition lanes). Ellen noted that the options with one motor vehicle travel lane provide more benefit for pedestrian crossings at every intersection, not only the six designated crossing improvements.

SAC Member Questions or Comments

Susan asked why there is a difference in improved visibility of pedestrians between Option 1 and Option 2a. Staff replied that with the cycle track (Option 1), the new curb extensions would be only on the right side.

Ben noted that with all the options, the color code of supported outcomes shows that only Option 1 addressed the outcomes.

Jrdn asked if Option 3 is what is currently on the ground. Staff replied that Option 3 adds spot improvements (transitions, bike boxes, rapid flash beacons). It tries to reduce conflicts throughout the corridor but does not address all the problems.

Details of how the options would look in plan view for select reaches of the corridor had been provided on boards. The committee took a break to look over the posters and reconvened at 1:10pm.

5. Committee Discussion of concept alternatives (Debora)

Ellen clarified that it may be possible to mix and match some of the elements across options.

Diana noted that Peter Koonce said this could be done as a “trial” like the project on NE 12th. She asked if the City could restripe the street to test the lane reduction and experiment with the signal timing. Ellen said yes, this is possible.

Debora noted that if the SAC found something to test, it could be put it in for a period of time, but she felt that people in the community would be concerned with whether it would really be a test and whether it would be removed if it wasn’t successful. Ellen responded that communicating to the community that a test will be removed may be a challenge, but noted it will be easier if the SAC and the City are really clear about how success of an experiment is measured.

Michelle asked how the group would proceed if a test failed, and asked how “hard” elements like curb extensions could be tested. Ellen responded that the City could paint stripes and install temporary traffic control or temporary planters to simulate curb extension areas. Any element shown here could be tested, not for whole corridor but for a segment.

Susan said that before focusing on the details, the group should discuss how each option addresses the ten outcomes.

Noni asked about Ellen’s use of the word “collective” to describe the outcomes. Ellen said that although the outcomes were developed by the working group that Noni served on, 20 of the 26 SAC members participated in the exercise to rank them, which is how we got to the top ten that the SAC adopted. Mychal noted that the SAC was reacting to the “green/yellow/red” indications for the outcomes, but there didn’t seem to be a quantitative difference. He urged the committee not to be too influenced by the color rankings. Debora agreed but noted that the ranking exercise helps the group balance all the outcomes.

Shara said she wanted more info about how the outcomes were ranked. Ellen said that although we’re showing the top ten outcomes out of a set of 18, the other outcomes haven’t been forgotten. She said that the color rankings are a “broad-brush” depiction. Each outcome has several measures, and before the next meeting staff will attempt to rate performance of each option on each measure.

Rob Burchfield added that the City debated trying to populate the rankings with the measures, and said that the City would share their process. Laurie said she would like to know the City's process but that the SAC should also do their own evaluation of how the options meet the outcomes.

Ellen gave one example of the ranking process by explaining that pedestrian crossings were better in Option 1 because one traffic lane reduced crossing distances and multiple threats.

Susan asked how significantly different the crash outcomes were between options, and staff replied that the City could look at that with Crash Reduction Factors.

Noni said that at the meeting of the Outcomes Working Group engineer Wendy Cawley talked about different ways to slow traffic down. Ellen explained those ideas were incorporated into the presentation at the previous SAC meeting, and she reviewed the tools shared then, which included speed reader boards, signal progression, speed limits, and narrower roadways.

Rob Burchfield noted that some tools have limited effectiveness. Speed reader boards are effective on in the short term, but drivers tune them out over time. The City usually puts them where physical conditions require slower speeds (for example the curve at N Willamette Boulevard and Rosa Parks Way. But he said these are not effective for general speed reduction.

Noni asked if safety education was an option that could be tried for a while. She said that sitting on the committee had heightened her awareness and maybe it was possible to do this for the community. Ellen replied that a portion of the project funds could be spent on education and enforcement if the SAC recommends that, and the SAC could help design this campaign. She had met with City staff about this and such a campaign cost be in the neighborhood of \$25,000-50,000.

Michelle asked if there was any research about understanding how the brain works (studies of transportation habits or psychology). Ellen replied that at PBOT, the Transportation Options Division looks at this the most. Ellen said she would try to put together some links to resources on this topic.

Debora asked to go back to Susan's original question of how the city got from the outcomes to the options.

Ellen said they started with a base package of improvements, including the signals and pedestrian improvements. Then they looked at what could be done to slow motor vehicle speeds and reduce potential conflict points. Removing a motor vehicle lane would do both of those. Then they considered what could address bike/bus conflicts, which suggested the idea of putting bikes on the left side. Because of the concerns that have been expressed about a left-hand option, they determined that a cycle track could have the most benefit of any left-hand bikeway.

Ellen then said that for Option 2a, buffered bike lanes were preferred because earlier work with TriMet had suggested a cycle track on the right side won't work very well (due to bus and LIFT loading needs, driveways and other access issues). The buffered bike lane doesn't completely

eliminate bus/bike conflict, but the project team believes it will improve things over existing conditions.

Finally, the City considered Option 3 as an alternative if one lane wasn't possible anywhere. They tried to find other tools such as bike boxes and transitions for bikes. Option 2b is hybrid of 2a and 3. Ellen said next time the City would come back with a matrix showing how the team believes each of the options will perform for all the measures of the top ten outcomes.

Susan said Ellen's description of the process helped, but she wasn't sure what the real difference was between the three colors applied to the outcomes. Shara felt that the ranking colors for each outcome were a flawed tool. She noted for example that in Option 1 the "transitions for bikes" outcome is red, but the "reduce conflicts" is green, which seems contradictory. Given that there are no right turns for bikes for 14 blocks it seems likely there will be conflicts.

In reference to an earlier comment about the traffic impacts of the New Seasons, Ben asked what effects the other developments would have. Ellen replied that a grocery store like New Seasons typically will draw more visitors than residential buildings.

Allan noted that near Legacy on Vancouver there was a "Stop here for pedestrians" pavement marking. He asked if it was possible to add things like that to remind drivers and bicyclists to yield to pedestrians. Ellen said that PBOT is testing this and will report on whether there is any change in bicyclist yielding behavior.

Michelle said that notes to bicyclists like this might also be a good opportunity to put art or poetry at places where bikes should stop for pedestrians.

Pastor Hennessee said he applauded the City and committee for working on these difficult issues; and said that he was glad the committee was not deciding anything today because they needed time to process the options. He also agreed that the committee shouldn't focus on the "red/yellow/green" rankings, as they may be somewhat flexible. He felt he began to get a better understanding of some of the conflicts while looking more closely at the posters.

Susan inquired about the City's commitment to on-street parking and whether creative solutions could be applied here. She suggested there might be options for special permit parking (such as church parking) or rush hour parking restrictions to help with bike overflow.

Jerrell said he appreciated that the City had brought forward this whole range of options. There may be problems, and the committee will want time to consider them, but then they must try to represent the citizens and communities not represented on the committee.

Karis asked what the next steps would be in considering mixing and matching the options. Ellen replied that if someone suggested something the City could prepare it for discussion at the next meeting. Karis said she liked Option 2b but perceived problems from Skidmore to Killingsworth with one lane, given the developments going in.

Noni shared Karis's concern for that location. She noted that 220 new residents were projected for the next five years and asked if the one-lane option would cause more problems. Ellen replied that it was considered through the tools the city uses for forecasting future traffic (but these models don't include bike or pedestrian traffic). She noted that when the City used the traffic model to explore how one motor vehicle travel lane might perform in the future, it showed some trips moving to other streets. Peter Koonce, who manages the City's traffic signal section, pointed out that capacity solutions should be focused on signals and intersections because that is where traffic gets stopped. Rob Burchfield explained that the traffic model assumes that the land is developed to the density allowed in the zone, which is more densely developed than what is currently built – so the model accounts for additional traffic.

Noni said another problem was visibility at the jog at Alberta – this is already a problem even with two lanes.

Diana said it was her understanding that the zoning changed to residential north of Skidmore. City staff confirmed this, and noted that the new developments were built in an "ExD" zone.

Karis suggested that the Rodney option should be brought back. Shara seconded this idea, and added a suggestion for putting a traffic signal or some other crossing improvement on Rodney at the offset intersection with Fremont. Michelle also wondered where the Rodney option went.

Ellen responded that Rodney is in the bike plan as a neighborhood greenway, and this committee can make a recommendation that the City prioritize its development, but that the City's policies don't support moving all the bicycles off Williams. She said this committee is not the stakeholder committee for a project on Rodney.

Debora said that the way to push the Rodney issue is to essentially make no changes to Williams. However, she said, the committee was charged with considering changes to Williams, not other streets.

Ellen said that at the next meeting the project team will bring something back for the committee that addresses the Rodney neighborhood greenway as an addition to North Williams improvements.

Rob pointed out that there may be negative impacts that should be noted for different options. An example would be a possible increase in transit times. A next step might be to consider other tradeoffs not measured by the top ten outcomes.

Debora commented that in some ways, longer travel times might be a positive outcome. She then asked the committee to wrap up the discussion and clarify what additional options they are asking the project team to bring back. There were two options requested, a "2C" option that is one lane only in the southern portion; and an option for pro-time parking restrictions on the east side in the busiest segment to allow for a "rush hour lane" for bicycles.

Joe Clinkenbeard asked if he could voice an opinion, since he will only be sitting in for this meeting. He said he thought that Option 1 and Option 2A are the best for crossing the street, and that both really mitigate the multiple-threat problem that pedestrians face.

Ben asked whether a left-side cycle track, would require the removal of existing curb extensions. Staff replied that the existing curb extensions would remain, and the cross-section could go to a regular bike lane around them.

Ben asked if the City considered a left-side buffered bike lane. Staff replied that it was discussed, and it is a possibility, but one downside is the more difficult transition to right turns for bicyclists, because, cyclists would have to merge with traffic to move to the right side of the street, rather than having the left turn zone in the shadow of parking, where they can wait for a gap.

Ellen encouraged the committee members to call her if they had more questions.

6. Next meeting will be Tuesday, March 6.

7. Public Comment period

Debora reminded the committee that some PSU students wanted to interview the SAC members. Ellen sent an email request earlier, and she will re-send it.

Amy Lubitow

Amy Lubitow, a PSU faculty member from the Sociology department, was in attendance, and she explained the request. She and her co-researcher, Thad Miller from the Urban Studies Department, would like to interview SAC members to understand if this process can be used in the future. A SAC member asked if members would be interviewed now or after whole process is over, and Amy said they would like to do it now so they didn't miss the opportunity, but they could be flexible. Amy sent a sheet around the committee if anyone wanted to sign up now.

Russ Willis

Russ Willis said that he was gratified to see the City's use of the ten outcomes. He was not sure that there was enough consideration of traffic calming in the options. For example, a rapid flash beacon at Failing might not be enough. Also, the existing signals on Williams may not be close enough for effective signal progression. Russ also suggested applying an entire streetscape concept in Segment 4 to try to signal to motorists and bicyclists when they are in a pedestrian district. He also commented on the testing comparison with 12th, noting that the issues were not the same (on 12th they were testing flow, which is not a concern on Williams). He said that the group should be clear on what they're trying to achieve before experimenting.

Cathy Galbraith

Cathy said she agreed that the rankings were probably subjective, especially as they concerned crashes and speeds. She also felt that speed reader boards could be effective – there has been one in Linnton for seven years and she can see drivers slow down in response. She also noted that

there are four or five apartment projects in the Williams corridor and there was not enough parking by half – she doesn't think the comprehensive plan envisioned this level of density.

Stephen Lamb

Stephen said that with Option 1, parallel parking off of a single lane would be problematic (for both sides of the street). Because everyone is saying slow the street down, he has a 'crazy' suggestion, inspired by the European woonerf concept: invert the uses of the space. Instead of having parallel parking on the outside lanes, provide diagonal parking in center lane with travel lanes on either side. This would allow drivers to pull in one side and pull out the other. The bike lane would remain where it is in Option 1.

Shara was interested in this idea, as it would also create a pedestrian island at the end of the parking row.

Debora adjourned the meeting at 2:11 pm.