

# Memorandum



**To:** Rich Newlands, *Portland Bureau of Transportation*

**From:** Drew Meisel, *Alta Planning + Design*

**Date:** June 4, 2012

**Re:** North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations Safety Project – Open House #2 Summary

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the key themes and outcomes of the second North Williams Traffic Operations Safety Project Open House. The intent of Open House #2 was to inform the public about the recommended concept put forth by the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), as well as to solicit feedback on the preferred design concept. A second priority was to highlight the project's robust outreach and expanded planning process—the result of feedback that the City was not fulfilling its goal of conducting an open planning process through which all voices could be heard. The project team responded to this concern by successfully reaching out to the community and inviting more people of color and cultural diversity to come to the public meetings and join the SAC. The expanded 26-person committee came together and voted to recommend a left-side buffered bike lane for the majority of the corridor and a shared left-turn lane bikeway in the busy commercial segment between NE Fremont St and NE Skidmore St. The complete preferred design concept diagrams are included in **Appendix A**.



**Project staff help explain the preferred concept to Open House attendees**

The recommended concept was presented at the Open House held on Saturday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of May at Immaculate Heart Church from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. The materials displayed at the open house are included in **Appendix B**.

A total of 112 individuals signed in to the event. Comments and feedback from the public were obtained through a number of means, including conversations with the project team and PBOT staff, comments made on the maps and display materials, and through written comments submitted on blank general comment forms.

## General Themes

A range of general comments and suggestions were received from the public Open House. A complete record of public comments are included in **Appendix C**, and summarized below (in no particular order):

- **Concern about Design.** Concern that the project fails to accomplish its goal of creating a safer and more comfortable bicycle environment due to a lack of legibility and consistency in the facility design. This concern extended beyond the bicycle experience as well. Many felt that the proposed design was confusing and a danger to all users.
- **Pending Land Development.** Concern about the impact of new development on motor vehicle traffic volumes and street operations (specifically near the planned New Seasons site).
- **Process.** An appreciation for the innovative thinking, open house format, hard work, and elimination of the bus/bike conflict.
- **On-Street Parking.** General criticism for accommodating on-street parking at the expense of bicycle and pedestrian safety and comfort (e.g. door zone issues and crossing movements). Some demonstrated a preference for trading a parking lane for pedestrian plazas, parklets, or wider sidewalks.
- **Motor Vehicle – Bicycle Conflict at Intersections.** Issues related to bicycle and motor vehicle conflict points at intersections (including right turn movements by bicyclists and concern about the placement of left side bike lane to the left of turning vehicles).
- **Motor Vehicle – Bicycle Conflict on Street Segments.** Concern about bicycle and motor vehicle conflict points within roadway segments (i.e., motorists using the buffered bike lane as a travel lane, as is commonly observed on SW Stark St and Oak St). Concern about the ability of motorists to safely and easily access the parking lane across the buffered bike lane.
- **Motor Vehicle Capacity.** Very strong criticism of decision to include two through motor vehicle travel lanes between NE Cook St and NE Fremont St. Many commenters also noted that this design does not respect the SAC recommendation to staff.
- **Traffic Control.** Request for new traffic signals at several intersections, specifically NE Stanton St.

## Corridor Map Comments

Attendees were encouraged to identify existing areas of concern along the project corridor by placing sticky notes with written explanations and/or descriptions of a particular issue. The following sections summarize these comments by project segment.

## Segment 1: NE Wining Way to the I-5 On-Ramp

- Provide a separate bike signal at the NE Weidler intersection to allow bicyclists to travel ahead of motor vehicle traffic. This would avoid the two modes having to mix just north of the intersection.
- Consider skip-stripe bike lane through the NE Weidler intersection with green pavement to improve the cross-over between bicyclists and motorists (see Fig 1).
- A need for additional guidance regarding correct lane placement for bicyclists and motorists on the approach to the Broadway intersection (see Fig 1).

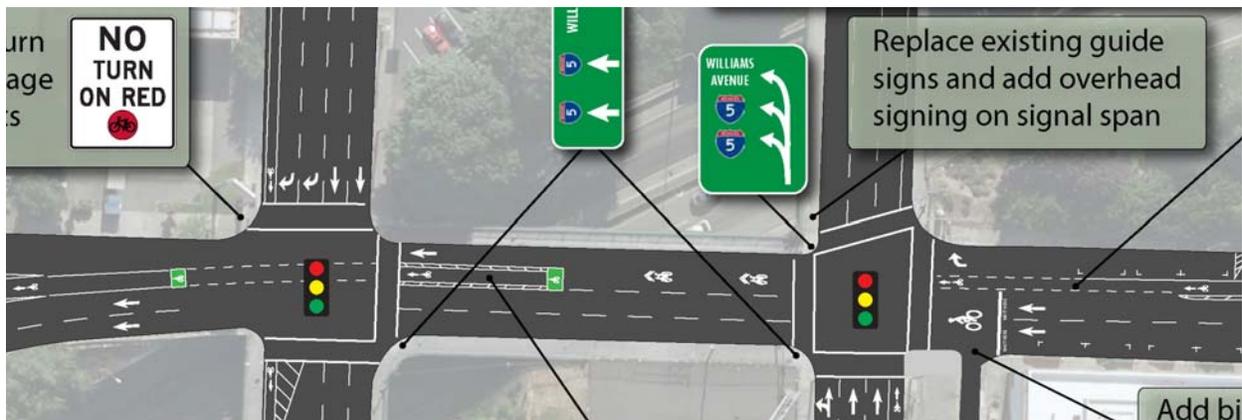


Figure 1. N Williams between NE Weidler and NE Broadway

- Concerns about motorists continuing to use the middle lane to access North Williams and then cutting across bicycle traffic transitioning to the left-side bike lane.
- Increase the visibility of the existing bike box at NE Weidler by making it consistent with other bike box designs in the City.

## Segment 2: I-5 On-Ramp to NE Russell St

- Confusion was expressed about how motorists and bicyclists safely navigate turns on and off North Williams at the NE Tillamook intersection and the need for educating the public on appropriate behavior at intersections [the design illustrated at the Open House showed a right-turn box for bicyclists, see Fig 2].
- It was noted that the visibility at the Tillamook intersection is poor for motorists crossing North Williams heading east/westbound.

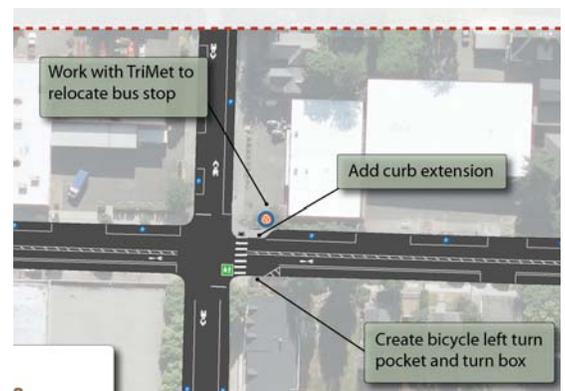


Figure 2. The proposed concept at the intersection of N Williams and NE Tillamook St

- Acknowledgement of the accessibility needs of vulnerable population residing near the Tillamook St intersection that require a crosswalk and sidewalk to safely reach the existing TriMet bus stop. “Seniors and persons with disabilities in wheelchairs use the bike lane because the sidewalks are not ADA accessible – I don’t see their needs represented.”
- Consider a mid-block crossing across from Chuck’s Market (South of NE Russell St) to create more predictable pedestrian crossing movements.
- Consider a single motor vehicle travel lane at NE Russell St to eliminate the mixing zone [traffic analysis at this location indicates a need to maintain a right-turn lane for motor vehicles due to high turn movements].
- Provide ‘Left Turn Only - Except Bikes’ signage at the Russell St intersection

### **Segment 3: NE Russell St to NE Cook St**

- Desire to spur development of the parcel bounded by Knott, Russell, Williams, Vancouver as a mixed-use building/incubator for black-owned businesses.
- Concern about placing the bike lane to the left of a left-turn only lane at the existing diverter on NE Graham St. Desire to remove the existing diverter.
- Issues related to bus loading/unloading at the NE Graham St stop where buses block the through motor vehicle travel lane.
- Place a traffic signal at NE Stanton St to improve pedestrian crossings of N Williams and to reduce motor vehicle speeds (6 separate comments). Commenters indicate that this signal was previously a funded project in the Interstate URA, but is no longer planned.
- Restrict parking in advance of the NE Stanton St intersection and clear vegetation from the existing crossing signage.
- The existing ‘Bikes yield to peds’ pavement markings are seen to be effective at improving behavior at the NE Morris St intersection. There were also requests to change the sign to the ‘Yield to Peds and Bikes’ sign common throughout the City.

### **Segment 4: NE Cook St to NE Skidmore St**

#### **Two motor vehicle lane section (NE Fargo St to NE Fremont St)**

- Eight commenters disagreed with the decision to have 2 lanes through this section, many commenters stating that this does not respect the SAC recommendation to staff.
- Concerns about the potential for ‘dooring’ issues with the removal of the parking lane buffer in a high parking turnover area.

- Safety concerns about the proposed configuration of the bike lane/bike box at Fremont and the potential for left-hooks.
- Consider making NE Cook St one-way eastbound.
- General approval for plans to place a traffic signal at NE Cook St to manage flow of traffic from I-405.
- Consider pedestrian crossing improvements at NE Ivy St to improve the connection to the planned New Seasons entrance.
- Provide textured street design (patterns, artwork, and brick) to help slow traffic and identify street as a place, not just a thoroughfare.
- Concern about the proposed design's ability to accommodate additional traffic load as a result of New Seasons.
- Suggestion to re-locate the existing bus stop at Fremont to a far-side stop.

#### **Transition Area to Shared Lane (north of NE Fremont St)**

- Concerns about legibility of the transition and potential for confusing and unpredictable behavior.
- Criticism of the mid-block transition from a two- to one-lane profile; requests to move this back to NE Fremont St as the SAC recommended.

#### **Shared Lane Area (NE Fremont St to NE Skidmore St)**

- Concern about danger to cyclists, especially as cars pull into and out of parking and make left turns.
- Proposal is perceived as not comfortable and degrading current conditions ("doesn't work for interested but concerned").
- Criticism about how drivers will be frustrated waiting behind a big line of bikes.
- Concern that cyclists will hug left hand side of road out of fear and put themselves into more vulnerable position for left hooks and dooring.
- Concern about the legibility of the design's forced left turn for motorists at intersections. Worried those drivers will accidentally end up in left lane and make last-minute merge to right in the intersection.
- Need for loading zones so delivery drivers don't block only through lane.
- Desire to remove the parking buffer and maintain a full width (12') shared travel lane.
- Concerns about motor vehicle traffic congestion increasing substantially under this option and diverting to side streets through the neighborhood.
- Concerns over too little parking.
- Concerns about excessive parking.

- Suggestion for the creation of parklets or extending the sidewalk area to better accommodate bistro tables and chairs.
- Requests that NE Rodney be developed into a Neighborhood greenway to serve as an alternate to N Williams.

### Segment 5: NE Skidmore St to NE Killingsworth St

- Criticism of both left turn options at Alberta - some expressed concern about impatient left-turning drivers stuck behind cyclists waiting for a green light to go straight, while others dislike left-hook danger of left-side bike lane (see Fig 3)

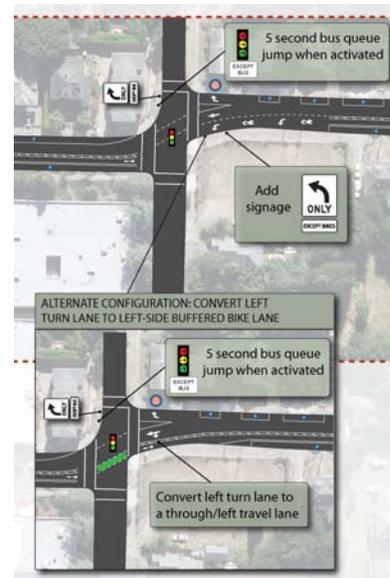


Figure 3. Proposed concept and concept alternative at N Williams and NE Alberta St

## Honoring History

With the reformation of the SAC a new goal was added to the project that would specifically seek “to honor the history of North Williams Avenue through elements of the transportation project”. The Open House provided the public with an opportunity to share suggestions for historical elements of the project. Attendees were encouraged to mark historic locations on a map for their consideration as an honoring history landmark. The results of this exercise yielded the following locations:

- Maxey’s Better Buy (1957)
- Cleo-Lilliane Social Club
- Cox Funeral Home
- Scotty’s Barbecue
- Eliot Elementary (now Matt Dishman)
- Blessed Martin/St Martin Pre-School
- Mrs. Collins Day Care Center
- Immaculata
- Elks Lodge / YWCA

- On the side of the planned New Seasons Market at NE Fremont St
- At intersections where bicyclists and pedestrians are often queued for a signal change
- Scottie's (at Morris)
- On the corner of Williams and Beech, between Willie Harris' former properties—his home and the barbershop
- Create a public plaza on empty corner lot at NE Alberta St
- On the payphone at Chuck's Market

## Traffic Safety Campaign

One of the activities at the Open House was having attendees brainstorm ideas for improving interactions between all roadway users. The suggestions that individuals shared with the project team are intended to create a more safe and comfortable traveling experience through a variety of approaches. Some of these ideas have been summarized below:

### Sign Ideas

- Depict a pedestrian, bicyclist and motorist together against a backdrop of the street. They should be shaking hands, high fiving and showing general cooperation, so that everyone can get where they need to go.
- Various pictures of vulnerable road users with the headline 'Give us a Brake! Please!!'
- The simple message 'Trapped in Traffic? Leave Earlier'
- A sign with the message 'Too Slow? Consider using MLK or I-5, complete with directional arrows.'
- A sign with a bicyclist in the Shared Lane in front of a motor vehicle with the message 'No Passing'
- The simple message 'Be Safe'
- Courtesy signs that target proper bicyclist etiquette
- Educate drivers about proper crossing of left-side bike lane. Example signage includes 'Look for bikes' and 'Bikes are faster than you think'
- The simple message 'Thank You for Not Driving'
- Signs that explain "shark's teeth" yield markings
- Sign warning road users of traffic changes ahead



**Two gentlemen contribute ideas for improving safety on N Williams**

### **Eyes on the Street Materials**

- Photos of diverse community members with slogans on banners, signs, etc. Possible slogans include:
  - ‘We Cross Williams. Please Stop for Pedestrians’
  - ‘We Ride on Williams. Please Share the Road’
  - ‘We roll on Williams. Please slow down’

### **Technical Changes**

- Reduce the speed limit to 25 mph
- Provide appropriate paint, textured road surfacing, pavement markings and buffers to facilitate predictable travel behavior.

### **Education Programs**

- Educate pedestrians about crossing streets away from marked crosswalks.
  - Step off curb to show intent
  - Large vehicles cannot stop quickly
  - Do not jaywalk mid-block
  - Look both ways to ensure a clear and safe path to cross

### **Enforcement Actions**

- Enforce passing laws (bicyclists and motorists)
- Enforce stop for pedestrians law (bicyclists and motorists)
- Enforce speed limit
- Enforce legal maneuvers (i.e., no cars in the bike lane)

## **Conclusion**

The written and verbal comments heard at the public Open House demonstrate a strong preference for re-examining particular aspects of the preferred design concept. Some of these issues may be addressed at the technical level (e.g., skip striping through some intersections and removing parking in advance of certain intersections), while other concerns may require a larger discussion. There is considerable disagreement over how best to create a safe and comfortable street environment for all users in the segment between NE Fargo St and NE Skidmore Street. The varied interests and opinions concerning the design in this segment present a significant challenge for the project’s implementation.

# **Appendix A**

## **Design Concept**

## **Appendix B**

### **Board Content**

## **Appendix C**

### **Detailed Responses**