



Sam Adams Mayor

North Williams Traffic Safety and Operations Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee February 1st meeting notes

Completed February 22, 2010

Susan D. Keil Director

SAC members in attendance (in alphabetical order by first name)

Allan Rudwick, Eliot neighbor

Bekah Cardwell, Port City Development

Ben Foote, Sabin neighbor and Umbrella

Debora Leopold Hutchins, Sistas Weekend Cyclers

Diana Moosman, MOSI Architecture

Irek Wielgosz, King Neighborhood Association

Jerrell Waddell, Life Change Christian Center

Jrdn Freeauf, Eddie Murphy Cabinets

Laurie Simpson, Eliot Neighborhood Association

Leah Nusse, Jesuit Volunteer Corps

Nathan Roll, Metropolis Cycle Repair

Pamela Weatherspoon, Legacy Emanuel Hospital

Paul Anthony, Humboldt Neighborhood Association

Shara Alexander, Eliot neighbor

Steve Bozzone, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition and Active ROW

Susan Peithman, Bicycle Transportation Alliance

SAC members absent

Jefferson Mildenberger, Native American Rehabilitation Association

Jennifer Dishman, Billy Webb Elks Lodge

Jorge Guerra, Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs

Reid Ethan Jackson, QUAD/Meyers Court Apartments

Richard Lundberg, American Red Cross

Steve Gemmell, Boise Neighborhood Association

Staff present

Michelle Poyourow, Public Involvement Consultant

Ellen Vanderslice, Portland Bureau of Transportation Project Manager

Members of the public in attendance

Abraham Sutfin, Abraham Fixes Bikes

Chris Goya, PSU Civil Engineering student

Jeff Menown, United Bicycle Institute

Joe Rowe, Active ROW

Jonathan Maus, BikePortland.org

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Mike Faden, Neighbor Pam Johnson, PSU Civil Engineering student Robert Hodge, Neighbor Russ Willis, Citizen activist Ted Beuhler

I. Welcome and introductions

Michelle Poyourow welcomed the SAC members and the public attendees to the first of six meetings. She noted that public comment would be taken at the end of the meeting and that the members of the public should make an effort to direct their comments to the SAC (and not to staff). She also warned the SAC that this first meeting agenda leaves much less time for SAC discussion and input than will future meeting agendas, as the City wanted to tell the SAC everything about N Williams before they begin discussing alternatives and advising the City.

Everyone present introduced themselves.

II. Project planning timeline, funding

Ellen Vanderslice described the City's timeline and funding for this project. (See document *N Williams Project Summary Sheet.*)

III. Project purpose and objectives – Committee endorsement sought

Ellen described the City's purpose and objectives (see *N Williams Project Summary Sheet*) in this project. She asked if any SAC members had concerns about the purpose and objectives, or wanted time to discuss it further, and noone responded that they did.

IV. N Williams Ave. Background and Existing Conditions

A. History of the corridor, recent projects

Michelle sketched out the history of the corridor since the late 1880's, when railroad and maritime workers settled in Lower and Upper Albina; through the "redlining" that cordoned Portland's black residents and business owners into the area around N Williams; "urban renewal" in the 1950's and 60's that bulldozed hundreds of residences around N Williams for a freeway, a sports arena and a hospital expansion; the influx of younger, mostly white, relatively affluent residents into nearby neighborhoods starting in the 1990's; and the recent development of many new residential and commercial buildings on the street.

N Williams had a streetcar line on it (as did Russell and MLK Blvd) until the 1930's. It was a two-way street until around the time the freeway was built, when it was converted to a "one-way couplet" with N Vancouver. The bike lane was added to N Williams after passage of the 1995 Bicycle Master

Plan. In 1997, the City counted 280 bikes on a summer day at Williams and Russell; last year more than 3,100 bikes were counted at the same location.

Transportation on N Williams received some City attention and money most recently in 2006 and 2007, when the Portland Development Commission (PDC) and the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) worked with neighbors to address pedestrian safety and motor vehicle speeding concerns on the street. As a result, new marked crosswalks, curb extensions and signs have been installed in the past few years. Some small adjustments were also made to the way the bike lane is painted south of Russell and near Fremont in 2010.

B. Current City policy

Michelle summarized the City's policies for N Williams. The street is designated in the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP) as a "Neighborhood Collector" for motor vehicle traffic. The City intends that Neighborhood Collectors "serve as distributors of traffic from Major City Traffic Streets or District Collectors to Local Service Streets and to serve trips that both start and end within areas bounded by Major City Traffic Streets and District Collectors...All Neighborhood Collectors should be designed to operate as neighborhood streets rather than as regional arterials."

N Williams is also classified as a "City Bikeway" in the TSP and recommended as a "Major City Bikeway" in the 2010 Portland Bicycle Plan. In the 2009 Streetcar System Plan, N Williams is named as an "alternative" to a possible MLK streetcar line. (Later research revealed that N Williams is classified as a "Transit Access Street," and that south of Fremont and north of Alberta it is in "Pedestrian Districts," but these facts were not presented at this meeting.)

Properties on N Williams are zoned mostly R1, EXd and R1a. Many of them (particularly the EXd parcels) can be developed into dense mixed-use buildings without on-site car parking, which will increase demand for public on-street car parking.

C. Existing conditions

Michelle described what she has heard from neighbors and businesses about the current conditions on N Williams as she has talked with people on the street and met with community members and leaders. The three main concerns people shared with her were:

- 1. Motor vehicle speeds: Most people expressed that cars on parts of N Williams move much too fast.
- 2. Bike/bus "leapfrogging" and conflict: The number of cyclists now riding on N Williams makes it hard for the buses to pull over at bus stops, causing confusion and conflict, especially during evening rush hour. People who bike, drive and take the bus complained about this phenomenon.

3. Fear of danger at pedestrian crossings: Perhaps related to motor vehicle speeds, many people are uncomfortable crossing N Williams or are concerned about the safety of others they see trying to cross (especially people with compromised mobility and Tubman Academy schoolgirls).

The SAC then reviewed City-provided maps, asked questions and added their own observations, in the following areas (see cited file names for maps and data):

- 1. Traffic volumes (*Williams_Existing_Conditions_Operations*) (About 3,100 bikes per day and 6,000 cars in summer.)
 - 2. Crash history (Williams Existing Conditions Safety)
- 3. On-street car parking use (*Williams_Existing_Conditions_Parking*) (Michelle noted that the blocks with low parking demand may soon be developed into mixed-use buildings, which will increase the parking demand.)
- 4. Transit use (*Williams_Existing_Conditions_Transit*) (In addition to shown data, Michelle noted how much TriMet LIFT service is provided on N Williams, because of the concentration of housing and work for people with disabilities.)
- 5. Motor vehicle speeds (*Williams_Existing_Conditions_Speed profiles*) (The group briefly discussed the difference in speed profiles between N Williams and N Vancouver, and hypothesized that it might be due to the adjacent land uses, or the number of motor vehicle lanes; one member noted that, because Vancouver is slightly downhill, it is more comfortable to bike next to cars because the "speed differential" is smaller between the bike and the car.)
 - 6. Width of the street (Williams Existing Conditions x-sections)

One SAC member asked if the City has data on crosswalk use or pedestrian travel around N Williams. The City does not. However, transit boardings and deboardings provide some useful information about pedestrian demand for access to transit along the corridor.

Pamela Weatherspoon asked if the "cycle track" recently tested on SW Broadway is working. Ellen and Michelle answered that it is being tested, and improved, but that overall it has been successful.

V. Committee Charter

For lack of time, Michelle and Ellen suggested that the SAC wait to discuss their charter until the next meeting, and they agreed. (See *SAC Charter*.)

VI. Public comment

Ted Beuhler asked the Committee to consider the very high bike volume on N Williams today and even more so in the future, and to go "hog wild" and "push" the City to do something of national caliber on the street.

Russ Willis suggested the Committee push for a solution that actively discourages what the community wants less of, and encourages what it wants more of. He also noted how much N Williams motor vehicle traffic he figures is using N Williams to avoid I-5 congestion, and how constrained the pedestrian environment now is on the street.

Joe Rowe noted how small the budget is for this project, wondered how many of the cars on N Williams are bound for Washington state, and asked the Committee to consider weighing in on the Columbia River Crossing given the effect he expects an I-5 bridge would have on N Williams traffic.

VII. Next meeting and wrap up

Michelle announced that the next SAC meeting would be on Tuesday, March 1st, from 12:00-1:30 pm, and that it would likely be in the same room (MOB West) at Legacy Emanuel Hospital.

Questions from the SAC for project team to answer:

- 1. How many of the crashes listed at "Broadway and Williams" are actually on N Williams (after bikes have turned north)?
- 2. How is the performance of the new Broadway separated bike signal being evaluated?
- 3. How do present motor vehicle traffic volumes on N Williams compare to past volumes? Are they higher than a Neighborhood Collector like N Williams *should* carry?
- 4. Does the City have "benchmarks" for successful Neighborhood Collector streets?
- 5. Can the SAC see a graph comparing motor vehicle volumes between N Williams and Vancouver?
- 6. What percentage of crashes get reported (and then show up on this crash map)?
- 7. What is the zoning of all of the parcels along N Williams?
- 8. Could there and should there be an email list for the N Williams SAC, so they can share information and have discussions outside of meetings?

The project team is assembling answers to these questions and will respond by email or at a future SAC meeting.

---Notes compiled and edited by Michelle Poyourow and Ellen Vanderslice.