



Sam Adams Mayor

Tom Miller Director

North Williams Traffic Safety and Operations Project DRAFT Stakeholder Advisory Committee May 3rd meeting notes

SAC members in attendance

Allan Rudwick, Eliot neighbor

Bekah Cardwell, Port City Development

Bernis Dorsey (for Jerrell Waddell), Life Change Christian Center

Ben Foote, Sabin neighbor and Umbrella

Debora Leopold Hutchins, Sistas Weekend Cyclers

Diana Moosman, MOSI Architecture

Jorge Guerra, Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs

Jrdn Freeauf, Eddie Murphy Cabinets

Laurie Simpson, Eliot Neighborhood Association

Martha McElligot, Jesuit Volunteer Corps

Nathan Roll, Metropolis Cycle Repair

Pamela Weatherspoon, Legacy Emanuel Hospital

Shara Alexander, Eliot neighbor

Steve Bozzone, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition

Susan Peithman, Bicycle Transportation Alliance

Members of the public in attendance

Amanda Milholland, Port City Development

Chris McGraw, Piedmont Neighborhood Association

Russ Willis

Barry Cowan, Property Owner

Jefferson Mildenberger, Native American Rehabilitation Association

Ken Aaron, Neighborhood Notes

Carol Herzberg, Portland Development Commission

Joshua Cohen, Fat Pencil Studio

Jonathan Maus, BikePortland.org

Dennis Hogan

Magdalena Valdivieso, Cha Cha Cha

Cynthia Chilton

Ed Abrahamson

Tom Anctil, Anctil Heating & Cooling

Project Staff present

Michelle Poyourow, Public Involvement Consultant

Ellen Vanderslice, Portland Bureau of Transportation Project Manager

Rob Burchfield, Portland Traffic Engineer

Adrian Witte, Alta Planning + Design Consultant

1120 S.W. 5th Avenue, Suite 800 • Portland, Oregon, 97204-1914 • 503-823-5185 FAX 503-823-7576 or 503-823-7371 • TTY 503-823-6868 • www.portlandoregon.gov

1. Introductions and Updates

Michelle Poyourow reported to the Committee that since their last meeting the project team had met with a group of North Williams developers, and that before their next meeting would have a similar meeting with a group of small business owners.

She asked the SAC to mark their calendars for the tentatively-scheduled Open House on June 11th (which has since been pushed back, date TBA), where the project team would show a more focused and limited set of possible tools and proposals for North Williams.

Susan Peithman asked what the project team is hoping the SAC will produce in its next few meetings. Michelle responded that they hope the SAC will narrow down the possible alternatives to one or two (in addition to keeping existing conditions) for the public to then consider at the next Open House.

2. Review Open House displays

For those members of the SAC and the public who had not attended the April 15th Open House, Michelle reviewed the Open House displays. (Available for viewing online at http://www.scribd.com/doc/53286395/N-Williams-April-16-Open-House-Displays, and for downloading at

http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=53905&a=345909)

3. Review Open House input

The project team received hundreds of comments at and after the Open House. Michelle presented the North Williams April Open House Input Summary to the SAC (available for viewing online at , and for downloading at http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=53905&a=348091). The Summary was emailed out to SAC members after the meeting.

Michelle noted that many people at the Open House expressed their concern that the proposals in this project are meant to serve other people who are just "passing through." She heard people who primarily drive express this concern about bicyclists, and people who primarily bike express this concern about drivers, and neighbors express this concern about all travelers on the street.

4. Technical next steps

Some of the possible tools presented for North Williams are technically complicated, and the project team is currently discussing them with other public agencies to determine if they are feasible. Most of the major technical questions have arisen about a cycle track.

A cycle track on North Williams could narrow the passable space of the street, so that is being discussed with the Fire Bureau. It would require a change in where bus stops are located relative to the sidewalk, and how they are designed, so that is under discussion with TriMet. A cycle track would impact access for people with disabilities to and from public and private LIFT vehicles, so that is being discussed with the City's Pedestrian Advisory Committee and TriMet. Finally, a cycle track would require different sweeping equipment than is used on North Williams today, so the team is discussing that with the Bureau of Maintenance.

Rob Burchfield told the SAC that the City is considering doing a license plate survey of auto traffic on North Williams, in order to get an idea of how people are using the street in relation to the rest of the street network (i.e. for trips to and from the neighborhood, or passing all the way through the neighborhood).

Bernis Dorsey asked how, in the license plate survey, the City would determine whether someone drives Williams like that every day, or just once in a while. Rob responded that all they can do is take a snapshot and, if taken at the right time, they can assume that it is representative of a typical day.

Rob also suggested that, given the challenges with a right-side cycle track, the team may come back to the SAC later and ask them to reconsider a left side bikeway (either bike lane, buffered bike lane or cycle track).

The team will report on these ongoing discussions and investigations at the next SAC meeting.

5. Discuss and recommend next steps

Michelle asked the SAC to discuss the potential trade-offs in each segment of North Williams of auto travel or parking lanes for more bus/bike operating space and better pedestrian crossings, in light of the feedback given by the public at the Open House.

Jorge Guerra and Diana Moosman reported to the group what they had heard at the recent meeting for North Williams developers (they both own property along North Williams and plan to develop it in the future). The developers at the meeting expressed that slower auto traffic would be good for the development of commercial areas along North Williams, and that a nicer pedestrian environment would attract more people to the area.

Diana pointed out that one of the technical difficulties with a cycle track that would be very important to developers and businesses is truck loading.

Allan Rudwick asked the group if anyone felt strongly that the street needed two auto lanes.

Shara Alexander said that she favors one lane for autos on North Williams, but that she has a concern about stopped buses blocking the one lane. Speed is the big problem where she lives, she said, and it seems like one lane is the solution. Regarding Segment 4, she doesn't know, but sees that bicyclists have just one corridor to ride on and it's Williams. She also supports improvements for bicycling on Rodney.

Diana asked if buses would pull all the way into the parking lane to reach a stop, if there were a buffered bike lane on the right side. Michelle said they would.

Susan Peithman recalled the measures of success that the group shared with the project team at the March SAC meeting. She said that it seemed like one lane would produce many of those measures of success. She said the Bicycle Transportation Alliance's goal is to work toward a bus/bike solution that would actively encourage people who are driving to bicycle on Williams. BTA is very interested in a cycle track and is looking at it with their partners. She wants to support businesses on the street, and while North Williams is a thoroughfare to some people, it could be more of a destination. She'd like to "slow down the dollars" passing up the street.

Shara pointed out that the "destination neighborhood" can be hard for neighbors to find appealing. It could lead to more of a party atmosphere on the street, which is not necessarily neighborhood friendly, so it's a double-edged sword.

Jrdn asked if TriMet's main concern with the possible designs so far was with a cycle track (as opposed to a buffered bike lane). Michelle said yes, specifically with an "island" bus stop and LIFT access.

Ben Foote asked how traffic from the Rose Quarter would affect what we can do from Weidler to Broadway. Ellen responded that the team believes we can reduce the auto travel lanes there without significant traffic effects.

Jorge asked if Vancouver is one lane, and Michelle confirmed that it is mostly one lane, though not in the segment near the Fremont Bridge ramps.

Bekah Cardwell said that she supports one lane. She asked what would keep people from hitting each other at turns, where the driver doesn't see the bicyclist because the cycle track is behind parked cars. Michelle responded that one option is to bring the cycle track and the right-hand auto lane closer together again, so that the people can see one another, and that this could mean removing auto parking at the end of the block.

Pamela Weatherspoon said that she drives North Williams home every day from the hospital, and there is definitely traffic. She can imagine it very backed up at peak hour and can't envision how one lane wouldn't create congestion.

Deborah Hutchins said that she agrees with Pamela. She often takes Williams from the Lloyd District to Lombard. She prefers it to the alternate routes, it calms her because it is not as congested and it is a smoother drive. She wonders why she should be pushed off the street. She doesn't want to see it dropped down to one lane.

Rob Burchfield clarified that when the engineers say the street would have enough capacity in, say, Segment 2 to move the same number of cars an hour with just one lane, that means *on average over the hour*. There could be a ten or fifteen minute peak-of-peak in there when it is congested, but over the hour the street would move that total number of cars acceptably.

Bernis Dorsey expressed his preference that the streets be inclusive of everyone. He travels on Williams at different times on different days, quite a bit, as he comes and goes from the Life Change Christian Center for different functions. He sees different numbers of cars at different times, people going to businesses, commuting, garbage haulers, then on the weekend he sees a lot of traffic for events. He has seen a lot of congestion, and near accidents. He is pro two lanes. Michelle asked him to clarify if he would want to keep Williams two lane along its entire length, or just in Segment 4 where the auto volumes are over what one lane can move, and he responded that he preferred two lanes along the entire length of the street.

Steve Bozzone said he crosses both Williams and Vancouver daily, and that at Vancouver cars will stop, but at Williams he has many close calls. He asked the City to consider not just automobile flow but bicycle and pedestrian flow, especially since a third of trips in the corridor are by bicycle. From a "mode equity" perspective it's unjust to design only for autos.

Allan Rudwick noted that, although there is congestion, people rarely have to wait through a signal. Nathan Roll agreed and said lots of parts of the city are more congested. Diana said the street is making a transition from a thoroughfare to a main street with businesses.

Rob Burchfield said he had been thinking a lot about a one-lane Williams, wondering how bad congestion would actually be. In modeling traffic, there is a concept of equilibrium, that drivers will take the least-time travel path, and that when you change which is the least-time path, the system will adjust to a new equilibrium. He expects there would be a few weeks or a month when things would be a mess, but then as people sought out the least travel time path for their trip, there would be a new equilibrium among North Williams, Northeast MLK, the I-5 freeway and North Interstate. For some people it would still make sense to drive on Williams, but people with some discretion in their route choice would pick another route.

Rob was confident that the good network of north-south auto routes around North Williams would make that equilibrium happen, but what the team doesn't want, he said, was to

negatively affect the small businesses on the street for a long time. If the City goes to one lane, it has to work for local stakeholders, the people who live and run businesses here.

Michelle asked Rob what the City might do differently at intersections if Williams were one auto lane. Rob responded that they would probably put turn lanes at all of the major intersections, so that when Williams gets a green light the through car traffic isn't held up by right or left turning cars. There would be more attention to detail.

Ben Foote asked whether Rob believes, in Segment 4, where a small fraction of the peak hour auto traffic is above what one lane could handle, that 15-20% of the auto traffic is "pushable" to another street? Rob responded with an example of when the Hawthorne Bridge was closed in 1996, traffic didn't really go away – it could be accounted for in increases on other bridges, but people choose to travel at different times and spread out the peaks.

Ellen Vanderslice suggested the SAC take a quick "straw poll" on whether the City and the project team should further investigate making Williams one lane along its entire length (not just in Segments 2 and 5), and present more on it at the next SAC meeting. The results of the straw poll were 11 yes, 3 no.

6. Public comment

Magdalena Valdivieso thanked the team for proposing to hold a special business meeting. She is concerned that developers can building a six story building on Williams without including any parking, and would like the City to look at that. She also said that businesses bring life into the neighborhood, as in her building, which used to be an abandoned warehouse. Her customers and employees walk and bike, but she believes that we need two lanes for people to come to the businesses. She also gets two deliveries a week from bigger trucks. She looks at NW 21st and 23rd and doesn't see the same number of bikers on those streets. She would like to see the neighborhood come together and make Williams a street for everyone.

Chris McGraw pointed out that parking is already tight on some blocks around Williams and will get worse. He wondered if the neighborhood needs some off-street parking. He also said that if he is riding by himself, he'll take North Williams and he often stops at a business on the street. But if he's with his family they are not brave bicyclists so they will take Rodney, and then they are very unlikely to stop and spend money at Williams businesses. He thinks a comfortable bike route on North Williams would bring more business by the front doors there.

Tom Anctil remembered back in 1978 when he first moved his business to the corner of North Skidmore and Williams. He was opposed to the bike lane when it first went in, but now he loves the bike traffic on the street and he thinks it's fine. He bought the lot across

Williams from his business, and is about to start a mixed use project there, and will move his Heating & Cooling facility there. It would kill it not to have on-street parking, so keeping as much on-street parking as possible is important to him. It is also important to him that good truck access to the new building is maintained, so if the bike lane were right against the curb that would be a problem for them.

Pamela Weatherspoon added that Legacy Emanuel Hospital will be opening its new Children's Hospital in 2012, so that will mean more traffic on North Williams than there is today. Ellen noted that she had understood the traffic analysis for the new hospital showed the opening would not result in additional peak-hour traffic (and the hospital therefore did not have to make any transportation investments or pay any Transportation System Development Charge fees).

Laurie Simpson let the group know that the North/Northeast Quadrant planning process was underway and at a critical time for input, with its next Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting on May 26th. More information here: http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?c=52841

Allan Rudwick asked whether the team was considering using angle parking anywhere, to add auto parking in some places. Michelle said yes, that is a possibility.

7. Wrap up and next meeting

The next meeting of the SAC will be Tuesday, June 7th, at Legacy Emanuel Hospital in Room 1077.

--Meeting notes prepared by Michelle Poyourow and Ellen Vanderslice, submitted for SAC approval June 14th, 2011.