

Sam
Adams
Mayor

Tom
Miller
Director

**North Williams Traffic Safety and Operations Project
DRAFT Stakeholder Advisory Committee June 7th meeting notes**

SAC members in attendance

Allan Rudwick, Eliot neighbor
Amanda Milholland, Port City Development
Jerrell Waddell, Life Change Christian Center
Ben Foote, Sabin neighbor and Umbrella
Diana Moosman, MOSI Architecture
Jrdn Freeauf, Eddie Murphy Cabinets
Laurie Simpson, Eliot Neighborhood Association
Leah Nusse, Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Nathan Roll, Metropolis Cycle Repair
Shara Alexander, Eliot neighbor
Steve Bozzone, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition
Susan Peithman, Bicycle Transportation Alliance

Members of the public in attendance

Sharon Maxwell-Hendricks, Neighbor
Tom Bickett, Legacy Health Systems
Lisa Goorjian-Duh, Neighbor
Russ Willis
Scott Lieuallen
Joe Clinkenbeard, Neighbor
Jonathan Maus
Andrew Neerman
Kathy Finney, Friends of the Children
Gregg Lavender, Friends of the Children
Bernis Dorsey, Life Change Christian Center
Joshua Cohen, Fat Pencil Studio

Project Staff present

Michelle Poyourow, Public Involvement Consultant
Ellen Vanderslice, Portland Bureau of Transportation Project Manager
Rob Burchfield, Portland Traffic Engineer
Drew Meisel, Alta Planning + Design Consultant

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Michelle Poyourow welcomed SAC members and the public, and facilitated introductions.

2) Public Outreach Update and Discussion

- a) Michelle and Ellen Vanderslice reported on May outreach efforts, including meetings they sought out in response to feedback from the SAC and the public:
 - A small meeting for North Williams businesses (9 business owners and two property owners attended). The group was very concerned about any reductions in on-street auto parking, most of them were not interested in a reduction of auto traffic on Williams, a few were interested in slower auto traffic on Williams, and a few expressed concern about delivery vehicles blocking traffic under a single travel lane option. They also expressed wariness in changing North Williams any further, and in the potential expense of this project; yet many were interested in seeing more stoplights on Williams.
 - Individual meetings with parents of children who attend Tubman revealed a desire to slow traffic down and make crossing Williams safer, and in that interest an openness to a one-lane Williams. Parents were also concerned about the volume of car and bike traffic on N Flint, and crosswalk compliance there.
 - In a discussion with the Humboldt Elementary School PTA, Ellen heard parents' safety concerns for children walking across Williams, that bus/bike conflicts are less of an issue on the northern section of Williams, interest in moving bike traffic off Williams and onto an adjacent street, lukewarm support for bikeways in general, and some concerns over the City's push to build bike infrastructure so quickly.
 - Unthank Plaza staff expressed interest in any changes that will make the street safer to cross for residents with disabilities, including lower speeds, more marked crosswalks or a single travel lane.
 - In a meeting with the Albina Ministerial Alliance, Ellen heard the following feedback:
 - The community is trying to adjust to gentrification, and needs time to adjust.
 - "Green" is good, but cyclists seem to have a big voice, and that is irritating.
 - From the presentation, this project seems to be all about bikes, despite its name.
 - There needs to be more sensitivity to the fact that the community has been invaded.
 - Williams is relatively safe as is; the real concern for safety is Alberta, where bicyclists are mixing with traffic and it's crazy – and the street has changed so people can't afford to live there.
 - Some of the innovative treatments the City is using for bicycle transportation (like bike boxes) are confusing to people driving.
 - This project should do more to reduce "them and us." There is anger and distrust from people in the congregations, and this project will have to work hard to overcome skepticism.

- b) Sharon Maxwell-Hendricks shared her concerns about the project and the outreach process. She expressed her concerns as:
- The City's recent planning efforts to combat crime, poverty, blight, drug related activity, and poverty has led to gentrification.
 - The African American community is not against bicyclists or change, but they would like a larger voice in the planning process. They would like to be at the table and providing input regarding the future development of the neighborhood and street.
 - The African American community would like to benefit from the changes that come to the neighborhood. A feeling of *belonging* to the gentrified neighborhoods needs to be fostered.
 - There is a general feeling that the African American community, who experienced years of crime, poverty, etc., has borne the brunt of the neighborhood's problems and that newcomers are reaping the benefits of a safer neighborhood without having put in any initial effort to improve the neighborhood.
 - Rodney is a better street for bicyclists and should be developed into a bikeway. Williams is not safe. In her experience bicycling as a child in the neighborhood and now teaching young people to bike, she uses the alleys and the side streets.
 - Jobs, and access to healthy lives are needed in the neighborhood.
 - The rising cost of housing has pushed many residents out of the community.
 - The community would like a medium or platform to address these issues in a meaningful way.

Sharon's comments were echoed by Jerrell Waddell. He added that he loves to see the new businesses coming in, but feels that the project team should speak with businesses that have operated on the street for a long time. He is concerned that removing a travel lane from Williams would lead to an outcry from the community. He loves the bicyclists, but increased development in the area combined with a reduction in capacity could be a congestion nightmare.

Jerrell said he would like to see a wider spectrum of street users involved in the process: businesses, schools, churches, and the existing African American community. The eventual solution for the street should be what is best for *all* users. He feels that the current effort emphasizes improving conditions for bicyclists too much.

Diana Moosman asked if Sharon or Jerrell could elaborate on the reasons why the neighborhood now feels unfamiliar. Sharon responded that the new businesses are mostly white owned/operated and cater to white people. When she goes into these businesses she is not comfortable, and her children are made to feel very uncomfortable.

Historically, businesses in this area were African American owned/operated, but many of these businesses have left the area following the redevelopment of the street. This is

unacceptable to many in the community who do not understand why these businesses are no longer operating on the street. This is partly due to decisions to alter the neighborhood not being transparent or inclusive of the existing community. The African American community feels that it has been left out of previous planning efforts.

- c) Michelle told the SAC that there will be a meeting on Thursday, June 23rd, at 6:00 pm at the Elks Lodge (6 N Tillamook) for members of the African American community around N Williams, which Debora Leopold-Hutchins suggested and is helping to promote. The SAC will receive an invitation by email.

3) Extended Timeline and Committee Member Commitments

Ellen told the SAC that the City would like to extend the process for this project in order to conduct further outreach with the community and better understand the issues surrounding the current bike lane and any future transportation changes on Williams.

She asked the SAC if they had any objections to continuing the project beyond the once-promised July end time; there were no objections.

She asked the SAC members to consider whether they could continue to serve on the committee and, if they could not, if they would help project staff find a replacement for them on the committee.

The tentative SAC schedule is now for a noon meeting on August 2, September 6, and October 4. (There will be no July SAC meeting.)

4) Technical Update and Discussion

- a) Report on transit, LIFT and parking impacts of a right-side cycle track

Rob Burchfield updated the group on discussions of the different bike/bus designs with TriMet. TriMet wants to achieve safe interactions between cyclists and the bus, while also maintaining quality bus and LIFT service.

TriMet provides a great deal of LIFT service on North Williams between Tillamook and Russell. LIFT is a door-to-door service that uses either regular bus stops, parking lots or curbside parking spaces to load and unload customers.

In a right-side cycle track design, TriMet would want the bus stop islands to be long enough to accommodate two buses or one bus and one LIFT van, i.e. 90' long; they would also want the islands to be on the far side of intersections, or set back 35' from intersections (for crosswalk visibility) if they were on the near side of the intersections. If North Williams had one-lane for auto traffic, auto parking on the left side of the street

across from the bus stop would be removed so that car traffic could flow around a stopped bus or LIFT van at the island. Bus stop islands could not be placed in front of driveways.

For these reasons, a right-side cycle track would result in the removal of a certain amount of car parking to maintain transit service and auto flow (whereas with a left-side cycle track, no bus stop islands or auto passing lanes would be necessary as buses would still pull to the curb on the right side of the street). This would be a major downside to a right-side cycle track.

Rob passed out an “Evaluation Criteria Matrix,” showing how each of the four bikeway options (right- or left-side cycle tracks or buffered bike lanes) score on various criteria, including these transit and parking criteria.

b) One lane or two? New analysis of how much car traffic a one lane Williams could move

Rob told the group that the project team had analyzed how much car traffic North Williams could handle in the section from Cook to Skidmore (where the auto volumes are highest).

He explained the difference between fixed signals and actuated signals. Fixed signals switch from red to green on a timer regardless of the absence of cross-traffic, and always give the full pedestrian walk time regardless of whether or not anyone is crossing the street. (The length of that green is dictated by the length of time it takes someone to walk across the street, which is much longer than it takes someone to drive or bike through the intersection.) Actuated signals can be set to only give a green light to the side streets when a car or bike triggers the sensor; and to give the longer green and the “walk” signal to the side street only when someone has pushed the button. As a result, actuated signals can give more green time to the main street (in this case, North Williams).

The signal at North Williams and Shaver is a fixed signal.

North Williams in this section is currently operating “under capacity,” meaning that it could move more cars than it does. The absolute peak-of-the-peak demand in the afternoon is about 1,250 cars per hour (this is extrapolated from the busiest 15 minutes of the peak hour); with the current fixed signal, it could handle up to 2,225 cars per hour.

With only one lane, but keeping the fixed signal at Shaver, this section of Williams could handle 1,150 cars per hour, slightly less than the peak-of-the-peak flow today.

But with one lane plus adding actuation to the signal at Shaver, it could handle 1,400 cars per hour – slightly more than the peak-of-the-peak flow today.

SAC member Allan Rudwick asked if, given the lengthened timeline for this project, the City could do any interim improvements on North Williams, such as high-visibility crosswalks,

before the end of this summer. Ellen responded that they would want to know what the complete plan is for the street before starting any work, but that some elements of it could certainly be implemented sooner than others, budget and weather and other factors permitting.

5) Public Comment

Lisa Goorjian-Duh: Lisa asked that the City consider the impacts of vehicle traffic turning eastbound off North Williams. During rush hour she sees drivers speed east (coming from the Fremont Bridge), cutting down side streets like Cook. This causes a dangerous situation for pedestrians and bicyclists on those side streets that are used as a cut-through. She would like to see the City improve the safety of Williams by making pedestrian crossings better, and she would also like to see North Ivy continued between Williams and Vancouver when that megablock is developed, so that kids going to Boise Elementary School can walk on side streets to get there instead of Fremont.

Bernis Dorsey: Mr. Dorsey said that it means a lot to his community that the City has been making such an effort to reach out to them. He has been a member of the community since 1979. He would like to know if there has been a forecast of auto traffic on the street. Michelle asked if he would like an answer to that question right then, as she'd heard it from other people. Rob answered that the City has some estimates but that the numbers have not been released to the public. The project team will have an answer for him and others at the next meeting. (Note: following the meeting, Rob met with the City staff that forecasts future traffic volumes. From 1988 to 2008 traffic volumes on N Williams increased at a rate of about 1% per year. Since 2008, volumes have fallen. The 2035 traffic forecasting model predicts that volumes on Williams will increase about one-half percent per year over the next 20 years. If this prediction holds true, peak hour traffic in the section from Cook to Skidmore would be approximately 1380 vehicles per hour, still under the 1400 that the street could carry with an actuated signal at Shaver.)

Gregg Lavender: Gregg said that making the street safer for bicyclists will lead to an explosion of bicyclists. He is a former bike/pedestrian safety teacher now working as a mentor with Friends of the Children. He would like to escort the children he mentors around North Williams by foot and bike, taking them on cultural and learning trips, but he is terrified of taking them on Williams/Vancouver and would like to see safety improvements on these streets.

Russ Willis: Russ said that as a vehicular cyclist he does not like the current roadway configuration on Williams, but that he also doesn't have a strong opinion about what kind of bikeway should be developed on the street. He said he would like to remind everyone that no one is served by cars speeding on North Williams. The street is not supposed to be a major arterial. Setting on-street parking back from intersections and phasing in crosswalks early in the project would both be positive changes in his opinion.

Joe Clinkenbeard: Joe echoed Russ's comments and added that Williams is difficult to cross safely. He finds that vehicle speeds are too high.

Notes compiled and edited by Drew Meisel, Michelle Poyourow and Ellen Vanderslice, June 21, 2011.