

Sam
Adams
Mayor

Tom
Miller
Director

M E M O R A N D U M

April 26, 2012

From: Ellen Vanderslice, Project Manager *Ellen*

To: Sam Adams, Mayor and Commissioner in charge of Transportation
Tom Miller, Director, Portland Bureau of Transportation
Greg Jones, Development and Capital Program Group Manager
Robert Burchfield, City Traffic Engineer

cc: Catherine Ciarlo, Office of the Mayor
Katja Dillmann, Office of the Mayor
Grace Uwagbae, Office of the Mayor
Debora Leopold Hutchins, Chair, Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Dan Layden, Capital Project Supervisor
Rich Newlands, Project Manager
Wendy Cawley, Traffic Safety Engineer
Adrian Witte, Alta Planning + Design
Michelle Poyourow, Poyourow Consulting, public involvement
Joan Brown-Kline, Brown-Kline and Co., public involvement

**Regarding: North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations Safety Project
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Final Recommendations**

Please find attached to this memorandum the FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for the North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations Safety Project, along with a list of all the SAC members.

The SAC chose a decision-making process that called for a 2/3 super majority vote to approve the final recommendations, with everyone offered the opportunity to add comments, concerns, or dissenting remarks to the final document. Of the 26 members of the committee, 25 voted on these recommendations, which were approved by a vote of 22 to 3. Comments, concerns and remarks have been incorporated as footnotes.

The North Williams project has been an amazing process, and I hope you will join me in thanking the many members of the community who joined us on this journey. In particular, I wish to express my deep thanks to Debora Leopold Hutchins, who chaired the SAC and whose leadership was essential to reaching this agreement.

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While most of the Final Recommendations pertain directly to the Traffic Operations Safety project, some go beyond the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Transportation. I particularly draw your attention to Recommendation No. 11, regarding future outreach, which is directed to PBOT along with the Office of Neighborhood Involvement and the new Office of Equity, to whom I will forward it. I will forward Recommendation No. 12, regarding housing, to the Bureau of Housing.

A public open house showcasing the future changes to North Williams Avenue will be held on Saturday, May 19, 2012, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Immaculate Heart Church (2926 N Williams). PBOT is already at work on an implementation strategy for these recommendations. Rich Newlands will be the project manager for the implementation phase.

It is my fervent hope, as PBOT moves forward with implementing these recommendations, that the implementation will honor the spirit of the agreement reached by the SAC, including elements such as honoring the history of Williams Avenue and educating area residents and travelers regarding traffic safety. The inclusion of these elements was important to the stakeholders, and I urge the Bureau to be creative and flexible in finding ways to address all the recommendations in this document within the constraints of the modest funding available.

#

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS
From the North Williams Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Regarding the North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations Safety Project

Background

The North Williams Stakeholder Advisory Committee was charged by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) with making a recommendation regarding the North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations Safety Project.

We, the 26 members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, accepted this charge to address safety and traffic concerns on Williams Avenue. We agreed as a Committee to make our decisions with compassion and integrity within a contextual framework, understanding the safety issues while at the same time acknowledging past planning processes and those who have been hurt by those planning processes. We agreed to do this in a way that was inclusive, safe, considered all voices, and had positive impact on the entire community. We committed to recommending sustainable transportation solutions that balance the needs and concerns of all users of the corridor, including neighborhood residents, workers, businesses, religious institutions, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists.

In the course of our process, we worked hard to hear the needs and concerns of all parties involved, while being cognizant of the history of the area. As individuals, we immersed ourselves in activities and events related to the issues before us. As a Committee, we took public comment at every Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting, and convened a Community Forum at which nearly 200 people expressed their hopes and dreams for Williams Avenue.

We believe that the members of the community are the experts in their neighborhoods, and that the City has expertise in traffic planning and engineering. Working with the project team of City staff and consultants, our Committee learned all we could related to Williams Avenue, including its history, how it functions for all modes today, and its place in the hierarchy and aspirations of the City's long-adopted plans.

To guide our process, we adopted a Charter, a Guiding Statement and a Decision-Making Process. We agreed that a two-thirds super-majority of those Committee members in attendance at a meeting would suffice to pass a proposal, and that any Committee member not in agreement would be welcome to write a dissenting opinion to be included in the record of the vote.

The Committee affirmed seven objectives for the project, then developed and adopted a set of ten desired project outcomes. The project team worked to develop project options to deliver our top ten outcomes. In evaluating and discussing these options, our Committee labored to integrate what each of us has observed and learned, while at the same time honoring the diversity of truths that we heard from members of the community.

Having reached agreement through this process, we now present our recommendations to the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Left-hand buffered bike lane

Believing that it is our best option for:

- addressing dangerous interactions between bicycles and buses;
- creating a safer environment for pedestrians of all ages and abilities to cross Williams Avenue;
- preserving a viable environment for local businesses; and
- encouraging through-traffic to take more appropriate arterials:

We recommend a left-side, buffered bike lane with one motor vehicle lane on Williams Avenue from the I-5 on-ramp to Fargo Street, and from Skidmore to Killingsworth.

2. Shared left-turn lane/bikeway

Believing that, in the busiest section of the Williams corridor, it will:

- keep vehicles flowing around temporary obstacles and through high-traffic intersections;
- maintain effective neighborhood and business access; and
- allow for safe left and right turns from Williams by bicycles:

We recommend a shared left-turn lane/bikeway on Williams Avenue between Fremont and Skidmore with demarcated left turns and a physical barrier to through-vehicle traffic in the left lane on the north side of left-turn intersections.¹

3. Fargo to Fremont

Believing:

- that pedestrian traffic will increase significantly with the construction of the new grocery store at the intersection of Williams and Fremont;
- that Line No. 4 buses will continue to turn from Williams left onto Fremont;
- that traffic will continue to enter Williams at N Cook Street:

We encourage PBOT to develop a design that makes a safe and comfortable transition from the buffered bike lane to the shared left-turn lane/bikeway while safely accommodating bus and motor vehicle turning movements.

¹ SAC member Allan Rudwick notes: "I trust that if it [shared lane] doesn't work, more input will be taken." SAC member Noni Causey notes that she does not support a physical barrier at every block; that she thinks the shared left lane will be confusing, cumbersome and inefficient for drivers; that she would rather have had two travel lanes and a regular bike lane on the left than the shared lane section; and that she believes the buffered bike lane and single travel lane should have ended at Russell rather than Fargo, and not be continued in the northern section.

4. Traffic Speed

For reasons of:

- increased safety for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists;
- safer school crossings;
- the health and prosperity of the local business community; and
- encouraging through-traffic to use more appropriate arterials²:

We recommend that all available tools be used to reduce motor vehicle speeds on Williams Avenue, including reducing the speed limit on Williams Avenue allowing traffic engineers to determine best design speed.³

5. Pedestrian Visibility at Crosswalks

Believing:

- that pedestrians are at risk in certain parts of the commercial district;
- that on-street parking is important for the businesses and churches on North Williams Avenue;
- that pedestrian traffic will continue to increase because of the two new housing developments; and
- • that sightline visibility is important for safe pedestrian crossings, but is often impeded by vehicles parked too closely to crosswalks:

We recommend the removal of 2 parking spaces on the west and east side of N Failing which should make it safer and more comfortable for pedestrians to cross the street.

We recommend that the City adopt a plan that includes curb extensions at corners in the business district.

We further recommend that PBOT strongly consider prohibiting parking within 20ft of crosswalks where curb extensions are not possible.

² SAC member Jerrell Waddell disagreed with this bullet point, saying that, “Williams has been used as an arterial for more than 30 years. Demand has grown for vehicle traffic as well as bicycling, and overall use of the street should not dictate that we encourage traffic to use other streets.”

³ SAC member Paul Anthony submitted a dissenting opinion on Recommendation No. 4: “I disagree strongly with the language in the recommendation: ‘...allowing traffic engineers to determine best design speed.’ Over the last year, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee had heard a significant body of testimony to the effect that traffic engineers have not been honest brokers and have pursued an agenda radically at odds with the safety and livability of the community around North Williams. The effect of their actions has been to push as many vehicles as possible through the neighborhood as fast as possible. The perennial PBOT argument that speed limits are set by the Oregon Department of Transportation is specious; the Bureau regularly pursues policies and actions contrary to state law when it suits the city’s convenience (Portland’s habitual failure to enforce the statewide law precluding parking within twenty feet of an intersection is only one such example). The speed limit on North Williams must be lowered to reflect the needs and realities of the schools, churches, social service agencies, businesses, and residents around the Avenue.”

6. Traffic Signals

Recognizing:

- that traffic signals have previously been requested by the community at Williams/Stanton;
- that the significant traffic congestion as vehicles access and egress the Kerby ramp off the Fremont Bridge results in dangers to all system users;
- that the longstanding history of vehicle and pedestrian accidents at these intersections warrants safety improvements; and
- that extensive growth is anticipated in the immediate Williams Avenue area:

We recommend, as a highest priority, that traffic signals be installed at the intersections of Williams and Cook and Vancouver and Cook, and at the intersection of Williams and Stanton.

We recommend the committee (or community representatives) approach Emanuel Hospital to participate as a good neighbor in establishing the recommended traffic signals.⁴

7. Bus Stop Relocations

Believing that the current bus stop at Williams and Fremont:

- contributes to congestion by unnecessarily routing buses across a major demarcated right turn lane, and
- by relocating the bus stop TriMet can anticipate expected passenger demand;

And, further believing that the current bus stop at Williams and Tillamook:

- creates a hazard for bicyclists turning right at Tillamook and the many bicyclists crossing Williams at Tillamook in both directions:

We recommend that PBOT and TriMet review the placement of all transit stops on Williams to optimize locations with respect to the new design, and we particularly recommend that the bus stop at Williams and Fremont be moved one block south to Williams and Ivy, and that the bus stop at Williams and Tillamook be moved north to the north side of the intersection.

⁴ SAC members Gahlana Easterly, Michelle DePass, and Chair Debora Leopold Hutchins had concerns in the final vote that this second recommendation under No. 6 as written had not accurately captured the Committee's intent, in which community outreach to Emanuel referred only to the signal at Williams and Stanton. PBOT is actively pursuing private and public sector partners for funding for the signals at Williams and Cook and at Vancouver and Cook. In particular, SAC member Gahlana Easterly wished this document to mention her meeting with New Seasons Market CEO Lisa Sedlar, and Ms. Sedlar's verbal promise during that meeting that NSM would participate in funding the signal at Vancouver and Cook. SAC member Laurie Simpson notes: "I also think the traffic signal at Stanton is very, very important to Eliot and Williams safety – controlling speeds on Williams and providing safe opportunities to cross the street." PBOT has clarified regarding the requested signal at Williams and Stanton that changes in the intersection operation with the new cross-section are expected to resolve some of the safety issues at this intersection, which will be reevaluated once those changes have been implemented.

8. Honoring the History of Williams Avenue

Recognizing and honoring:

- the many people who have been residents, visitors, workers, business owners and property owners in the historically Black community (Albina) made up of the Boise, Eliot, King, and Humboldt neighborhoods;
- the descendants and collective memory of the community, and all those who have suffered, or watched their families or businesses suffer, due to systemic processes of racial residential segregation, housing condemnation to make way for urban renewal, institutional disinvestment, and governmental or institutional goals that collided with neighborhood dreams, goals, and hopes;
- the legacy of these processes and the history of insensitivity that has taken place as it relates to neighborhood change;
- the community's need to honor its past and learn from our collective experiences; and
- the opportunity to use this project intentionally to reverse that negative legacy and begin the healing process:

We recommend that the City work with the community to further short- and long-term projects to honor the people, businesses and civic institutions that have lived and thrived on Williams Avenue, including using elements of the North Williams Traffic Operations Safety Project, such as the safety campaign, signage, placemaking, and public art, to achieve these ends, and incorporating features such as oral history excerpts, photographs of significant people and places, walking tours, and a web presence.⁵

9. Safety Campaign

Believing:

- that our own travel behaviors have been affected by the insight and information we have gained through our service on this Committee; and
- that information about the changes to Williams Avenue will be critical to safely transitioning to the new configurations:

We recommend that PBOT undertake a Safety Campaign concurrently with the implementation of the first changes to the roadway, using education, enforcement and encouragement, and incorporating short-term projects to honor the history of Williams Avenue.

⁵ SAC member Jerrell Waddell has this dissenting comment: "Regarding honoring the history of Williams Avenue, I believe this decision to change the street is dishonoring the people who were historically engaged in commerce and who lived in this area, by creating a venue designed to be used by a particular population of younger, white professional people who bicycle."

10. Neighborhood Greenways

Recognizing:

- that Williams Avenue is used by a diverse bicycle community with many different and sometimes competing needs,
- that the number of active bicyclists in North and inner-Northeast Portland will increase significantly in the near term; and
- that any improvements recommended by our Committee to streets other than Williams Avenue must develop from their own process and stakeholders:

We recommend that PBOT aggressively pursue options such as North Rodney Avenue for neighborhood greenways that can serve as viable alternatives supplementing bicycle use of Williams Avenue.

11. Future Outreach and Actions by PBOT and the City of Portland

Recognizing:

- that changing transportation design has a significant impact on quality of life;
- that impacted local communities are diverse and multi-faceted, have frequently been marginalized and disproportionately impacted by past efforts at civic improvement, and are often difficult to access through conventional means;
- that the City needs to be responsible to all communities, especially those which are under-served communities, or culturally disadvantaged communities, when considering project sites; and
- that the history, land use, and prior planning efforts should be considered and questioned while engaging in these projects:

We strongly recommend that the City right past wrongs by studying the North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations Safety Project, its success and failures, utilizing a formal facilitated evaluation process, to guide new policy on engagement processes that ensure that all voices are heard.⁶

We strongly recommend that the City of Portland critically evaluate its public participation efforts and stakeholder input processes to determine who in a particular community is not being heard in the process and ask why they are not being engaged, and furthermore to make every effort to actively engage those who have been marginalized.

We strongly recommend that the City start future projects from a place of community need with early input and guidance.

We strongly recommend that the City recognize the opportunities and challenges inherent in planning efforts, and to strive for an outcome that is truly sustainable.

⁶ SAC member Jerrell Waddell has this dissenting comment: "I don't see how we can right the wrongs when this Committee, even as expanded, did not adequately represent those who do not bicycle."

We recommend that PBOT's future outreach utilize the resources of the city's Office of Neighborhood Involvement.⁷

We offer the North Williams Stakeholder Advisory Committee's Guiding Statement as a model for future outreach.

12. Housing

Having accepted public testimony on, and in the cases of some SAC members, directly experienced:

- the decades-long history of displacement of minority communities from the area served by N. Williams;
- the ongoing effects of gentrification on aging households; and
- the lack of acceptable affordable, and accessible housing alternatives for seniors, the disabled community, and families making less than the median family income as determined by HUD standards⁸:

We recommend the City find additional sustainable funding for the Interstate URA pilot program for culturally appropriate outreach to assist homeowners in danger of losing their homes, currently administered by Portland Housing Bureau

We strongly recommend the City develop an affordable housing strategy for North Williams Avenue, using a community-based committee and observing the principles and tools outlined above.

13. Project Funding and Phasing

Recognizing:

- that the recommendations of this Committee likely exceed the resources immediately available for implementation of the project;
- that it would be advantageous to reallocate roadway space in time for the peak bicycle use months of 2012; and
- that pedestrian safety is our highest consideration, but that some pedestrian improvements are relatively expensive:

We strongly recommend that the City seek funding for all elements of the project, including those that exceed currently allocated resources; and we encourage the City to develop a phasing plan for the project elements that implements as much of the intent of the project as possible in the first phase, even if some elements are first implemented as interim improvements.

⁷ SAC member Michelle DePass asks that the expertise of the Office of Equity also be leveraged.

⁸ See the US Department of Housing and Urban Development MFI for Portland area 2011:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/phb/index.cfm?c=50010&a=352655>

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North Williams Avenue Traffic Operations and Safety Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Name	Affiliation
Debora Leopold Hutchins, Chair	Sistas Weekend Cyclers
Allan Rudwick	Neighbor
Ben Foote	Neighbor
Caitlin Wood	Disability Rights Oregon
Diana Moosman	MOSI Architecture
Dwight Terry	Terry Family Funeral Home
Gahlana Easterly	Property owner
Irek Wielgosz	King Neighborhood Association
Jana McLellan	Port City Development Center
Jazzmin Reece	Reece Consulting, LLC
Jerrell Waddell	Life Change Christian Center
Jrdn Freeauf	Eddie Murphy Cabinets
Karis Stoudamire	Boise Neighborhood Association
Kenneth Doswell	Betty Jean Couture
Laurie Simpson	Eliot Neighborhood Association
Melissa Lafayette	Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Michelle DePass	Neighbor
J.W. Matt Hennessee	Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church
Mychal Tetteh	Village Market at New Columbia
Nathan Roll	Metropolis Cycle Repair
Noni Causey	Education specialist, small business owner
Pamela Weatherspoon	Legacy Emanuel Hospital
Paul Anthony	Humboldt Neighborhood Association
Shara Alexander	Neighbor
Steve Bozzone	Willamette Pedestrian Coalition
Susan Peithman	Bicycle Transportation Alliance

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