

NORTHWEST IN MOTION

RECOMMENDED DRAFT REVISIONS MEMO

February 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This memo describes changes the Northwest in Motion project team is proposing to make to the Public Review Draft in response to public and agency feedback and additional technical analysis. These changes will be reflected in the Recommended Draft of Northwest in Motion that will be submitted to City Council for consideration at a hearing in Spring 2020.

2. PROJECT REVISIONS

The project team proposes the following revisions to the projects listed in Northwest in Motion, to be incorporated into the Recommended Draft:

- **NG.1. Provide more clear direction for how to ensure the Post Office development east of 9th Ave does not lead to unacceptably high traffic volumes on the Johnson Neighborhood Greenway.**

In recent months, the Broadway Corridor Master Plan that will guide the development of the large post office site east of 9th Ave from Hoyt to Lovejoy was completed, and the project has started to develop early street design plans. The Northwest in Motion project team is concerned that the draft plans, which include a traffic signal at NW 9th Ave & Johnson St as recommended in the Traffic Impact Study, would lead to high volumes of traffic using Johnson St as a convenient route to get from the 10th/11th Ave couplet to the redevelopment site and vice versa. We will be meeting with PBOT development review and Prosper Portland staff to try to resolve this issue early on, and will be offering clearer guidance in Northwest in Motion on the need for diversion on Johnson St in advance of any post office development improvements to make sure that 9th Ave is the primary route to the site rather than Johnson St.

- **NG.3. Redesign NW Overton St proposal to reduce parking impacts to small businesses and better meet emergency response needs while still providing a low-stress bicycle connection.**

We heard concerns from small businesses and residents along NW Overton St from 9th to 11th that the amount of on-street parking removal, including all parking on the south side, would have a negative impact on the viability of the businesses along the street. In response, PBOT staff met with concerned business owners and residents and explored various options and alternatives in more detail. A major point of concern was that our proposal only left Overton easily accessible from the west, but all the remaining parking would be in the opposite direction. This seemed to be a legitimate concern as it would make circulation difficult and may dissuade people from visiting and parking in the area.

The project team took a look at options and realized that on-street parking could be restored on the south side of the street without compromising the neighborhood greenway connection. Normally, the eastbound traffic volumes would be concerning, but given that people biking will be turning from 11th to Overton with no stop sign, while people driving on Overton will have a stop sign at 11th, we believe that bikes will have adequate time to travel along Overton eastbound without being passed or closely followed by motor vehicles. The revised proposal will still have a diverter for the westbound direction at 9th Ave, but to ensure it can be easily used as a Major Emergency Response Street we will revise the graphic to show a striped bike lane with no concrete island.

- **NG.4. Revise NW Savier St proposal from 19th to 20th to allow two-way motor vehicle traffic while still calming traffic and ensuring a low-stress environment.**

We received feedback from property owners and developers in the rapidly-developing Slabtown area, as well as from PBOT Development Review staff, that the proposed changes to NW Savier St were inconsistent with the adopted Conway Master Plan and would unduly hinder development in the area. This was given new urgency with the early assistance applications for development of the parcels on both sides of Savier St from 19th to 20th. While the intention of this Northwest in Motion proposal was to ensure that a street that is already low volume will continue to stay low volume, we also have to be consistent with the Conway Master Plan which takes precedence while there are still remaining parcels to redevelop. The project team is comfortable removing the proposed car-free street, because we can monitor traffic volumes and could propose diverters further east or west of the Conway area in the future as needed. However, we will still encourage development of a specially-designed low-speed street in conjunction with the proposed developments on both sides of the street. This could take the form of a green street (similar to portions of Pettygrove) or other design that emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle travel and de-emphasizes motor vehicle through trips.

- **NG.5. Recommend an interim version of 25th/Johnson/Westover intersection realignment be installed in conjunction with interim diverter on 24th Ave at Westover to address safety concerns.**

We received feedback from many residents expressing concerns about safety at the 25th/Johnson/Westover skewed intersection and expressing fear that the additional traffic going through that intersection after the diverter goes in on 24th at Westover would make the problems even worse. To address this, we propose adding a recommendation that an interim “paint and post” intersection realignment be installed at 25th / Johnson / Westover around the same time as the 24th Ave diverter is installed. This will improve safety by moving the stop bars closer to the intersection, improving visibility and making it clearer who has the right-of-way. It will also reduce crossing distance and improve visibility for pedestrians.

- **CI.1. Keep NW Westover Rd open for eastbound traffic approaching NW 23rd Ave, and focus investment instead on improving pedestrian safety and comfort at the intersection.**

We received a great deal of feedback expressing concerns about the proposed closure of NW Westover Rd to traffic as it approaches NW 23rd Ave. Feedback included concerns about potential difficulty programming a plaza space in that context due to the steep slope and lack of ground-floor activity, concerns about loss of on-street parking in a high-demand area, and the impact of traffic that would be directed to Everett and 23rd. Overall, there was a strong theme in the feedback that people felt Westover should remain open to traffic to preserve access and circulation in the constrained area around the Uptown Shopping Center.

In response to this feedback, the project team took another look at the impetus for the project, which was to address transit delay experienced by the Line 15 bus southbound on NW 23rd Ave approaching W Burnside St. Further analysis of transit delay data found that the delay appears to be more related to the split-phased operation of the 23rd & Burnside signal than due to traffic entering 23rd from Westover. With this information, the project team feels comfortable removing the full closure of Westover from the Northwest in Motion Plan going forward. However, we continue to be concerned about the pedestrian environment walking along the west side of NW 23rd Ave crossing Westover, given low stop sign compliance and visibility issues. Therefore, we propose keeping a project in the plan for pedestrian improvements while keeping the street open for traffic.

- **CI.1. Add back raised mid-block crosswalk at Westover Condominiums as part of overall traffic calming project along Westover.**

We heard feedback from residents along NW Westover Rd that they would prefer a raised crosswalk at the mid-block crossing near Westover Condominiums to better enhance visibility of the crosswalk and improve yielding for pedestrians by people driving. The raised crosswalk had been shown in an earlier draft of the plan but was removed for the Public Review Draft because the project team was unsure that it was the appropriate solution. More recently, we have received confirmation from our traffic engineer that a raised crosswalk is appropriate, so we will return it to the plan in the Recommended Draft.

- **CI.2. Put greater emphasis on the potential for the reconstruction of NW 23rd Ave north of Lovejoy to also include significant streetscape elements to improve the pedestrian and main street environment.**

While we have received a high level of support for the reconstruction of NW 23rd Ave to address long-deferred pavement maintenance issues, many people have called for more emphasis on the ways in which this project could enhance the main street vitality of the corridor through elements like pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, larger tree wells, expanded sidewalks, stormwater planters, and raised side street crossings. The project team agrees that we need to do a better job of describing this as a project with multiple opportunities and benefits beyond pavement repair. Doing this will not only make the project more beneficial and more exciting to the public, it will also help expand the pool of funding sources, as maintenance-only funds have traditionally been very limited and mostly concentrated on preventative maintenance rather than replacing already-failed assets. A good example is the Division Green Street project in inner SE Portland, which started out as a pavement reconstruction need but ended up being funded only after it evolved to also include significant stormwater management facilities and pedestrian streetscape improvements. The Recommended Draft of Northwest in Motion will provide better descriptions of these other streetscape elements and encourage them to be included in the project, and will also recommend development of a streetscape plan specifically for this segment of 23rd Ave so that both future projects and future developments will have a clear expectation of what is to be constructed.

We have also received feedback from PBOT staff that NW 23rd Ave north of Northrup is one of the many options under consideration for a future streetcar extension to Montgomery Park. While a decision has not been made on the alignment yet, and such a decision will not be made in time for adoption of the Northwest in Motion Plan, the project team thinks it would be prudent to include language that any reconstruction project on NW 23rd Ave should at the very least be “streetcar-ready”, in other words able to physically accommodate a streetcar extension in terms of roadway depth and lane widths. We will add language to the plan to that effect.

- **CI.3. Identify fire-friendly speed cushions as a potential future project on NW 18th/19th Ave to reduce speeding if necessary after completion of other projects.**

We have heard feedback with concerns about speeding along NW 18th and 19th Avenues throughout the Northwest in Motion process. During most of the Northwest in Motion planning process, the posted speed limit on NW 18th and 19th Avenues was 25 mph, and the measured 85th percentile speeds were also roughly 25 mph. Based on that data, we did not recommend any further traffic slowing intervention. In recent months, posted speed limits were dropped to 20 mph throughout the NW District area, including on 18th/19th, creating a potential need for traffic slowing to encourage traffic to go the new speed limit. That said, it is possible that the new posted speed limit along with the enhanced pedestrian crossings in the Northwest in Motion Plan will combine to lower measured speeds over time. We propose adding language to the project that commits PBOT

to monitor speeds over time as crossings are implemented and identify fire-friendly speed cushions as a potential future intervention if needed to address traffic speeds.

- **CI.4. Take a phased approach to the NW 21st & Glisan project, and redesign it to reduce parking impact.**

The project team took a closer look at the NW 21st & Glisan intersection improvement project and determined that the bus turning radius and accessibility issues could be achieved through a near-term restriping project without having to wait for the proposed curb extensions, which will take longer to design and construct. We plan to implement this change as soon as possible because it is a safety and operational issue that needs to be addressed and does not need to be tied to a larger capital project. The project team was also able to reduce the parking impact of the restriping portion of the project, which is now expected to only remove four on-street parking spaces on 21st Ave near the intersection.

- **CI.4. Revise Everett/Glisan proposal to remove peak-only bus lane and clarify data-driven process for a potential future redesign of the corridor after Flanders implementation.**

We received feedback from stakeholders expressing concern about peak-only parking restrictions on NW Everett St because they would add an extra layer of complexity to an already-complex parkign system in this part of NW and would be a significant parking impact in a high-demand area. We also heard concerns about the idea of adding a second travel lane, even if it was to be a bus-and-turn only, without upgrades to the pedestrian crossings already being in place. Given these concerns and the modest improvements to transit delay that we predicted with this proposal, we plan to remove this interim concept from the plan and instead focus on near-term pedestrian improvements while saving a more significant redesign for the future.

We have also heard continuing frustration with the design of NW Everett St, particularly the project several years ago that removed one of two motor vehicle lanes from 19th to 23rd and converted it to a wide bike lane. The main concern seems to be a perception that the space is inefficiently used because bike volumes are low while traffic queues in the single remaining motor vehicle lane. While it's true that ridership in this bike lane is low at 122 bike trips per day (as measured in May 2019), PBOT has justified the project based on the need for basic bike network connectivity. A common theme in public feedback on Northwest in Motion has been the suggestion that this justification may not continue to make sense once the Flanders Bridge is constructed over I-405, as people biking will then have a low-stress and high-quality connection to and from the Pearl District. On the other hand, there is the chance that bike ridership generally will grow, and many people may find this stretch of Everett to be a faster route even if they choose to cut over to the Flanders Bridge before crossing I-405. Because of this uncertainty, we continue to think that any decision to convert the bike lane to other uses should wait until after we can measure what happens to bike travel after the Flanders Bridge is constructed.

While the project team proposes to keep this basic framework intact, we recognize some frustration in the public with the ambiguity of the decision-making process laid out in the Public Review Draft. To address this, we propose being more specific about the triggers for a redesign of NW Everett St. We propose to modify the flowchart so it is clear that the trigger for converting the bike lane to another use would be if bike volumes, as measured at least one year after Flanders Bridge opening, decline over that time rather than increasing. Before and after bike volume measurements should be taken at a similar time of year and with similar weather conditions (ideally summertime and clear weather), and should account for changes in population and job numbers in the area. We will also make more clear that the most likely redesign of the street would be to bring back the second travel lane, though depending on Line 77 frequency and levels of delay at that time, PBOT may consider making one of the lanes a bus priority lane from 21st to 19th. Whether the bike lane is converted to a

general travel lane or a bus lane, such changes will only move forward if enhanced pedestrian crossings have been completed at 20th Ave and 22nd Ave to ensure that pedestrian safety is not compromised.

It is worth noting that we have also received a great deal of comments expressing a similar frustration about low bike usage of the NW 16th Ave bike lane, and asking for the bike lane to be converted into a second travel lane. While NW 16th Ave has not been a focus of Northwest in Motion, we want to acknowledge these concerns and explain why PBOT does not support removing the 16th Ave bike lanes. The main answer is that we believe the 16th Ave bike lanes have a much higher potential for ridership growth because of upcoming projects that will make it more useful. Currently, the bike lane has poor connections to the rest of the bike network, especially at the south end from Everett to Burnside. However, the upcoming Flanders Bridge and Burnside/Couch/I-405 projects will greatly enhance the bike lane and will better connect it to the rest of the bike network via Flanders Bridge, Couch St overpass, and crossing Burnside to Goose Hollow with a new signalized bike crossing. Removing the 16th Ave bike lane would also have a very negative impact to the Pearl District, since it is the “couplet” to 14th Ave and there is no good alternative in the Pearl District for southbound bike travel. Another factor to note is that even if we did remove the bike lane, we would not be able to carry two travel lanes all the way to the Glisan intersection due to ODOT mitigation requirements (widening the freeway off-ramp to two lanes) related to the Flanders Bridge project.

- **CI.5. Potentially restrict left turns at NW 23rd Place & Vaughn St to address safety concerns at the intersection.**

We have received feedback expressing serious concerns about traffic turning left from Vaughn to 23rd Place, especially during peak times when drivers coming from Highway 30 are wanting to avoid the relatively long wait for a protected left turn arrow onto 23rd Ave. This is similar to the concerns we have already had about the left turn onto 24th Ave, and we have heard concerns that our proposal to restrict turns onto 24th will simply shift more traffic to 23rd Place. In addition, our proposed transit improvement for eastbound buses turning right from Vaughn to 23rd Ave involves extending the right turn pocket back to 24th Ave. Doing this creates additional safety concerns with allowing left turns from Vaughn to 23rd Place since cars would be turning in front of two lanes of traffic instead of just one. For these reasons, we propose to restrict left turns at both 23rd Place and 24th Ave. We acknowledge that this will further put pressure on 25th, 26th, and 27th to be the access points in and out of the neighborhood, but we think those will be safer intersections for left turns since they are further from the eastbound queue that develops on Vaughn approachign 23rd Ave. Before including this proposed change in the Recommended Draft, the project team needs to verify that there is a viable alternate route for trucks to serve the Food Front grocery store. If there is no other option, this change may not be feasible.

3. NEW PROJECTS

The project team proposes making two additional neighborhood greenways eligible for Northwest in Motion funding and proposes a specific change to a recently constructed project, as described below:

- **Make upgrades to the Flanders St and 20th Ave neighborhood greenways eligible for Northwest in Motion funding.**

Members of the NW Parking SAC and the NWDA Transportation Committee have brought up the need to include funding for upgrades to the Flanders St and 20th Ave neighborhood greenways in addition to the ten primary Northwest in Motion projects that we have identified. Until now, Northwest in Motion has not included much discussion of these two neighborhood greenways because they had already been funded before the Northwest in Motion process began. Since then, the 20th Ave neighborhood greenway was implemented, while the

upgrades to the Flanders neighborhood greenway will be completed in conjunction with the Flanders Bridge project. We now know that due to budget limitations, various scope items such as curb extensions at some intersections had to be cut from both of those projects. The project team thinks it makes sense to include these remaining elements as eligible uses of Northwest in Motion funding, including parking revenue, so that the projects can be fully implemented as originally intended.

- **Modify the recently-constructed diverter at NW 20th Ave & Raleigh St to allow northbound motor vehicle traffic while still blocking southbound motor vehicle traffic.**

As discussed above, the 20th Ave neighborhood greenway was not originally considered a Northwest in Motion project because it had already been funded and was underway when we started this process. One of the elements that was recently constructed was a full diverter on the south leg of the NW 20th Ave & Raleigh St intersection. This was primarily intended to prevent high volumes of southbound traffic coming down the newly-extended 20th Ave from Highway 30 from continuing to the neighborhood greenway portion of 20th Ave. As a preventative measure in case northbound traffic volume issues were to arise in the future, the diverter was designed to block both directions of traffic. Since installation, we have heard significant concerns from residents, businesses, and property owners about how the design of the diverter negatively impacts neighborhood circulation and access to on-street parking. We have also heard concerns from PBOT staff and developers in the Slabtown area that this full diverter design is inconsistent with the Conway Master Plan and is also inconsistent with the other diverters we have proposed in Northwest in Motion, which are usually semi-diverters that only impact one direction of traffic at a time.

PBOT agrees that the design of this diverter is problematic and that it should be modified in the near future to better match the overall diversion strategy. We plan to make 20th Ave one-way northbound for traffic from Quimby to Raleigh, with a contraflow bike lane, similar to the design on 20th Ave from Everett to Flanders. Just like our approach to diversion on other neighborhood greenways, we will commit to monitoring the effectiveness of the diverter and if northbound volumes increase on 20th Ave in the future to an unacceptable level we will re-engage the public around adding another diverter further south on 20th Ave, for example near Lovejoy or Northrup.

4. PROGRAMS

Based on the feedback we received, it appears the Programs chapter only requires minor modifications for the Public Review Draft. These will include changes to the “Improve Visibility at Intersections” section to clarify how we approach parking setbacks, and changes to the “Lower Speeds Throughout the District” section to acknowledge that we recently implemented 20 mph speed limits throughout the district and reorienting the section around what we can do to calm traffic so that the speed limits are intuitively followed, and what steps are needed to move that concept forward.

5. PHASING AND MONITORING

We have received some feedback asking us to clarify the phasing of projects and how we intend to engage the public regarding moving project elements from interim to permanent installation as well as proposing new elements if needed for project success. The Recommended Draft will include information about proposed phasing in each project page to make this clearer and will better describe how decisions will be made and how the public will be involved in changes moving forward. We will lay out this process including the type of analyses we will conduct and how we will share that with the public and community organizations.

6. NEXT STEPS

The Northwest in Motion project team will be conducting outreach with key stakeholder groups throughout February and March to discuss these proposed project revisions and other minor revisions to the other chapters in the plan. These revisions will be incorporated into a Recommended Draft of Northwest in Motion that will be submitted to City Council for consideration at a public hearing in Spring 2020. We are currently trying to secure a date in April 2020, but that is not yet confirmed. The public will have an opportunity to give written testimony for at least 30 days leading up to the hearing and oral testimony at the hearing itself.