

Mayor Ed Murray  
600 Fourth Avenue  
Seventh Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

October 25, 2014

Dear Mayor Murray,

This letter is on behalf of several community groups comprised of diverse citizens who live, work, and play in the Roosevelt and University District neighborhoods. We write to request that the upcoming Roosevelt Way NE and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE AAC (Arterial Asphalt and Concrete) project include significant improvements for all modes of transportation, particularly walking and bicycling. We include a list of specific requests in a later paragraph.

We ground our requests in commitments and plans already established by the City, including the Complete Streets Ordinance 122386, in which the City committed that it will plan for, design, and construct all new City transportation improvement projects to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit ridership, while promoting safe operation for all users. In addition, the City's Bicycle Master Plan recommends a "protected cycle track"--a protected bikeway--in the Roosevelt Corridor (Roosevelt Way, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> avenues), and the Pedestrian Master Plan identifies the neighborhood as a priority area for pedestrian improvements. Finally, Seattle's Urban Village Strategy aims to reduce dependence on automobiles, particularly in urban centers including the University District. As the neighborhood continues to grow, it is critical that Roosevelt and 11<sup>th</sup> develop, not just into busy thoroughfares for vehicles, but as urban streets that are safe for all people, including school children, University of Washington students, the disabled, those without cars, transit users, bicycle commuters, the elderly, as well as those who are walking.

The current design of the roadway in the Roosevelt and 11<sup>th</sup> AAC project area increases the likelihood that people on bicycles will be struck by cars and trucks. In 2007 Bryce Lewis, who had just moved to Seattle to start school at the UW, was hit and killed by a dump truck on the south side of the University Bridge. Between 2007 and 2014, there were at least 63 car-bike collisions on Roosevelt Way NE. <sup>1</sup>Between 2010 and 2012, Roosevelt was tied with Second Avenue for the most reported car-bicycle collisions in Seattle. Eastlake Avenue had the second-highest number of collisions.

People walking also lack safe passage for significant stretches of this corridor. While I-5 offers car drivers a multitude of lanes to cross north and south in this area, people walking and biking have no viable alternative to the University Bridge if they wish to head south from the University District. The route is dangerous for people on foot and on bikes.

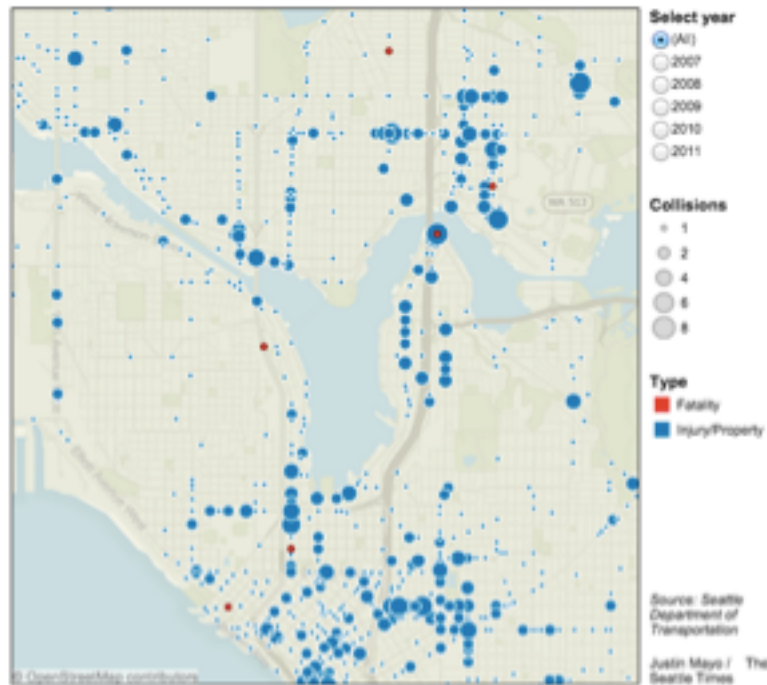
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<sup>1</sup> From <http://crosscut.com/2014/09/30/transportation/122046/second-avenue-just-beginning-protected-bike-lanes/>



The

Seattle Bicycle Master Plan designates Roosevelt, 11<sup>th</sup>, the University Bridge, and Eastlake for future protected bicycle lanes, creating a vital, safe bike route through the U District and on through Eastlake.



This map of reported bike crashes shows how Roosevelt and Eastlake are hotspots for crashes. Roosevelt was tied for the most reported bike collisions with Second Avenue and Pine Street from 2010 to 2012. Eastlake had the second-highest number of collisions in that period.



**Tire tracks show how fast cars take right turns off Roosevelt onto 40<sup>th</sup> where the sidewalk and bike lane abruptly end.**



**In 2007 a dump truck ran over Bryce Lewis at Fuhrman and Eastlake, just south of the University Bridge.**

Regarding the AAC plan, we understand that the budget is focused primarily on needed repaving. However, we argue that this project should not miss a major opportunity to transform the Roosevelt and 11<sup>th</sup> corridor into a truly multi-modal model of Seattle's future. The Department of Transportation's own citizen survey acknowledges that people need to feel safe to choosing biking and walking over driving.<sup>2</sup> The project must address this gap.

We have conducted an initial analysis of the 30% Design Plan, accompanied by a walking audit to collect more information. During the walking audit, we submitted over 30 comments to the City's "Find It, Fix It" program, and received detailed responses from a Mr. Paul Elliot. We have also received some information from Mr. Tri Ong in response to a letter sent by one of our members on this issue. From all of this information, we conclude that the Plan contains a good start to needed walking improvements, and insufficient attention to bicycling improvements.

Regarding bicycling, the 30% design for the Roosevelt and 11<sup>th</sup> AAC project does not include any improvements for bicycling infrastructure. We were encouraged to hear that SDOT Director Kubly has renewed efforts to add some safety improvements for bicyclists south of 45<sup>th</sup>, particularly in connecting over the University Bridge, into this project--though the budget is pending. While these are critical, we believe there are many other needed improvements to bicycling infrastructure--particularly a protected bike lane in the near vicinity, including north of NE 45<sup>th</sup> Street. Currently, people riding in the bike lane on Roosevelt face the threats of being "doored", of being hit by right-turning cars at intersections, and also must cross multiple lanes of fast-moving traffic when turning east-bound from Roosevelt or west-bound from 11<sup>th</sup>, for example around NE Campus Parkway, NE 40<sup>th</sup> Alley, and NE 41<sup>st</sup> Street.

Meanwhile, we approve of the plans for significant improvements to sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure. In particular, we are pleased to see plans for the construction of curb bulbs and curb ramps at many intersections, better aligned curb ramps, several in-lane bus stops which will include

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<sup>2</sup> SDOT Bicycle Data <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/bikedata.htm>

expanded sidewalks and shorten the crossing distance of Roosevelt, and requirements for new sidewalks with proposed developments. In addition, we are pleased to hear of efforts to plant new trees, fix drainage problems, enforce parking violations, and relocate recycling and waste bins, light poles, and other sidewalk infrastructure when possible. These improvements will go a long way towards making an easier and safer crossing of the streets along Roosevelt Way and 11<sup>th</sup>. However, speeds and the road width will continue to be a problem for people walking. We also see additional need in collaborating with property owners about locating sandwich boards, chairs, and other temporary items in a consistent zone, ensuring free-flowing of people walking and reducing safety hazards, particularly for the blind.

We continue to advocate for the following specific requests for possible inclusion into the Roosevelt and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NE AAC project:

- Address the triple threat problem (parked car lane, bicycle lane, and two vehicle lanes) for people walking across Roosevelt Way and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, by
  - not allowing parked vehicles near street crossings to improve visibility;
  - adding curb bulbs in combination with other effective treatments at particular crossings; and
  - implementing road diet rechannelization techniques for reducing opportunities for high speed passing and for calming vehicle speeds;
- Integrate solutions that would speed up transit;
- Consider how to add a transit lane to the corridor;
- Reduce lane width of car lanes to encourage lower driving speeds;
- Install protected bike lanes, with protected street crossings across busy arterials, on Roosevelt and 11<sup>th</sup>. These bike lanes should flow seamlessly into the crossing of the University Bridge and onto Eastlake Avenue East;
- Assertively improve the most dangerous intersections around the University Bridge and 45<sup>th</sup> with some effective combination of signage, signalization, rechannelization, reconfiguring, or closing dangerous merging on and off ramps;
- Repair all segments of sidewalks that have buckled or are very uneven and represent threats to people walking, particularly those with disabilities;
- Request, provide incentives, or regulate property owners to ensure a safe, inviting, and obstruction-free passage on the sidewalks in front of their property. Some examples of how this could be done include having clearly marked driveways, doors that open inwards rather than onto the sidewalk, locating sandwich or display boards consistently on the edge of the sidewalk, and installing awnings;
- Apply consistent width requirements to all new sidewalk construction, and look for opportunities to expand pedestrian space;
- Locate utility poles, sign posts, and other potential obstacles in a consistent fashion such that they do not impede pedestrians (particularly blind or impaired) from walking safely in a straight line; and
- In conclusion, make creating safe conditions for all modes of transportation a high priority--including people of all ages and abilities, walking and on bicycles--over the demands for parking.

These concerns are being addressed to Mayor Murray, City Council, key executives of SDOT, and supporters of walking, bicycling, and transit in the City of Seattle. We thank you for considering our input and for your work to make Seattle's streets safer for everyone. We would be happy to assist in any way we can to help bring about these much needed changes. We will continue to advocate for safety as a top priority in street projects and for alternatives modes of transportation as integral to a more livable city.

Sincerely,

Drew Dresman and Forrest Baum

On behalf of

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