



August 12, 2020

Memo: Reconnect Seattle Survey – Bike Mode Shift

From: West Seattle Bike Connections + Duwamish Valley Safe Streets +
Seattle Neighborhood Greenways + Cascade Bicycle Club

To: Sam Zimbabwe, Director, SDOT
Heather Marx, West Seattle High-Rise Bridge Safety Project Manager, SDOT
Danielle Friedman, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

Cc: Seattle City Council Transportation & Utilities Committee Members
West Seattle Bridge Task Force Members

The West Seattle Bridge closure is one of the most significant mobility challenges the city has faced in recent times. The impact is only going to increase as trip numbers continue to rebound to pre-COVID levels. This is a challenge felt by residents and workers not just in West Seattle, but in the neighboring communities, including Southpark and Georgetown. Cut-through traffic has increased sharply in these neighborhoods in the last several months, bringing with it safety risks to residents walking and biking in these neighborhoods - which already suffer from lack of sidewalks and safe, dedicated bikeways. Another issue is increased pollution in communities that have already, for generations, borne the brunt of environmental impacts in Seattle. It is for these reasons that rapid investments to provide multi-modal transportation options are necessary. Our goal in providing the following feedback is to keep people and goods moving safely over the Duwamish River in ways that honor Seattle's commitments to equitable transportation, our environment, social justice, and economic vitality. To those ends, we offer these comments regarding the Reconnect West Seattle survey, budget, priorities, and implementation.

We are happy to see that the city recognizes the role biking can play to mitigate impacts of the West Seattle high-rise bridge closure by creating an aggressive but realistic bike mode share goal for West Seattle as part of the Reconnect West Seattle project. To achieve the mode shift goal for biking, it will be necessary to make it safe, comfortable and efficient for many more people to bike.

The funding and scope of projects to improve biking is insufficient: fully fund the spot improvements list we provided in Spring (attached). While we appreciate the inclusion of many of our suggestions in the Reconnect Seattle survey we are disappointed to see that the city plans to implement only a handful of spot improvement projects, spending less than \$1M [up to 10 projects at less than \$100,000 each.] This is woefully inadequate to attract the numbers of new bikers you are planning for in a manner that will sustain interest in cycling to maintain the bike mode share over the medium or long term.

SDOT currently estimates spending between \$160 million and \$225 million for the first two years of the West Seattle Bridge Program. **Budgeting one percent of this amount for bike route spot improvements in 2020-21 is a more realistic amount** for the mitigation measures necessary to meet the mode shift goal for biking.

The proposed investment is not proportional to what is planned for bus and water taxi service, or to what has already been spent on measures for car and truck traffic detour routes such as traffic cameras, bridge deck reinforcement, and policing the Spokane Street bridge. For example, **the target mode share increases for the West Seattle Water Taxi and for biking are equal, yet the proposal makes threefold investments in the water taxi.** The list of required investments we shared this Spring already represented a prioritized list; the bare bones essential investments needed to create a connected, protected network of bikeways through West Seattle, Georgetown and SODO. Instead of making those investments, SDOT is asking the community to further prioritize. Ten spot improvement projects are a start, but they will not do the job. Cities in North America that have had great success in encouraging a mode shift to bikes have all done so by implementing connected, protected networks of high comfort bikeways over short periods.

Additionally, paint and post improvements need to be complemented with programmatic support. Seattle’s Commute Trip Reduction program has, over the years, implemented innovative programming that has supported and encouraged mode shift. The city must rapidly develop a program that provides would-be bike commuters with the tools and resources they need to make the initial behaviour change, institute it in routine, and stick with the shift over time and across seasons. The city must look at ways to support people from a range of backgrounds so that people of all ages, abilities, languages, ethnicities, genders and races can equally rely on biking as a safe, affordable and sustainable way of getting around during the bridge closure. Some examples could include:

- supporting low income bike riders with subsidies or loans for bikes and bike maintenance;
- on-trail activations such as via “trail ambassadors” to support new riders with routing guidance, etc;
- provision for high capacity, covered, secure bike parking hubs in key downtown locations and transit hubs;
- maps and routing information in multiple languages.
- bike maintenance and bike education training targeting communities with historically less access to those skills.

Investment in biking is ripe for mode shift results; the 2018 Seattle Squeeze provides direct evidence. During the SR99 Viaduct/Tunnel transition in January 2019, West Seattleites proved that they would use bikes for commuting across the Spokane Street Bridge, even on dark, cold January evenings. With our active encouragement, West Seattleites added more than 1,000 bike trips per day across the bridge above typical January counts. Increased bike trips exceeded additional Water Taxi trips, despite the large expenses made for increased water taxi service. Unfortunately, the city made no effort to improve conditions for biking. Consequently, after the emergency, the numbers biking fell back to the usual winter numbers. **Sustaining a shift to biking requires investment.**

Our April 28 proposals represent a constrained approach, to prioritize only those measures that are really needed for bike routes to the bridges, and that can be implemented quickly, economically, and without major disruptions.

Sincerely,

Don Brubeck, West Seattle Bike Connections
Peaches Thomas, Duwamish Valley Safe Streets
Clara Cantor, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways
Vicky Clarke, Cascade Bicycle Club

Attachment: from our April 28 proposal.

[Bracketed B0xx items reference the Reconnect Seattle survey list. Bracketed “YVYC” proposals reference 2020 Your Voice Your Choice submittals.]

Top priorities for expediting key Bicycle Master Plan network routes,**1. [B074] Sylvan Way SW / SW Orchard and east to Highland Park:**

Build a combination of protected bike lanes and off-street walking/biking paths, to connect from 35th Ave SW at High Point down to Delridge Way SW and up to 16th Ave SW and South Seattle College, and connecting down to the Duwamish Trail via Highland Park Way. This is a key east-west route serving disadvantaged neighborhoods. Consider a parallel route option using neighborhood greenway treatment on NE leg of SW Orchard to 18th SW to SW Webster to 11th SW to SW Holden, in lieu of bike lanes on Dumar Way SW and SW Holden west of 11th SW.

2. Highland Park Way SW: This is a key east-west route to the Duwamish Trail north to Spokane St Bridge and east to 1st Ave S Bridge and South Park Bridge. Provide an all ages-and-abilities bike route both directions from SW Holden to West Marginal Way SW / Duwamish Trail.

Rebuild the south sidewalk as a two-way multi-use path meeting City standards, as part of the Highland Park Traffic Safety Project.

3. [B039] 1st Ave S Bridge to 1st Ave S:

Develop a safe connection from the bridge to the viaduct over the rail yards on 1st Avenue S. The Reconnect Seattle survey map shows a route directly north from the bridge on 1st Ave S. Due to the freeway ramps, this is not likely to be feasible. Consider instead improving the bike route from the bridge on S River Street to 6th Avenue S to S Dawson Street to 3rd Ave S to S Hudson St to 1st Avenue S (as mapped on Seattle Bike Map).

4. [B067] SW Roxbury:

Complete the bike lanes with paving overlay and striping, even if not fully protected at this time.

Top Priorities for spot improvements:

[references to Reconnect Seattle survey proposal numbers and Your Voice Your Choice proposals]

West Seattle & South Park routes

- 1. [B051] Chelan 5-way intersection:** Improve wayfinding signage; at the Delridge slip lane crossing, paint a center stripe and arrows on the sidewalk to guide riders to the right of the bike sensor that triggers the flashing beacon; provide a longer curb cut at Delridge intersection for better access from the trail to the bike box; add a bike sensor to the bike box on Chelan Ave SW at SW Spokane St.
- 2. [B073] SW Spokane/ Harbor SW /Avalon Way SW:** Route finding signs for the left turn bike lane from the trail. Change the NO TURN ON RED to illuminate during the all-red phase prior to the bike signal turning green.
- 3. [B060] West Marginal Place SW and 16th/17th SW** improvements along the Duwamish route “missing link”. [2020 YVYC Bicycle – 3611 Marginal Place SW]

4. **[B045] West Seattle Bridge Trail / Terminal 18 Entry Crossing:** Add "Do not block" signage and paint on the road at the T18 crossing. Port drayage trucks waiting to enter the terminal have been blocking the crossing.
5. **[B046] West Seattle Bridge Trail / SW Spokane Place crossing at Terminal 18:** Add a speed hump or raised crosswalk to reduce vehicle speeds.
6. **[missing] West Seattle Bridge Trail / SW Spokane Place crossing at Terminal 18:** Move 11th Ave SW traffic signal to this location at trail crossing. [YVYC Bicycle – 1000 SW Spokane St]
7. **[B067] 23rd Ave SW “Nucor Trail”:** Improve lighting, visibility and paving on biking/walking connection from Delridge Way to SW Spokane Street and Alki Trail. [YVYC Walkway – SW Charlestown & 23rd Ave SW]
8. **[missing] Duwamish Trail railroad track crossing:** Replace the crossing at north end of trail. [YVYC Bicycle – 4215 West Marginal Way SW]
9. **[B076] West Marginal Way SW:** Clear vegetation and private encroachments on west side pedestrian pathway and sidewalk.
10. **[B047] SW Admiral Way from Fairmount Bridge to SW Manning:** Add downhill bike lane per BMP. [YVYC Bicycle – SW City View & SW Admiral Way]

Georgetown and SODO routes:

11. **[B056] East Marginal Way S:** Install temporary jersey barriers to separate north-bound bike lane from general purpose lane wherever feasible, but especially north and south of S Hanford St intersection, to prevent drivers from using the bike lane as an extremely dangerous right-side “passing lane”. Enforce the “freight only” right turn lane at S Atlantic St.
12. **[missing] Colorado Ave S:** Resurface cratered paving on Colorado Ave S for ~200 feet between S Hanford and S Lander Streets, on bike route from West Seattle to SODO Trail and SODO light rail station. [2020 YVYC Bicycle – 2943 Colorado Ave S]
13. **[B038] 1st Ave S:** Clear private encroachments and parking on sidewalk zone of west side right-of-way in the blocks between S Spokane St and the viaduct over the rail yard. Make low-cost sidewalk paving improvements for walking and biking.
14. **[missing] Corson Ave S railroad track crossing:** Rebuild the sidewalk at UP track crossing by Georgetown playfield. Significant obstacle and ADA violation in present condition. [YVYC Bicycle – 5609 Corson Ave S]

Priorities for preserving (or expediting) the schedule and scope of in-progress capital projects:

1. **East Marginal Way S Corridor Project**
2. **Delridge RapidRide H Corridor Project**
3. **[B012] West Marginal Way safe crossing at the Duwamish Longhouse & Cultural Center**
4. **Georgetown - South Park Trail**