

October 1, 2014

To:

Commissioner Steve Novick
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SENT VIA US MAIL AND EMAIL

Commissioner Novick and Director Treat:

North Portland, the fifth 'quadrant' is located to the west of the eastside and north of downtown Portland, and a high volume of traffic between these neighborhoods south and downtown are funneled to the east. Many trips for people who live in North Portland and get around on a bicycle—including to inner Northeast, all of Southeast and most of Southwest require riding on North Interstate Avenue.

N Interstate Ave has single north and south bound motor vehicle lanes of varying widths separated by MAX tracks and bike lanes that are 5 feet wide or narrower. Sidewalks are intermittent. Long, un-signalized stretches and excessive road width accommodates high vehicle speeds.

The quality of access for people on bikes or on foot along N Interstate Avenue is most severely compromised in one section: a half mile between N Tillamook St and the southern outlet of N Larrabee St. In this section, bike lanes and vehicle lanes are at their narrowest, sidewalks are narrow or non-existent and this serves as an important corridor for freight traffic between Lower Albina and Swan Island Industrial District to I-5 at the Broadway Bridge onramps. People walking, riding bikes, and driving cars, buses and trucks (including many double dump trucks) share narrow stretches of road. Road conditions along this route force bicycles and motor vehicles together through confined spaces without warning.

To improve safety conditions in this section of Interstate Avenue in both directions, we request that PBOT take the following actions to address the significant hazards along the road section.

Interstate Southbound:

1) Tillamook to Larrabee Exit:

1.1) Continuous right turn lane is not in compliance with Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and should be removed for the 100' south of Tillamook St. (OBPP 2011, 1-34)

1.2) Left lane has excessive width, and should be narrowed to 12', with the excess space added to the left shoulder (OHDM 2003, 8-7)

1.3) Right lane has excessive width, should be narrowed to 12', with the excess space added to the right shoulder/bike lane (Parsons, 2003 and OHDM 2003, 8-7)

2) Under the Larrabee Viaduct:

2.1) Roadway is too narrow. The driving lane and bike lane share 12'11" (of which the driving lane is 10' 4" and bike lane is 2'7"). This is only slightly wider than the standard width of a single 12' driving lane. This is out of compliance with the Portland Bicycle Master Plan, which requires a 5' bike lane adjacent to a 10' driving lane. (PBMP, 1996, A-11). This roadway needs to be:

- marked for "bikes on roadway" (OB&PP, 1-20, 1-22) with a standard bike warning sign (W11-1) 100 feet before the Larrabee viaduct;
- marked with sharrows to indicate that bikes and automobiles share the road in this section;
- a second standard bike warning sign (W11-1) should be mounted on the first column to the right of the roadway under the Larrabee viaduct; and,
- Transverse rumble strips should be added to the roadway surface before the bike lane narrows from the left curb of the road surface to 2 feet left of the existing bike lane to provide tactile warning to the cars, trucks and buses.

2.2) Sewer drainage grate is incorrectly located in bike lane, should be moved off the roadway (OBPP 2011, 1-16 – 1-17)

3) From Larrabee viaduct to Broadway overpass:

3.1) Variable driving lane width on Interstate – the driving lane should be restriped to be a consistent width of its narrowest point – 10' 4" – and excess width be added to the bike lane or be used as a buffer for the bike lane.

3.2) Three ridges across the bike lane perpendicular to the travel direction on expansion joints in the cantilever section should be leveled with adjacent surface. One sunken manhole cover immediately before the Broadway overpass should be modified to be consistent with the adjacent driving road surface.

Interstate Northbound:

4) Under the Broadway overpass and Larrabee viaduct:

4.1) Problem: The sidewalk was added as an afterthought and a visible seam in the concrete indicates how the sidewalk, which was added only from the bike lane and not the travel lane, interrupts what had been a consistent width bike lane. The bike lane is now too narrow for safe passage, while the driving lane is wider than in other road sections.

4.2) Interim solution: The lanes should be restriped to a minimal driving lane and as wide a bike lane as possible. PBOT has said they will do this for the section underneath the Broadway bridge, and it should also be done under the Larrabee viaduct.

4.3) Explore more significant changes to widen the bike lane and should consider combining the sidewalk and bike lanes under the bridge into a single 7' wide multiuse path. While 7' does not meet the 10' requirement for a multi-use path, it would work in this situation with just one lane of bicycle traffic and limited pedestrian traffic. It is the same width as a bridge sidewalk, so it meets some engineering guidelines. A curb separated bike path will enhance safety for this section because it will prevent inadvertent intrusion of motorized vehicles into the narrow lane at the pinch points. (OBPP 2011, p. 4-7). Except for required modification of at least one storm sewer drain, it is straightforward and inexpensive.

5) At the "merge" with northbound Larrabee:

5.1) Problem: The bike lane is reduced to 3' 9" approaching the traffic light where northbound Larrabee St merges into N Interstate Avenue.

5.2) Interim solution: Restripe the lanes so that the driving lane is 10'6" wide and the bike lane is 5'6" wide.

5.3) Evaluate feasibility of moving the stop bar and crosswalk on northbound Larrabee back about 10' and widen the roadway by moving bike lane into what is now the sidewalk.

6) Speeding:

6.1) Problem: Many motorized vehicles exceed the posted speed of 30 mph. This increases speed differential and gives motorized vehicles less time to react, and causes higher levels of wind buffeting (strong cross winds created when a large vehicle passes a bicyclist) in the narrow bike lanes, all of which makes collisions more likely and the consequences of collisions more severe.

6.2) Interim solutions: Put up temporary Speed Reader Boards ("Smart Carts") every couple months, both northbound and southbound.

6.3) Consider the narrowing the driving lanes through the corridor to a maximum of 10' 6" to slow traffic (Parsons Transportation, 2003). The speed limit should be lowered to 25 miles per hour with enforcement to ensure compliance.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing these changes and working together to find viable long-term solutions where incomplete or interim solutions are requested. We would be happy to schedule a site visit and/or bike ride through this important corridor for people who make trips by bike to and from North Portland and Vancouver, Washington.

Sincerely,

Blake Goud
Ted Buehler

CC: Mayor Charlie Hales

Additional signatories:

Arbor Lodge Neighborhood Association
East Columbia Neighborhood Association
Eliot Neighborhood Association
Kenton Neighborhood Association
npGreenway
Overlook Neighborhood Association
Piedmont Neighborhood Association

Encl: Explanatory images (where images differ from letter, description in the letter shall prevail)