

Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland

1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 800
Portland OR 97204



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Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 1700
Portland, OR 97201

To the members of the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission,

I am writing you to provide the comments of the city's Bicycle Advisory Committee on the Proposed Draft (April 2015) of the SE Quadrant Plan. The Bicycle Advisory Committee is appointed by the City Commissioner in charge of Transportation. Its purpose is to "advise the Mayor, City Council and all bureaus of the City on matters relating to the use of the bicycle as a means of transportation and recreation."

Having read the SE Quadrant Draft Plan, and having heard a presentation about the plan from Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff at our May, 2015 monthly meeting, I am writing to express some significant concerns about the approach suggested in this plan for bicycle transportation in the Central Eastside. In summary:

- No existing or planned bikeways identified in the Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030 should be omitted from the SE Quadrant Plan
- Both city and regional plans and policies support the inclusion of all bikeways previously identified in the SE Quadrant
- We support the idea of the Green Loop and want to see both 7th and 9th Avenues identified as Green Loop routes
- Leave the engineering to PBOT
- Improve and expand the bicycle network to address parking constraints and congestion.

We recommend addressing these issues in the most direct and efficient means: by bringing the quadrant plan into compliance with previous city planning efforts and the Regional Transportation Plan.

Following is a brief description of our observations, concerns and recommendations.

No existing or planned bikeways should be omitted. Map VI-9; Non-Auto Circulation Improvements omits several significant bikeways included in the Council-approved Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030. Missing are 9th Ave, MLK and Grand Ave, 11th and 12th Ave, Belmont and Morrison St. The absence of 9th Avenue is of particular concern. The Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030 identifies this route as a Major City Bikeway (the highest classification for bikeways in the Bicycle Plan's functional bikeway classifications). We also find the focus on east-west routes, only, to be disappointingly limiting as it seems to ignore the potential for a stronger connection between the Lloyd District and the Central Eastside.

City and regional plans and policies support the inclusion of all bikeways. The development of 9th Avenue (both SE and NE) is identified as a project in the city's Transportation System Plan and scored highly in PBOT's newly-developed project selection criteria screening. It is also high on the list of PBOT

projects for grant funding. A 9th Avenue neighborhood greenway would link with the proposed active transportation bridge across the Banfield Freeway, which was one of the BAC's top priorities for advancement within the next two years. Both 9th Avenue and the Belmont-Morrison Bikeway are in the financially-constrained TSP project list. Projects for both the 11th/12th and Grand/MLK couplets are too small to be identified as large capital projects, but would instead be funded through the TSP financially-constrained Bikeway Network Completion Program.

In addition, the roadways mentioned above are all identified as either Regional Bikeways or, in the case of 9th Avenue, as a Regional Bicycle Parkway. The latter is the highest functional classification in the regional plan for bicycle facilities. The city is required to be in conformance with the Regional Transportation Plan. As such, these roadways will remain in the Transportation System Plan and they should not be omitted from the SE Quadrant Plan.

We support the idea of a Green Loop and want to see both 7th and 9th Avenues identified as Green Loop Routes. The BAC supports the concept of the Green Loop as a visionary recreational facility for pedestrians and people on bikes. However, we are also interested in facilities that work well principally for bicycle transportation. The SE Quadrant Plan identifies the idea of a Green Loop as "a community amenity ... [that] would further enhance the Central Eastside as a destination point for recreation, cultural attractions, restaurants, tourism and other amenities that enliven an area and create a sense of place." This definition of the Green Loop is well stated and worthy of support. However, when consideration of the Green Loop is conflated with planning for bicycle transportation, this presents a problem.

The SE Quadrant plan envisions the Green Loop as the only north-south route through the heart of the Central Eastside. As a recreational facility, the Green Loop must serve both people walking and bicycling by design. This ignores the reality that combining these modes is not always the best practice when planning for transportation networks within a dense area with a wide diversity of uses and destinations. Furthermore, at the May meeting of the Bicycle Advisory Committee BPS staff presented a number of reasons for not including 9th Avenue as a recommended bikeway in the plan. Prominent among these was the notion that people walking would not find 9th Avenue a desirable place to be because it is not a commercial street. This falsely equates the needs of pedestrians with those of people riding bicycles and interferes with good bicycle planning. The needs of people walking and bicycling are sometimes different. For this reason, we want to see both 7th and 9th Avenues included as part of the Green Loop concept and planning for bicycle transportation in the district.

What the Central Eastside truly needs is a good bicycle transportation system. Both the City of Portland and the region have identified 9th Avenue as a desirable bicycle route worthy of the highest functional classifications. Planning for the development of a recreational facility like the Green Loop should not be allowed to detract from what is intended to be a key element of the city's bicycle transportation network.

It should be noted the plan creates some further confusion in the way it ignores 9th Avenue. Although the plan understandably discusses the needs of freight, nowhere does it identify a significant role for freight on 9th Avenue. Map III-8 (Proposed Network for Regionally Significant Freight Routes) does not identify 9th Avenue as either an existing Major Truck Street nor as a proposed Priority or Major Truck Street. In accordance with these non-designations, Map III-7 (Freight Counts, 2008-2015) has no

counts on 9th Avenue. While we recognize that as a Freight District Street there likely are trucks on 9th, it is clearly not a high priority street for freight movement in the district. Yet it would appear the exclusion of the 9th Avenue bikeway designation is somehow in deference to freight movement.

Leave the engineering to PBOT. In the section on the Green Loop the draft plan identifies the “ability of the street to accommodate a 2-way cycle track” as an evaluation criterion for locating this recreational facility. Two-way cycle tracks are rare throughout the U.S. Where they are found, it is generally not in environments like the Central Eastside, which: has lots of pedestrian and automobile activity, is characterized principally by two-way roadways, and has relatively few signalized intersections. For many years two-way bikeways were practices to be avoided. Only recently are they being introduced into select situations in a handful of cities across the U.S. It is alarming that an agency with little knowledge about transportation best practices would advance suitability for a two-way cycle track as a criterion for a facility that is intended to be supremely safe. We feel this type of decision making is best left to PBOT as the city agency with highest degree of professional knowledge about transportation operations.

Improve and expand the bicycle network to address parking constraints and congestion. Part of the findings process for the development of the SE Quadrant Plan included a survey of Central Eastside property and business owners. The survey report (Central Eastside Industrial District Survey Report; December 2010) states the top three issues for businesses within the Central Eastside are customer parking, employee parking and traffic congestion. The report also notes 75% of the employees of survey respondents drive to work. Business respondents identified they wanted the city to “improve parking and transportation access/infrastructure” to help their business thrive. This approach is inadequate as a stand-alone strategy for a growing city like Portland. Furthermore, such a strategy directly conflicts with the critical policies identified in the Comprehensive Plan, the Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030, the Climate Action Plan, the Regional Climate Smart Strategy and the Portland Plan.

Given that a high percentage of both employees and visitors to the Central Eastside live within easy bicycling distance of the district (49% of business identified “City of Portland” as the market they serve) and that bicycle transportation directly addresses the top three barriers identified by business respondents, it makes clear sense to advocate for the improvement of the bikeway network within and connecting to the district, as well as its rapid implementation. The draft quadrant plan instead reflects a desire to restrict the city’s bicycle transportation network in this rapidly growing district.

We are concerned about different messages arising from separate arms of City government. To have the recent, extensive, city- and region-wide, Council-approved (both City Council and Metro Council) transportation planning efforts supplanted by a local planning project led by an agency with a peripheral understanding of transportation does a disservice to those citizens and stakeholders involved in previous planning efforts, as well as a disservice to the realization of stated city goals (e.g. 70% non-automotive mode split).

Transportation is obviously an important function that transcends the artificial divisions created by the boundaries of the central city quadrants. As such, it requires the ability to look beyond these narrowly-defined geographic areas and take into consideration the larger system. The Quadrant planning process and this plan in particular, should acknowledge that it is not the best method for transportation planning and should remain deferential to transportation-specific plans such as those previously stated.

Unfortunately, the draft SE Quadrant plan appears to do the opposite by contradicting clearly defined city goals and previous planning efforts.

Overall, we are disappointed in this document and what feels like a reactionary effort to inhibit change in this important part of the city. It is also disappointing to see this plan fail to acknowledge the tremendous contributions bicycle transportation is making to the Central City. Indeed, it is bicycle transportation that has made the largest contribution to the decline in drive-alone commuter mode split for Portlanders since the year 2000, and which continues to make the most cost-effective contributions to the goals elucidated in The Portland Plan.

The Bicycle Advisory Committee's request is that the SE Quadrant Plan accurately reflect previous and continuing planning efforts and highlight all city- and regionally-approved routes in this document. Those are:

9th Avenue
Grand Avenue
Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue
11th Avenue
12th Avenue
Morrison Street
Belmont Street

Further, we request that recommendations for specific facility types (e.g. two-way cycle tracks) be removed from the plan, and that the Green Loop concept in the SE Quadrant recommend both 7th and 9th Avenue as routes.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee,



Ian Stude, Chairperson

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