



MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 31, 2014

TO: Transportation Commission

FROM: Michael Ingram, Senior Transportation Planner
Kurt Latt, Senior Transportation Engineer

SUBJECT: Commission recommendation regarding proposed rechannelization of 116th Avenue NE, from NE 12th Street to Northup Way

Purpose and Background

Transportation Department staff have proposed rechannelizing the segment of 116th Avenue NE from NE 12th Street to Northup Way to remove one of the two northbound through lanes and implement bicycle lanes on both sides of the roadway. The City Council has requested the Transportation Commission review this proposal and develop a recommendation to be brought back to the Council for their consideration. Staff provided the Commission with an overview of the proposal on September 25, 2014, followed with an extensive presentation of technical analysis and policy issues on November 13, 2014. An Open House was held on December 11, 2014 to brief the public on the proposal and solicit public input. Additional comments have been received over the approximately four month period since this proposal was first introduced. Please see below for a discussion of the Open House and associated comments. At your January 8, 2015 meeting, the Commission is asked to make a recommendation whether to proceed with the proposed rechannelization project. This recommendation will subsequently be presented to the City Council.

Open House and Public Input

An Open House was held for the project on December 11, 2014 from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm at City Hall. The Open House drew nearly thirty attendees and included Councilmember Lee and several Transportation Commissioners. Property owners, cyclists, and other interested parties brought their perspectives on the proposal, which generated constructive discussion and a productive exchange of ideas. A diversity of opinions were expressed, with some in favor of the proposal as it is defined, some in favor of modifications that would extend the proposed bike lanes continuously south to the NE 12th St intersection (or beyond), and some opposed to the proposal altogether. Written comments received from participants at the Open House, together with comments received by letter or email before and after the Open House, have been compiled (40 pages in all) and are available for viewing on the project web page. Many (but not all) of these comments have been forwarded by email to Commissioners over the course of the past several months. Commissioners are encouraged to review these comments found at:

www.bellevuewa.gov/116th-rechannelization.htm

In all, more than 40 comments were received from individuals and organizations that expressed a variety of opinions in support of or opposition to the project. Of particular mention is the suggestion by some to extend the proposed bike lanes further south to the NE 12th St intersection. Staff review indicates implementing bike lanes all the way to NE 12th Street would involve the need to eliminate one of the two northbound vehicle lanes immediately north of the intersection and modify lane conditions on 116th Ave NE south of NE 12th St as well. At the Open House, the preliminary design was presented which maintains the travel lanes as they exist today over the first 600 feet along 116th Ave NE, northward from NE 12th St. Staff believes it is important to not eliminate the second northbound through lane in this area in order to maintain traffic flow at the signalized intersection of NE 12th St and 116th Ave NE. There are several considerations associated with the alternative of extending the bike lanes to the NE 12th St intersection (offset of travel lanes, added queuing, extends limits/scope of overlay) and as discussed previously with the Commission, staff does not recommend modifying the plan to expand the bike lane limits beyond the current proposed preliminary design. However, there may be treatments such as Sharrows (shared lane markings), dashed line markings, signing, or other features that could be utilized to better highlight cyclist activity in this transitional area just north of NE 12th St. These will be evaluated and considered in more detail, if the Council decides to proceed with the proposed rechannelization.

Recommendation for City Council

Consideration of this project by the City Council is anticipated in early February, 2015 (the exact meeting date is not yet established). Attached is a draft letter for the Transportation Commission's consideration in forming their transmission to the Council on the proposal. Staff will be available at the Commission meeting on January 8, 2015 to discuss any changes in the recommendation or other modifications to the letter, as may be desired by the Commission. In addition to the letter, a Transportation Commissioner should be identified to present the Commission's recommendation to the Council at the forthcoming meeting.

Project Monitoring

The proposed rechannelization would be implemented in conjunction with the repaving operations for the summer of 2015. The Transportation Department intends to conduct a comprehensive monitoring program where outcomes and benefits of the proposal can be determined. The following outlines the intended work plan to monitor performance of the proposal:

Volume Data Collection – The Transportation Department has historically collected daily vehicle traffic volumes on 116th Ave NE and the surrounding streets. This effort will continue with an added element to develop maps showing daily traffic before and after implementation. This will aid in evaluating if shifts in traffic materialize for the area. Additionally, peak hour traffic counts at traffic signals at both ends of the proposal segment will be collected before and after implementation. Bicycle data will also be collected in the corridor for the before and after implementation conditions.

Video Observations – Using cameras at surrounding traffic signals, the corridor will be monitored periodically, before and immediately after implementation. These cameras allow

staff to observe conditions in real time, and if necessary, can support engineering evaluations that might refine design elements such as signing in the implemented plan. These video observations will also be used in gathering information about bike counts, travel patterns and use of the facility.

Safety Analysis – Collision data will be queried from the city’s accident record data base. Following the project’s implementation, records will be reviewed for comparison with the “before” condition.

Speed Study – Projects of this nature tend to increase compliance with posted speed limits. The Transportation Department will conduct speed studies in the corridor for the “before” and “after” conditions.

Public Comments – As additional public comment is received throughout the development, implementation, and completion of the project, this input will be compiled and tracked. Often, public comment can contribute to the enhancement of concepts and improvements incorporated with projects. Where practical and beneficial, these comments will be utilized in the best interest of the proposal and community.

Attachment:

Transportation Commission Draft Letter of Recommendation to City Council (January 8, 2015)



Transportation Commission

Commissioners:

Scott Lampe, Chair

Janice Zahn, Vice-Chair

Vic Bishop

Clifford Chirls

Francois Larrivee

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Date: January 8, 2015

To: Mayor Balducci and Councilmembers

Subject: 116th Avenue NE – NE 12th St to Northup Way Reconfiguration

The Transportation Commission is pleased to offer our recommendation in support of the proposal to reconfigure 116th Avenue NE to add bike lanes between NE 12th St and Northup Way. Following extensive review of technical and policy considerations and informed by input from the public, we believe the proposed revisions to this segment of 116th Avenue NE will effectively serve all modes of travel in this important corridor.

In September 2014, the Council directed staff to work with the Transportation Commission to review technical and engineering considerations and to engage the public and solicit feedback on the proposed revisions to the channelization of 116th Avenue NE. The proposed revisions involve removing one of the two northbound travel lanes along most of the roadway segment and striping bike lanes on both sides of the roadway. Over the past few months, staff has extensively investigated and shared with the Commission its analyses for traffic forecast modeling, system operations, safety, land use plans, regional projects, and other engineering and planning aspects of the proposal. Staff has also spearheaded a public engagement effort, resulting in robust and thoughtful feedback.

The public engagement has included several Transportation Commission meetings, a well-attended Open House, project web site and social media interaction, media releases, a neighborhood information flyer distributed to property owners and businesses, and over 30 emails and letters from individuals and organizations. Staff also reached out to and met individually with representatives from each of the three hospitals in the corridor. There was a diversity of opinions expressed by the public and the Transportation Commission appreciates the many thoughtful comments and suggestions received. We expect staff will continue to hone the preliminary design moving forward to reflect public feedback to the extent possible and consistent with sound engineering principles.

Our recommendation to proceed with the rechannelization allows for the implementation of bike lanes along this segment of 116th Avenue NE in conjunction with repaving operations scheduled for this coming summer. This implementation involves minimal, if any, additional cost and is a step forward in meeting the desires of

Bellevue Transportation Commission
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the greater community to balance and better serve all modes of travel. Bicycle lanes in this corridor are identified in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and add an important mobility option recommended in the Downtown Transportation Plan. Widening this roadway to add bike lanes is not a necessary or foreseeable implementation strategy. Similar rechannelization projects in Bellevue and around the region have produced very successful outcomes in balancing the needs of various users. And staff will be monitoring the outcomes of this rechannelization project.

The approach proposed by staff maintains vehicle traffic flow by retaining current travel lanes at either end of the corridor and is supported by the Commission. The design minimizes disruption to the surrounding street system operations and improves safety for all modes of travel. With these improvements, the bicycle route linkage between the SR 520 regional trail and Downtown Bellevue will be enhanced as well as improving the connection with the forthcoming bike lanes to be constructed with the Northup Way CIP project starting this year.

We thank the City Council for considering our recommendation and stand ready to further address any questions the Council may have regarding this proposal.

Sincerely,

Scott Lampe, Chair, Bellevue Transportation Commission
Janice Zahn, Vice-Chair, Bellevue Transportation Commission