

WEST SEATTLE BIKE CONNECTIONS

September 11, 2015

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Subject: **Seattle Trails Upgrade Plan**

Dear Monica:

We are writing to offer group input to the Trails Upgrade Plan. We are happy to know that SDOT is doing a comprehensive study of the multi-use trails. The trails are valued community assets. They are essential in providing mobility and recreation for people of all ages and abilities. The trails vary widely in age, design, condition and use. It seems timely to step back and look at them as a whole, for safety with Vision Zero, and for connectivity and equity as part of the region's transportation network.

West Seattle Bike Connections a volunteer community organization advocating for safe and effective bicycle transportation in, to and from West Seattle. We advocate for pedestrian safety as well, and for use of city streets by all modes of transportation. We represent West Seattle and South Park in the Seattle Neighborhood Greenways coalition. We are the West Seattle branch of Cascade Bicycle Club's "Connect Seattle" groups. We are part of Sustainable West Seattle. At our last meeting, we developed some suggestions for the Trails Upgrade plan, and followed up with other members in an online brainstorming session. Here are our thoughts.

A. General issues for all multi-use trails and off-street bike paths:

1. **Vehicle drivers entering and exiting driveways frequently fail to stop and look** before crossing multi-use paths, creating serious hazards and causing serious injuries. At all public drives, e.g., into parks, public parking lots, Seacrest marina:
 - a. Install stop signs and stop bar markings on pavement for exiting drivers.
 - b. Restrict curb cut widths to minimum workable, with required sight triangles.
 - c. Hold parking lane parking back from entries.
 - d. Add trail crossing warning signs to entries to public and private drives.

2. **Posts and bollards are hazardous** to bike riders, especially when trail traffic is heavy, and in hours of darkness. Remove posts where not really necessary to prevent vehicle traffic from entering trail. Mark all bollards and posts and mark pavement at posts per national trail standards. Follow [WSDOT Design Manual Chapter 1020 - Bicycle](#)

[Facilities](#) for setback, daytime high visibility paint and nighttime retro-reflective markers, and pavement warning markings per MUTCD.

3. Pedestrians, dogs on leashes, skaters, skateboarders, people pushing strollers, and tourists on rental bikes and surreys tend to use the entire trail width when in groups, making it difficult to yield and hazardous to all parties for people on bikes or skates to pass in either direction. Even solo pedestrians and inexperienced cyclists are often encountered on either side of the trail, at random. We recommend design and education to encourage **travel on the right, with passing on the left and yielding to oncoming traffic, for all trail users.**
 - a. Paint a dashed yellow or white centerline on all two-way trails
 - b. Provide consistent signage for trail etiquette for all trail users.
 - c. Remove bikes-right, peds-left markings where occur (e.g., parts of Burke-Gilman in Wallingford and Fremont).
 - d. Where there is a bike (or wheeled) traffic lane separated from a foot traffic lane, as on part of the Alki Trail and in Myrtle Edwards Park, provide clear signage for trail etiquette, and, in cooperation with Seattle Parks & Recreation, do not permit vendors to use or block the pedestrian lane.
4. **Way finding** from streets to trails is generally good, but wayfinding from trails to streets is missing. Add street signs visible from the trail to show what streets trail users are intersecting.
5. **Provide regular seasonal vegetation trimming, removal of invasive plants, and tree root pruning.** Cooperate and coordinate with Seattle Parks and Port of Seattle for their portions of trails. Work with neighboring land owners to encourage vegetation trimming and elimination of invasive or view-obscuring vegetation that poses safety problems. Provide root pruning to preserve the trees and the roadbed.
6. **Provide sweeping** of trails that are prone to collect sand, gravel, mud and debris.
7. **Work with SPD, Parks and Port of Seattle to police homeless encampments** that impede trail access or present an intimidating presence, especially at night in areas of low traffic where there may be little observation by others.
8. **Respond to spot maintenance requests** for vegetation trimming, drainage problems, and debris. Our members' experience with SDOT response to Find It Fix requests is poor.
9. **Prohibit trail use by motorized scooters and motorized cycles that are capable of exceeding 20 mph.**
10. **Work with King County, Burien, Renton, Shoreline, Lake Forest Park,** and other nearby jurisdictions to strive for consistent multi-use trail design including pavement markings and warning signage.

B. New Trails Needed

1. **Multi-use trail along side of East Marginal Way S from S Spokane Street south to the 1st Avenue S Bridge,** as included in the East Marginal Way Multi-Modal Corridor

Project. This will provide a safe bike and pedestrian route for employees at the Federal Center South, and many other workplaces, for people living in West Seattle, South Park, Georgetown, and Beacon Hill.

2. To create a safe way to travel up and down the hill at the southeast end of West Seattle, a new trail is needed **from the Duwamish Trail** at the intersection of West Marginal Way and Highland Park Way, **up to Riverview Park**, parallel to Highland Park Way, in or along the south edge of the **West Duwamish Greenbelt**, with connections to the new Delridge/Highland Park Greenway and to South Seattle College.
3. Along with the Lander Street overpass for trucks and cars, build a **bike/pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks at Holgate to extend the Mountains to Sound Trail to the west**, with connection to the SODO trail, SODO light rail station and busway, and eventually via Lander to the protected bike lanes on East Marginal Way S. Close Holgate at the tracks to allow Amtrak to consolidate their rail yard. This is Amtrak's suggestion. The Mountains to Sound Trail does not actually go to the Sound. It is not called the "Mountains to Beacon Hill Trail". It should go to the sound to provide a safe, direct connection between West Seattle and SODO and Beacon Hill by bike and on foot.

C. Specific fixes in our area:

1. **Complete the Duwamish Trail from the West Seattle Bridge trail to and along West Marginal Way SW to the Duwamish Longhouse** (SW Alaska St) on the west side where there is presently no sidewalk, and cross there to trail on east side. For short term: Fix the horrible track crossing at (unimproved, unsigned) SW Idaho St/ West Marginal Way SW.
2. **Duwamish Trail crossing under 1st Ave S Bridge south approach:** Improve the grade crossing of 1st Ave S just north of Highland Park Way SW. Take steps to slow the high speed northbound vehicle traffic, and move the trail crossing back to the northwest to use the street instead of awkward curb ramps with poor sight lines.
3. **Duwamish Trail just south of intersection of West Marginal Way/ Highland Park Way SW/ 1st Ave S:** remove "the tree" that narrows the trail into a couple foot wide hump of broken asphalt, or widen the trail around it.
4. **Duwamish Trail at 1st Ave S Bridge:** Add lighting along trail on north around S Michigan St.
5. **Duwamish Trail near 1st Ave S Bridge:** Pave the short-cut off the south side of 1st Ave Bridge, at existing low hill.
6. **Duwamish Trail from S Trenton to S Henderson in South Park:** They call this "the scary trail". Overgrown, dumping ground, personal safety problems because it is unobserved. Lots of attention needed to make this safe. Kids need to use this to get to Concord School using the bridge across West Marginal S at S Henderson St.
7. **Connection of Alki Trail, West Seattle Bridge Trail and Duwamish Trail:** Do the promised Chelan 5-way intersection short term curb, signage and paint improvements now, and get the long-term flyover proposal onto the capital projects list.

8. **West Seattle Bridge/ Alki Trail at Harbor Ave SW & SW Spokane St:** Remove vegetation that creates a blind corner. Modify guardrail, curbs and curb ramps to create good sight lines for visibility of bikes by drivers, and to permit safe left turn westbound crossing by bike from trail to Avalon Way. Add centerline and edge striping to channel bike riders and pedestrians each direction.
9. **Alki Trail from SW Florida St or SW Harbor Lane and south along the stretch with a tree-planted center median:** Add lighting on the trail itself. Tree canopy from the center median and along the trail shades the trail from street lights, making it very dark during hours of darkness in spring through fall.
10. **Puget Ridge side trail from 22rd Ave SW north of Andover to West Seattle Bridge Trail:** Dangerously narrow with poor sightlines. Widen trail for 2-way traffic, or create a separate climbing trail. It would mean extending into the other side of the little park there (around the pinnacle). Dangerously narrow with poor sightlines. Could also change sign at Andover from "Dead End" to "Dead End except bike/ped" or otherwise sign for trail access.
11. **West Seattle Bridge/ Duwamish/ Alki Trails Intersection at west end of Spokane Street Bridge approach:** the large dirt area to the south of the trail would make an excellent location for a skateboard park. It is covered, has lighting, and does not compete for space in other parks. Every few years some enterprising boarders build features on the sidewalk, which is unsafe because it is right at the edge of the trails, and the city removes them. Kent has successfully placed a skateboard park alongside the Interurban. Seattle could do it, too, in a way that does not interfere with the trails.
12. **West Seattle Bridge Trail at the Duwamish east waterway bridge/fishing pier:** There are steel studs left in the pavement from when some of the bollards were removed to make way for the trail. They are a hazard to tires and could really tear flesh if someone falls on them.
13. **West Seattle Bridge Trail:** Remove severe humps and broken concrete panels in trail between S Spokane St/Terminal 25 and the Duwamish east waterway bridge. One of these humps is close to causing a pedal strike crash.
14. **West Seattle Bridge Trail:** Replace wide and slippery pavement sealant joints at corner of S Spokane St and East Marginal Way S with a non-slip joint seal. Much of the problem is the uneven surface the seam creates. Any replacement needs to create a uniform surface without a groove or hump. It would be better to rebuild the whole corner as a proper curved bike trail with smooth, seamless paving, with no utility handhole or vault cover plates.
15. **West Seattle Bridge Trail at the corner of Spokane and E Marginal:** Add signage to encourage northbound cyclists to cross E Marginal using the ped signal.
16. **East Marginal Way S just north of Spokane:** The plastic posts separating the bike lane are a hazard to bicycles. Remove them. They are already being run over by cars and trucks. They will either end up bent over into the bike lane, or the plastic tops will be sheared off leaving the metal base parts hazardously exposed. The lane behind the posts is collecting gravel which cannot be reached by street sweepers. There is no

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need for this separation, because the signal timing gives cyclists turning north time to reach the northbound bike lane before traffic on East Marginal can catch up to them.

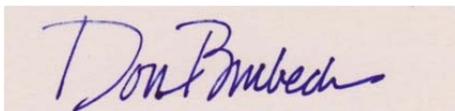
17. **West sidewalk of East Marginal Way S from S Spokane St to S Atlantic St:** This is the de facto multi-use trail until protected bike lanes are built, and is the route of choice for slower or less confident bike riders from West Seattle to downtown. It is far from meeting standards. Most urgent fixes needed:
 - a. Remove fire hydrants from middle of path near Terminal 25. This is an outrageously unsafe condition, repeatedly reported to SDOT. No one would accept SPU installing hydrants in the middle of a general purpose traffic lane. Why should it be acceptable in a bike lane? I have personally stopped to give first aid to people who have crashed into these hazards, causing injuries to themselves and damage to their bikes.
 - b. Remove the severe humps in pavement. These have existed since the 2001 Nisqually earthquake. Repairs are overdue. Not ADA compliant, among other things.

18. **Portside Trail, south entrance, east side of Alaskan Way S, to the Portside Trail at Atlantic St:** The plastic posts separating the bike lane have been run over by cars and trucks. They are bent over into the bike lane. The lane behind the posts is collecting gravel which cannot be reached by street sweepers. If SDOT truly wants to protect the bike trail entrance, Jersey barriers or cast-in-place concrete barriers are needed.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment, and would welcome more conversations, trail rides, and any clarifications with photos or maps, or other assistance that would be useful.

And, we are supporting the *Move Seattle* levy, to help fund all these things we would like to see!

Sincerely,



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