



March 4, 2016

Dear Ms. McLaughlin,

Thank you for the chance to comment on the Right of Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM) for Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). As you know, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways (SNG) staff and leaders have been studying this “[cookbook of Seattle roadway design](#)” closely since 2014. About 20 people provided comments that we just added to the ROWIM update. The collective theme of our comments is as follows.

Standards Not Minimums. The ROWIM needs to always state, in clear terms, the **desirable dimensions of streets and roadways**. Strong guidance is needed. Don’t use minimums. Developers and others looking to save money will always use minimums to cut corners. Use Standards. When a developer, or SDOT employee, or another City agency needs an exception to recommended City Standard dimensions, require permitting review.

Standard Lane Widths. Dimensions in all graphics should be Standard widths. Here are SNG recommendations for Standard lane widths:

- Sidewalk. 6’ clear zone
- Bike lane one direction. 6.5’
- Bike lane two directions. 12’
- Vehicle and turn lane width (maximum). 10’
- Bus lane width. 11’

People Streets. Our coalition sees the ROWIM as an opportunity to review the Functional Classification of streets. **Streets should not always default to vehicles.** Several street types will be needed in our near future that are pedestrian-only or at minimum pedestrian/bicycle-oriented:

- **Plazas as Pedestrian-Only Streets.** Create a plaza typology of urban streets with sidewalks that permanently open the entire street to pedestrian and bicycle use only, possibly with limited access freight in non-peak hours. (example: Pike Place Market)
- **Home Zone.** Much like the Dutch woonerf, Home Zone streets in areas with sidewalks would be streets “where cars are guests” and vehicle traffic travels at 10 mph or slower. Freight, emergency service and other vehicular street uses would be planned for minimal disruption. Create Home Zones in rapidly developing urban villages with medium density areas underserved by open space (example: Ballard, U-District).
- **Neighborhood Curbless.** Similar to a Home Zone or Dutch woonerf, but in areas without sidewalks. People walking, biking and playing on the street would have priority over vehicles “where cars are guests”. Vehicle traffic engineered to 10 mph or slower. Freight, emergency service and other vehicular street uses would be planned for minimal disruption. (example: 17th Ave NW north of NW 85th)



Design Vehicle. Saying SDOT’s goal is “to minimize pedestrian crossing distances and improve safety” is directly at odds with wide streets and wide turning radius still mandated throughout the ROWIM. Why has SDOT selected SU-30 as the design vehicle? **We should not design our city streets to all accommodate giant trucks.** We recommended the ROWIM design the vehicle for the city, not the city for the vehicle. Using SU-30 (42’ turning) as a base design vehicle is too large for reducing turning radius and impacts safety for all road users. At least use NACTO Standard DL-23 (22.5 turning), which in many cases is still too large a Standard design vehicle on many urban streets.

Frequent Updates Tied To NACTO. Street design standards are changing rapidly. The ROWIM needs to reflect Vision Zero, Tactical Urbanism, Complete Streets, ADA, and other policies that will continue to mandate changes to the right-of-way. **We strongly recommend updating Seattle’s ROWIM annually, based on updates to the NACTO guidelines that currently follow best US practice for urban streets for people.**

Thank you for your hard work on the ROWIM!

Sincerely,

Cathy Tuttle
Director, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways

cc:
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