Next Steps

Placing Neighborhood Greenways in the Context of Seattle’s Bicycling Past, Present, & Future

Blake Trask
State Policy Director
Talk Purpose

1. Context on Seattle and bicycling as I understand it

2. Comments on the Bicycle Master Plan

3. Issues to be aware of

4. Next steps

(what it’s not about)

1. A story about direct advocacy or the political/organizing efforts by some advocacy organizations, which are integral
Movements over time
Seattle pre-2007

- Parks Department had spent more on bicycle facilities than SDOT/SEATRANS/Engineering Dept.
- Projects were most notably trails (Burke)
- Projects were opportunistic - Wild West mentality
- Ad hoc nature of bicycle projects means that this transport mode was never part of the feedback mechanisms for transportation project managers in Seattle
2007

- Bicycle Master Plan passed unanimously by Council
- Complete Streets Ordinance passed
- Funding from Bridging the Gap Levy commenced
Council members and the mayor's office have been loath to say how they will respond to Governor Christine Gregoire's demand that they put two viaduct-replacement options on the ballot. But on Tuesday, January 16, with Gregoire's January 19 deadline fast approaching, observers speculated that council members and the mayor were preparing to make a big announcement Wednesday, January 17, after The Stranger went to press. That announcement would reportedly serve as a campaign kickoff of sorts for the "Tunnel Lite," so called because, at just four lanes, it would be smaller and have less traffic capacity than the mayor's original preference, a six-lane tunnel. The smaller tunnel has been controversial because it would lower the waterfront's car capacity by about a third, and because it would bypass the center city, forcing downtown traffic onto slower surface streets.

Supporters of the surface/transit alternative, including the People's Waterfront Coalition, the Sierra Club, and Friends of Seattle, "don't support any freeway," including the tunnel, PWC fundraiser Cary Moon says. "Our position is that we should get started with the [city's traffic] mitigation package," which contains many elements of the surface/transit proposal, "while we keep trying to work on a common solution."

More details have emerged about the recent demotion of Peter Lagerwey, the former head of the city's bike and pedestrian program and a 22-year city veteran. The final straw reportedly came when Lagerwey allowed the appointment of Bicycle Advisory Board nominee Catherine Staunton, a pediatrician and advocate for separate bike facilities, to move forward. Staunton opposes many aspects of the master plan, and voiced those concerns at her confirmation hearing earlier this month. The plan, she told the council, "does not address safety issues. I think it's designed for bicycle enthusiasts." A more "visionary plan," Staunton suggested, would move bikers to segregated trails and paths. Cascade Bicycle Club advocacy director David Hiller, in contrast, believes bikers should be taught to act like cars. "It doesn't work from an engineering standpoint" to separate bikes from traffic, Hiller said.

Although Lagerwey didn't have a direct say in the nomination, one of Lagerwey's deputies helped facilitate it. That employee, the only person at the city working full-time on the city's Bike Spot Improvement Program, was moved out of the bike office. Lagerwey, meanwhile, was replaced by a pedestrian-safety expert. It's unclear what the changes will mean, long-term, for the program, which is gearing up to implement the city's first bike master plan. SDOT spokesman Gregg Himakawa called the reassignments an "HR matter" and wouldn't comment further.

Some bike advocates worry that Staunton will slow down the bike master plan, which is currently being considered by the advisory board. At least one council member, Peter Steinbrueck, said he was "definitely interested" in learning more about Staunton's objections to the master plan. However, Staunton said Tuesday that she would ''probably resign'' from the advisory board over the controversy. "It's kind of been a disconcerting process," Staunton said. ★

barnett@thestranger.com
Bicycle Master Plan Observations

- Developed immediately prior to the explosion of interest on the national scene
- Onstreet bike facilities were fought for and included, but strong desire to focus on trails existed
- Recommended facilities were vague and not ground-truthed – huge variance it what actually is installed
What it lacked

- Focus on separation
- Adequate direction for public involvement and education (perhaps an implementation problem more than the Plan’s problem)
- Detailed design specs (which results in a just-in-time approach)
- Project manager to track BMP implementation and coordinate with non-SDOT departments
Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board

- Founded in 1977 by resolution
- Bicycle Master Plan noted SBAB as stewards of the Plan
- Some obsessive membership
- In the vacuum that existed – consistent presence and tracked projects and attempted to be timely
- Bicycling is so far behind that advisory is inherently advocacy
“all war represents a failure of diplomacy”

Harsh letters and comments to our City friends can be the equivalent to war.

At SBAB, we endeavor to serve as foils for our City friends: they can be our greatest advocates because ultimately they build the visions we have.

Tendency to serve as a watchdog is natural, but we attempt to instead provide constructive feedback and advice to City staff.
Major Projects & Light Rail

Spokane Street Viaduct project

Plan for reroutes and delays

SR 99 - S Holgate Street to S King Street Viaduct Replacement

Mercer Corridor
Funding

- Bridging the Gap represented a sea change - institutionalizes the Bicycle Program (however minimally)

- Air has been sucked out of the room for national grant opportunities (TIGER) due to major projects (Mercer, Spokane, etc)

- State level funding is abysmal

- Loss of Proposition 1
Update Wish List

• Better intersections
• Calmer and more separation (cycle tracks & greenways)
• Better data
• Signalization
• Transit & school connectivity

Greenways

• More greenways, but they shouldn’t be relegated to just new bicycle facilities
• Intra-neighborhood network, but also larger citywide network – integrate with trails, bridges, and cycle tracks
Elements to remember

Greenway benefits extend beyond bicycle users - don’t relegate it to just bicycles

Seattle is a city of islands with many chokepoints that Greenways cannot address

“...characteristics of the built environment have a direct impact on crashes...”
Next Steps

Keep your work going – continue to innovate & involve

Recognize that Greenways are huge, but not the only answer for bicycle users in Seattle

Find ways to work with others who can help you

Support funding, state legislation (SHB 1217, “Neighborhood Safe Streets Bill”), and attend Transportation Advocacy Day in Olympia on January 31!
Photos

- Sally Blogshaw - http://bagshaw.seattle.gov/
- Bike Portland - www.bikeportland.org
- Seattle Department of Transportation - http://www.seattle.gov/transportation
- Project for Public Spaces - http://www.pps.org
- Rails to Trails Conservancy - http://www.railstotrails.org
- Copenhagenize - http://www.copenhagenize.com