

Monroe Street Neighborhood Greenway Concept Plan
Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting #1
Wednesday, September 3, 2014

Tour of Monroe Street, starting downtown at City Hall (fire bay) – 4:00pm to 6:00pm

Summary Notes

General

- Traffic calming was an important theme of the tour, as the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) agreed that creating a comfortable shared environment will require slowing vehicle traffic, especially on eastbound uphill stretches that magnify speed differential between road users. Suggestions for calming included pavement markings such as sharrows, curb extensions, and speed bumps.
- Participants requested more ADA-compliant sidewalks, including curb ramps and yellow textured surfaces (detectable warning strips).
- Improved access to nearby schools is a major consideration for the project – students walk and bike to Milwaukie ES, Linwood ES, Ardenwald ES, Lewelling ES, Rowe MS, and Milwaukie HS near the study area. A Safe Routes to School process for Linwood ES is currently being undertaken by City of Milwaukie and the North Clackamas School District.
- As properties are redeveloped, the City should consider adopting access management policies designed to restrict the number of new driveways and to consolidate existing driveways wherever possible, to reduce conflicts between motor vehicles and vulnerable road users.
- The project team should contact the local fire bureau about potential issues with speed bumps and diversion on identified emergency routes.
- The group would like to see information available on the project website that educates the general public on neighborhood greenway function and design, with visual examples of Neighborhood Greenways.

Section A: 21st Avenue to OR 224

- Monroe Street is characterized by narrow, curb-tight sidewalks less than 5 feet wide and in poor condition in several locations.
- Because Monroe Street is only 27 feet wide between curbs in this section, space is at a premium. The street has parking on the uphill side of the street, which some residents wish to retain.
- The PAC did not perceive a problem with bicycle riders crossing the new MAX light rail tracks at 23rd Avenue. Although the angle between the road and tracks is not completely perpendicular, the crossing is generally smooth.
- The PAC expressed concerns about the intersection of Monroe Street at 25th Avenue, where the roadway narrows to create a difficult environment for motorists wishing to overtake cyclists going uphill. One suggestion was to use green paint to denote conflict or transition areas at points where the right-of-way is constrained.
- Monroe Street had been repaved just prior to the tour but did not have a painted centerline. One member of the PAC observed that not having a centerline seemed to encourage drivers to give cyclists more room. The City is planning on leaving the road un-striped until the Monroe Street planning process is complete.
- It was observed that the YMCA daycare facility near OR 224 attracts families who would potentially use Monroe Street to walk or bike to the center.
- One participant suggested a leading pedestrian and bicycle interval signal at the OR 224 intersection, which would allow pedestrians and bicyclists to get a head start and increase their visibility.

Section B: East of OR 224 to Oak Street

- This section of Monroe Street was under construction and closed to traffic; the PAC was not able to observe the street during normal traffic conditions.
- Monroe Street east of OR 224 is generally quiet, with low traffic volumes and speeds. However, some motorists heading east use Monroe Street to avoid traffic at the OR 224/Oak Street intersection. And some truck drivers following their GPS units are possibly being directed to turn left onto Monroe Street from eastbound OR 224.
- One suggestion was to restrict movements at OR 224 to right-in/right-out only in order to improve safety.
- People exiting the bowling alley (Milwaukie Bowl) are unclear about where to go and end up on Monroe Street.
- Effective wayfinding is necessary where the corridor makes a jog from Monroe Street to Campbell Street.

Section C: Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Crossing

- The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) crossing at Oak Street is the busiest section of the corridor. Because the roadway is unlikely to be widened to install bicycle lanes, it may be beneficial to separate bicycle traffic completely from motor vehicles. One suggestion was to consider widening the existing sidewalk to create a side path through the crossing and up to 37th Avenue.
- Rapid flash beacons or flashing crosswalks could be used to assist vulnerable road users across Oak Street.
- Because the route has several jogs in this section, wayfinding will be integral for users navigating between Campbell Street and Monroe Street across the tracks. In addition to signage, sharrow pavement markings could indicate which direction bicycle riders should turn at decision points.
- The crossing has recently received “quiet zone” improvements in the form of median islands. One PAC member suggested modifying the barrier to create a median refuge island for bicyclists turning left from Campbell Street to Oak Street heading eastbound. However, this may conflict with Federal Railroad Administration regulations on quiet zone crossings.
- A semi-diverter could be installed at Campbell Street to prevent motorists turning westbound from Oak Street. Many drivers use Oak St as a cut-through.
- Currently, traffic heading eastbound has the right of way at Railroad Avenue/Monroe Street just east of the UPRR crossing, which can be confusing to road users. In addition, bicycle riders heading westbound have to make a difficult left turn from Monroe Street to Oak Street. One potential solution is to construct a roundabout at this three-way intersection, in order to slow vehicle traffic and make turning easier. However, it would likely require nearby property acquisition.
- The corridor should be designed keeping in mind connections at this location to a planned north-south neighborhood greenway along 29th Avenue, which has been identified in the City’s Transportation System Plan (TSP). The City has also planned a future multi-use path along the UPRR alignment to connect to Railroad Avenue east of 37th Avenue.
- North of the railroad tracks, the west side of Oak Street is property owned by UPRR while the east side is owned by a private developer and is slated for redevelopment.

Section D: Oak Street to 42nd Avenue

- The four-way intersection at 37th Avenue is busy, and it can be hard for eastbound cyclists to regain momentum after stopping, where there is a 6.6% uphill grade between 37th Avenue and 40th Avenue.
- The eastbound (uphill) direction has a bike lane that is less than 5 feet wide (PAC members noted it was too narrow), while there are sharrows in the westbound (downhill) direction between 40th Avenue and 42nd Avenue. There are no sharrows or other pavement markings westbound between 37th Avenue and 40th Avenue.

- The sidewalk is in fair to poor condition along this section. Lawns from private residences have encroached over decades onto the sidewalk and the sidewalk is uneven.
- At 37th Avenue and 42nd Avenue, PAC members wanted to see changes made to encourage through traffic to use King Road or Railroad Avenue instead of Monroe Street. Currently, it is not intuitive for drivers travelling to Linwood Avenue to determine which routes are preferred.
- One PAC member asked whether the centerline could be removed in this section, as it can encourage drivers to overtake cyclists unsafely. City officials responded that the centerline could be removed if volumes were lower in this section (as well as in Section E), which could enable a downgrade of the functional classification from “collector” to “neighborhood route” or “local street.”

Section E: 42nd Avenue to Linwood Avenue

- Because this section of Monroe Street has a rural cross-section with no curbs or sidewalks, the overwhelming concern of the PAC along this section is pedestrian safety. It can be difficult to find a safe place to walk next to traffic routinely going 25-30 mph. A particular problem area for pedestrians is the lack of visibility near 52nd Avenue where the road bends.
- Pedestrian conditions are also poor crossing Monroe Street along side streets, especially at intersections where there is a jog in Monroe Street such as at Stanley Avenue, which is also a potential north-south neighborhood greenway route.
- It can be difficult to see stop signs at the four-way intersection with Home Avenue, which can lead to some motorists driving through them without stopping, impacting the safety of vulnerable road users such as bicyclists and pedestrians.
- According to PAC members, the perception of Monroe Street as a rural road encourages motorists to speed, which compounds the issue with pedestrian safety. Periodic police enforcement on this section temporarily solves this problem.
- Acceptance from neighbors for building new sidewalks is a concern. While City property maps indicate that there is enough width within the public right-of-way for sidewalks, private residents’ lawns have encroached into this right-of-way. In addition, many residents park on the gravel shoulder along the roadway. The City should work with individual property owners on a case-by-case basis to determine proper mitigation for potential right-of-way acquisition for constructing sidewalks.
- Several PAC members want the City to consider pedestrian alternatives to new sidewalks, in order to reduce both project cost and the amount of property acquisition necessary.
- Bicycling is also difficult in this section due to high speeds and volumes, rolling terrain, lack of visibility around curves, and inadequate shoulders, which are especially needed during uphill climbs. There is no bicycle-specific infrastructure in this section besides two sharrows markings and wayfinding signage at Stanley Avenue.
- The eastern end of the corridor at Linwood Avenue is considered dangerous for all modes. Speeding is commonly observed along Linwood Avenue, which provides connections to routes parallel to Monroe Street. There is consensus among PAC members that this intersection should be designed to connect to the future County-maintained section further east. The City would need to work with Clackamas County to develop a mutually agreed upon vision. Linwood Avenue is a regionally designated corridor in the Metro 2040 Growth Concept. Several members noted this would be good location for a pedestrian-activated signal.
- Drainage is a significant issue in this section. Regular flooding occurred after heavy rainfall, particularly around Home Avenue and 55th Avenue, until the City installed 5 drywells. That eased the problem but did not eliminate it entirely, as flooded basements are still relatively common. PAC members asked the project team to consider improvements that incorporate stormwater management best practices while also serving as placemaking along the corridor, such as bioswales.