

BWNA Transportation Committee Proposal – February 8, 2021

Background

Prompted initially by concerns of traffic volume and speed on NE Skidmore on the north side of Wilshire Park, neighbors and BWNA supported a couple of traffic surveys by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) in 2020. In addition, a BWNA newsletter insert questionnaire to specific area residents living adjacent to NE Skidmore was utilized to get feedback on both traffic calming ideas and other creative usages of this extra wide portion of roadway. The June PBOT traffic survey on NE Skidmore showed 59.1% of the eastbound traffic at 35th Place exceeded the posted 20 mph limit. The 15 neighbor questionnaires returned showed a strong desire for a painted pedestrian crossing at 35th Place/Skidmore, with more mixed support for speed bumps, narrowing the street via a bike lane, and opening the street on weekends for community events.

Over the last few months of meetings and email dialog, members of the Transportation Committee have reviewed the above data as well as researched other cities' initiatives regarding a wide array of "non-traditional" activities for streets – including PBOT's own Livable Streets Strategy and support for "Portland in the Streets" programs. The transportation committee has made ongoing efforts to identify and build collaborative relationships with the key PBOT decision-makers.

Since PBOT will be in our neighborhood working on the Greenway Expansion Project involving NE Skidmore and NE Mason east of 37th Ave., it is very timely to work with them on concepts within this proposal.

Proposed Short-term Actions (next 2 -6 months)

Coordinate with PBOT, utilizing their existing "Street Prototype" program, a number of temporary (from a few hours to a full weekend duration) pilot projects focused on NE Skidmore to alter traffic flow with the goals of testing the impacts on calming traffic, getting demonstrative feedback, and generating community engagement. All these activities tend to narrow perspectives on the street in ways that we think would act to reduce drivers' speed. The plan would be for representatives of BWNA to be present during significant portions of these pilot projects to obtain direct feedback and observations. Some project possibilities:

1. Creating a bike lane along south side of Skidmore using tape and cones.
2. Creating street art (chalk) at 35th Place to act as a simulated crosswalk visual.
3. Installing bump-out sections along the south side of Skidmore (cones/standpipes/barricades).
(Note: Seattle's similar program has used trash bins and lawn furniture at times)

Communicate general ideas and timing through the BWNA newsletter/blog. (Not every pilot program would need to get a specific announcement – sometimes maybe just placards placed during the test as reminders.)

Note: There most likely will be some nominal costs associated with these activities, so the Transportation Committee is requesting pre- approval level of spending up to \$100.

Intermediate Goals (once pandemic guidelines allow)

(Note: while Skidmore remains the focus due to its wide width, these type of community engagement activities could be located anywhere in the neighborhood.)

Create long term street art at 35th Place and Skidmore. This would require a maintenance commitment. Again, art would act as a faux crosswalk visual to slow traffic.

Hold smaller, focused half-day block party-type activities that are supported within the PBOT “Play Streets” program such as:

- Open area chalk drawing sections

- Games – ping pong, bean bag toss, bike riding path/challenge

Longer-Term ideas

Create a neighborhood-wide annual Block Party event utilizing multiple blocks along Skidmore to include:

- Organized activities and games

- Entertainment

- Food carts

- A BWNA booth promoting communication and activities (as an aid to recruitment, possibly replacing the neighborhood-wide Taste of Beaumont event in late spring)

Improve safety on streets throughout the neighborhood by facilitating and encouraging PBOT strategic thinking around “super blocks” to limit through-traffic routes within dense residential neighborhoods with logical placement of barricades to drive traffic towards boundary arterial streets. This could include specific areas to pilot a program with temporary barricades within Beaumont Wilshire or in partnership with other neighborhoods. Obviously, more detailed conceptualization and buy-in from the BWNA Board and PBOT would be required.

Summary

While our initial focus was on traffic issues on Skidmore, the discussions within the Transportation Committee expanded to include opportunities for neighborhood engagement utilizing streets as a backdrop to broaden perspectives, create more interaction between neighbors, and foster creative ideas to make neighborhood movement safer for all residents.

The Transportation Committee hopes to get Board approval to pursue the short-term actions and obtain general support for longer term goals, with understanding that as the details firm up the committee would come back to Board for approval of more specific actions and possible costs associated with these longer term ideas.

References

Portland in the Streets Program

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/66077>

Tactical Urbanism

<https://www.transformative-mobility.org/assets/publications/Street-Plans.pdf>

Driver's perception and speed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oP-Ndww1zw>

PBOT Livable Streets Strategy

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/633118>

Providence- City Walk

<https://tooledesign.com/project/city-walk/>

Barcelona – Super Blocks program

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-11/barcelona-s-new-car-free-superblock-will-be-big>