

Westlake Stakeholders Minutes of Meeting - Westlake Cycle Track

(August 27, 2013)

I. MEETING ATTENDEES:

Peter Avlogitos	Ann Bassetti	Phil Bannon	Roger Drill
Pamela Hale	David McClain	Lynn Reister	Gordon Rich
Bill Wehrenberg	Randy Sandell	Peter Schrappen	Dick Schwartz
Cam Strong	Bill Wiginton	Joseph Zamberlain	Tim Zamberlain

(Note: These attendees include Westlake Ave. North business owners and managers, residents, employees, customers and boaters. Some of attendees are also pedestrians, bikers, joggers and walkers. A more complete set of Westlake Avenue North Stakeholders includes: residents, businesses (owners, employees, customers / clients / tenants, boaters, pedestrians, joggers, walkers, tourists).

I. PURPOSE OF MEETING:

Eight members of the Westlake Parking Workgroup (established in 2007) were joined by seven additional concerned citizens. Following brief introductions, Cam offered to facilitate the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to gather factual information to determine whether or not the Westlake Avenue North community is facing potential problem with a City of Seattle “Cycle Track” initiative, to be installed along Westlake Ave. North. The fear is, if not sensitively planned and implemented, the Cycle Track could cause significant harm to Westlake Avenue North community stakeholders.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Ann Bassetti and Dick Schwartz provided a summary of the information they had collected prior to the meeting regarding the City of Seattle’s plans to install a “Cycle Track”. Ann summarized her research conversation with the following individuals:

- Michael Hintze from the Toole Design Group (who has been contracted by the City of Seattle to provide planning and design consulting services for the Westlake Ave. N Cycle Track)
- Barbara Lee who is SDOT's project manager for the Westlake Cycle Track Project
- LeAnne Nelson who is SDOT’s Outreach coordinator for the Westlake Cycle Track Project

III. SUMMARY OF FEARS & CONCERNS:

The participants first expressed their fears & concerns verbally, which were captured on a white board. Each participant was then provided paper & pens and asked to list their fears and concerns. Since there were many repeated and overlapping concerns and fears, the following is a summary of

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those expressed:

Very Big Concerns over Loss of Parking Spaces

- ⤴ Westlake Avenue North lost 400 of its 1600 parking spaces in 2002, plus an additional 60 parking spaces in 2008 with the City of Seattle South Lake Union Project. Now there are only 1140 spaces for 4000 stakeholders plus customers. The loss of more parking spaces can be devastating to the Westlake Ave. N community.
- ⤴ The Westlake Ave. N Parking Workgroup spent 2 years working with the City to develop the WESTLAKE AVE. PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN, which was implemented by the City in 2008. This plan implemented 2-4 hour parking zones on the water side of the parking strip, in order to inhibit “Park and Riders” (who get on buses to go downtown). Despite the City agreeing to coordinate all changes to the Westlake Parking Management Plan with the Workgroup, for unknown reasons, those 2-4 hour zones were eliminated by the City in recent years, and made into full-day zones. As feared, the lot is now filled all day long, it appears, often with Park and Riders. The 2-4 hour zones need to promptly be changed back to what was established in the Westlake Parking Management Plan, and the City needs to honor and follow-through on their commitment to coordinate all changes with the Workgroup.
- ⤴ We are very worried we will lose the Free Parking Zone (located on the west side of the parking strip) which is part of the Westlake Parking Management Plan. This is particularly important for low-income employees and residents for whom paying for parking can be prohibitive.

Business Impacts

- ⤴ The viability of many of the Westlake businesses is dependent on having viable parking options, especially the marine repair shops and boat dealerships. This MUST be addressed if small maritime-dependent businesses (aka “the working lake”) are to remain on the west side of Lake Union.
- ⤴ Marinas (there are many along Westlake North) need short-term parking for moorage customers AND daily parking for employees and boat owners who are taking their boats out. Loading & unloading stuff from cars would involve long walks.
- ⤴ Loss of more parking spaces for Marina residents can be devastating to these businesses and their customers. Drive marina boat owners away; loss of moorage.
- ⤴ Marina customers will have difficulty accessing their boats if parking spaces are lost.
- ⤴ Many businesses need available parking for their customers. Current business customers will find other places to get services if they can't find parking.
- ⤴ New customers will avoid Westlake if parking is not available.
- ⤴ Many employees of businesses must drive here – and hence need parking – because they live far away and do not have adequate public transportation options.
- ⤴ Forcing employees to take the bus or pay for parking reduces employees' wages

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- ⤴ Worried about the viability of small businesses if we lose free parking (employees of these small businesses depend on parking, especially free). Many of those employees are in lower-income brackets, for whom paying for parking is prohibitive.
- ⤴ Marina customers will have difficulty accessing their boats.
- ⤴ Many businesses will have to close because no parking (for example: China Harbor, Safe n Sound swimming, gym). Parking in that area is already maxed out.
- ⤴ Raising the cost of parking raises the cost of doing business in this area
- ⤴ Loss of business revenues and profits due to construction and reduction of free parking

Residential Impacts

- ⤴ The effect of reduced parking spaces on residential parking and Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) limits access to our residences and increased RPZ costs.
- ⤴ Impact on residents' parking - reduced parking will make parking permits worthless if there is no place to park, even if you have a permit.
- ⤴ Raises the cost of living for residents in this area

Future Development on Westlake Ave. N Impacts

- ⤴ This major cycle track development project will result in a significant loss of the traditional waterfront and water-dependent maritime community.
- ⤴ How long would construction take and what are the projected effects that construction on the community?
- ⤴ How painful with construction be? The Mercer Mess is already customer-repellent.
- ⤴ Loss of business revenues and profits due to construction and reduction in the current free area is a significant concern.
- ⤴ In recent years, we've already endured major rebuilding of Westlake and parking lot, repaving of 34th Street in Fremont, and now massive construction of the "Mercer Mess" -- all of which create years' of traffic jams for us.
- ⤴ Where will construction vehicles and equipment be stored and/or parked?
- ⤴ Subsequent impact of trolley (we hear it's being considered to extend down Westlake)
- ⤴ Cycle track and future trolley would destroy business and residence along Lake Union
- ⤴ Bike tracks elsewhere in the City have forced residents to park off the primary path. There are no other parking options on Westlake.
- ⤴ As a result, property values could be reduced.
- ⤴ Has an economic impact study been completed? If not, why not?
- ⤴ Has the Impact on business with the loss of parking been studied? If no, why not?
- ⤴ Is this initiative permitted under the Shoreline Act?

Safety Concerns

- ⤴ Concerns of the safety issues for pedestrians, bicycles, and autos which can cause loss of life and injuries
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- ⤴ Bikes now run too fast through the Westlake Ave. North parking area, causing a danger to them and others (pedestrians and cars).
- ⤴ The Westlake parking area is a right-of-way, not a street – 5 mph limit!
- ⤴ The speed of the bike traffic under a cycle track will increase, making the situation all that more dangerous.
- ⤴ Too many bicyclists already disregard laws and pedestrians and create safety issues for pedestrians and vehicles.
- ⤴ If the cycle track is too narrow, it gets scary and dangerous for the bike riders (such as when 2 lanes of bikers cross the Fremont Bridge on the narrow sidewalk)
- ⤴ Ingress and egress from parking lot area is dangerous.
- ⤴ Traffic exiting Westlake at high rates of speed is not a good mix for fast-moving bike traffic that will not stop at intersections.

Vehicle Movement Concerns

- ⤴ Westlake Avenue North is one of Seattle's only 5 north-south designated truck routes. It is crucial to not inhibit the traffic flow, in general, but especially mandatory for trucks.
- ⤴ Westlake is a truck route. Keep the access, without any reductions.
- ⤴ Overall impact to vehicle movement (e.g., trucks, ingress / egress, emergency vehicles ...)
- ⤴ Impact on general traffic flow of cars and trucks crossing the Cycle Track does not appear to be well thought out for this area. Semi trucks often need to take the intersection entrance, plus the frontage road to access property and businesses along the lake.
- ⤴ If the Cycle Track is located on the west side of the corridor, how will cars enter and leave?
- ⤴ Congested traffic will become worse than it is now
- ⤴ We move trucks with 40-54' trailers in and out of our property. This movement is critical for the viability of our business.
- ⤴ The Cycle Track will diminish traffic flow
- ⤴ Westlake Avenue North is a main 4-lane arterial. Converting 2 of the 4 lanes for bicycles will create a serious negative impact on traffic flow.

Frustrations with Bicyclists & Lack of Rules & Enforcement for Safe & Responsible Bicycling

- ⤴ Even with an existing Cycle Track (65th / Burke Gilman to Sand Point Way), bicyclists are still on road and sidewalk in that area
 - ⤴ Many bicyclists don't follow traffic rules and/or are insensitive to pedestrians and cars – and the police do not enforce bicycle safety rules.
 - ⤴ The Cycle Track won't address safety issues related to 'rogue' cyclists in the Westlake Ave. North parking areas and sidewalks, if cyclists are still allowed to ride anywhere they want and at any speed they want this will remain an unsafe area for pedestrians and vehicles.
 - ⤴ Continued unenforced control of bicycles – dangerous when bicyclists do not follow the rules for them – failure to yield right-of-way, exceeding 5 mph, passing a car ahead, ignoring pedestrians, etc.
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- ⤴ We were promised by the City bicycle traffic would be managed by “fast” bikes on Dexter, and “slow” bikes on Westlake, however this is yet another broken promise by the City.
- ⤴ Bikes do not stop at stop signs along bike tracks – which is evident on the cycle track at 65th and the Burke-Gilman trail.
- ⤴ Bike traffic will continue to use the frontage road and the sidewalk. Again, 65th Street is a good example.

General Requirements in Parking Area Management

- ⤴ Businesses and residents need load / unload zones
- ⤴ Need space for dumpsters (currently most of them are in free parking zones on west side of parking strip)
- ⤴ Can lower speed limits (5 MPH) be set in this corridor, based on Washington House Bill 31 (Washington Safe Neighborhoods)?
- ⤴ Enforcement of new laws and regulations relating to Cycle Path

City Process

- ⤴ Question: how much money has been allocated, and where did it come from?
 - ⤴ Question: what was the process until now?
 - ⤴ City hasn't explained why this is needed, in light of expenditures reconfiguring Dexter
 - ⤴ Worried that this project will be done “on the cheap” and not consider the community’s needs-- we need better long-term thinking
 - ⤴ We need a single source of contact who will read what we submit and coordinate action through-out the City.
 - ⤴ What is the appropriateness of this project for this area, especially with Dexter parallel bike lane close-by (1 block away)?
 - ⤴ The City's complete disregard for the desires of their citizens on a local basis.
 - ⤴ The City making decisions and financial obligations without citizen involvement.
 - ⤴ The City not following through on its commitments to citizens (e.g., the City promised to continue to work changes in the Westlake Avenue N Parking Working Group)
 - ⤴ A lack of long-range planning
 - ⤴ We are just now recovering from the last re-design of this area (poorly thought out and ignoring community feedback on negative impacts)
 - ⤴ The City's complete disregard of any plan the community puts together as a stakeholders' group plan.
 - ⤴ The City solves problems on the cheap for special interest groups ahead of a community’s needs.
 - ⤴ Project scope unknown
 - ⤴ SDOT has a long history of telling the Westlake community one thing, and doing something else
 - ⤴ The City has not been transparent about this Westlake Track and appears to be moving
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forward without stakeholder input

- ⤴ Impacts on community stakeholders has not been considered

IV. NEXT STEPS

The group decided it would be helpful to the Westlake Ave. N community to develop a website with factual information regarding the Westlake Cycle track Project, as well as seek to develop an email list of individuals who are interested in becoming aware of scheduled meetings related to this project. Bill Wehrenberg volunteered to create a website, and would be looking to the group for help with the content to list on the website.

Minutes Prepared by: Ann Bassetti and Cam Strong