

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Preliminary Responses to Madison-Miller Community List of Site-Specific Concerns

Background

In July 2002 SDOT staff met with a small group of community residents who identified a series of site-specific concerns the community wanted the department to investigate and suggest improvements. What follows are the identified concerns and SDOT's preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations. The staff person who led the work for each issue and particular location is also identified along with their phone number and e-mail address. Staff would welcome any feedback from the community. Based upon your comments SDOT will consider additional measures and prepare for further discussion of the issues with the community. In your comments, please feel free to include any additional traffic concerns of yours that the department might evaluate.

Pedestrian-Related

Prepared by Megan Hoyt (684-5124 and megan.hoyt@seattle.gov)

15th Ave./John

Pedestrians need a safe way to cross 15th at north side of intersection.

Signal Operations has plans to bring the north crosswalk up to standard. Overhead pedestrian heads will be replaced with standard pedestal-mounted pedestrian heads.

While an additional crosswalk on the north side of John Street would improve the pedestrian connection through the intersection, the impacts this would have on vehicle congestion could create significant delays throughout the area.

19th Ave./Republican

Pedestrians have difficulty crossing 19th due to fast traffic that won't often yield.

A recent Neighborhood Street Fund submittal has been funded to add curb bulbs across 19th Avenue East at East Republican Street. While there are few proven ways to slow speeding drivers, curb bulbs do several things which can improve the pedestrian crossing experience. First, they bring pedestrians out from behind parked vehicles thus increasing visibility for both drivers and pedestrians. Secondly, by stepping out from the sidewalk onto the curb bulb, drivers can see more clearly that a pedestrian is indeed crossing the street.

23rd Ave./Thomas

Concern about the safety of the crosswalk.

The intersection of 23rd Avenue E and E Thomas Street was identified, along with others, in a recent inventory as a location that may need to be removed if other no other viable treatments for improving the crossing are identified. ***Our next step will be to evaluate this crosswalk in conjunction with other crossing locations along 23rd Avenue.*** There are other locations both with and without marked crosswalks along 23rd Avenue that may be problematic. Our objective will be to create safe pedestrian crossings at regular intervals along this corridor in locations that have the highest pedestrian use. While we do not have a schedule for completing this work, we hope to have taken tangible steps early next year.

Intersection-Related

Prepared by Trevor Partap (615-1911 and trevor.partap@seattle.gov)

East John Street/East Madison Street/24th Avenue East

A number of drivers traveling westbound on East John Street and waiting to turn left on East Madison Street have expressed concern about sight distance, most especially about their ability to see eastbound traffic coming up the hill on East John Street. ***The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is willing to study this intersection to see whether or not it is feasible to install a protected left turn signal phase.*** In the past eleven years there have been only three recorded collisions of this kind at the intersection.

19th Avenue/East Republican Street:

As already noted, SDOT has approved the concept of installing two curb bulbs at the intersection of 19th Avenue and East Republican Street in order to slow drivers and facilitate a more comfortable crossing for pedestrians. We recommend the installation of a curb bulb on the eastside of 19th Avenue, south of East Republican Street, and on the west side of 19th Avenue, north of East Republican Street. Funding for these curb bulbs was awarded through the 2002 Neighborhood Street Fund process, for construction in 2003.

15th Avenue/East John Street:

We recognize that a merge for northbound vehicles on 15th Avenue NE, between East John Street and East Thomas Street, may not be ideal. However, there has been only one recorded collision along this stretch of road involving northbound vehicles that were merging. Based on our observations, drivers wishing to continue eastbound on East Thomas Street tend to move into the far right lane on East John Street (prior to reaching the intersection of 15th Avenue NE), unless there is a bus at the stop immediately before the intersection. ***SDOT will discuss with staff at King County Metro to see if the bus***

stop could be moved to the west end of that same block. Such relocation would allow eastbound drivers a chance to get in the far right lane on East John Street, rather than having to do so on 15th Avenue NE.

SDOT also looked at other options including designating the right lane of E John Street a right turn only lane (except for transit), and the left lane, left-turn only. This option did not work as it would create unnecessary delay for left turning vehicles, and when the left lane backed up beyond the first block, right turning vehicles (and buses) would also be blocked as on-street parking is allowed west of that first block.

Traffic Signals

Prepared by Adiam Emery (684-5121 and adiam.emery@seattle.gov)

23rd Ave/E Madison Street

The left turn prohibition from southbound 23rd Ave. to westbound Madison St. was implemented for safety purposes. The "geometry" of the intersection makes it extremely difficult for a large truck to make the left turn without crossing the centerline on Madison. In addition, heavy southbound traffic volumes on Madison in the peak hours may make left turns from 23rd hazardous. Aside from the lane space limitation the only safe way to remove turn prohibition would be to ensure that the left turning vehicles have a designated left turn arrow (left turn phase). (There isn't sufficient room for a left-turn pocket). Therefore, if the left turn phase is to be implemented it has to be done by splitting the northbound and southbound movements (Similar to 23rd & Union). This increases delay, reduces efficiency and is generally not a viable solution. This intersection already operates at a very low level and splitting the phases would only make conditions worse for all users, not only at this particular intersection but also along the whole 23rd corridor.

Alternatives

- There is an existing left turn route via 23rd & Olive; left on 23rd & Olive and to the new signal at 20th & Olive & Madison.
- SDOT is analyzing the feasibility of removing the peak hour left turn prohibitions on E Thomas St. which is the next arterial north of Madison.

E Pike/14th Ave/Madison

This intersection has its challenges. Currently, SDOT is working on the delay 14th is experiencing during the PM-Peak. It is a challenging intersection because there are three streets with different needs that are intersecting. As you would anticipate, Madison carries more of the volume; therefore, Madison gets the priority when synchronizing the

signals. It is very challenging to get a perfect progression for all three streets. Parking on Madison reduces the capacity of the eastbound lanes to one.

E Madison/22nd Ave

The way this intersection runs is very common for many of the intersections in the City. We have Madison that carries much of the volume. The 22nd Ave. volume is moderate in comparison. In synchronizing the signal, a higher percentage of time is allocated to Madison Street to accommodate the higher volume. Hence the drivers on 22nd experience the delay. The highest cycle length for this intersection is 100 seconds.

[General Note: Delay is shared between approaches to signalized intersections in the same ratio as their volumes.]

Parking Strategies

The Miller Neighborhood Association has expressed concerns that the increasing demand for on-street parking will make it difficult for residents to find on-street parking within a reasonable walking distance. Current demand for on-street parking comes from residents, Meany Middle School employees and visitors, Miller Playfield users (on evenings and weekends) and area customers/clients (Kingfish restaurant, church-goers). Increasing demand for on-street parking spaces comes from commuters who park within the neighborhood to access transit service.

Strategy 1: Expand the Zone 4 Restricted Parking Zone

In 2000, Julie Erickson, who manages the City's Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) program, met with Miller Neighborhood Association to discuss an eastern expansion of Zone 4. An initial study was performed at that time and streets were identified that would be eligible for restricted parking regulations. Benefits of the RPZ expansion include prevention of long-term use of on street parking by non-residents during the day, particularly commuters and Meany Middle School employees.

To proceed with this opportunity:

- Upon request, the Seattle Department of Transportation will verify those blocks eligible at this time for the expansion. Members of the community must then circulate petition forms. Expansions of existing zones may be approved on a contiguous block-by-block basis, with signatures from 60 percent of the residents and a determining check made by SDOT staff that the parking space on that block is at least 75% full during the posted time of the RPZ.
- Once expanded, each resident within the zone is eligible (with proof) to obtain an RPZ Zone 4 permit to display in their vehicle(s).
- For more information, please contact Julie Erickson, Seattle Department of Transportation, (206) 684-5092, julie.erickson@seattle.gov

Strategy 2: Increase the supply of on-street parking spaces in residential neighborhoods

An alternative or complement to restricting the use of existing on-street parking spaces would be the expansion of the existing supply. There are several streets within the neighborhood where on-street parking is currently prohibited on one side of the street. However, parking could be permitted on both sides of the street if the property owners desired that change. Benefits of this strategy are that it increases the supply of on street parking for area residents while also providing a traffic-calming effect.

The follow streets are at least 25 feet wide and could support parking on both sides of the street with a single traffic lane.

- The south side of E. Thomas St. between 22nd and 23rd.
- The east side of 20th Ave. between Olive and Union.
- The east side of 21st between Pine and Union.

To proceed with this strategy:

- Neighborhood residents should contact Frank Nelson at 684-5379 or SDOT at 684-ROAD. Interested community members will be supplied with petitions.
- 60 percent approval is required from the property owners on each side of the block to add parking.

In the analysis to determine where parking could be added, the west side of 21st Ave. E between John and Thomas and the east side of 22nd Ave. between Pine and Union were also reviewed. However, both of these streets are designated by the Seattle Public School District as travel routes. Complications that arise when school buses attempt to negotiate narrow streets with parking on both sides include scraped paint, lost side-view mirrors and occasional difficulties where a flagger is required to assist the bus to back out of the street.

These same complications could arise if parking is added to the west side of 21st Ave. E between John and Thomas, adjacent to the Miller Playfield. However, this segment of street is already designated one-way eliminating conflicts between buses and other vehicles travelling in opposite directions. Because of the competing opportunities on this street (traffic calming versus school bus accessibility versus increased parking capacity), neighborhood residents, the City and Meany School should jointly discuss potential changes.

To proceed with this strategy:

Neighborhood residents should contact the principal of Meany Middle School, Christie Clark at (206) 252-2505 to discuss making these changes. If amenable, the principal should contact Frank Nelson at 684-5379.

Strategy 3: Regulate spaces in commercial areas

The creation of on-street regulations adjacent to businesses (such as 1-hour and 2-hour parking restrictions at Madison & Olive and/or load zones on the east side of Denny at Madison) will designate those areas for short-term customer parking. When this type of parking is available, area customers have less need to seek out parking in residential neighborhoods. Additionally, this removes spaces that may be used by commuters.

To proceed with this request:

- The Miller Neighborhood Association should request assistance from SDOT's Neighborhood Parking Strategies program. Staff can provide neighborhood representatives with educational materials that can be distributed to businesses. If businesses wish to pursue regulations or load zone installations, they can do so by contacting SDOT at 684-ROAD.
- For more information, please contact Meghan Shepard, Seattle Department of Transportation (206) 684-4208, meghan.shepard@seattle.gov

Strategy 4: Increase the supply of on-street parking spaces around Meany Middle School

To increase the supply of on-street parking spaces available to school and neighborhood visitors, two changes could be made.

- Modify the bus and parent load zones hours around Meany Middle School. The south side of E. Republican Street is a parent load zone from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and was installed in 1976. Today, the typical parent-load zone is from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. With approval from the School District, the zone hours could be changed to provide more daytime parking for school or neighborhood visitors.
- The bus load zone hours on the west side of 21st Ave. E from E. Republican Street to E. Thomas St. are currently 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The afternoon zone could potentially be shortened in length. School district approval would also be required for this change.

To proceed with this strategy:

- Neighborhood residents should contact the principal of Meany Middle School, Christie Clark at (206) 252-2505 to discuss making these changes. If Meany Middle is amenable, its principal can contact Frank Nelson at 684-5379.

Strategy 5: Create an evening-only RPZ at Mercer & 19th

In 2000, the Miller Neighborhood Association discussed the creation of an evening-only RPZ around Mercer & 19th to protect on-street parking spaces from impacts created by the Kingfish Restaurant. This zone creation could prevent evening use of on street parking by non-residents. In the 2003-2004 City of Seattle budget, new funding has been made available for studies to create new RPZs.

SDOT staff has concerns about the creation of this RPZ for the following reasons:

- While funding is now available, there is a waiting list of areas that have already requested RPZ eligibility studies in 2003. Requests for RPZs are studied in the order that SDOT receives them.
- An RPZ must consist of at least five contiguous blocks for enforcement purposes. The study will be required to determine the area of impact from Kingfish patrons.

Other solutions to mitigate the impact of evening parking include working with Kingfish to develop a valet system or an alternative access discount program where patrons are given a certain discount for demonstrating that they biked, walked or bussed to the restaurant.

To proceed with these other options:

- The Miller Neighborhood Association should request assistance from SDOT's neighborhood parking strategies staff. Staff can form a workgroup with neighborhood representatives and business representatives to explore solutions.
- For more information, please contact Meghan Shepard, Seattle Department of Transportation, (206) 684-4208, meghan.shepard@seattle.gov

To proceed with the RPZ request:

- The Miller Neighborhood Association should request to be placed on the list of areas to be studied for RPZ eligibility. When possible, SDOT will perform the study.
- If eligible, a neighborhood committee will be formed to design the zone and its restrictions. SDOT will then create petition forms that must then be circulated by members of the community throughout the potential zone. 60 percent approval of each block is required before the zone can be created.
- Once created, each resident within the zone is eligible (with proof) to obtain an RPZ Zone permit to display in their vehicle(s).
- For more information, please contact Julie Erickson, Seattle Department of Transportation, (206) 684-5092, julie.erickson@seattle.gov

Traffic Calming

(prepared by John Marek, 684-5069, john.marek@seattle.gov)

1. Install permanent curb bulb at E. John and 21st Avenue:

Currently a partial closure is in place on the northeast corner of E. John and 21st Avenue East. 21st Avenue E is currently one-way in the southbound direction. A curb bulb is painted at the northeast corner extending into 21st Avenue to help reinforce the restricted northbound access onto 21st Avenue East.

The intersection was field checked and evaluated based on site characteristics such as street width and drainage concerns. **Based on this evaluation, it was determined that installing a permanent bulb is feasible.** The size of bulb would extend six to nine feet into 21st Avenue E. A preliminary estimate for type of improvement is \$10,000 to \$15,000. The existing “One-Way” and “Do Not Enter” signs could then be relocated on the bulb, which might increase visibility of the signs and improve compliance.

Seattle Department of Transportation would require support from the adjacent property owner, the Seattle Fire Department and Seattle Public School District before approving the installation of a permanent bulb at this corner.

If you have any questions and wish to pursue this option, please contact John Marek at 684-5069.

2. Excessive Speeds on 21st and 22nd Avenues:

Seattle Department of Transportation investigated concerns of high speeds and cut through traffic along 21st and 22nd Avenues East between John and Republican. Site visits were conducted to determine the feasibility of potential traffic calming treatments.

Both streets are 25 feet wide, which is typical of most non-arterial residential streets in the city. While 22nd Avenue has parking on both sides and allows for two-way traffic, 21st Avenue is one-way southbound and has parking only on the east side of the street. As a result, 21st Avenue E is fairly comfortable for motorists, which may result in higher speeds. **One inexpensive form of traffic calming would be to reinstall parking on the east side of the street.** This would narrow the travel lane and decrease motorists comfort level. Typically the lower motorists comfort level is the slower they travel. Parking can be restored at no cost to the residents provided the School District and 60 percent of the households on the block support the project. (Also, see comments under Parking Strategy #2.)

Another possible traffic calming alternative would be to install traffic circles. Circles help to break up longer routes into single block segments and slow traffic at the intersection. There is currently one circle at the intersection of at E Republican and 21st Avenue E. Additional circles could be placed on 22nd Avenue at both E Thomas and E Republican Streets. The cost of a traffic circle is approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000. If the neighbors agree to maintain the circles, they can be landscaped to add an aesthetic quality to the device as well as helping calm traffic. Before SDOT would approve the

construction of traffic circles, the community must show that 60 percent of the households within one block of the intersection support the project. In addition, the project must be reviewed and approved by the Seattle Fire Department to identify any access issues that they may have.

An additional traffic-calming alternative would be the installation of chicanes on either or both streets. Chicanes are a set of two or three curb bulbs placed on alternating sides of the street. The chicanes narrow the street to a one-lane segment, but the street can still be designated as two-way. Motorists must slow down to maneuver through the device. If another vehicle is inside the chicane then the approaching vehicles must stop and wait for the other to pass through. Chicanes can be effective at reducing both speeds and volumes; however, because parking is not allowed inside the chicane they eliminate a significant amount of parking. For a typical three-bulb chicane, approximately 130 to 170 feet of curb space on each side of the street would have parking restrictions. The cost for a three bulb landscaped chicane is approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000. SDOT requires 60 percent of the households in the area support the project before approval can be given for construction. In addition, the households abutting the bulbs must approve of the project as well as the Seattle Fire Department and the School District.

One final alternative that SDOT is evaluating is the installation of speed humps. Speed humps are most effective on streets where a significant percentage of the motorists are traveling 35mph or faster. Where speed humps have been installed we've observed speeds reduced to approximately 30 mph. As a result, SDOT typically supports this type of treatment only on those streets where 15% of motorists are traveling faster than 35mph and where there are over 400 vehicles. ***SDOT is conducting speed and volume studies for 21st and 22nd Avenues to help determine if speed humps are an appropriate alternative.*** The results of the study will be shared with the community once they are completed.

At this time our recommendation for calming traffic is to start with the least restrictive measures first and work up to more restrictive measures as needed. For 21st Avenue E between Republican and John this would include reinstalling parking on the west side of the street. For 22nd Avenue E between E Republican and E John, SDOT recommends installing traffic circles at Thomas and at E Republican Streets. And for 22nd Avenue E between E John and E Madison, SDOT would recommend installing a chicane to help reduce speeds, understanding that a chicane would have a significant impact on parking on this segment. If these measures do not prove to be successful then additional devices such as chicanes or speed humps can be considered.

One alternative that was not discussed at this time was the use of physical diverters such as full or partial closures, or center medians that prevent access to streets. Because of the limited access to some sections of 21st and 22nd due to the left turn restrictions on 23rd at Madison and at John, SDOT felt that additional restrictions to address cut through traffic

may severely impact resident's ability to access their homes. However, if the neighborhood were interested in these types of treatments, we would be willing to explore the feasibility and impacts with the community.

If you have any questions or wish to pursue this option, please contact John Marek at 684-5069.