



HAND Comments on Clinton St. Diverters

October 2, 2016

We are generally limiting our comments to the diverter in HAND--at 17th & Clinton--and the streets within the HAND boundary, west of SE 29th.

Cyclist Perspective

Overall, from a cycling perspective, we feel the diverter at SE 17th is working well. Cycling on Clinton has reportedly become less stressful, and motor vehicle volumes on the street have decreased significantly. However, we have concerns about the 2005 vehicles per day between SE 21st and 26th, and the 256 vehicles at peak hour at SE 13th (more on these below).

Pedestrian Perspective

From a pedestrian perspective, we are concerned that the diverter has not improved safety and comfort on the road. Motor vehicles reportedly do not yield to pedestrians at the SE 17th and Clinton intersection, and the diverter visually divides the crosswalks across SE 17th.

Driver Perspective

We've heard second-hand reports that some drivers are frustrated that their customary driving routes are long longer available to them. This should be expected, and we've not spoken to anyone directly who strongly opposes the diverters due to increased inconvenience. There is some evidence that drivers are evading the diverter at 17th & Clinton, as the flexible wands are significantly marked and scuffed from drivers running over them.

SE 21st - 26th

We feel that the goal for the Clinton Greenway Enhancement Project should not be to merely reduce motor vehicle traffic on Clinton under the 2000 VPD mark, but rather to be more ambitious and seek the 1000-1500 VPD levels outlined in the Greenway Report. We also feel that there needs to be some "headroom" to accommodate future growth in vehicle volumes as the neighborhood surrounding Clinton continues to grow, bringing new residents and their cars.

This seems a particularly important issue between 21st & 26th, where both daily and peak-hour vehicle counts remain high. We are skeptical about whether speed bumps alone will depress

volumes to 1500 VPD along this stretch, and note that speed bumps themselves can create problems for cyclists, buses, and residents living along the street. We would encourage PBOT to explore other options for reducing volumes along this section of the street, including, potentially, adding an additional diverter.

SE 12th

It appears that with the addition of the diverter at 17th, morning rush hour drivers attempting to bypass Powell congestion now use 14th, 15th, or 16th to access Clinton and the traffic light at 12th. This has led to a substantial increase in VPD on these side streets, and we are hearing about conflict on Clinton west of 17th in the mornings as a result of left-turning vehicles. While daily volumes on this stretch of Clinton are in the “acceptable” 1000-1500 VPD range at 1408, the peak hour volume of 256 westbound at morning rush (which is in fact an increase over the “before” number of 223) is well above the recommended 150 VPH. While we were hoping the diverter at 17th would be sufficient to address the high VPH and subsequent backup of cars waiting at the light at 12th, it appears that implementation of further motor vehicle volume reduction strategies is needed at this location.

Evasion

We have some additional concerns about evasion of the diverters; residents report that people are bypassing the diverter at 17th, either by making illegal U-turns around it or by simply driving over it. Examination of the flexible wands shows that they have been hit on numerous occasions in the short time since they were installed. We don’t have sufficient data to know how significant the evasion problem really is, but we feel that even low levels of evasion can create safety problems for other road users (cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists). We would ask that, as a temporary measure, the flexible wands be replaced with a more rigid barrier, until those accustomed to driving over the barrier wean themselves off the practice, after which the flexible wands could be replaced.

Trucks

The west end of Clinton is an industrial zone. There are reports from neighbors that the diverter has pushed heavy trucks onto neighboring streets, and we are concerned that this will create maintenance issues in the future. Raw vehicle counts do not capture the nature (vehicle type, weight, etc) of diverted traffic; one large truck will likely have far more impact on the roadway than 10 diverted cars. There is the additional issue of how large freight can best access Division from West Clinton with left turns disallowed at 17th.

Mitigation

We support residents who seek mitigation against diversion-related impacts on their streets, and encourage you to be responsive to the needs of affected residents both now and in the future, while still following established PBOT process. Although we would ideally like to see more comprehensive sampling of neighbor opinion, there is neighbor support for an additional speed bump on Woodward between 25th and where the street narrows at 23rd. Currently the last bump is at around SE 27th. Drivers who have been slowed by the east-of-26th bumps can make

up lost time in those extra-wide 23rd-25th blocks before they're funneled into the narrower part of the street. However, overall, the bumps east of 26th haven't been in place for long enough to really see if drivers choose other routes or slow down considerably because of them, especially with the traffic changes related to summer being over, school just starting, etc.

Outreach

Overall, we were dismayed with the manner in which the public process and resident outreach was conducted. Not all neighbors within 2 blocks of the project area received notification (namely those with a SE Division address), and the information that was communicated to residents was lacking. Materials mailed to residents were vague about the nature of the proposal, even though the conversation was clearly about diverters, and there was never any serious discussion about the possibility of relocating the one at 17th. The initial survey failed to explain the safety challenges facing the Clinton Greenway and questions seemed to lead respondents to foregone conclusions. It would have been better to be more open from the start about what was being proposed, which would have enabled residents to make a more informed decision about how to best get involved.

Perhaps most importantly, HAND requested that a small community advisory committee be established representing a variety of stakeholders to review the data, and help define the problem and the solutions prior to putting the diverters in place. In addition to the proposed diverters, the design of evaluation measures along with potential mitigation strategies and their limitations (funding, engineering, etc.) should have been discussed prior to implementation in keeping with the City's public involvement principles.

Moving Forward

We would recommend as an addition to the Greenway Report, and consideration for greenway improvement projects moving forward, that guidance be added regarding the impact of diversion on local service streets that already see over 1000 VPD. Regarding the Clinton Enhancement Project within HAND, those streets would be SE 17th and SE 21st. While streets that are below 1000 VPD prior to diversion are protected against passing the 1000 VPD threshold as a result of diversion, there appears to be no such consideration for local service streets that are already experiencing larger volumes than their classification would suggest. Our recommendation would be to add a clause stating that in these cases, post-diversion mitigation be implemented as needed to ensure that these streets do not suffer any additional motor vehicle burden as a result of diversion. For instance, a street that sees 4000 VPD prior to diversion and 4600 VPD following diversion receive mitigation to offset those 600 additional vehicles.

We would also like to see in the Greenway Report the general 1000 VPD limitation for side-streets broken up into at least two or three different VPD limits based on street width (i.e. wider streets keep the 1000 VPD limit, whereas narrower streets get a lower limit). Narrower streets cannot handle an increase in motor vehicle volumes as easily as wider streets due to reduced visibility and increased difficulty for motor vehicles to pass other road users. A

consideration can be made for on-street parking utilization, as a narrower street with little-utilized on-street parking can effectively function like a wider street compared with a narrower street with lots of cars parked on the street.

Yours sincerely,

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