



Brooklyn Action Corps.

August 19, 2018

RE: The future of bike lanes on SE 26th

Dear Art,

We are concerned about the future of SE 26th after the bike lanes are removed.

Our first preference would be to preserve, or even enhance the bike lanes on SE 26th. If this is not an option, we would instead ask that measures be taken to slow the traffic on SE 26th; specifically, that parking on the west side of the street be restored between Gladstone and Taggart, creating a calmer traffic environment, and a streetscape contiguous with the sections from Holgate to Gladstone to the south, and Taggart to Division to the north. We do not support conversion of the existing bike lanes into a broad "shoulder," and especially oppose making any final decision without first consulting with the HAND (Hosford-Abernethy), Creston-Kenilworth, and Brooklyn neighborhoods.

We recognize the role that SE 26th plays as a neighborhood collector, but it is also a residential street, and we feel it would be better for everyone if it were treated as such. Wide shoulders are not typically found in residential neighborhoods, and they will only signal to drivers that it is appropriate and safe to drive faster. This is the wrong message.

Several years ago, PBOT agreed to lower the speed limit on SE 26th from 30MPH to the current 25MPH. Unfortunately, because much of the street has parking on one side only, and the bike lanes create a wide-open feel, many drivers still drive well in excess of the speed limit. The high vehicle speeds on SE 26th are a hazard for all users, including pedestrians crossing the street, cyclists riding in the substandard bike lanes (or proposed shoulders), and for drivers entering 26th from driveways or adjoining streets.

Despite similar traffic volumes, drivers travel more slowly along the segment of 26th between Holgate and Gladstone than they do farther north. We believe this is primarily because the presence of parking on both sides of the street creates a narrower, tighter road profile than the areas where parking was removed to create the bike lanes. It is, quite simply, less comfortable to drive fast south of Gladstone. It is also more comfortable to walk, as vehicles parked along the street create some isolation from the passing traffic, and it is easier to cross due to slower vehicle speeds and a shorter crossing distance.

We ask that the existing treatment between Holgate and Gladstone be extended north to Taggart, where the bike lane ends and parking on both sides resumes. Redesignating the bike lanes as

“shoulders”, but otherwise leaving the existing street profile intact, will make the current speeding problem worse. Further, the creation of infrastructure that looks like bike lanes, but isn’t, will only lead to confusion and ambiguity. Where should cyclists ride? The shoulder? The vehicle lane? It will be unclear to most cyclists, and even less so to drivers, who may react aggressively to a cyclist riding in the traffic lane, which will become legal (and may be the safer bet) once the bike lanes are removed.

We also repeat our past request that marked crosswalks be installed adjacent to every bus stop along SE 26th. The recent installation of a crosswalk at Franklin, in front of Cleveland High School, has been a great success. Drivers routinely stop for pedestrians, and it has greatly improved safety for students crossing the street. It demonstrates definitively that marked crosswalks will be respected by drivers on SE 26th.

Finally, in conjunction with the restoration of parking, we’d like to ask that “upstream” parking be pulled back by 10 or 15 feet from every intersection, to make it safer for drivers and cyclists to enter or cross the street. The current combination of high speeds and low visibility create an ongoing safety hazard. If parking is restored to both sides of the street, there will still be a net parking gain, so this should not be objectionable.

SE 26th has, for far too long, been treated as a speedway, its residential nature ignored. While our three neighborhoods deeply regret PBOT’s decision to remove the existing bike lanes, we urge you to take advantage of the opportunity this loss presents to create a safer and more pleasant street for all modes by restoring parking to both sides of the street, extending the treatment between Holgate and Gladstone north to Taggart. Most importantly, we ask that you not make any decision about the final design of SE 26th without first conferring with the residents of HAND, Creston-Kenilworth, and Brooklyn.

Thank you,

Chris Eykamp
Chair, HAND

Rachel Davies
Chair, Creston-Kenilworth NA

Guy Berliner
Acting Chair, Brooklyn Action Corps.

CC: Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
Commissioner Dan Saltzman

Chris Warner, Interim Director, PBOT
Jillian Detweiler, The Street Trust