

June 18, 2016

WEST SEATTLE BIKE CONNECTIONS

TO: Lander Street Bridge Project
Seattle Department of Transportation
Via email lander_bridge@seattle.gov

SUBJECT: **Comments on South Lander Street Bridge Project**

West Seattle Bike Connections is a volunteer community organization advocating for safe and convenient transportation by bike to the places people in West Seattle need to go, as part of a sustainable, efficient, transportation system for people and goods.

We support the construction of a bridge on S Lander Street from 1st Avenue to 3rd Avenue S over the railroad tracks. South Lander Street is on a vital freight route, important to our regional economy, and in particular to us in West Seattle for our jobs at the Port, in SODO industries, in shipping and international trade, and for delivering the goods we all depend upon for our daily lives. We appreciate the need to improve the efficiency of this route for truck traffic by spanning the railroad tracks that currently cause delays and a safety hazard. We recognize the priority for freight.

South Lander Street from Colorado Avenue S to Airport Way S is also a bike route that is used now, and will be used more in the future, connecting West Seattle to SODO, the Sound Transit light rail station and Metro/ST Busway stops, the Busway Trail, and on up to the International District, Beacon Hill, Capitol Hill, Central District, and I-90 Trail. This route connects destinations people want to travel to by bike (and on foot from transit stops), including major employers, such as the Seattle School District, Starbucks, USPS and the many industries, shipping and distribution companies in SODO. S Lander Street is the only east-west bike route on SDOT's Interactive Bike Map through SODO between Safeco Field and Georgetown.

S Lander Street is West Seattle's only connection to Sound Transit Link Light Rail. The #50 Metro Transit bus serves the station, but is not on a route or schedule that is convenient for many people in West Seattle, especially at night or on weekends. There is no park-and-ride option at this station. Travel by bike using S Lander from Utah and Colorado Avenues S, if it were safe and convenient and not subject to long delays by freight trains, would provide a relatively convenient option for people to use light rail until there is a West Seattle station some 20 years from now (if voters approve the \$50.2B ST3 package).

2007 compared to 2016 Design Options: The reduction in bridge width from the 2007 to 2016 design concepts has been accomplished by eliminating bike lanes. We object.

Seattle's "Complete Streets" ordinance applies to this project. Design for pedestrian and bike use should include the bridge and connecting routes at each end so that it really works without safety conflicts at crossings or the kind of inconvenience to bike riders that leads to unsafe riding and conflicts with truck traffic.

Design of this \$140,000,000 bridge should meet standards of the 2016 Seattle Right of Way Improvement Manual; the May 2016 draft Freight Master Plan; the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan; and the draft 2016 Pedestrian Master Plan.

2016 Design Option 1: If a 14 foot wide raised sidewalk for bike and pedestrian use (a “Shared Use Path” under Seattle’s Right of Way Improvement Manual) is proposed for the north side only, the width would be adequate for mixed bike and foot traffic, but it may be problematic for bike and pedestrian crossings at each end for eastbound traffic. Safety and convenience may be compromised. A good proportion of bike riders may avoid the inconvenience by riding in the traffic lane going east. This would defeat the intent of separation of bike from truck traffic. The design concept is not developed in enough detail to be able to assess whether this concept could be successful. The key will be in the design of the approaches from Utah and 4th Avenues.

2016 Design Option 2: If sidewalks are installed on both sides without bike lanes, six feet is too narrow for mixed bike and pedestrian traffic, especially at the proposed grades. The design standard for a Shared Use Path that mixes bike and pedestrian traffic is 10 feet minimum width in Seattle’s draft Right of Way Improvement Manual. National Standards recommend a 5 percent grade maximum for this width, and greater width where grades exceed 5 percent, to allow for weaving and passing. The proposed concept with 6 foot wide sidewalks does not meet the NACTO Design Guidelines or AASHTO or FHWSA standards adopted by the City of Seattle for a bike facility. Bike and pedestrian access on both north and south is highly desirable, but a 6 foot wide sidewalk is not a bike facility. Design Option 2 eliminates bike access except in traffic lanes, which is not acceptable on a bridge with steep grades and high volumes of heavy truck traffic. The design concept would work well if the sidewalks were designed as shared use paths at least 10 feet wide.

11 to 12 foot wide lanes on steep grades are not safe for mixing people on bikes with heavy trucks that are 10.5 feet wide mirror-edge-to-mirror-edge. 6 foot sidewalks on steep grades are not safe for mixing bike and pedestrian traffic.

Repairing the cratered paving on Colorado Ave S and on Utah Ave S is needed to provide better connections to S Lander St for bike routes from S Atlantic Street and S Hanford Street. Those repairs are needed before the bridge construction, because 1st Ave South has no dedicated bike facilities planned for the near future and traffic and road conditions on 1st Avenue South will only get worse as construction commences on this project.

The 2016 Lander Bridge design options as presently proposed, while eliminating conflicts with railroad trains, appear to increase conflicts between bike and motorized vehicles traffic, or between people biking and people walking. We recommend more work on design concepts for the cross sections, with restored width, and for the approaches and connections on nearby streets.

Sincerely,



Don Brubeck
President, West Seattle Bike Connections