



Magnolia Community Club

MAGNOLIA'S COMMUNITY COUNCIL

April 1, 2010

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Magnolia
Community Club
P.O. Box 99564
Seattle, WA
98139-0564
206.283.1188

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Mr. Peter Hahn, Acting Director
Seattle Department of Transportation
PO Box 34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Re: Nickerson Street "Rechannelization" aka "Road Diet"

Dear Mr. Hahn:

I write on behalf of the Magnolia Community Club which represents the approximately 24,000 residents of Magnolia.

At a meeting last week with Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, the Magnolia Community Club Transportation Committee was quite surprised to learn that he had been informed by you that SDOT is going ahead to implement the Nickerson rechannelization project aka "road diet". We had been led to believe that this project was on hold, and that there would be an opportunity for additional public input. Accordingly, we request a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss our strong concerns about this project, as well as to inform you about other transportation issues of importance to Magnolia.

As you know, Nickerson is a primary route for Magnolia, Queen Anne, Interbay and Ballard residents traveling east and west going to and from Fremont, Wallingford, and the University District. This route will also serve as an important corridor for accessing the new bored tunnel and I-5 from the northwest part of the city. In early 2009, SDOT proposed reducing Nickerson from four to two lanes. At times during the day and early evenings this route is already congested. Major back-ups occur at the intersection of Fourth Avenue North, Nickerson, Westlake, and Dexter Avenue. The situation is compounded when the Fremont Bridge is raised for boat traffic, with much greater frequency during the summer months. Reducing the vehicle carrying capacity of Nickerson makes no sense. The adjoining communities would welcome the redevelopment of Nickerson so that it better moves traffic in this area and meaningfully addresses the current bottlenecks. Improving the pedestrian pathways and crosswalks on Nickerson is also a worthy endeavor for the City

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to pursue. Equally important, the City should quickly complete the unfinished Ship Canal Trail for cyclists and pedestrians, so that bike and pedestrian traffic can use this unique route that closely parallels Nickerson.

In a letter dated April 8, 2009 the Magnolia Community Club expressed its strong concerns about the proposed reduction on Nickerson from four to two lanes in each direction. A copy is enclosed for your convenience. Thereafter, we met on several occasions with your predecessor, Grace Crunican, and other SDOT representatives about a number of initiatives that impact or will impact Magnolia, including the Nickerson proposal. SDOT, along with representatives of WSDOT, the Port of Seattle and King County also made presentations to Magnolia residents at two general meetings of our members in 2009. In these meetings we received assurances that the Nickerson project was on hold, that SDOT was awaiting modeling studies, and that there would be an opportunity for additional public input at a later date.

It was our understanding that consideration would be given to the effect rechannelization would have on other transportation projects that were in the planning stages, including the Viaduct Replacement Project, the development of a new central corridor along Alaskan Way, and the conversion of Mercer to two-way traffic east of Aurora. We note that on the SDOT website, the description of the changes proposed for the Nickerson Street corridor, as revised 6/3/09, states that SDOT hopes to complete its evaluation by the end of the year, and that compilation of the questions and answers received during the comment period that had recently ended would be sent out after SDOT had completed its evaluation.

We are hopeful that an early meeting with you can be arranged to discuss the foregoing.

Sincerely,



Diana Dearmin
President, 2010

Enclosure

cc: Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
King County Councilmember Larry Phillips
Ellen Monrad
Eugene Wasserman
Warren Aakervik



Magnolia Community Club

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April 8, 2009

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Ms. Grace Crunican, Director
Seattle Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Mr. Eric Widstrand
Seattle Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

Re: Magnolia Community Club Comment on Nickerson Street
Rechannelization

Dear Mayor Nickels, Honorable Council Members, Grace and Eric:

The Magnolia Community Club is deeply concerned about the proposed reduction of vehicle lanes on Nickerson Street from two lanes to one lane in each direction from the Ballard Bridge to W. Florentia Street for two reasons: one immediate, and one longer term.

1. Currently Nickerson is the primary route for Magnolia residents and visitors going to and from Fremont, Wallingford and the University Districts. At times during the day and early evening that route is already congested. The major back-up occurs at the intersection of Fourth Avenue North, Nickerson, Westlake Avenue, and Dexter Avenue. The situation is compounded when the Fremont Bridge is raised for boat traffic, with much greater frequency during the warmer months of the year. Reducing the number of lanes to one in each direction, a 50% reduction in capacity, is unacceptable.

2. Looking ahead, the City in presentations to the public has identified Nickerson as an important alternative to West Mercer Way to access the north portal of the bored tunnel. The Magnolia Community Club has previously opposed the reconfiguration of Mercer, which is the principal access for Magnolia residents to I-5 in either direction, as increasing, rather than lessening, delays and congestion, and the consequent pollution from idling engines. West Mercer Way is a two lane road (one lane in each direction). The

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City's current plan is to reduce the four lanes on Mercer Street between 2nd Avenue West and West Mercer Way to two lanes. Recognizing that when the Viaduct comes down there will be a substantial increase in vehicles (trucks, buses, taxis, passenger cars) seeking access to both I-5 and the north portal of the bored tunnel, the City has represented that motorists will avoid the Mercer jams by using Nickerson. Even if Nickerson were to remain a four lane road, such re-routing will create traffic jams on Nickerson. A reduction to two lanes will likely overwhelm it. It appears to us that SDOT is working at cross-purposes.

We are mindful that the proposed project is intended to improve pedestrian crossing safety and improve Nickerson for biking. Both are important, but under the circumstances the improvements will be marginal, especially when weighed against the ensuing traffic congestion. There are now sidewalks on both sides of Nickerson from the Ballard Bridge to 4th North, with the exception of one block on the south side of Nickerson Street east of 12th Avenue West. There are two signal activated crosswalks, as well as the traffic lights with "walk" signs at 3rd Avenue West and West Florentia Street. Nowhere on this corridor are there retail establishments on both sides of the street. With the possible exception of the intersection at 3rd Avenue West, there are no significant cross streets. For this reason, the creation of a two-way center turn lane would do little to improve safety or facilitate traffic flow. There are center turn lanes at 3rd Avenue West.

As the Queen Anne Community Council pointed out in its letter dated March 4, 2009, the objective of improving the biking facility can be accomplished in another way. There is already a bike and walking path on the Ship Canal Trail from (under) the Fremont Bridge to 6th Avenue West and West Etruria, where the trail currently ends. However, the disused rail line continues on to the industrial area immediately to the east of the south end of the Ballard Bridge. At that point there is a spur from the BNSF rail yard at Interbay to the warehouses in this area. This spur appears to be used infrequently. According to the Queen Anne Community Council's letter, the railroad siding lay-out has been completed, and the connection of the Lake Washington Ship Canal Trail's west end to West Emerson Street and Fishermens Terminal is the next logical step.

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For the above reasons, we urge you to delete from the proposal the reduction of traffic lanes from four to two on this important and heavily used corridor.

Sincerely,



Randall Thomsen
President (2009)

RT:src

cc: Magnolia Queen Anne District Council
NAC