

City seeks to update Bicycle Master Plan; Open house scheduled for May 18

By Kate Bennett
The Southwest Portland Post

At the SWTrails meeting on February 26, Ellen Vanderslice and Denver Igarta, both from the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PDOT), spoke about Portland’s Bicycle Master Plan update and its impact upon Southwest Portland.

To provide a bit of background, Portland’s Bicycle Master Plan was first adopted in 1996. According to PDOT’s website, the purpose of the plan was to provide “a blueprint for making bicycling and walking an integral part of daily life in Portland.”

The Bicycle Master Plan proved to be a success. Since the first implementation of the plan, Portland’s bikeway network has more than doubled in miles, thousands of bicycle parking spaces have been added, and bicycle-related events and activities have increased ten-fold.

As a result of this success, PDOT wants to update the Master Plan. The transportation office wants to prepare our city for the next ten and twenty years of cycling.

While the city makes beneficial bicycle-related changes, others are taking note. For instance, in 2008 Portland was recognized by the League of American Bicyclists as a platinum-status bicycle friendly community.

But Southwest Portlanders, especially the members of the SWTrails group, felt as if Southwest Portland had not reached platinum status as a bicycle

friendly community. The group decided that something needed to be done in order to remedy this.

With dedication and a passionate desire to elevate Southwest Portland’s bicycling community to platinum status, six members of the SWTrails group worked on and produced the *Bicycle Facilities Strategy to Reach Platinum Status in Southwest Portland*.

The report, a detailed assessment of Southwest Portland’s bicycle problems and recommended solutions, was submitted to the Office of Transportation on November 3, 2008. Luckily, the report has been viewed favorably. As Vanderslice remarked, “[the report] was an excellent piece of work that has been a great help to staff.”

The SWTrails group was obviously excited to hear what Vanderslice and Igarta had to say about their report at the February 26th meeting. Overall, their feedback was positive.

Vanderslice said the SWTrails group identified a good network of bike routes and that the Bicycle Master Plan committee has “incorporated most of the recommendations from the report into the draft Bicycle Master Plan network.”

One such recommendation that has been incorporated into the draft plan is a stretch from Terwilliger Boulevard and 6th Avenue to Spring Garden Street and 17th Avenue.

According to SWTrails, “a low traffic neighborhood connection is needed to provide a low traffic alternative to Taylors Ferry.”

According to the draft network map, the resolution to this need is a proposed bicycle boulevard route which would travel along Southwest 6th Avenue, Hume Street, 12th Street and Carson Street.

Another drafted resolution is to turn Southwest Mitchell Street, Westwood Drive, and Westwood Court into “enhanced shared roadways.”

According to Vanderslice, an enhanced shared roadway is a roadway that has “shared roadway markings (bike-and-chevron) and accompanying signage delineating where bicyclists and motorists share a travel lane.”

This resolution would address Southwest Portland’s need for a low traffic link between Hillsdale and Fairmount that has a gentle gradient.

There are many more proposed bike routes for Southwest Portland, but the type of biking facility placed on each road depends on the road. As Vanderslice noted, “What [bike facility] is most suitable definitely varies according to the street, based on traffic volumes and speeds, sight lines, and other factors.”

She explained that although Southwest Portland has a hilly topography and sight lines and connectivity issues, there is still potential for biking facilities ranging from cycle tracks to regular bike lanes.

Vanderslice hopes to submit the Port-



land Bicycle Master Plan update to City Council this September. In the meantime, she would love to see Southwest Portland residents at the Open House on May 18 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

The open house will be held in the Wilson High School cafeteria and will give residents the chance to weigh in on the Bicycle Master Plan update as well as the Streetcar System Plan.

As Vanderslice explained in an e-mail to *The Post*, she needs to first hear recommendations from the people of Southwest Portland.

She then said that in order to implement the recommendations, “We need to get the plan adopted, amend the Comprehensive Plan per the plan’s recommendations, and implement at least some funding strategies from our plan. For all three of these steps we will need the strong support of the community.”

If you wish to see the current draft of the Bicycle Master Plan update prior to the open house, visit the City of Portland’s Office of Transportation’s website at www.portlandonline.com.

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