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'City of Roses'



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BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Commuters negotiate between other vehicles, bike lanes and construction projects on the busy North Williams Avenue thoroughfare. In the coming weeks, Portland transportation crews will be switching the bike lane to the left side of the street in a move to increase safety on the street, which sees more than 4,000 bikers at peak hours and has seen its fare of cycling accidents.

## Look to Your Left!

### Bike lane on Williams Avenue switching sides for safety

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It's a street almost everyone can agree has changed immensely. Now Williams Avenue in north Portland is readied for one of its latest flips, quite literally, a lane change and then some.

Crews are set to break ground in the coming days on a project that will move the bike lane on Williams from the right side of the street to the left and bring in a host of other new infrastructure in a city-led move planned to improve safety on the heavily used thoroughway.

Spearheaded by Portland Bureau of Transportation, the

construction will include five upgraded crossings with added curb extensions and painted crosswalk markings. A new traffic signal will be installed at North Cook Street, and for most of the corridor, two lanes of motor vehicle travel will give way for one lane of motor vehicle travel and one left-sided bicycle lane. The exception will be a section between Fremont and Skidmore streets where travelers will share the road. Speeds will also be reduced from 30 miles-per-hour to 25 and 20 between Fremont and Skidmore.

The project was supposed to be completed some time ago, but was halted five months into the process after community members expressed concerns over how African American

residents lacked "substantial" representation in the conversations around the changes, especially considering the street serves historic black neighborhoods that have seen a vast number of people of color displaced by changes in housing, urban renewal and other factors.

After some consideration, the city added a committee to the North Williams Traffic Safety Project, this one dedicated to honoring the history of African American presence in adjoining north and northeast Portland neighborhoods.

Michelle DePass is a member of the "Committee to Honor History on Williams" and also the pre-existing Stakeholders Advisory Committee, which she said she was recruited for in the aftermath of the community complaints as city leaders looked to add more black voices into the planning process.

A cyclist herself, and a resident in the neighborhood on-and-off for 53 years, as well as an area homeowner, she says the changes are good, and something she will utilize herself, but wishes they could have come when the area was mostly

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