

OLD NORTH END PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY PLAN

Public Hearing – Tuesday, April 12, 2016

First Lutheran Church – 1515 N. Cascade Avenue – Colorado Springs

SUMMARY: It was stated that people who live along a street should have a say in the street’s design as well as those who drive on it. The Old North End has four 4-lane streets in five blocks. That is the same amount of lane capacity as four Interstate highways in five blocks. This excess capacity offers a unique opportunity to reduce the number of lanes in the Old North End and thus improve the quality of life on the affected streets.

N. Nevada Avenue through Colorado College (E. Cache La Poudre Street to E. Uintah Street) cannot be safety-sized due to heavy left-turn traffic off of N. Nevada onto westbound Uintah Street.

The plan will be implemented by the City Traffic Department in two phases. The first phase will safety-size (reduce two-lanes-in-each-direction to one-lane-in-each-direction) N. Cascade Avenue, N. Weber Street, and Fontanero Street through the Old North End during the summer of 2016. The second phase will safety-size N. Nevada Avenue, N. Wahsatch Avenue, and E. Uintah Street through the Old North End in the summer of 2017. Following demonstrated success on Phase One, Phase Two will then be undertaken. If Phase One does not work for any reason, all streets will be returned to their original lane striping.

How will the City enforce people illegally driving in bike lanes and buffer zones? Answer: The lanes will be clearly marked. Drivers who stray into on-street bicycle lanes and buffer zones have not been a problem.

Templeton Gap Road has been safety-sized and now there is trouble driving across it. Answer: Because of traffic signals, cars tend to move in bunches or platoons. One group of cars moves down the road when the light is green, but when the light turns red the road empties of cars and drivers at cross streets can get across the road. The platoons of cars will be longer with single-lanes in each direction, but the breaks will come and the cross traffic will get through.

The plan calls for bike lanes on safety-sized streets. Which ones? Answer: The City is considering bike lanes through the Old North End on Cascade, Weber, Wahsatch, and Fontanero.

How will traffic get through traffic signals if only one lane is open? Answer: Traffic capacity is low enough north of Uintah Street that enough cars can get through the traffic signals at Uintah Street with just one lane open.

There is a big problem at Colorado College where the students cross N. Cascade Avenue in large numbers. The result is to divert traffic from N. Cascade Avenue to nearby Wood Avenue. Answer: The number of marked pedestrian crossings at Colorado College on N. Cascade Avenue is being reduced from four to two. That will make pedestrian crossings at Colorado College less difficult for drivers using that street. Actually, traffic capacity on N. Cascade Avenue is so great and the number of cars so below capacity that safety-sizing N. Cascade will not divert cars on to Wood Avenue.

Please hurry to safety-size Fontanero Street. I suggested it many years ago.

What will the newly painted safety-sized streets look like? Answer: The driving lanes will be clearly identified by solid yellow lines on both sides of the driving lane. The bicycle lanes will be clearly marked with bicycle logos. The buffer lanes will also be clearly identified.

There is much concern that safety-sizing on N. Cascade Avenue through the Old North End will divert traffic on to Wood Avenue. Answer: N. Cascade Avenue is highly under-utilized north of Uintah Street. There should be no diversions to other streets when N. Cascade is made one-lane-in-each-direction. Wood Avenue already has four-way stop signs and large speed bumps to discourage through traffic. If there is diversion, a better solution for Wood Avenue would be closing and gating Wood Avenue at W. Uintah Street and at W. Van Buren Street at the railroad crossing.

What about first responders (ambulances) getting to Penrose Hospital? Answer: There will be no blocking because drivers can pull into bicycle lanes and buffer zones to get out of the way.

I like to bypass Uintah Street traffic and Uintah Street traffic signals by driving down San Miguel Street. It is difficult crossing Cascade and Nevada on San Miguel Street. Will that get worse with safety-sizing? Answer: As noted before, the platoons of cars released by green lights will be longer with safety-sizing, but the breaks caused by red lights will come and will allow cross traffic to get across the street.

A resident of Roswell noted that the large speed bumps on Wood Avenue had diverted traffic going to Corpus Christi School and Church. Instead of getting off I-25 at Uintah Street and coming north on Wood Avenue, Corpus Christi traffic was now going up to Fillmore Street on I-25 and cutting through Roswell on Beacon Street to the railroad crossing and W. Van Buren Street. It was said that the increase in traffic through Roswell when Wood Avenue was “speed bumped” was quite noticeable. Answer: Closing Beacon Street at the railroad crossing would benefit the residents of both Roswell and Wood Avenue.

Bike paths on major arterial streets increase the chances of being “doored.” That is having the door of a parked car opened in front of a moving bicycle and causing a bicycle wreck. Answer: Safety-sizing will create larger bicycle lanes that will be further away from the doors of parked cars.

Why not cut the speeds on all streets through the Old North End and Colorado College to 25 miles per hour? Answer: City Traffic will consider that suggestion.

Will Phase Two actually get done? Will N. Nevada, N. Wahsatch, and E. Uintah really be safety-sized? Answer: If you do too many streets at once, people will freak out. If you do four major arterial streets (Cascade, Nevada, Weber, and Wahsatch) all at one time, the entire project will fail. We are talking politics with Phase One and Phase Two. We must test only part of it first in order to convince people that safety-sizing will really work.

Please extend your traffic counts and traffic studies to N. El Paso Street, because some traffic might be diverted to that street.

I live on Weber Street, and I am thrilled by this plan. The best part is making it safer to get out of your parked car.

Why not safety-size Nevada and Wahsatch first? It will make a better test. Answer: It will be better to do Cascade first to show that safety-sizing works. Cascade will not generate the pushback (in public opinion) that Nevada will. There has been a major change in attitude in Colorado Springs City government toward safety-sizing. We have implemented one-lane-in-each-direction all over town on heavily trafficked roads (Lake Avenue in the Broadmoor, Flying W Ranch Road in Mountain Shadows, etc). We are even considering safety-sizing Colorado Avenue through the West Side. We want more traffic on the freeways (I-25) and less on our residential streets.

Whatever you do, do not give any more land to Colorado College!

There are plans to put a bus route on N. Nevada Avenue through the Old North End. How will one-lane-in-each-direction affect that? Answer: The people who reside on N. Nevada Avenue should form a committee to study the entire problem. There should be a representative of City Transit and a representative of City Traffic on the committee, as well as representatives of the bicycling community. That way a coherent plan for all these changes on N. Nevada Avenue can be worked out.

A representative of Bike Colorado Springs (a bicycling support group) noted that the Old North End lacks good on-street bike lanes and this safety-sizing plan will provide them. He noted that on-street bike lanes coupled with one-lane-in-each-direction would increase livability and property values on Old North End streets.

Do not put bicycles on N. Nevada Avenue. There is too much activity there already.

After adjournment, one man came up to the speakers' table and said: "The problem on Wood Avenue is that speeders race around the corner at the railroad tracks, speed down Wood Avenue and take the traffic bumps noisily, make rolling stops at the stop signs, and then make the right turn onto W. Uintah Street."