

Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland

1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 800
Portland OR 97204



16 September 2009

DeAnn Sandberg
TriMet
710 NE Holladay Street
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Ms. Sandberg,

On behalf of the Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), I am submitting this letter to clarify the committee's position regarding programming for the planned LRT bridge over the Willamette River – specifically about whether bicycle facilities should be located on both sides of the bridge or concentrated on only a single side of the bridge.

In considering the various programming options for the bridge, the BAC initially found the notion of placing all bicyclists on one side of the bridge and all pedestrians on another to be quite attractive. Such an arrangement could possibly reduce the potential for bicycle-pedestrian conflict. However, after discussing the issue at two successive meetings, the BAC has concluded that the most practicable solution is for single-direction bicycle facilities to be included on each side of the bridge – with westbound cyclists on the north side of the bridge and eastbound cyclists on the south side.

Our first concern with locating cyclists on one side and pedestrians on the other was having cyclists riding in opposing directions in close proximity on a facility that will have significant grades and therefore significant downhill speeds. With some cyclists heading downhill at relatively fast speeds towards others traveling uphill at much slower speeds creates the potential for cyclist-cyclist conflicts, especially at the ends of the bridge, where activities generally will be more concentrated.

Our second concern was compliance with the “one mode per side” rule, specifically as applied to pedestrians. While signage and design treatments may work well to discourage bicyclists from using the “pedestrian-only” side, pedestrians have proven more difficult to corral. Keeping pedestrians to a single side may be especially difficult as the size of the bridge and the potential configurations for pedestrian access might require a significant amount of out-of-direction travel for pedestrians who need to access the “correct” side of the bridge. Thus we felt that having all of the cyclists and some of the pedestrians on a single side would greatly increase the potential for conflict.

We feel that the current system of one-way bike travel and two-way pedestrian travel on the Hawthorne Bridge represents a decent model from which to start when designing the final program for the new Willamette River Bridge. We do feel that there are significant improvements that can be made to this model however, especially given the proposed 14' width per side on the new bridge. We trust and hope that signage, pavement markings, paving materials, and grade separation will all be considered when preparing the final design. I and Vice Chair Robert Pickett will continue to represent the BAC at “programming workshops” currently being organized by TriMet, and the entire BAC looks forward to providing TriMet with whatever assistance we can on this important effort.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew C. Arnold'. The signature is stylized and cursive, written over a white background.

Matthew C. Arnold
Chair, Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Cc: Teresa Boyle, PBOT