

Feedback for the Downtown Transportation Plan from DKS
From: Spokane Bicycle Advisory Board
Compiled by John Speare
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1. Consider sharrows, instead of lanes, for some areas.

Bike lanes and other bike facilities encourage new users to take up cycling. We should assume that many users of the bike lanes will be new, novice, or intermediate cyclists. Most cyclists in these classes tend to "ride in the gutter." That is, they tend to ride as close to the curb/away from traffic as possible.

Therefore, when lanes are painted, these riders tend to hug the right side of the painted lane. When cars are parked against the painted lane, the chances for dooring (where a cyclist runs into a car door) increase. On narrow streets, where there is just enough room for a vehicle lane, a bike lane, and parking, it seems that the likelihood of dooring would increase.

A sharrow directs the cyclist (and provides a visual indication for car drivers) of where the front wheel of the bike should be pointed as the cyclist travels. For these narrow/busy streets, I think a sharrow is a better tool for "gutter riding" cyclists than a lane as it guides the "gutter rider" to the safest lane of travel on a road.

There are two sections of the proposed plan that call for stripes that may be better suited for sharrows:

- Riverside from Monroe to Jefferson
- Howard from the park, south to 4th Ave.

In both cases, the lanes look good on paper and the math/width makes sense. But in practice, both of these sections are very busy with pedestrians and people entering/leaving cars at parking meters. These sections should have sharrows.

There may be other sections that would make for better sharrows.

2. East bound / Spokane Falls Blvd.

The all-up map in Chapter 4 (figure 4-1) is out of date. There is another map showing an east bound route on Main street. Where is that? The current route showing (presumably) E/W bound traffic on Spokane Falls Blvd from Monroe to Division is not explained anywhere in the project plans, nor is the Main street east-bound route.

3. East/West routes through down town

Comment 3A.

I'm generally disenchanted with the cycling facilities circling downtown and not running through downtown. (On the commuter data map (<http://www.johndogfood.com/bikespokane>), I'm maybe the only person who uses Second, a designated bike route, mostly because it goes where I go, out to Sunset and Gov't Way. I could take a different route, but going through Brown's Addition and Peaceful Valley means narrow roads (Riverside still) with lots of parked cars and driveways at this point.)

In conjunction with SF Blvd and Main, I'd like to see another east/west through downtown, maybe Sprague and First, or First and Second (attaches nicely to Fish Lake external route). I'd also like to see another north/south couplet through downtown, around Washington and Bernard, in that area. maybe a third north/south coupled to Sherman on the present map.

Comment 3B.

At this point, the eastbound Main Ave. bike lane would only go to Pine, and maybe extend past it part of a block to the Jensen-Byrd building where there would be a little turnaround. We are doing a campus master plan update this fall and plans will get more specific then, but that's the idea that was illustrated in the University District strategic master plan in 2004.

Bikes would have to turn one block north at Pine to reach SF Blvd, or one block south to reach the Riverside Extension, if they want to go through or to go to the academic buildings currently on the campus. (The campus property extends from the river to the railroad tracks, so there will be more destinations between the tracks and SF Blvd over time.)

This isn't a huge gain in bike throughput, but to me it's a real gain for making Division more permeable to put any kind of visible invitation to bike across, on all the streets. Riverside Extension is more important for overall circulation but Main will help.

4. Bike Lane on Stevens St and alternate route suggestions to South Hill.

I don't like the idea of a bike lane up Stevens. I've ridden that hill maybe three times and it stinks. Cars bomb up the hill as well as down and even with a lane, it wouldn't be comfortable for even experienced cyclists. Jefferson zig-zagging up to Adams, goes all the way to 29th I think. It's not nearly so steep and there's much less traffic (is that what the map shows?). Maybe that has to be a, dare I say it, bicycle boulevard. There also needs to be a connection to Cedar/High Drive because people use it, lanes are there already for part of it and sharrows would do the trick the rest of the way.

5. Amenities

One nit-pick is semantic, which is labeling storage, lockers, racks, etc. as "amenities." How about "facilities" or "infrastructure" or "support infrastructure" or "secondary infrastructure" or something that doesn't sound like it's not necessary. Anything but "amenities." Including education and enforcement as amenities also seems counterproductive in a political sense.

6. Fourth Ave route: Jefferson to Howard

Although I don't think the 4th avenue route is ideal in many ways, these are the reasons I'm now supporting it:

-- The level of engineering detail around the hard intersections (mainly Lincoln and Monroe) is lacking in the DKS project plans. After white boarding the smart/thoughtful solutions that Katherine Miller has engineered for these intersections, I believe we can put cyclists through this stretch pretty safely. It's not ideal, but as they say: perfection is the enemy of the good. Or something

-- I don't have a better alternative. I don't think it's reasonable to route down 2nd/3rd for new riders; there's just too much traffic entering from the side. 5th is not reasonable as it routes cyclists up and around the area in a way that will force them up unnecessary hills.

-- From a funding/project perspective, providing the loop (roughly: 4th ->Howard ->SFB ->Riverside ->Jefferson) is more likely to find support.

-- If the question comes down to: the 4th ave route or nothing, I'd choose the 4th ave route with the Katherine design/specific implementation.

-- Katherine has applied for funding on this loop, which is a great piece of urban infrastructure. So, looking at the big picture here, I'd rather support the bigger project/loop with a section/route that I'm not crazy about, than shove a frame pump in the front wheel of progress and endo the whole thing.

7. Connection to Sherman/SE Blvd to and from downtown

I have a different issue on 4th, because of my ultimate destination. I am more apt to go south on Howard to 4th, and then go EAST on it to Sherman/SE Blvd. That stretch of road is abysmal by any measure. It's signed as a bike route but it should be labeled a cyclocross route or BMX route or something--it's very hard on the dental work to go slamming over the road surface.

I would advocate for having a good high-vis (lane or sharrow) east/west circulation route that connects up with the bike lane on SE to increase its value for moving cyclists into & out of downtown, which means at this point Sprague, 4th, or both. The University District conceptual work included traffic calming and streetscape on Sprague.

8. Connectivity to Browns Addition

My two bits would be on a sensible connection to Brown's Addition. Sharrows on Riverside do make sense. Continuing Sharrows on Riverside as it merges into/with Sprague and then separates again as it enters Brown's Addition might clarify the

confusion that occurs with the onramp for the Maple Street Bridge. My bike tours to Riverside State Park take that route with a scenic detour through Brown's Addition. I have significant concern that my casual cyclist clients may get sideswiped by impatient northbound motorists. Brown's addition demographics should fit well with cycling if the right infrastructure were available. East bound out of Brown's Addition to Downtown is also really confusing. Sharrows alone may not be enough. Bike Boulevards use an emblem on the pavement in addition to signage. Maybe there might be some type of disk that could be recessed in the pavement that would not be caught by snow plows and would wear much better than paint. Maybe Spokane can come up with a design that is innovative and will better cycling in cold climates.