

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) increases. 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 will increase.

A sharrow directs the cyclist (and provides a visual indication for car drivers) to where the front wheel of the bike should be pointed as the cyclist travels. For these narrow/busy streets, we believe 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 bike lanes designated by striping that may be better suited for sharrows:

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

In both cases, the bike 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. We believe these sections should have sharrows.

Other sections of the proposed routes should be evaluated for use of sharrows.

2. East bound / Spokane Falls Blvd.

The map in Chapter 4 (figure 4-1) is out of date.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 this? 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 downtown

Comment 3A.

We're not supportive of cycling facilities simply circling downtown and not running through downtown. (On the commuter data map (<http://www.johndogfood.com/bikespokane>)). Although only a few people may use Second Ave., a designated bike route, traveling through Brown's Addition and Peaceful Valley means narrow roads (Riverside) with many parked cars and driveways that make this routing a challenge. In conjunction with Spokane Falls Blvd. and Main St., we'd to see another east/west through downtown, e.g. Sprague and First, or First and Second (this attaches nicely to the Fish Lake external route). We'd also strongly advocate for an additional north/south couplet through downtown, around Washington and Bernard, in that area, e.g. 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. WSU is currently creating a campus master plan update that will be more detailed this Fall, 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 Spokane Falls 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).

Although this may not represent a major gain in bike throughput, it is of significance as it makes Division St. more permeable by creating a visible invitation for bikes to cross on all of the streets connecting the downtown area with the University District. Riverside Extension is more important for overall circulation but Main will also help.

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

Riders heading into the downtown from the South Hill will often use Washington St. (coming from Grand and Bernard). However, heading south on Stevens is not a good idea d/t the narrow roads, the speed of traffic, and the blind spots that exist. Jefferson St. stair-steps up to Adams and can be taken even further south up the Hill. It's less steep and there's much less traffic. This may provide an opportunity of placing a bike boulevard. Additionally, there should be a connection to Cedar/High Drive as it is heavily used by cyclists, it is partially striped (up to 14th) and it's a designated bike route. Sharrows would be a good addition to this section of road.

5. Fourth Ave route: Jefferson to Howard

Although 4th Avenue route may not be ideal, it is a reasonable option because:

-- 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, we believe we can put cyclists through this stretch pretty safely.

--There is unfortunately not a better alternative. Second and Third Aves. are challenging For novice riders, d/t excessive traffic and entering traffic from N/S-bound traffic. Fifth Ave.

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→ Spokane Falls Blvd.

→ Riverside→ Jefferson) is more likely to find support.

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

The stretch of road, south on Howard to 4th, and then east to Sherman/SE Blvd, is terrible from the standpoint of road surfacing. It's a signed bike route. A consideration is a high-visibility lane or sharrow providing east/west circulation route that connects 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.

7. Connectivity to Browns Addition

We support 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 on-ramp for the Maple Street Bridge. There are riders who access Riverside State Park that take this route with a scenic detour through Brown's Addition. There is expressed concern that novice cyclists may get sideswiped by impatient northbound motorists. Brown's Addition demographics should fit well with cycling if the right infrastructure was provided.

East-bound out of Brown's Addition to Downtown is also really confusing. Sharrows alone may be insufficient. 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.

8. Amenities

We strongly encourage a reframing of the language that is/has been often used to address bicycling facilities. These should not be identified as “amenities” but rather “facilities,” “elements,” or “necessary infrastructure.” Likewise, education and enforcement should not be viewed as “amenities” but rather are essential to creating a safe and viable bicycle environment.