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Adam Bartz, Co-Chair
Don Brubeck, Secretary
Amanda Barnett
Jeff Aken
Casey Gifford
Riley Kimball
Claudia Lewis
Merlin Rainwater
Phyllis Porter
Terique Scott
Puja Shaw

November 4, 2016

To: Scott Kubly, Director, SDOT

RE: **South Lander Street Bridge Project**

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 30% design presentation of the S Lander Street Bridge project.

Our recommendations:

1. **Accommodate eastbound bike traffic on the south side and westbound bike traffic on the north side**, in bike lanes or mixed ped/bike paths meeting Seattle's adopted standards for width, grade and separation from truck traffic.
2. **Improve the approach routes to the bridge on east and west.**
3. **Or, if 1 and 2 are not feasible, provide alternative separated bike routes from S Spokane St to the SODO light rail station as part of this project.**

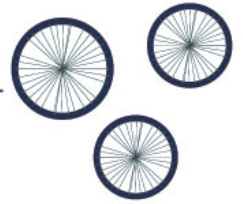
On April 12, 2016, the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board (SBAB) submitted a letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation in support of the City of Seattle's FASTLANE grant application for construction of the South Lander Street Grade Separation and Railroad Safety Project. In that letter, SBAB wrote:

"We support the Lander project because, in addition to improving movement of goods locally and internationally, it will dramatically improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers at what is now a dangerous rail crossing. At the same time it will improve connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians attempting to reach the SODO light rail station and other transit facilities from job sites that range from the Starbucks headquarters of the Pacific NW Coast Guard headquarters to major freight terminals.

In our role as guardians of the Bicycle Master Plan Goals that include Safety, Connectivity and Equity, we will collaborate with SDOT in shaping the S. Lander Street project final design, ensuring it meets the City's Complete Streets policy and ensuring that the overpass will safely accommodate bikes, especially to the light rail system and the SODO Multi-Use Trail that runs alongside the light rail tracks and will be extended by next year.

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the city on matters related to bicycling, and the impact which actions by the city may have upon bicycling; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the city's planning processes insofar as they relate to bicycling.

- City Council
Resolution 25534



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For the above stated reasons, the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board strongly urges your consideration and approval of the City's FASTLANE grant application for the South Lander St Grade Separation project."

SBAB recognizes the importance of this project to freight mobility, and supports protecting and growing the industrial sector of Seattle's economy in SODO. The S Lander Street project and the surrounding environs can safely accommodate freight, industrial use, pedestrian and bicycle traffic with some adjustments to the current design.

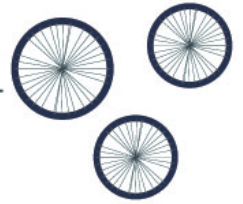
S Lander Street can be a valuable and much more used bike route between West Seattle and its nearest light rail station and Beacon Hill, the International District, Central District, and Rainier Valley. With adjacent major employers including Starbucks, USPS and Seattle Public Schools, and the 25,000 job growth forecast for SODO, bike commuting would be a vital way to avoid worsening traffic congestion and meet Seattle's goals for sustainability.

The City Center Connector streetcar briefing, also presented at the October 5, 2016 SBAB meeting, noted that streetcar ridership is projected to increase from the current count of 6,000 to 24,000 boardings per day after streetcar tracks are added to First Avenue. The projection is not based on extrapolation of growth from a count of riders in the existing condition. The existing condition is that no one rides a streetcar on First Avenue. It is based upon what could happen if a new option is introduced. It requires use of imagination, as well as data, to envision the future. For S Lander Street, the same applies to future pedestrian and bicycle traffic projections.

Although there are major bike commute destinations in SODO, not many people ride bikes on S Lander Street at present, because of the train delays and condition of the connecting streets. Instead, more indirect routes as far away as Georgetown and Pioneer Square are used to avoid at-grade railroad crossings and poor pavement conditions. If the bridge is built with safe and efficient connections for using bikes, this becomes an altogether different situation. It is not logical to simply apply a historical city-wide ridership growth average for bike traffic to a new situation at a specific location any more than it would for streetcar ridership on First Avenue. It is not good "data driven design" to apply data from one situation to an entirely different situation. Complete Street analysis requires a wider and deeper analysis, and some imagination to envision the future.

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While we understand the pressures on SDOT project management to reduce costs and to avoid scope creep, we think that SDOT and the City should have a wider view in mind for a project that uses such a significant share of local, state and federal resources. To design a more affordable project, the width of the bridge was reduced to save tens of millions of dollars. However, the width reduction only impacts those who use the bridge by foot or bicycle. The cost reduction is at the expense of a safe and efficient route for eastbound bike and pedestrian traffic. To make up for this reduction in pedestrian and bicycle access and safety, we recommend expanding the length of the project to provide safe and efficient approaches for eastbound bike and pedestrian traffic for a very small fraction of the cost savings. This would provide a project that meets the intent of the Complete Streets ordinance.

Best practices for the bridge design would **accommodate eastbound bike traffic on the south side and westbound bike traffic on the north side**, in protected bike lanes or mixed ped/bike paths meeting our adopted national standards for width at the bridge's designed grade, to avoid the need for bike traffic to make multiple crossings of Lander in the eastbound direction. This is especially important for safety at intersections with high levels of semi-truck turning movements.

For the approaches to the bridge, we see three viable options:

1. **Make the S Lander route safe and efficient for people on bikes:**
 - a. Pave either Utah Ave S or Colorado Ave S from S Hanford St to S Lander Street, with bike route signage and edge markings. This is a neighborhood greenway route in the Bicycle Master Plan.
 - b. Revise the design of the sidewalk on the north side of S Lander from 3rd to 4th Avenues S to meet multi-use trail standards. Eliminate curb cuts that do not meet current city standards for width, distance to intersections, distance between curb cuts, and sightlines. Design the intersections so that logical waiting and curb ramp locations are not located within the sweep of semi-truck turns.
 - c. Extend the same treatment to S. Lander Street from 4th Ave S to the E3 Busway/SODO Station. This requires consideration of the much-used bus stop for the MT #50 bus in this block.

Or

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2. Provide protected bike lanes each side on the E3 Busway from S Spokane Street to S Lander Street.

This would not meet the project safety and mobility objectives of eliminating at-grade railroad crossings for bike riders, but would provide offsetting benefits due to greater safety, connectivity and efficiency once across the tracks to the busway.

Or

3. Extend the SODO Busway Trail south to S Spokane Street.

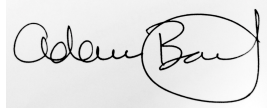
As with option 2, this would not meet the project safety and mobility objectives of eliminating at-grade railroad crossings for bike riders, but would provide offsetting benefits due to greater safety, connectivity and efficiency once across the tracks to the busway. It does have the same drawback that the S Lander Street Bridge faced: the City does not own the right-of-way required to extend the trail. This would only be a viable option if the City can obtain such rights before the S Lander Street project is built. It would not be logical or fair to say that the S Lander Street Bridge project had to delete bike lanes to avoid cost prohibitive acquisition of more right-of-way, and then say that bike facilities could be provided by acquiring more right-of-way.

It is not an adequate response for SDOT to say that these options could be put into the next update of the Bicycle Master Plan Implementation Plan. That would not allow the S Lander Street Project to meet the objectives of the Complete Street Project. As pointed out, the options noted above are not top tier projects in the BMP quantitative scoring. They could not score high because they would not offer connectivity without a bridge at this location. That situation changes if the bridge is introduced, but the BMP implementation and project scoring process is constrained, and would not allow these project to rise until the next full BMP update, which could be later than final design for this projects, and is just speculative. This project cannot be a complete project based on speculative ideas. This project should include funding and design for all modes that need to be accommodated.

Sincerely,



Steve Kennedy
Co-Chair



Adam Bartz
Co-Chair

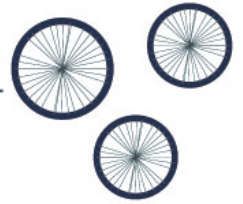


Don Brubeck
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