

# 35TH AVE NE PROJECT



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Updated 4/23/19

### OVERVIEW OF NEW DESIGN

#### 1. What is the new design?

In response to the feedback we heard about the design, we've chosen to move forward with a new design that includes 1 travel lane in each direction, a center turn lane (north of 65th) and parking maintained on the east side of the street (between NE 47th and NE 85th streets).

New design elements:

- NE 47th St to NE 65th St
  - One lane in each direction
  - No center turn lane given the narrow width of the road
  - Parking will be maintained on the east side of the street only; peak hour parking restrictions will be removed to make parking available all day
- NE 65th St to NE 85th St
  - One lane in each direction
  - Center turn lane
  - Parking will be maintained on the east side of the street only; peak hour parking restrictions will be removed to make parking available all day
- NE 85th St to NE 89th St
  - One lane in each direction
  - Center turn lane
  - Parking will be maintained on both sides of the street between NE 85th and NE 87th (parking on the east side only between NE 87th and NE 89th)
- Throughout the corridor
  - Pedestrian crossing improvements at 60th St and 80th St, with further evaluation of additional requests after the project is complete
  - New left-turn pockets at NE 75th St as well as space for left-turning vehicles to pull out of the travel lane at many other intersections
  - Signage and cross enhancements on the 39th Ave NE greenway
  - New load zones and short-term parking changes, in coordination with nearby businesses

#### 2. Why was there a new design presented?

Paving on the corridor gave us the opportunity to redesign the street to better organize the space. We proposed a design that included bike lanes consistent with recommendations from the Bike Master Plan, adopted by City Council in 2014. However, because of the limited width of the street (40 feet in much of the corridor), we were only able to fit a protected bike lane on one side of the street, with an unprotected 5-foot bike lane on the other side. We also needed to accommodate the existing frequent transit service and maintain some parking for businesses and residents. All this was a squeeze, with lane widths as narrow as 10 feet 6 inches.

Through project development and into construction, we continued to hear from the community, both for and against the design. Ultimately, we made the tough choice to change the design. We've consistently heard the following shared goals from the community: improve pedestrian crossings and reduce vehicle speeds and aggressive driving. Compared to the street today, the new design for 35th will help us address those issues, while not precluding future bike connections.

### **3. What are the next steps for the project?**

We are moving forward with the new design and anticipate final striping on 35th to happen in May. We'll keep an eye on the corridor after construction is complete. We've received requests to evaluate the posted speed limit on the street, so we will perform a speed study to determine if changes are needed. We'll continue working with businesses that have requests for changes to short-term parking on the corridor. SDOT is evaluating requests for additional enhancements in the area that we've received from the community and will share more information as we have it.

### **4. How does the new design increase safety on the corridor compared to current conditions?**

Better street design can lead to safer streets. The new design helps us improve safety and operations for all travelers on 35th by providing a dedicated space for turning vehicles. We've seen decreased vehicle speeds and decreased collision rates on streets with 1 lane in each direction and a center turn lane. Examples include [NE 75th St](#), [NE 125th St](#), and [Nickerson St](#). We've also implemented a similar design on [35th Ave SW](#) and [Phase 1 of the Rainier Corridor Improvements Project](#). The design better defines a single lane of travel in each direction, which is a self-enforcing design that encourages people driving to slow down and be aware of their surroundings.

### **5. How does the new design enhance safety for pedestrians crossing the street compared to current conditions?**

The design better defines a single lane of travel in each direction, which helps increase safety for people crossing the street. Today's lanes are very wide, with a total curb-to-curb distance that spans 2 parking lanes and 2 travel lanes. During peak commute hours when parking is restricted, the curbside space is often used for passing or turning and pedestrians must watch for active traffic in all of this space. This circumstance poses a "multiple threat situation," when drivers on the inside lanes are not able to see pedestrians as they cross the street and may not stop.

### **6. Does the decision on 35th change the City's priorities under the Levy to Move Seattle, Bike Master Plan, and/or Climate Action Plan?**

We're committed to continuing to build a connected bike network as Seattle grows. The [Bike Master Plan](#) is funded in large part by the [Levy to Move Seattle](#), so we've been working with the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board to prioritize the projects in the Bike Master Plan to make the best investments and maximize safety, connectivity, equity, ridership, and livability. The 2019 Bike Master Plan Implementation Plan identifies potential risks or issues that may change over time, with the goal of being upfront about what we'll need to consider before each project is built. We're taking public comments on that draft plan and as individual projects move forward, we'll continue to engage the community as we move through design and construction.

Every street and every project is unique. We'll continue to apply citywide policies and plans but will also look at each specific location, the trade-offs, and how best to accomplish our goals on that particular corridor. We are continuing to move forward with projects over the next several years as outlined in the [2019 BMP Implementation Plan](#).

## VEHICLE TRAFFIC AND OPERATIONS

### 7. Will this new design increase travel times?

SDOT has completed a traffic study and there will be no measurable change to travel times. The center turn lane is intended to allow for the flow of traffic around those that are waiting to turn left.

### 8. Does the turn pocket at NE 75th St remain in the design?

Yes, we're adding a left turn pocket at NE 75th St in both directions. We're not adding left-turn arrows to the signal at this time, as this requires installing new signal poles, additional underground utility work, and coordination with nearby private property owners. We'll continue to evaluate traffic operations and consider changes in the future.

### 9. Will there be turn lanes at other key intersections?

With the new center turn lane north of NE 65th St, there will be space for left-turning vehicles to pull out of the travel lane at many intersections. We are not able to install left-turn pockets at NE 65th St because of space need for buses to make turns at this intersection. The existing left-turn pockets at NE 85th St will be maintained.

### 10. Can I use the center turn lane to drive around a bus or garbage truck?

It is against the law ([RCW 46.61.290](#)) for a vehicle to drive in a center lane for the purpose of overtaking or passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction. Center turn lanes are to promote safe passage for people driving as they turn left from either direction.

### 11. What is the current speeding rate on 35th Ave NE and what do you expect it to be following completion of this project?

Right now, 85 percent of vehicles are traveling at 31 miles per hour or below. We've seen that restriping lanes and better organizing the street helps organically and naturally slow vehicle speeds.

Speed is the critical factor in the severity of collisions. People who are walking are twice as likely to survive after being hit by a car at 25 MPH than at 30 MPH. Reducing traffic speeds through this project is part of our [Vision Zero](#) efforts to eliminate serious and fatal crashes by 2030.

### 12. Is SDOT considering changing the speed limit?

We've received requests to evaluate the posted speed limit on the street. After the project is complete, we'll study speeds on 35th and make additional changes, if needed, based on observations and data.

### 13. How can this project minimize traffic cutting through adjacent residential streets?

Many of the adjacent residential streets have sidewalks, curbs, and on-street parking, which are some of the most effective tools for slowing down vehicle speeds. In response to the concerns we've heard from neighbors, we collected speed and volume data on select streets before the project began. Some of the "before" data may be limited because of vandalism to data collection equipment. We'll return after the project is complete to gather additional data.

Residents can also better understand the existing conditions on their neighborhood streets by borrowing a radar gun from SDOT to measure current speeds. Speeding is generally considered a problem if 15% or more of the traffic is going 5 miles over the speed limit. To learn more, refer to our Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program [webpage](#).

## BICYCLE CONNECTIONS

### 14. What enhancements will SDOT make to the 39th Ave NE greenway? What are the crossing improvements at 65th?

We'll be looking at upgrades to the wayfinding along the 39th Ave NE greenway. This will include additional greenway signage at regular intervals and particularly near arterial crossings. We're still in the early stages of planning for crossing enhancements at NE 65th St. We'll be reviewing data and working with operations staff to determine what changes might be appropriate.

### 15. What was recommended for 35th in the Bike Master Plan?

The Bike Master Plan recommended a protected bike lane on 35th north of 65th. Because of limited width on the street, the original design only included a protected bike lane in the northbound direction, with a striped bike lane in the southbound direction. The Bike Master Plan recommended painted bike lanes south of NE 65th. The original design included a painted bike lane in the northbound direction, and sharrows in the southbound direction.

### 16. What are the options for people biking on and near 35th?

While there would be no protected bike lanes on 35th, people riding in the street would still benefit from slower vehicle speeds and clearly defined travel lanes. We will also be making signage enhancements to the parallel neighborhood greenway on 39th Ave NE that provides a route for people that prefer to bike on a quieter street.

### 17. Will there be sharrows on 35th Ave NE?

The sharrows (road markings that indicate a shared lane for bicycles and vehicles) will not be repainted on 35th. Seattle's current practice limits the use of sharrows on arterial streets. Previously, sharrows were used primarily as an education tool to alert drivers to the presence of bicyclists on streets and were sometimes used to designate a location in the shared lane for bicycles to ride. Sharrows are now used as a transition tool for short distances. As with any city street, people riding bicycles have a legal right to ride in the roadway with vehicles.

## PARKING AND LOADING

### 18. How will on-street parking change?

To make space for the center turn lane, parking will be maintained on the east side of the street only (between NE 47th and NE 85th streets). The peak-hour parking restrictions will be removed to make parking available all day. Because the road is wider, parking will be located on both sides of the street between NE 85th and NE 87th streets.

Throughout this project, we've worked with businesses and religious organizations along 35th to better understand parking, loading, and access needs. With the new design, we have decided to prioritize parking on the east side of the street. This decision is based on community feedback and the location of several existing load zones and ADA parking spaces on the east side of the street. We've heard that these spaces are critical for people with limited mobility that are attending services at the religious institutions on 35th. We'll continue working with businesses that have requests for changes to short-term parking on the corridor.

For context, today, parking is allowed on both sides of the street, but is restricted depending on the time of day (no parking in the morning southbound, no parking in the afternoon northbound). During project planning, we studied parking utilization throughout the day. On some blocks, parking is 70 to 100% utilized,

however, adjacent blocks (one block to the north or south on 35th Ave NE), have parking available, with parking utilization at 50% or less.

**19. Can you retain parking on the west side of the street?**

Retaining parking on both sides of the street would limit space for the center turn lane, affecting turn movements at intersections and the reliability and predictability of corridor. Based on feedback from businesses, we've already made some changes to accommodate load zones that will be removed on the west side of the street. That includes new 2-hour parking near the Seattle Public Library and new load zones on side streets for other businesses.

## **BUS AND PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS**

**20. Is SDOT making changes to crosswalks or adding new crosswalks?**

We're adding flashing beacons at existing crosswalks at NE 60th and NE 80th streets. We'll evaluate requests for crossing enhancements at 50th, 77th, and 87th after project completion.

**21. What changes will SDOT make to the striping at the NE 47th St and 45th PI NE intersection?**

We'll paint a curb bulb and install white posts at the NE 47th St intersection. This painted area will narrow the existing intersection to better clarify vehicle turn movements and shorten the distance for people crossing the street.

**22. When will the new signal be installed on 35th at 68th?**

We're planning to install a new signal at 35th Ave NE and NE 68th St. This upgrade is still being designed and installation would likely be a few years from now. We'll provide updates on timing as we know more.

**23. Will the bus stops remain at NE 68th St? Will there be other changes to bus stops?**

Both northbound and southbound bus stops will be maintained at NE 68th St in response to community requests.

Working with King County Metro, we're improving transit speed and reliability to Routes 64 and 65. As part of this project and to help traffic and buses move more smoothly, we're consolidating bus stops in the project area. We'll remove 3 bus stops on each side of the street along 35th Ave NE based on the number of people boarding/exiting the bus. We will maintain consistent spacing so that the bus will stop every 2 blocks.

In addition, northbound bus stops at NE 85th and 75th streets will move from the south side of the intersection to the north side to help traffic move more smoothly. New bus shelters or awnings will also be added at several locations.

**24. Does the new design change transit operations?**

The new design will allow efficient transit travel through the corridor with southbound buses making in-lane stops at the curb. Northbound buses will pull out of the travel lane, to the curb, at bus stops.

**25. Will the new bus stop on the north side of NE 75th St make it harder for kids to walk to Eckstein Middle School?**

As part of [Safe Routes to School](#), we worked with Eckstein Middle School on a recommended path for students exiting the bus on the east side of 35th Ave NE. Students would cross 35th Ave NE, remaining on the north side of NE 75th St, and continue up the hill to the existing pedestrian signal at 31st Ave NE, which is directly across from the school's front door.