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Nickerson Rechannelization Facts and Answers
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What is rechannelization?

Rechannelization is when SDOT changes the lane lines on a street, in this case from a street that has two travel lanes in each direction to a street that has one travel lane in each direction, along with a center-turn lane. Often, rechannelized streets will have bicycle facilities such as bike lanes.

Why rechannelize W Nickerson Street?

We are rechannelizing Nickerson St to make the street better for pedestrians and bicyclists, reduce vehicle speeds, and reduce collisions. The speed limit on W Nickerson St is 30 mph, but average speeds are significantly higher. Narrowing the space for motor vehicles has been shown to reduce travel speeds, while not decreasing the capacity of the street. This project is part of the early implementation of the Pedestrian Master Plan and wanting to improve access and safety for pedestrians crossing the street along the corridor. As part of the project we are also looking at what the Bicycle Master Plan recommends for the corridor.

What factors did you consider?

- Volume – 19,300 vehicle trips on an average day
- Speed – 85th percentile is 40 mph westbound and 44 mph eastbound
- Collisions – rear-end, left-turn, side-swipe and hitting parked cars most common
- Metro Transit – In the morning, 6 buses eastbound & 5 buses westbound. In the evening there are 5 buses eastbound and westbound.
- Freight needs – Major Truck Street (5.2% of the traffic is trucks)
- Bicycle needs – corridor mentioned in the Bicycle Master Plan
- Pedestrian generator – multi family housing, businesses and commercial
- Traffic diversion – hasn't happened for other projects. If cut-through traffic materializes, we can address it case-by-case.

Aren't there are too many cars on Nickerson for this to work?

The current average daily traffic on Nickerson is roughly 19,300 vehicles each day. National studies show that this level of traffic can be accommodated within the proposed 3-lane configuration.

How does SDOT know that reducing the number of lanes won't decrease the capacity of the street? That doesn't make sense.

We agree it seems odd, but we have rechannelized 15 streets over the past 30 years, without reducing capacity – a recent example is Stone Way in Fremont/Wallingford. The two-way left turn lane will allow left turning vehicle to make their turn without blocking the through traffic, which increases efficiency.



What about safety?

Rechannelization has been shown to reduce rear-end collisions, side-swipe and angle collisions. These types of collisions are typical for W Nickerson Street.

I ride a bicycle along Nickerson. How does this help me?

Rechannelizing Nickerson will allow SDOT to add a bicycle lane westbound and a wider travel lane eastbound with shared lane markings (sharrows). Many bicyclists feel more comfortable with bike lanes and sharrows, and sharrows let drivers know where to expect bicyclists.

Will this make it easier to cross the street?

Yes. Since people will only have to cross one travel lane in each direction, it opens up many more possibilities for SDOT to mark crosswalks across Nickerson. Also, bringing speeds down to the posted limit will help pedestrians cross more comfortably.

Will this rechannelization remove any on-street parking?

We do anticipate minimal parking loss in a few spot locations along the corridor. Currently we estimate the loss of 12 parking spaces along the corridor.

I have to drive my delivery truck on Nickerson. Will this make it harder for me?

No. The proposed lane widths on Nickerson are 12 feet and 13 feet, wider than the current lanes. Wider lanes are more comfortable for large vehicle and navigating curves in the road, such as the one by 8th Avenue W, will be easier with wider lanes.

Did we consider the reroute of traffic along Nickerson due to the Alaskan Way Viaduct Project?

Yes. We coordinated with the Viaduct team and the bored tunnel will not send additional traffic onto Nickerson during the AM peak period. However, there could be up to 10% additional traffic westbound on Nickerson in the PM peak period. This would be less than a 90 vehicle increase.

Why put bicycle facilities on Nickerson when there is a parallel trail that bicyclists can use?

Commuter cyclists and cyclists that have a destination in the area that are comfortable riding in traffic will use Nickerson. The recreational rider would use the parallel Ship Canal Trail. Additionally, we have found that as a trail gets more use the faster recreational bicyclists will use the parallel arterial route (Nickerson Street).

Did we consider the back-up when the Fremont Bridge or the Ballard Bridge is opened?

Yes. The US Coast Guard does not raise the bridges on the ship canal for both of the 2 hour AM and PM peaks (total of 4 hours). This was agreed to since the vast majority of the craft along this waterway are pleasure/private vessels. Additionally, the bridges will open for vessels at any time outside of the periods but will only open at intervals for pleasure craft, and they will hold the bridge opening if they can see multiple craft approaching.