SMILE Special Transportation Committee Meeting
Traffic congestion on SE Tacoma and the Sellwood Bridge

September 27, 2017

1. Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Scott Kelly, Transportation Committee Chair. Approximately 25 people in attendance.

2. Tacoma Street Area Cut Through Traffic and Congestion. Scott reviewed the PBOT data and options presented at the August 16 meeting. Discussion of the various potential fixes presented by PBOT followed.

. Diverters - About half those in attendance indicated they are open to some types of diverters in some locations, but during the discussion many voiced reservations about diverters at specific locations. Some support for diverters on Tenino since it is a narrow street not suited for cut-through traffic. Some support for a checkerboard diverter grid throughout the neighborhood.

In a related question, nearly everyone said they would be willing to go 3 or 4 blocks out of their way (due to diverters, for example) for every vehicle trip if it resulted in a sharp reduction in cut-through traffic on their street.

. Umatilla Street enhancement as a greenway - Most supported speed bumps west of 13th, and possibly curb bulbouts to slow traffic and discourage cut-through traffic. But most seemed to recognize this is a wide street that invites cut-through. No support for changing stop signs on Umatilla to allow free flow on Umatilla as this would just encourage more cut-through and speeding.

. Medians - There wasn't strong support for medians on Tacoma at 7th and 9th, with the feeling that they would

block cars from turning left off of eastbound Tacoma in the PM. There was some support for putting a short median in the middle of blocks on Tacoma to discourage vehicles that turn left onto westbound Tacoma from driving the full length of the block in the center lane to get ahead of a few cars that are waiting in backed up traffic.

. 6th Ave Signal - Most in attendance favored replacing the signal with a bike/ped only signal (Ped Hybrid Beacon). A few people pointed out that many apartments are being built on 6th, and the need to retain a vehicle signal to facilitate access to Tacoma. Scott re-stated PBOT's comments from the August meeting that the signal can't be replaced until the Feds accept the bridge project, which might take a year.

Nearly everyone agreed that we need to find out what the technical and legal limits are for the signal? For example, can the signal be adjusted to a 5 or 6 minute delay on 6th? Can it be programmed to vary the delay by time of day (longer delays on 6th during peak AM traffic to allow more free flow on Tacoma), or for special Oaks Park events that require more access to andfrom 6th Ave north of Tacoma?

. Change 6th Ave to one way southbound from Tacoma to Tenino - There was little support for this, partly because of all the new apartments being built on 6th. The change to one-way would force them onto 7th or further east.

Discussion of other potential changes included the following:

. Stop left turns from northbound 17th onto some or all of the streets from Linn to Tenino. If all left turns in this stretch are prohibited, vehicles trying to enter the neighborhood would be forced to go all the way to Tacoma and then turn left on 16th, 15th, or 13th, none of

which are ideal (left on to 13th is currently illegal). If only some left turns are prohibited, traffic will only be diverted to the other streets. The ability to enforce prohibiting left turns on 17th was also questioned. There didn't appear to be majority support for this option.

. Signal at 17th and Ochoco/Andrews - There was strong support for this for two reasons. First, if programmed correctly, it could effectively meter traffic from the south in the morning to avoid congestion on Tacoma. If Tacoma isn't congested, drivers would have no reason to cut through the neighborhood. A signal at this location could also improve the crossing of the Trolley Trail and future Springwater Corridor Trail location.

. Install stop bar pavement markings and crosswalk pavement markings at select locations to slow traffic. This might be a low-cost way to slow traffic.

. Make some blocks adjacent to Tacoma one way during peak hours. There was some belief that this might improve flow.

. Prohibit right turn on red from southbound 13th onto westbound Tacoma. The westbound 99 bus (which only runs during peak hours) stops on the east side of Tacoma to pick up passengers. When traffic backs up, the bus driver is reluctant to enter the intersection at 13th until it is clear. Seeing that small gap, cars turn right from 13th on the red light. The bus often has to wait for several signal cycles, even 15 minutes or more, before there is an opportunity to get all the way through the intersection.

Scott pointed out that during the bridge construction the 99 bus turned north on 13th, and the stop bar on southbound 13th was moved back to accommodate the bus movement. Right turn on red from southbound 13th was prohibited during that period, and many people complained that it was backing up traffic on 13th, even for vehicles

turning left on Tacoma. Nevertheless, improving the flow for the bus on Tacoma seems to be more important than reducing congestion on 13th.

. Meter vehicles entering the neighborhood when Tacoma is backed up. If traffic from 17th Ave at Ochoco and from Tacoma at McLoughlin was metered with signals when traffic is backed up to cross the bridge, then the desire to cut through the neighborhood streets would be greatly reduced.

Requests for additional information included the following:

. What is the peak traffic on 17th immediately south of Linn?

. What is the peak traffic volume on Tacoma immediately west of McLoughlin?

. How does the traffic volume on the Sellwood Bridge now compare with the traffic volume before the bridge replacement project?

Scott will relay the results of the meeting, including preferences and requested information, to PBOT and schedule another meeting when needed.

3. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.