

Prepare for Changes to Washington and Emerson Streets

Jim Jones, Land Use and Transportation Chair

As you may be aware, Councilman Nevitt and WWPNA have been negotiating with Public Works requesting that Washington and Emerson streets be reverted to their original residential two-way configuration. These negotiations went through several iterations, but have finally come to fruition with an agreement. I would like to thank Brian Mitchell of Public Works for his dedication to finding a workable solution, and commend Councilman Nevitt for his commitment to the neighborhood.

Neighbors should prepare for forthcoming changes to these streets.

What is going to happen?

1. Public Works must first go through a formal posting process for those street lights which will be removed. This will take 30 days.
2. The speed limit on Washington and Emerson will be reduced to 25 miles per hour.
3. All the stop lights on Washington and Emerson will be replaced with 4-way stops, except the stop lights at Speer, Alameda and North Buchtel. No changes are proposed north of Speer or south of I-25.
4. For the rest of the length between Speer and I-25, Public Works will install a 4-way stop every two blocks. The result will be a stop sign every two blocks from Speer to I-25 on both Washington and Emerson.
5. Public Works will designate Washington and Emerson as bicycle streets, and after resurfacing next summer, will stripe in a bike lane on each street.
6. Public Works is looking into adding 4-way stops at the intersections of Ohio & Washington (by the community center), and Ohio & Emerson (by the Wash Perk) due to the heavy pedestrian traffic.
7. In five years, Public Works commits to make an evaluation for a final conversion to two-way.

When will we see the changes?

Public Works will begin work as soon as is possible. However, if workers are needed for snow removal or possible emergencies, the work on Washington/Emerson could be delayed. Following is an estimated schedule:

1. Signage should be installed during December 2009 into January of 2010, lasting 30 days.
2. Stop lights will be removed between Alameda and I-25 and replaced with stop signs, and the speed limit reduced. This should take 2-4 weeks (January into February).
3. Stop lights will be removed between Speer and Alameda, and replaced with stop signs, and the speed limit reduced. This should take 2-4 weeks (February into March).

4. Resurfacing of the southern part of Washington/Emerson will be done during the summer of 2010.
5. Striping in the bike lanes will occur after the resurfacing is complete next summer.
6. The evaluation for final conversion will be in 2015.
7. The designation of Washington and Emerson as bicycle streets will be immediate.

Though Councilman Nevitt and the neighborhood would have preferred a full conversion at once, we believe this implementation plan is workable and provides immediate benefit to the neighborhood without jeopardizing the goal of a full conversion, as is called for in several Public Works plans.

Safety First!

Please watch for these changes, and keep safety in mind, as it will take some time for traffic patterns to adjust. So always obey the stop signs, and be aware that folks crossing these intersections may be encountering the stop signs for the first time. We want to minimize the potential for any fender benders. These changes should reduce traffic in the interior of the neighborhood and make it safer for residents walking and biking to school, Wash Park or any of the local businesses.

Update on traffic mitigation plan

This agreement makes significant progress on our overall traffic mitigation plan. As has been reported, we currently have roughly 250,000 cars a day flowing in and around our neighborhood. As the Gates factory sites and Alameda Station are redeveloped, this number could exceed 300,000 and might even reach volumes approaching 350,000. Understanding the future traffic impacts, WWPNA adopted the following goals for traffic mitigation. I have added updates for each item.

1. Mitigation measures at the I-25 off-ramps so traffic cannot freely flow into the neighborhood.
 - a. Completed as part of T-REX and the Valley Highway, with either a stop sign or eventual stop light at the end of each off ramp.
2. Mitigation measures along Lincoln to prevent neighborhood cut-through traffic.
 - a. Completed as part of the Alameda Station planning, with a future stop light at every intersection south of Alameda.
3. Mitigation measures on Mississippi from Broadway east to Logan to ensure traffic from the Gates redevelopments primarily flows west to the traffic corridors better suited to accommodate the load.
 - a. Completed as part of the NEPA planning, with a stop light at Logan and Mississippi which allows only one turn lane to north Logan, and improvements to Mississippi to better regulate traffic flow.
4. Returning Washington and Emerson, where single family homes predominate both sides of the street, back to two-way streets to prevent their use as an alternate

- routes for the additional traffic load (without any loss of parking on either side of the street).
- a. Significant progress has been made with a date for evaluating a final reversion to two-way.
5. Improved pedestrian crossings to the light rail stations.
- a. Completed as part of the T-REX, NEPA and the Alameda Station Plan. Wide multi-use sidewalks will be installed on Ohio between Lincoln St. and the Broadway Station, and stop lights will be eventually installed at Ohio & Logan, and Ohio & Lincoln (at the off ramp) to provide safer pedestrian access. Lastly, stop lights will eventually be installed at all intersection of Broadway and Lincoln south of Alameda which will provide safer pedestrian access to the Alameda Station.
6. Speed reductions on Logan and Downing. WWPNA will continue to pursue this goal.