

Name: Master Street Plan Amendment – Bicycle Plan Map Update

Location: Jurisdiction wide

Request: To upgrade and add 8 Bike Lanes, 2 Bike Paths and several Bike Routes

Source: Staff

PROPOSAL / REQUEST:

To amend the Master Street Plan, Bike Plan Sections to upgrade LaMarche Drive, Taylor Loop Road, Main Street (6th to Roosevelt), 7th Street (Rock to Woodrow) to Bike Lanes (Class II) and add Louisiana and Center (Markham to I-630), Chester (Roosevelt to Daisy Bates Drive), 9th Street (I-30 to Main) as Bike Lanes (Class II) and to add Coleman Creek (19th to Lee Avenue), Rail Road alignment (3rd Street to 65th Street) and Rose Creek (3rd Street to River Trail) as Bike Paths (Class I) and to add State Street (I-630 to River Trail), Commerce (Daisy Bates to 9th Street), Sherman (9th Street to 6th Street) as Bike Routes (Class III).

ANALYSIS:

At the end of 2013, the Bike Friendly Committee of Little Rock recommended a package of changes to the Little Rock Bike Plan. Staff reviewed the requests and set a series of public meetings to discuss the Bike Lane and Path changes proposed by the Committee. These meetings were held in February and March 2014. Written comments were received prior, during and after these meetings. Based on these comments received as well as those expressed at the meetings, a final package of changes was developed to present for amendment.

New proposed Class I – Bike Paths are suggested along two creeks and a railroad right-of-way. (These routes are separate bicycle only facilities.) There are three segments proposed. The longest is along the former railroad right-of-way from Interstate Park around the State Fair grounds to 7th Street where the existing proposed Bike Path is shown. This is part of a multi-county bike path that has been proposed from Little Rock to Hot Springs (the ‘Southwest Trail’). The remaining portions for that Path within Little Rock’s jurisdiction are already represented on the Little Rock Bike Master Plan. A second segment would continue along Rose Creek from 3rd Street (where the existing proposed Path ends) to the River Trail. This has been reviewed by the Little Rock Parks Department and advocated by the Capitol View Stiff Station Neighborhood organization for several years. The remaining new Bike Route is along Coleman Creek from 20th Street (where a proposed Bike Route ends from UALR) to Lee Avenue in Hillcrest. This proposal would make a north –south connection from Hillcrest to the Fourche Bottoms via the UALR campus. Due to development along Coleman Creek, the actual alignment of the ‘Path’ may follow existing streets and street right-of-

way parallel to the creek itself. (The Creek is in a concrete 'U' box with development to the open box from 20th to 12th Streets.) This amendment places a corridor on the Plan as a north-south bicycle route through central Little Rock.

The Class II – Bike Lane proposals are along streets with the majority of the changes are in the downtown area. These changes are either an upgrade of a proposed Class III - Bike Route to Class II - Bike Lane or the addition of a Class II – Bike Lane. The proposal is not to enlarge any of these streets but rather to add a bicycle lane on the existing street using either a 'road diet' (changing from four lanes to three) or removal of parking on one-side. The decision on how the bike lanes would be implemented will be made at the time a street is re-surfaced or re-constructed.

There are six new proposed Class II (Bike Lane) shown in central/downtown Little Rock. Four are north-south lanes and two are east-west lanes. Main Street has been re-stripped with Bike Lanes from 7th Street to Roosevelt Road. This amendment recognizes the already implemented Class II –Bike Lanes. Part of this Bike Lane is new Class II (south 17th Street) and part is upgraded from a Class III (north of 17th Street) on the Plan Map. Main Street was re-stripped with a 'road diet' when it was re-surfaced. Chester is proposed to be added as a Class II – Bike Lane. The Bike Lane passes Philander Smith College, Dunbar Recreation Center, Dunbar Middle, Gibbs Elementary and Williams Library. Chester had an average-daily-volume of 7900 in 2012 at 11th Street. The street is primarily residential single-family south of Wright Avenue and is mixed institutional-residential uses between Daisy Gatson Bates Drive and Wright Avenue. Chester is a four-lane street with no parking, at the current volumes Chester is a good candidate for a 'Street Diet', conversion to a three-lane road with parking or bike lanes. At such time as Chester is re-surfaced or reconstructed, a 'road diet' will be considered. After public input as part of the resurfacing project of Chester, re-stripping from four-lanes to three-lanes may be implemented.

Both Center and Louisiana, north of Interstate 630 are one-way streets with on-street parking allowed along much of the roads. Both have two travel-lanes and have a volume of 3900 and 2400 respectively near Capitol. As part of the City re-surfacing program or if either street is re-constructed the City will have a meeting to review the implementation of a Bike Lane on these roads - either a 'Street Diet', the reduction of on-street parking or other method of implementation will be determined. (The two-way portion of Louisiana would be a Class III – Bike Route, due in part to the limitations of the road with two-way traffic, access to adjacent property, parking, etc.).

The two east-west roads proposed for Bike Lane designations are 9th Street and 7th Street. 9th Street, east of Main Street is three lanes for the first three blocks and then four lanes to Interstate 30. East 9th Street through this corridor is less than 40-feet in width, making four-lanes almost unusable as four separate lanes. MacArthur Park and a private school can be found along this segment of 9th Street as well as homes and a fire station. At the time of re-surfacing or reconstruction of East 9th Street, the design of bicycle facilities will be included. It may be necessary for sharrows rather than Bike Lanes along 9th Street due to limitations on widening the street. 7th Street is currently

shown on the Plan as a Class III Bike Route. The proposed map change is west of Main Street upgrading to a Class II – Bike Lanes. Since the road currently is two vehicular lanes with parking on both sides for much of its length (Main to Woodrow), the proposal would be to have a Bike Lane in one-direction and a Bike Route (sharrows) in the other so as not to impact parking on both sides of the road. Traffic volumes range from 11,000 at the State Capitol to 3800 at the railroad underpass. West of the Capitol Complex, there might be room for Bike Lanes in both directions. At the time of reconstruction or resurfacing design decisions would be made.

In west Little Rock, LaMarche Drive (Chenal Drive to Taylor Loop Road) and Taylor Loop Road (LaMarche Drive to Rahling Road) are proposed to be upgraded from Class III to Class II – Bike Lanes in both directions. Both roads are proposed to be constructed as 36-foot wide roads (with or without bicycle facilities). The proposal for each road is to continue to have a vehicular travel-lane in each direction with no parking on the road (as is the case today). The City of Little Rock is constructing the connection for LaMarche Drive at this time and is scheduled to widen Taylor Loop Road. As part of the construction projects, the City intends to ‘mark’ both roads with Bike Lanes and two-lanes of vehicular traffic.

The Class III – Bike Routes proposed to be added to the Bike Plan are all in the downtown (MacArthur Park Neighborhood) area. They are Commerce from 17th Street to 9th Street, Sherman from 9th Street to 6th Street, 7th Street from Cumberland to Sherman and State I-630 to River Trail. Commerce Street would connect the neighborhoods south of the Interstate to MacArthur Park and on to the River Trail. Sherman takes on north of MacArthur Park to the existing bike network at Capital Avenue (and on to the River Trail). The East 7th Street route continues that route from Main Street on to Sherman.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS:

Notices were sent to the City’s contact list for ordinance amendments. This list includes engineers, developers and neighborhood organizations. In addition the following neighborhood associations were notified: Capitol View/Stiff Station, Central High, Downtown, Downtown Little Rock Partnership, Hillcrest, MacArthur Park POA, Oak Forest, Pettaway, South End, Southend Coalition, Whitmore Circle, and Wright Avenue. Over 260 property owners adjacent to proposed Class I or II bike routes received letters informing them of the change and meeting. Staff has received several contacts as a result of the mailing. Most of the comments are related to the possible loss of parking in downtown.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff believes the change is appropriate.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

(JULY 24, 2014)

Walter Malone, Planning Staff reviewed the proposed changes starting with the Class I – Bike Paths, then Class II- Bike Lanes and Class III – Bike Routes. Jeremy Lewno, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator for the City, indicated he was available to answer any question and also indicated bicycling was becoming more than just recreational use and the City needed to help provide safer routes for bicycles for both recreational and transportation related trips. The goal is to make all streets safer for all modes of transportation.

Chris East, Studio Main and live/work downtown, expressed support for the Bike Plan changes. Each of the roads have 60-foot right-of-ways and it is possible to have streets with bike lanes on such roads. The proposal for 7th Street has been tested with a ‘Pop-up’ in 2013. Temporary Bike Lanes were used. With Bike Lanes, cars know to look for bicycles which increases safety for bicycles. When bicyclists know there are safe places to travel, more people will bike.

Mason Ellis, biker and downtown worker/resident, stated that the downtown environment had been built as a multifunctional transportation system (walking, horses, bikes, etc). Now it has been limited to just cars. As a resident of downtown he looks for walking and bicycle options. The addition of these proposals to the plan adds a good amenity for downtown. It is Mr. Ellis hope that the plan is what we can come to for Little Rock.

Ed Sergeant, SOMO Board and Governor Mansion District resident, advocated alternative forms on Chester and 9th Streets. These changes will ‘calm’ the streets to make them easier to cross by pedestrians. Supports of these changes are Gibbs School, Dunbar Middle School, Dunbar Recreation Center, William Library, Art Study, Quapaw Quarter Association along Chester, and St Edwards School and Little Rock Parks along 9th Street.

Dale Aclin, Stephens Building, expressed concern about the Bike Lanes on Center and Louisiana in the two blocks south of Markham. There is a lot of traffic on these roads and it would not connect to anything else for bicyclists. He also expressed concern with the hotel related traffic along Markham and non-local drivers.

Mr. Malone indicated that Louisiana from 4th Street to Markham is two-way and in this section Sharrows would be used rather than Bike Lanes. Staff would amend the package to show a Class II along Louisiana from 4th to Markham.

Commissioner Nunnley, stated that Staff needed to explain to the residents what was happening and the advantages. If the local residents’ concerns and issues are not addressed, there will be a ‘firestorm’. There needs to be discussions and meetings with the local residents and education efforts made.

Commissioner Berry indicated that there had been some meetings to talk with residents and owners. There was some discussion about traffic and parking issues and the need for education moving forward so that the City understands the concerns and residents/owners understand the impacts and advantages.

Tony Bozynski, Director of Planning & Development, indicated there had been meetings on the package of changes and with the 3/8 cent funded projects there would be an additional meeting with residents before any work was done. (This would be true for Chester Street).

Commissioner May reminded the Commission of the 'Denver Plan' traffic signal system in downtown Little Rock and how that had made it easier for pedestrians. Education is key, people always have concerns when change is involved.

Chairman Fountain asked the speakers who worked downtown how they were about to bike to work and wear a suit for work. There was some discussion about lockers and shower facilities.

A motion was made to approve the package as amended without Center Street. By a vote of 10 for 0 against and 1 absent the motion was approved. A motion was made to approve the Bike Lane on Center Street, by a vote of 9 for, 0 against, 1 recusal and 1 absent the motion was approved.