

9/28/2024

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide recommendations for the “B” Street Corridor Plan. For the readers’ convenience, Streets for Everyone has summarized our comments below. These are followed by a detailed narrative describing our concerns about the draft and recommendations to fulfill the city’s current TSP goal #1 to “create a ‘green’ template for other cities in the state and nation to follow.”

Good Items in the Draft Plan

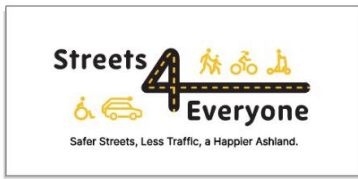
Draft Plan Item	Explanation
Traffic diverter at west and east ends of the corridor	Existing traffic volumes between 2nd & 3rd already exceed those suitable for a bicycle boulevard (per NACTO, Designing for All Ages and Abilities). Diverters will reduce current volumes and ensure that volumes will remain at levels suitable for a bicycle boulevard.
Filling-in sidewalks gaps	Sidewalks provide basic mobility for people who don’t or can’t drive, or don’t have the money to own a car.
Change classification to B Street from “neighborhood collector” to “residential street”	The volumes and residential character of “B” Streets warrants this change, and would support the transition into a bicycle boulevard.
20ft no parking zone at all intersections	Clear zones at intersection approaches are an essential safety improvement, reducing crashes through improved visibility
Sharrow markings saying “Bike Blvd” along B Street between Water and N. Mountain	These let bicyclists know they can take the whole lane and informs cars to expect people on bicycles. This adds validity to bicyclist presence, improves confidence for less-sure riders, and naturally encourages drivers to slow down.
Reducing speed limit from 25mph to 20mph	Necessary to ensure safety of vulnerable road users in mixed traffic mode space.
Installing wayfinding signage and pavement markings directing people	Needed to help people navigate the best and safest routes for bicycling and walking. Contributes to the city-wide bicycle network completeness and channels bicycles and walkers onto it.

Major Issues with Draft Plan

Draft Plan Item	Issue
Neighborhood greenway / bicycle boulevard volume thresholds used in definition	The draft plan doesn't align with NACTO's <u>Designing for All Ages and Abilities</u> (DAAA) which Ashland TAC and City Council support. The draft plan definition is insufficient based on the best current research and creates significant risks for the City of Ashland planning due to the potential for inconsistencies in policies
Over-reliance of decorative painted crossings to slow traffic and improve safety	Decorative painted crosswalks have not been shown to improve safety for vulnerable road users in "residential neighborhoods". The research cited regarding painted crosswalk safety in the draft plan do not constitute reasonable evidence given the covid 2020 circumstances of the studies, and has not been replicated in other contexts.
Filling in sidewalk gaps	Sidewalk construction to fill sidewalk gaps should be an immediate-term improvement to provide a complete network for walking

Summary of Recommendations by Streets for Everyone

Recommended Change	Reason
Implement back-in angle parking between 1st St and 5th St on one side of B St *(see below narrative for complete specifications)	Narrows "B" Street between 1st and 5th while increasing parking supply for residents and employees in the downtown. This supports the bicycle boulevard transition at a low cost in addition to easing parking concerns for the surrounding area including downtown.
Use NACTO's Designing for All Ages and Abilities (DAAA) speed & volume thresholds for bicycle boulevard	The consultant's use of alternative standards to those used in DAAA is inconsistent with past city practices, and is insufficient to ensure functional use by people of all ages and abilities.



9/28/2024

Install raised crosswalks at all intersections rather than painted crosswalks	Raised crosswalks have been documented to slow traffic, improve accessibility for everyone and especially people using an assistive mobility device, gives priority to pedestrians and bicycles, and does not degrade over-time as compared to decorative painted crosswalks
Install sharrows throughout the corridor	These markings are an essential element of a bicycle boulevard and promote appropriate behaviors among people riding bicycles and auto drivers, in addition to contributing to the completeness of Ashland's bicycle network
Install sidewalks where missing, particularly between 6th and Mountain St along B St	Missing sidewalks create gaps in the sidewalk network making travel difficult or impractical for vulnerable, young, or disabled residents, and additionally creates safety risks.

Key Immediate and Short-term Improvements that are both Attainable and Cost-Effective

Improvement	Cost Estimate
Sidewalk in-fill	\$38.3k *
Sharrow markings	\$25.2k *
Diagonal parking between 1st and 5th	\$4k-\$8k
20ft daylighting at all intersections	\$8.1k *

* Cost estimates are based on those provided by Kittelson and Associates in the draft plan

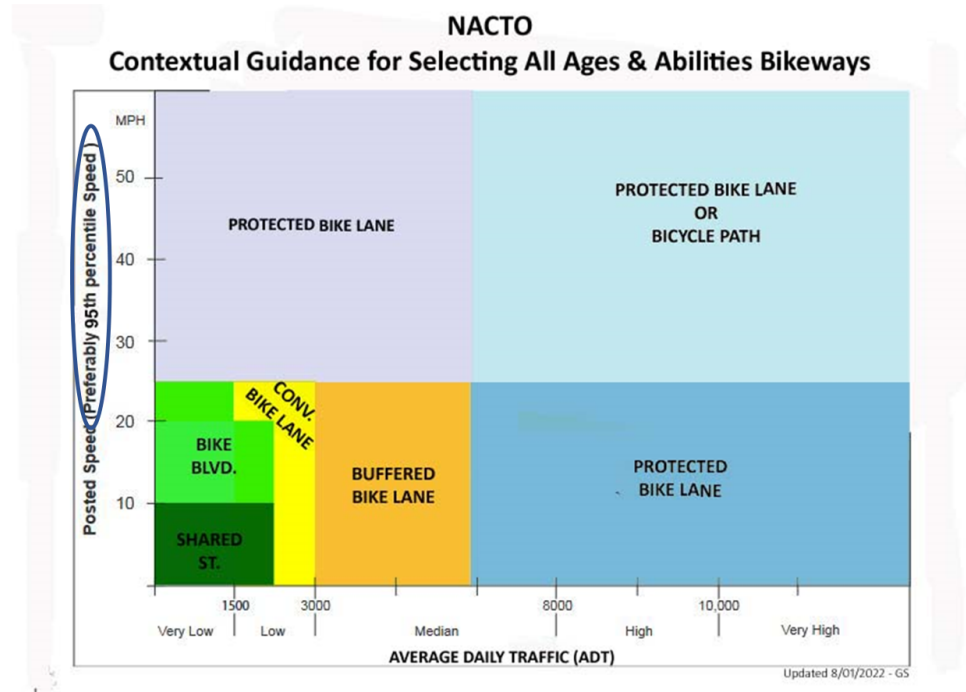
The city's strategy to integrate this document and the Safe Routes to School Plan into the updated Transportation System Plan (TSP) requires, it would seem, that this Plan conform to the same standards (OAR 660-12) as those for the TSP itself. Regrettably, we find that the "B" Street Corridor Plan does not incorporate the requirements of the Transportation Planning Rule / Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities Rule (See 7/18/2024 memo, attached, from Gary Shaff to the Transportation Advisory Committee).

Designing for All Ages and Abilities

We acknowledge that it was the city's oversight not to require the consultant to use **NACTO's document entitled Designing for All Ages and Abilities**. Without that direction, the consultant settled on other standards which are not focused on providing bicycling facilities that are suitable for kids, adults, older adults and people new to bicycling (i.e. people of all ages and abilities). Without that direction, the consultant relied upon alternative standards to ascertain the appropriateness of a bicycle boulevard (i.e. neighborhood greenway).

"Neighborhood greenways should have the majority of drivers traveling at speeds of 25 mph or less (20 mph is preferred). In addition, neighborhood greenways should be designed for motor vehicle volumes under 1,500 vehicles per day, with up to 3,000 vehicles per day allowed in limited sections of a corridor. - NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide"

The NACTO document Designing for all Ages and Abilities includes contextual guidance which aids in determining when a bicycle boulevard is appropriate. As the following graphic shows, it should be designated where 90th percentile speeds are 25 MPH or less and traffic volumes are equal to or less than 2,250 vehicles per day. At 3,000 vehicles per day (the consultant's upper threshold for a bicycle boulevard), NACTO's Designing for all Ages and Abilities suggests either a conventional bike lane or, possibly, a buffered bike lane.

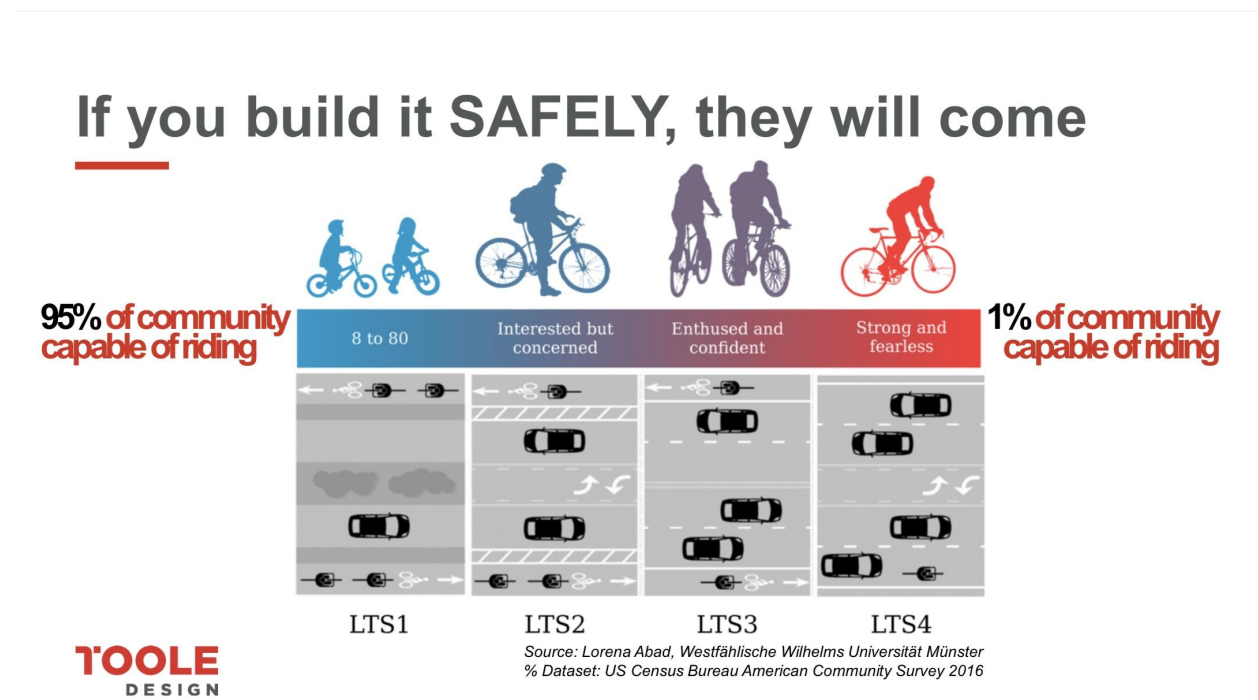


The weekday traffic count between 2nd and 3rd street, according to the draft plan (page 6) is 2,479. That is 10 percent higher than is suitable for an all ages and abilities bicycle boulevard bikeway. The consultant's use of "alternative" thresholds meant that little effort was expended analyzing variations in

speeds and volumes within the B Street corridor. Had they used the Designing for All Ages and Abilities thresholds, they would have focused more effort on the section of “B” between 2nd and 3rd, where volumes exceed 2,250 and 90th percentile speeds exceed 25 MPH. Had the consultant used this reference, it is likely that the consultant would have recommended a different set of priorities and changed the timeframes for improvements.

Level of Traffic Stress

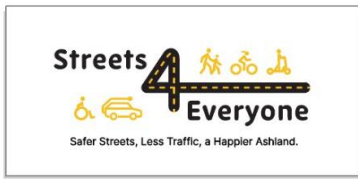
In order for “B” Street to function as a bicycle boulevard, improvements must be made to maintain a **level of traffic stress (LTS)** of one (1). As can be seen from the graphic below, LTS 1 is suitable for people ages 8 to 80. **Attaining LTS 1 on “B” Street corridor will ensure that virtually everyone in Ashland (95% of residents; i.e. people of all ages and abilities) can ride a bicycle safely, conveniently, efficiently and comfortably along the entire length of the corridor.**



Corridor Boundaries

The city erred by not directing the consultant to study the full extent of “B” Street. “B” street extends from North Mountain Avenue to Water Street. The draft plan does not include the block of the “**B” street corridor between Oak Street and Water Street**. It is not mentioned, analyzed or recommended for any improvements.

Water Street is where “B” street ends on the west. It is puzzling why this one-block section of “B” was excluded from the plan. Water Street, based upon observation, meets the standards for a bicycle boulevard; it has both low speeds and low volumes. Further, Water Street connects with Ashland Creek



9/28/2024

Park (a key destination per OAR 660-12-360), on the north and, on the south, to Ashland's downtown, immediately across from the Plaza (also a key destination). That contrasts with traffic characteristics on Oak Street, which has higher speeds and volumes and, will require protected bike lanes. At its southern terminus, Oak Street ends at North Main where traffic must turn south away from the Plaza. Oak Street does not provide direct bicycle access to the Plaza without dismounting your bicycle and becoming a pedestrian.

Excessive street width

The consultant recommends, in the long-term, **relocating the curb** in order to narrow "B" street between 1st and 5th Streets from its current 46 foot curb-to-curb width. On page B3 of the draft plan, the consultant recommends "bringing curbs in to match the 30 foot cross section." The consultant's recommendation is in apparent recognition that the current excessive width—which promotes excessive speed and distracted driving. It should be noted that speed data (preferably 90th percentile speeds) was not collected or not published in the draft plan for the section of "B" Street between 1st and 5th. **This data should be collected and reflected in the plan.**

In any event, the curbs shouldn't be modified. Modifying the location of curbs and gutters entails relocating the storm drains inlets. These "improvements" are very costly. Rather, the cross-section should be modified to include diagonal, back-in parking on the south side of the "B" Street between 1st and 5th Street. The cross-section on "B" with two-way traffic (9.5-foot per travel lane), 45-degree diagonal back-in parking on one side (19 feet), and parallel parking (8 feet) on the other would match the 46-foot curb-to-curb width of "B" Street between 1st and 5th. This cross-section not only narrows the travel lanes but would also increase parking supply by approximately 60 spaces (12 parallel spaces per block face by 8 block faces = 96 total spaces versus 27 diagonal parking spaces on 4 block faces plus 12 parallel per block face on 4 block faces for a total of 156 spaces).

Fee to park

The city should institute a fee for parking in the diagonal parking spaces and allow parking by permit only between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. That approach would ensure that residents in these areas could always find parking (provided they purchased a permit) and parking for downtown employees would be significantly expanded (again, if they or their employer purchased a permit). Ideally, the parking fees would be dedicated to implementing bike and pedestrian improvements.

Center Planting Strip (as an alternative to diagonal parking)

The city could, as an alternative to diagonal parking, add an 11-foot wide **center planting strip** between 1st and 5th Streets. With this design, that portion of "B" could become more beautiful and provide a tree-shaded canopy during Ashland's hot summer months.

Sidewalk in-fill

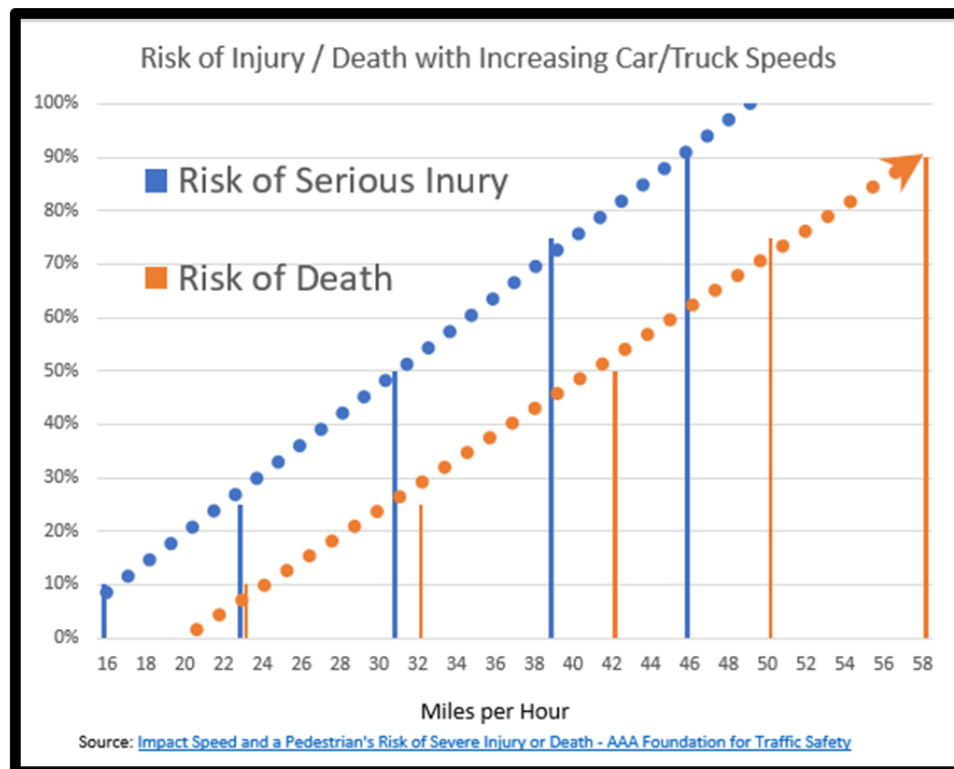
The consultant's recommendation suggests that **sidewalk in-fill** should be a medium or long-term priority. Sidewalk in-fill should be done immediately. Approximately 30 percent of the city's population doesn't drive because:

- 1) they have aged-out of driving,
- 2) are too young to qualify for a driver's license,
- 3) can't drive because of a disability, or
- 4) can't afford the high cost of an automobile.

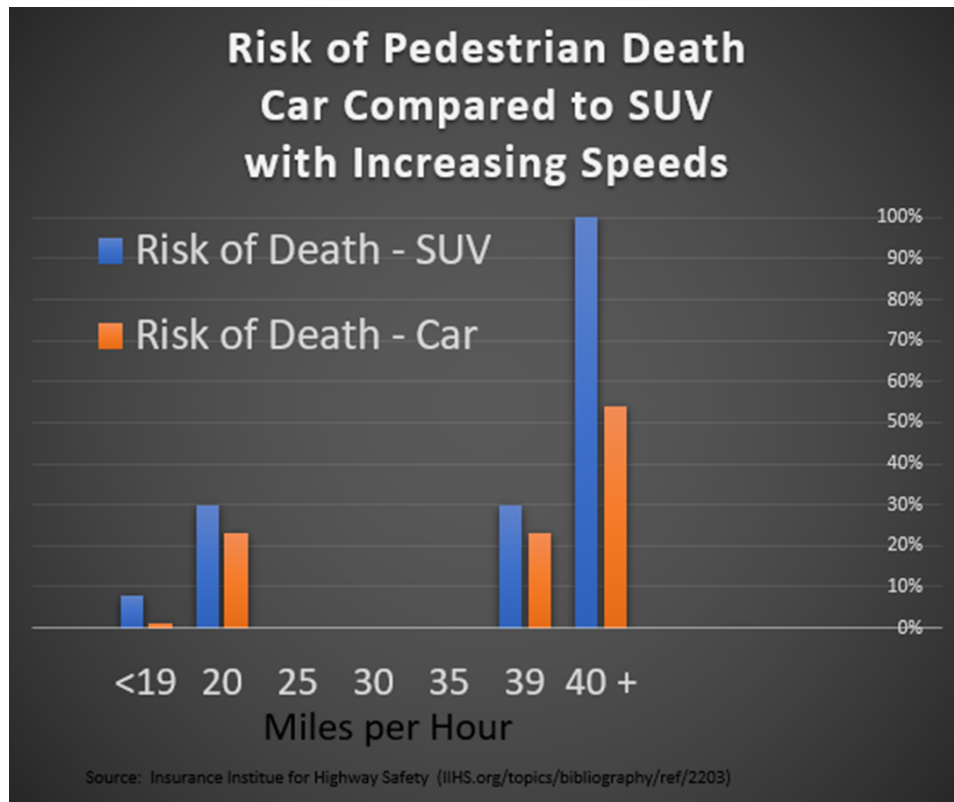
The consultant's recommendation would ignore or postpone addressing these needs for at least three years or possibly more than eight. Sidewalk infill should be a top priority and completed before any other improvement in the corridor is undertaken.

Saving lives (achieving Vision Zero)

Lowering actual **vehicle speeds** (not posted speed) is essential to protect people walking and bicycling. The graphic below illustrates the marked increase in risk of death at speeds greater than 25 MPH. At 20 MPH, however, the risk of a pedestrian death when struck by an automobile is virtually zero. Notably, that is not the case with larger SUV's and pickup trucks which, by the design of the vehicle itself, increases the risk of death for pedestrians when struck by a vehicle traveling at 20 MPH or higher significantly more than smaller vehicles.



“At speeds of 20-39 mph, 3 out of 10 crashes with SUVs (30 percent) resulted in a pedestrian fatality, compared with 5 out of 22 for cars (23 percent). At 40 mph and higher, all three crashes with SUVs killed the pedestrian (100 percent), compared with 7 out of 13 crashes involving cars (54 percent). Below 20 miles per hour there was little difference between the outcomes when pedestrians are struck by either vehicle type.” (Source: [https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/new-study-suggests-todays-suvs-are-more-lethal-to-pedestrians-than-cars#:~:text=At%20speeds%20of%2020%2D39,involving%20cars%20\(54%20percent\)](https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/new-study-suggests-todays-suvs-are-more-lethal-to-pedestrians-than-cars#:~:text=At%20speeds%20of%2020%2D39,involving%20cars%20(54%20percent).)).



Ashlander’s vehicles, in contrast with other metropolitan communities, own a higher proportion of large SUV’s and pickup trucks. The speed limit on B Street, as the consultant suggests, should be reduced to 20 MPH (slower would be better). More importantly, traffic-calming features must be added to ensure that actual vehicle speeds are 20 MPH or less and driver behavior naturally gives priority consideration to bicycles and pedestrians.

Decorative painted crosswalks

The consultant has placed too much faith in **decorative painted crosswalks** as a safety feature and traffic calming device. While they can be relatively cheap and decidedly improve city culture, the safety benefits have not been conclusively shown in the literature documenting their impacts. The consultant’s suggestion of improved safety is poorly supported by the citation used in the draft report. Rather, to achieve the benefits outlined in the report, the first priority for crosswalks should be “raised” not painted, although painting can accompany the raised treatment as well.

The consultant's single citation of the safety benefits of decorative, painted crosswalks notes that the period of analysis "overlapped with periods of reduced volumes due to the Covid-19 pandemic." Further, there were only four of the 17 sites studied that were classified as "residential neighborhood" and all but one of these included sidewalk improvements and/or raised crosswalks. Table 8 of the consultant's cited report shows that three of the four "residential neighborhood sites had no "vulnerable user" crashes; either "before" or "after" the "improvement." The fourth "residential neighborhood" site had a single vulnerable user collision and it occurred in the "after" comparison period." The single source relied upon by the consultant provides too little evidence of tangible safety benefits of decorative, painted crosswalks alone to warrant their inclusion in the B Street Corridor Plan. It is more reasonable to conclude, based upon the consultants cited report, that decorative, painted crossings will have little to no safety benefits for pedestrians, bicyclists, and rollers. It is also probable that decorative, painted crossing will have no impact on vehicle speeds especially at night when most pedestrian deaths occur. Raised (or raised and painted) crosswalks have been documented to accomplish the stated objectives much more effectively.

Night time is when a little more than three-quarters of all pedestrian deaths occur.

(https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_7/nighttime_visibility.cfm#:~:text=The%20nighttime%20fatality%20rate%20on,pedestrian%20fatalities%20occur%20at%20night) Disconcertingly, an October 2019 paper in Accident Analysis and Prevention, found that decorative crosswalks — for example, those painted for Pride month — seem to benefit younger pedestrians more than older pedestrians. (See also <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10792635/>) Ashland's demographics, being skewed toward older people, would seem to warrant a different approach.

Raised crosswalks

The use of **raised crosswalks** (where the intersection is raised to the height of the sidewalk) have multiple benefits including:

- 1) proven speed reduction benefits,
- 2) improved access for all people especially those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices,
- 3) pedestrian safety benefits which have been rigorously documented.

Research shows that raised crosswalks can reduce pedestrian crashes by 45 percent.

(https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/step/docs/TechSheet_RaisedCW_508compliant.pdf) Furthermore, they don't degrade as rapidly as decorative, painted crosswalks. The recently painted crosswalk at the entrance to Lithia Park, which is only a few months old, is already black with tire marks. Raised sidewalks should be constructed everywhere the consultant has suggested a decorative, painted crosswalk and possibly should be used instead of the consultant recommended traffic circles.

Street lighting

The draft report did not include an inventory of **street lighting**. We observed that a single light pole is present at most, but not all, intersections along the "B" street corridor. The only pedestrian scale lighting

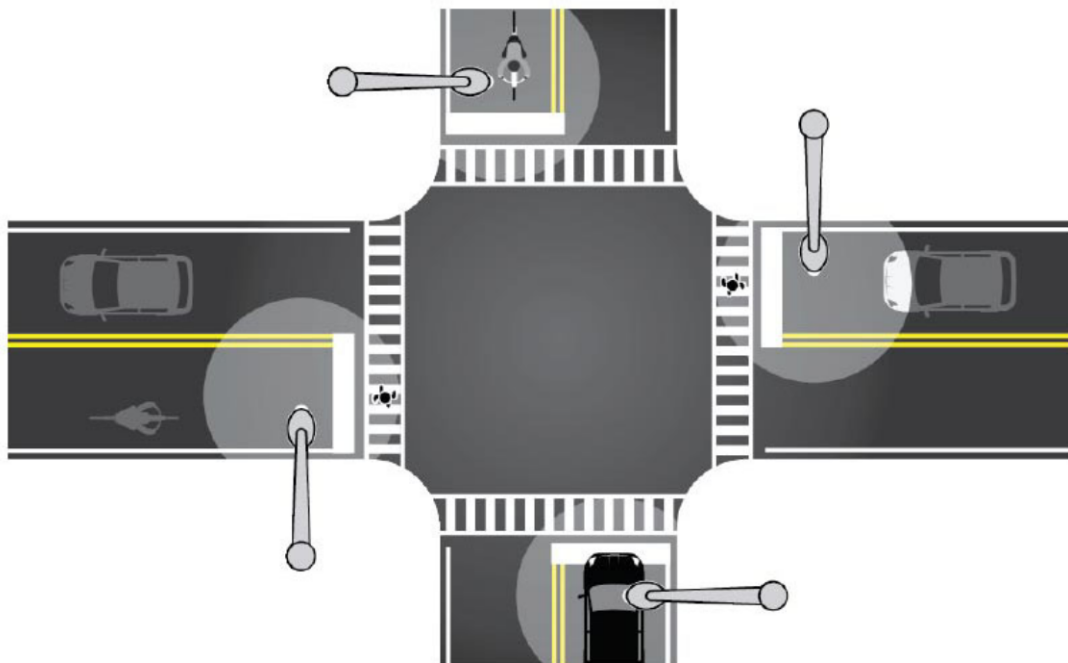
on “B” is between Oak and Pioneer by the Armory. We recommend that pedestrian scale lighting extend from Water

Street to Fifth.

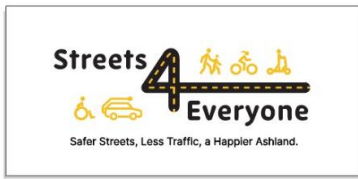
Intersection illumination (via street lights) should be improved at all intersections and, at a minimum, conform to AASHTO’s recommendation.

AASHTO is an American standards agency that publishes specifications and guidelines as well as tests protocols that are used in highway design and construction throughout the country. The current *AASHTO Roadway Lighting Design Guide* (2018) provides a general overview of US lighting systems to guide state transportation departments and recommends minimum design parameters. Based on quantitative predictions using CMFs, AASHTO has concluded that when lighting is installed at intersections, nighttime injury crashes are predicted to be reduced by 38%, and nighttime pedestrian injury crashes reduced by 42%. From these results, along with other studies with similar data, AASHTO strongly recommends luminance or illuminance design methods. The range of recommended illuminances is from 2 lux (0.2 fc) to 17 lux (1.6 fc), and luminances range from 0.2 cd/m² to 1.2 cd/m² depending on the roadway classification, land use, and pavement reflectance. For intersections, AASHTO recommends that key decision points and conflict points be illuminated. The *AASHTO Roadway Lighting Design Guide* also urges lighting designers to consider rendering the pedestrians at intersection crosswalks in positive contrast by placing lighting poles before the crosswalks or lighting the approach side of the crosswalk.

(source: <https://apps.ict.illinois.edu/projects/getfile.asp?id=9812>)



Source: FHWA



9/28/2024

TO: Ashland Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Gary Shaff
Date: 7/18/2024
RE: B Street Corridor Study

Chair Adams and honorable members of the Transportation Advisory Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the development of the B Street Corridor Plan. We regret that we were not aware of and, consequently, didn't attend the June 6th community charete. We would like to take this opportunity to share our recommendations. The following summarizes bicycle and pedestrian needs/requirements and concludes with our recommendations.

Bicycles

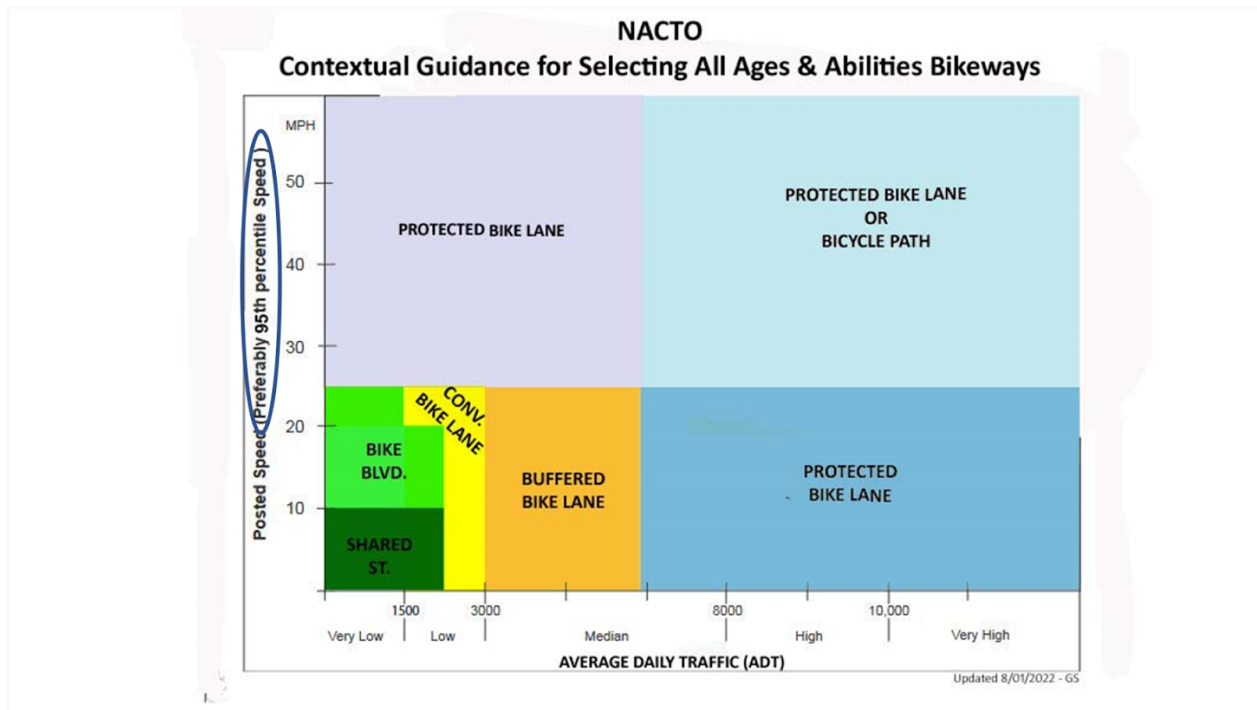
The city has a long-standing commitment to create a bicycle transportation network that is suitable for people of all ages and abilities. Recent projects on Ashland Street and N. Mountain are examples of this commitment.

The B Street corridor has been and will continue to be a crucial segment in the city's bicycle and pedestrian network. It will serve to connect "all ages and abilities" bicycle facilities on N. Mountain and

protected bike lanes on Oak Street, that we anticipate, will replace the shared roadway (sharrows) on Oak Street. Those improvements coupled with improvements on Water Street will provide safe, convenient and efficient access to the Downtown Plaza - the center of cultural and social activities in Ashland (and a key destination per OAR [660-012-0360](#)).

The Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities Rule (Rule) explicitly requires that “cities and counties shall plan for a connected network of bicycle facilities that provides a safe, low stress, direct, and comfortable experience for people of all ages and abilities.” ([OAR 660-12-0600](#))

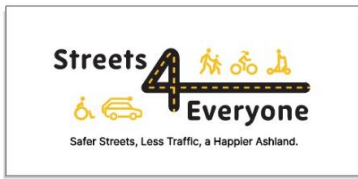
The Rule provides for the use of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) document entitled “[Designing for All Ages and Abilities](#)” (OAR 660-12-610(5)b). Below is a graphical simplification that uses vehicle speeds (y axis) and traffic volumes (x axis) to determine the appropriate “all ages and abilities” bicycle facility designs for city streets.



It is critical that 90 percentile speeds, as recommended by NACTO, be used in establishing bicycle facility designs in the city. That way children, as well as adults with beginner bicycling skills can safely utilize the resulting network.

According to data included in the 1999 Ashland B Street Transportation Plan, Appendix A, “the maximum ADT recorded on B Street is 2,200 vpd and the maximum 85th percentile speed recorded is 25 mph.” There is little doubt that, today, the speeds are higher and traffic volumes have grown.

Pedestrian



9/28/2024

The Rule, OAR [660-12-0500\(2\)](#), requires - “the pedestrian system ...serve people walking and those using mobility devices or other devices that operate at a similar speed and scale as people walking. The pedestrian system is intended to serve most short trips under one mile in cities.” The Rule also requires that “cities or counties must include any part of the complete pedestrian system not presently built to the standard in the complete pedestrian system plan as a gap or deficiency.” (OAR 660-12-0500(4)).

Recommendations

The B Street Corridor Plan should, at a minimum, ensure that:

- 1) traffic volumes throughout the corridor remain under 2,250 ADT, and
- 2) 90th percentile speeds fall below 25 MPH

and thus appropriate for a bicycle boulevard (per NACTO guidance - see graphic above),

- 3) the speed limit, as with other bicycle boulevards in the city, should be set at 20 MPH, and
- 4) continuous ADA accessible sidewalks, including access ramps, should be provided for in the Plan and made a top improvement priority. The mobility needs of people with disabilities and others who don't drive must be fully reflected in the Corridor Plan.