

To: Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI)

From: Tim Rooney, Board member, Winston Downs Community Association

RE: Comments on proposed revision to Denver Moves 2015 recommended bikeways map

Date: December 15, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed revisions to Denver's 2015 bikeways map. WDCA's prior experience working with DOTI on a bike lane construction project in our neighborhood was needlessly difficult. There was no opportunity for feedback on the project design or route between the time when DOTI originally recommended the bike lane for implementation and the time, approximately five years later, when DOTI informed WDCA that it intended to build the project as recommended.

The project as originally proposed extended East/West from the existing bike path on S. Kearney to S. Quebec Street. There were significant route and design flaws with the project and it had to be rescoped, but only after WDCA and other local stakeholders (e.g., Denver Green School) had to spend months pointing out the challenges with the proposed design. Among other things, a WDCA task force found mistakes in research submitted and assumptions about where sidewalks emptied out into Quebec. There was no guarantee that design changes would have resulted from our input and this would have caused major safety and traffic problems in our neighborhood. We do not wish to repeat this experience again.

DOTI's strategy for siting bikeways for the 2015 bike map was to build infrastructure so that all residents were within a two minute (a quarter mile) of a safe and comfortable bikeway. The proposed map appears in many ways to be a continuation and expansion of this strategy.

Denver (and our community) would be better served by a more open-ended discussion with DOTI on how it can best serve both the needs of bicyclists and residents. It is clear that the spacing of bike lanes is not the only (and is likely not the most significant) barrier to increasing the number of vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) by bike and/or on foot and enhancing safety. Ultimately, increasing VMT by bike and improving safety are the end goals, not construction of bike lane miles. A "build it and they will come" siting strategy does not address the major safety challenges associated with a north-south bike route in Southeast Denver. Few residents will choose bicycling as a transportation mode when faced with the daunting challenge of crossing Alameda, 6th Avenue, 8th Avenue, 13th, Avenue, 14th Avenue, Colfax and beyond by bicycle. Would cyclists be better served by concentrating investment on fewer, safer routes? We have received specific feedback on this issue from residents in our neighborhood who are avid cyclists.

We would like DOTI to be successful in meeting its goal of safely moving more people to more active, sustainable transportation modes. This may require rethinking its strategy for siting and building specific routes to best serve the most users. We have not yet seen data on the performance of DOTI's bike lane siting strategy to date. Selection and prioritization of bike lanes needs to be based on actual performance data collected for existing projects on metrics that count and discussions with the bike community.

Initial concerns we have currently for the proposed routes that would directly impact our neighborhood:

S. Monaco Parkway: There is no information on how a bike lane would safely be sited on the street or sidewalks on this major arterial. Available space for sidewalks is limited and the cost and feasibility of expanding them appears to be questionable. Reducing space available for car and bus traffic on this already congested route does not seem to be a viable option. A neighborhood bikeway that is substantially safer already exists on nearby Kearney Street.

S. Oneida Street (from Leetsdale to Alameda): While we see that a North/South bike route could provide access to communities south of Leetsdale to the Denver Green School, there are major safety issues associated with crossing Leetsdale and serious issues of criminality on the staircase running north from Leetsdale to our neighborhood. There has been one recent murder, many other crimes, and widespread homeless encampments in this area. Eliminating parking on one or both sides of this street will not address these safety issues and would not be justified based on the small number of people that would be served. Improving the safety and security of the staircase should be a goal in its own right, however.

WDCA can't support the recommended bicycle routes because there is insufficient information on the design for these routes and no process for reviewing the design and obtaining the valuable input of our community and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of the proposed route. Plus, we have significant concerns about the siting strategy being used to meet the end goals of increasing cyclist safety and use of alternative transportation modes.

We would appreciate specific feedback on how DOTI intends to proceed based on our input. Please do not hesitate to call or email to discuss further.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'TR', with a stylized flourish underneath.

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