

Just Say NO!!!

- **No more “bicycle friendly” conversions of critical traffic corridors**
- **No more “pedestrian friendly” installations that really are intended to disrupt traffic**
- **Make our streets functional, not the plaything of special interest groups**
- **Maintain traffic throughput – “Cars” are not the enemy – wastrel public officials are**
- **Quit wasting money with incessant planning and public schemes that serve no greater purpose than change for change sake and for special interests’ sake**

There are two sides to this Nickerson Street project, one is the special interest/self interest that drives it, and the other is the part it plays in the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement project. The one side, this special/self interest side is an anathema to government for and by the people, and the other is about city government trying to pull a fast one on the public.

Side One: Self Interested Officials and Their Friends

Seattle's citizens are increasingly being subjected to changes in the city which are not publicly mandated or driven by citizen-based directives. Instead, such things as the changes proposed to Nickerson Street are being driven by interests that exist outside of the city's normal municipal fabric, they represent extremely one-sided agendas, are self-serving, in many cases altogether self-interested, and most to one degree or another tend to create little to no overall public value.

These City of Seattle changes are being facilitated through carefully thought out and implemented propaganda campaigns. SDOT in particular has become very masterful at these public manipulation extravaganzas, the now ubiquitous “public hearing”, the colorful and copious charts, maps and other visual presentations, and the extensive use in all printed, electronic, and oral presentations of terms such as “sustainability”, “green”, “save the planet”, “climate change”.

These terms in particular are used because they have come to be so inculcated into the public's consciousness, and so loaded with certain meanings, that public officials know they can rely upon them to provide legitimacy, even if it is pseudo-legitimacy, for what they want to do. These terms are also used by SDOT and others in the City to gain acceptance for their transportation/street projects. Who wants to openly oppose a project if it means that they are going cause the planet to be lost, or that opposition means they aren't showing concern for how people can live sustainably?

The other side of this coin is “who” and “what” is driving Seattle's transportation agendas. Again it isn't citizens, it is a combination of interests, first and foremost about City officials and their acolytes seeking personal aggrandizement, and, as strange as it may sound, about the City government pandering with its initiatives and programs to professional or special-interest communities, social clubs, associations and the like. These organizations which have little to no relevance in terms of how we citizens live our day-to-day lives, in how we want our city to be maintained and/or have it evolve.

They do not or do not necessarily reflect what civic values or beliefs we hold near and dear and/or look askance at. However they now drive much of the City of Seattle's transportation projects, its urban planning, its legislative agendas.

Most if not all of the City's officials, elected and appointed, and many administrators belong to some professional organization, some group that is related to their job. It is the affiliations that City officials have with these organizations and associations which I think is providing a great deal of motivation for what agendas are pushed in this City. These agendas are not arising out of just the sense of affinity one has for the agenda of an organization to which one belongs, but they are arising out of a desire on the part of individuals to be a strong proponent of the organization's agenda because oftentimes if not most of the time, it leads to being recognized for that advocacy work if you will, and receiving all kinds of accolades and kudos by the organization in question.

The mayor is particularly taken with this sort advocacy/recognition paradigm, that is essentially a quid pro quo system. One only has to look through the news releases he puts out, the news reports about him. Many of them center around "the City" receiving some award or recognition, meaning the mayor receives some award or another, some recognition for "the work he is doing in the city".

A typical accolade is this one from the last month: "Seattle Honored as Gold-Level Bicycle Friendly Community - Award recognizes city's significant bicycling commitment and investments. At the international Pro Walk/ Pro Bike Conference today, Mayor Greg Nickels was presented with a gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community award by the League of American Bicyclists. The award recognizes Seattle's commitment to, and investment in, improving conditions for bicyclists."

The release goes on to say, "A strong advocacy community, including the Cascade Bicycle Club and the long-standing Bicycle Advisory Committee, supports Seattle's active and diverse bicycling culture. This, coupled with the investment by city government and local businesses, has pushed Seattle to be recognized as a gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community. Seattle joins the prestigious company of San Francisco, Boulder, Colo., and Madison, Wis., at the gold-level.

Such recognition at the street level is practically meaningless, it isn't about the public as a whole, it doesn't give us one dime more to buy groceries, it doesn't make our children smarter, or our lives better. In fact, it is costing us, we have to literally pay for the agenda that leads to this sort of thing, for the planning, and for the capital improvements that follow these agendas, and we have to pay with the disruption to our lives, including real and intrinsic disruption.

In the short and long run, what does the average citizen in Seattle care about their city being declared "bicycle friendly", by a special interest lobbying organization in Washington, D.C.?

There are many more such examples that could be cited, but for the purposes of this Nickerson Street reconfiguration project, the point is it is being driven by an extremely narrow interest, bicyclists and City officials, it is about turning Nickerson Street into a "bicycle friendly" corridor, that benefits an almost infinitesimal portion of the city's population, while at the same time it inconveniences the majority of those people who rely on a motor vehicle to carry out their day-to-day activities through this important transportation corridor.

Such an inequitable and unconscionable use of our City's resources, which belong to the public, is unacceptable. You are encouraged to just say "No!" to this project, and demand that more appropriate transportation uses and projects be paid attention to by the City, including fixing if nothing else the innumerable potholes that plague our streets. Everything can't be a grand and glorious public relations opportunity and it shouldn't be. The citizens deserve better for the tax dollars they pay into the City.

Side Two: Gridlock and Congestion Oh My!

From: Elizabeth Campbell [campbell.beth@comcast.net]

Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2009 12:05 PM

To: 'campbell.beth@comcast.net'

Subject: Sea Change to Nickerson Street - More Artificially Induced Gridlock and Congestion Before and Post-Viaduct Tear Down

Dear All,

This is beyond baloney, putting Nickerson Street on what SDOT and its Biking-at-all costs enforcement agency smugly and snickeringly¹ refer to as a “road diet” – turning Nickerson into a very constricted two lane roadway, causing a 50% reduction in its capacity!

For those of you who did not attend, Magnolia’s recent “You’ll Love the Tunnel” meeting, put on by SDOT, KCDOT and WSDOT, Nickerson Street was touted by these department of transportation people as one of the fine alternative routes they had come up with to solve the throughput capacity reduction they are planning for Magnolians and its neighbors when the tunnel is built (see map right).

Nickerson was boldly highlighted on two different SDOT maps as a preferred, major SDOT alternative route that Magnolians and their neighbors should plan to use in a post-Viaduct era, to access I-5 and other thoroughfares east and south. It was particularly underscored on these maps and by SDOT’s reps at the meeting that Nickerson, to use SDOT’s words, was an “important freight connection” for maintaining Ballard’s and Interbay’s freight mobility needs.

It was Nickerson Street that SDOT’s representative, with a straight face, and in light of this now recent disclosure about reconfiguring Nickerson, he bold facedly lied by omission about Nickerson being this viable alternative for Magnolians to use when the Viaduct was gone. Let’s be honest, and SDOT needs to be honest, planning for this sea change in Nickerson Street did not start February 13th, the day after the Magnolia meeting. How come if the City that claims it is so interested in sharing with its citizens its transportation plans, and, particularly how it is so interested in hearing what the public has to say about those plans, makes zero mention of this sea change to Nickerson at the Magnolia meeting on the 12th, or even at the tunnel information meeting in Ballard yesterday (February 23rd)?

It is reprehensible and inconceivable this project. I for one am appalled at (and very tired of) both the arrogance and the duplicity of these traffic planners and their departments. No one from SDOT or the City explains how they can pump up the housing density volumes in Ballard, at Interbay, all through the 15th Avenue corridor, and at the same time create more and more chokepoints throughout the street corridors that serve these areas.

The fact of the matter is SDOT and the City officials care little about the free flow of the legal, legitimate, daily vehicle throughput, about the domestic commerce of citizens. Instead they conspire to rob or deprive of us our freedom of movement. Locally, SDOT is systematically constricting main thoroughfares and transportation corridors throughout the City, it is attempting to if not grid lock our streets, to at least so disfigure, disrupt, and constrict them that people will cease to freely use them. In the bargain it is using a special interest, the “bicyclist” interest, as its excuse, using it as a gateway population for this activity, followed up by the City’s pretentious claims that it is saving us all from climate change with these projects.

SDOT can pump out all the shiny maps and posters about this Nickerson Street project it wants, it can treat us to the overload of transportation planning-speak (it refers to the Nickerson project as “rechannelization”), send all its erudite



appearing “planners” to coax us into believing that this is for our own good, that there won’t be any reduction in capacity, but the fact of the matter is, SDOT/the City is saving us from nothing! Instead what it is doing is ushering in this special form of tyranny via its civic hubris, aided and abetted by artificially induced congestion and gridlock. It is seeking to obstruct mobility, freedom of movement, and it is installing and giving authority to its proxy, the bicyclists, to explicitly or implicitly do its dirty work at street level, disrupting the free flow of traffic in Seattle.

Truly, if you were one of those who objected to the BAT (Bus) lanes that were established in 2008 on both sides of Elliott Avenue West and Fifteenth Avenue West, or if you dealt with the Queen Anne traffic reconfigurations that have been on-going for the last few years, then you should absolutely howl that this is to be done to Nickerson.

The point is, “maybe” this transformation of the Nickerson Street corridor will not be *too* burdensome and onerous now (although I for one don’t believe that, I drive through there twice a day), but wait until the Viaduct is torn out. You can be sure that Nickerson *will not be resurrected* in its present configuration as a four lane thoroughfare, it will not be restored period. It will be kept to two lanes, SDOT will care less that traffic is congested and impeded in that corridor, because it is being done by intentionally. It is part of the City of Seattle’s illegitimate, unmitigated war on cars, and like it or not, it is by extension, and/or directly a form of war on its citizens.

The City has no mandate to do this, and if it expects to spend billions of dollars, of taxpayer money on its tunnel, it better provide *viable* mitigation for its actions in that regard, including but not limited to maintaining existing vehicle capacity on all major local transportation corridors. Anything less is unacceptable!

Forward this to whomever you will - call, write and object *loudly* to City officials, that enough is enough of this malarkey by the City and by SDOT in particular. Please also plan to attend SDOT’s meeting regarding this project, Wednesday, March 4th, and disavow SDOT planners that their continued disregard for the public’s free access to and use of the city streets is unacceptable. Now is also a good time to visit the website of www.yesviaduct.com, to download and print a copy of the petition to stop the tunnel from being constructed, and to sign it and get others to sign it. The time has never been more critical to bring a halt to this runaway train wreck known as Seattle Transportation Planning 101 – the Urban “Mobility” and Bicycle Plans.

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