



FOR COUNCIL MEETING OF:  
AGENDA ITEM NO.:  
PUBLIC WORKS FILE NO.:

November 9, 2009  
8 (b)

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
THROUGH:  LINDA NORRIS, CITY MANAGER  
FROM: PETER FERNANDEZ, P.E., PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR   
SUBJECT: RESTRIPING COMMERCIAL STREET NE/SE BETWEEN  
MARION STREET NE AND TRADE STREET SE

**ISSUE:**

Shall the City Council approve restriping Commercial Street NE/SE, between Marion Street NE and Trade Street SE, from four travel lanes to three travel lanes?

Shall the City Council also approve installing shared lane bicycle pavement markings, called "sharrows," on the outside travel lanes of Commercial Street NE/SE?

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that Council approve the restriping of Commercial Street NE/SE from four lanes to three lanes between Marion Street NE and Trade Street SE (Attachment 1). Staff also recommends that Council approve the installation of "sharrows" in the two outside lanes.

**BACKGROUND:**

The portion of Commercial Street within downtown Salem has contained four travel lanes with angle parking on both sides of the street for more than 80 years. In 1964, there was documented concern about safety related to the four narrow nine-foot-wide lanes on Commercial Street and the impact of angle parking. The Citizen Advisory Traffic Committee (CATC) reviewed a letter from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) that stated that ODOT would continue to stripe Commercial Street with four lanes (Commercial Street was a State Highway at that time) until the parking issue of parallel versus angle was resolved. At the request of Council in 1995, a study was conducted to determine the impact of providing longer angled parking spaces to prevent larger vehicles from blocking the travel lanes. The Parking District Board decision was to leave things unchanged.

The 2008 Streets and Bridges Bond has provided funding to repave Commercial Street NE/SE from Marion Street NE to Trade Street SE in summer 2010. As part of this project, the Vision 2020 Bicycle and Pedestrian Working Group recommended staff consider restriping Commercial Street from four lanes to three lanes to make room for a

bicycle lane. Subsequent discussions focused on installing sharrows, either in conjunction with a bicycle lane, or instead of a bicycle lane.

Sharrows are a pavement marking (see Attachment 2) that indicates a section of roadway that is deemed a shared space for both cars and bicycles. Their primary purposes are to encourage bicyclists to ride away from the door zone next to on-street parking, and to encourage drivers to pass cyclists with adequate space. The sharrow consists of a bicycle marking with two chevrons above it. Sharrows have been used in a number of cities throughout the United States and have been installed in a number of cities in Oregon, including Portland, Eugene, and Corvallis.

The *Salem Transportation System Plan (Salem TSP)*, Bicycle System Element, does not identify Commercial Street, from Marion Street NE to Trade Street SE, as having a striped bicycle lane. However, there is no policy in the Salem TSP that would prohibit the installation of sharrows.

### **FACTS AND FINDINGS:**

Commercial Street NE/SE is classified as a Major Arterial Street with a 99-foot right-of-way. The curb-to-curb width is 71 feet in the section between Union Street NE to Ferry Street SE. Between Ferry Street SE and Trade Street SE, the curb to curb width is 58 feet wide. Generally, there is angle parking on both sides of the street, except in the block between Ferry Street SE and Trade Street SE.

#### **Three lanes verses four lanes**

Staff conducted traffic counts on Commercial Street NE/SE in October 2008. Based on traffic operational modeling, the traffic volumes that currently exist can be accommodated in three lanes. The traffic modeling was also performed assuming a five percent growth in future traffic volumes. The future traffic can also be accommodated in the proposed three lanes.

On Commercial Street NE/SE, between Union Street NE and Trade Street SE, traffic volumes range between 12,000 and 17,000 vehicles per day. Of that, a majority of traffic, 70 percent to 80 percent of the traffic volume, use the two center travel lanes. Fewer vehicles use the far left lane because every two blocks that lane is a left-turn only lane. Fewer vehicles use the far right lane because parked vehicles regularly extend into that lane, forcing vehicle into the center lanes.

#### **Bicycle lanes verses sharrows**

Originally, staff supported the installation of a bicycle lane. A six-foot-wide bicycle lane was proposed along the west side of the street between the outside travel lane and the angled on-street parking. However, during the course of a number of public meetings, it

was determined that there was little support for a striped bicycle lane on Commercial Street.

The advantage of a bicycle lane is that it provides bicyclists with their own space to travel down the street. The bicycle lane would connect from the new bicycle corridor along Chemeketa Street NE to the existing bicycle lanes on Trade Street SE and on Commercial Street to the south. A bicycle lane behind angle parking has existed on Winter Street SE (between State Street and Bellevue Parkway) since the early 1980s with no safety problems.

The disadvantages of a bicycle lane on this portion of Commercial Street are that bicyclists will want to be in other travel lanes so that they can make turns onto other streets as they circulate through downtown. There also will be limited visibility for drivers to see bicycles as they back out of an angle parking space, and limited visibility of bicyclists to see vehicles backing out of a parking space.

The bicycle shop owners and representatives supported sharrows versus a bicycle lane. The bicycle shop owners preferred sharrows because they allow more flexibility and circulation options for the bicyclist in a downtown setting. They recognize that the traffic volumes are high, but the vehicle speeds are low so a bicycle can easily use a travel lane. Therefore the bicyclist can choose the lane that best suits their need. They like using sharrows as a means of notifying the vehicle drivers that bicyclists may be using the travel lanes.

## **Public Involvement**

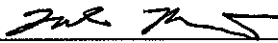
Usually, traffic control changes are items that are discussed at neighborhood associations and/or at the Citizen Advisory Traffic Commission (CATC). However, because the proposal involves a major arterial street running through downtown, additional public meetings and contacts were conducted.

The following is a listing of the public meetings held to discuss the issues and options:

- Summer 2008
  - Restriping to three lanes and providing a bicycle lane was first developed within the Vision 2020 work group.
- March 2009
  - Idea was presented at the Vision 2020 Open House, held at the Salem Conference Center. A computer simulation of the proposed restriping was played as well as a sharrows striping displayed.

- May 2009
  - Meetings with the Mid-Willamette Valley Chapter of the Bicycle Transportation Alliance and an informal meeting with a few members of the Downtown Advisory Board (DAB did not have a quorum). Support for restriping to three lanes and adding bicycle lanes were received from both groups.
- June 2009
  - A public open house was held. Approximately 800 notifications were mailed to businesses and property owners in the downtown area. A press release was issued. Door-to-door notice was hand delivered to businesses the day prior to the event. Attendance at the open house was estimated at 35 people.
  - CAN-DO Board Meeting voted to endorse the proposed restriping and installation of a bicycle lane.
  - Salem Bicycle Club outreach presentation, no recommendation.
  - Downtown Advisory Board (DAB) voted to endorse the restriping and installation of bicycle lane.
- July 2009
  - GO Downtown presentation. Questions raised about safety and need of bicycle lane. Staff was asked to talk with bicycle shop owners. Concerns about traffic capacity with one less lane. No formal recommendation made about restriping or bicycle lane, but there was little support for restriping or bicycle lane. There was a separate questionnaire circulated to businesses.
- August 2009
  - Second GO Downtown presentation. Traffic capacity was main topic. No recommendation, but general understanding that three lanes can support traffic volumes. No support for a bicycle lane.
  - Meeting with bicycle shop owners and representatives. They supported sharrows verses a bicycle lane. Supported restriping to three lanes.
- September 2009
  - DAB meeting to talk about GO Downtown meetings and concerns, and to present alternative option of sharrows verses bicycle lane. DAB asked staff for additional outreach; specifically to ask businesses if they support three wider lanes to improve parking and safety and that sharrows would be recommended verses a bicycle lane.

- October 2009
  - Citizen Advisory Traffic Commission (CATC) voted to support restriping to three lane with the installation of sharrows. Minutes are attached in Appendix 3.
  - Survey was delivered to 79 businesses on Commercial Street and on the nearby side streets. A total of 34 responses were received. There was general support for restriping to three lanes. Survey and results are contained in Attachment 4.
  - DAB presented with survey results. Voted to amend previous decision from supporting restriping to three lanes and adding a bicycle lane, to supporting restriping to three lanes and adding sharrows. Minutes attached in Attachment 5.

  
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Mark Becketl, AICP  
Parks and Transportation Services Manager

Attachments:

1. Commercial Street NE/SE Restriping Plan
2. Sharrow Pavement Marking
3. CATC Minutes of October 2009 Meeting
4. Restriping Survey and Results, October 2009
5. Downtown Advisory Board Meeting Minutes of October 2009

Wards: 1 and 2

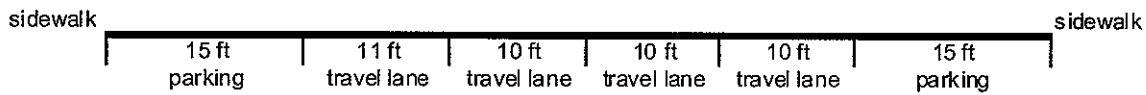
Prepared by: Kevin Hottmann, P.E., City Traffic Engineer

## Attachment 1

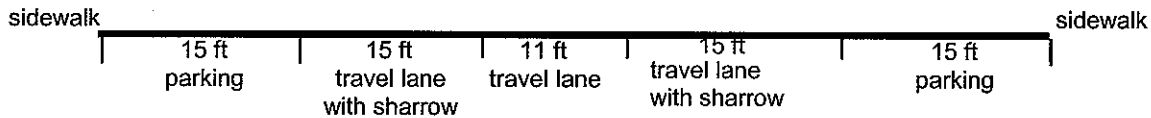
### Commercial Street NE/SE Striping

As part of the 2008 Streets and Bridges Bond Measure, the City will be repaving Commercial Street from Marion Street south through the downtown core. This presents an opportunity to modify the striping to address on-going concerns with the lack of bicycle facilities in downtown and concerns relating to oversized vehicles extending into travel lanes when parked in the angled parking spots. The proposed striping provides three wider lanes with sharrow on both outside lanes and allows more room for larger vehicles to park.

#### Existing Southbound Commercial Street (Typical)



#### Proposed Southbound Commercial Street (Typical)



## Attachment 2

### Commercial Street NE/SE Sharrows

A sharrow is a pavement marking (pictured here) that indicates a section of roadway that is deemed a shared space for both cars and bicycles. Shared+Road+Arrows=Sharrows.



**Attachment 3**

**CITIZENS ADVISORY TRAFFIC COMMISSION**

**October 1, 2009**

Members Present: Ellen Miller, Miles Adams, Gary Obery, Gary Lockwood, Roger Trygstad, Tim Hay, Christopher Hackett, James Gavin

Members Absent: Bill Rothrock

Staff Present: Kevin Hottmann, City Traffic Engineer, Tony Martin, Assistant City Traffic Engineer, Dave Kinney, Traffic Engineering Assistant

1. Kevin Hottmann, City Traffic Engineer, presented the proposed design of restriping of Commercial Street SE/NE from Marion Street NE to Trade Street SE after the planned overlay of this section of Commercial Street.

Discussion:

CATC Member Trygstad moved to recommend restriping plan from four lanes to three lanes.

CATC Member Miller seconded the motion.

VOTE passed unanimously

Mr. Hottmann continued the discussion regarding adding of bike lanes, sharrows, or neither.

CATC Member Miller moved to recommend sharrows.

CATC Member Obery seconded the motion.

Vote passed unanimously

2. New Business:

- a. CATC Member Obery asked that streets used by bicyclists and those with bike lanes be considered when prioritizing streets for overlay projects.
- b. Chairman Lockwood asked Staff to consider reducing the speed limit on portions of River Road S.

Mr. Hottmann agreed to do a speed study and to forward information to CATC on how to ODOT establishes speed limits on all roads in Oregon.

- c. Discussed future addenda items.

## Attachment 4

### Street Pavement Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Projects

#### Commercial Street Restriping

#### Merchant Opinion

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback on the following questions. Go Downtown Salem and the City of Salem are interested in your opinion on the following proposal. City staff will be presenting the proposal at a public hearing at City Council on November 9. It is our goal to provide you with information in advance of this public hearing.

**PROPOSAL:** To restripe Commercial Street from 4 lanes to 3 lanes.

#### INFORMATION:

- Commercial Street between Marion and Trade Streets is scheduled for repaving in 2010.
- This will provide an opportunity to improve traffic and parking efficiencies and safety.
- There will be **no** changes to existing parking spaces.
- Bike “sharrows” pavement markings may be added in the restriping plan. A bike lane is no longer recommended.
- Traffic count studies indicate the lane on the furthest west side (the fourth lane) carries 11% of the total traffic on Commercial St.
- A ten year traffic forecast utilizing a 5% growth rate was taken into consideration.
- Commercial Street south of Trade is already three lanes. Commercial at Marion is three through lanes and a forced left turn.
- The left turn only lane at State Street will be eliminated. Left turns will still be allowed from the thru/left turn lane.

#### REASONS TO CHANGE:

- Currently, backing into traffic from the diagonal parking spots is difficult due to restricted visibility.
- Three lanes will allow more space behind parked vehicles improving visibility and safety.
- There have been numerous requests from citizens to improve the safety of existing parking.
- Often oversized vehicles extend into the adjacent travel lane impeding traffic flow.
- Three lanes of traffic will improve traffic flow efficiencies and provide wider lanes.
- The queuing traffic model predicts this change will improve efficiencies and not increase congestion on Commercial Street.
- A portion of the bicycle community has advocated for sharrows rather than a dedicated bike lane.
- On September 3, 2009, during First Wednesday, there was an opportunity to test the efficiency of 3 lanes. The west lane at Chemeketa was closed from 3pm to 6 pm. There was no evidence of increased congestion even through the peak hour of commute time.

**MERCHANT OPINION QUESTIONNAIRE: 34 out of 79 surveys returned**

1. Do you believe there is a need to increase safety for diagonal parking on Commercial Street?  Yes  No.  
**23 yes, 10 no**
  
2. Do you believe providing additional space behind a diagonally parked vehicle will allow more visibility and safety when merging back into traffic?  Yes  No.  
**25 yes, 8 no**
  
3. Do you believe parked cars backing into the flow of traffic and extended length parked vehicles impede the flow of traffic on Commercial Street?  Yes  No.  
**24 yes, 9 no**
  
4. Would elimination of the right hand lane for vehicle traffic and providing additional space to diagonal parking decrease the efficient flow of automobile traffic?  Yes  No.  
**17 yes, 14 no, 2 no response**
  
5. Would the reduction of four lanes of vehicle traffic to three lanes have an impact on your business?  Yes, a negative impact  Yes, a positive impact.  No impact  Undecided.  
**5 yes negative impact, 2 yes positive impact, 17 no impact, 8 undecided, 2 no response**
  
6. Would improving the safety of diagonal parking on Commercial Street have an impact on your business?  Yes, a negative impact  Yes, a positive impact  No impact.  Undecided.  
**1 yes negative impact, 9 yes positive impact, 15 no impact, 8 undecided**
  
7. Do you support the restriping of Commercial Street from four lanes to three lanes in order to improve the safety of parking and improve traffic efficiencies?  Yes  No  Need more information.  
**23 yes, 9 no, 1 need more information**

Additional Comments?

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Thank you for your feedback. We will collect the surveys on Wednesday October 21, 2009.

Please attend the City Council Hearing on November 9<sup>th</sup> if you can.

## Attachment 5

### DOWNTOWN ADVISORY BOARD ACTION SHEET

#### ISSUE:

Commercial Street Striping

#### DATE OF DECISION:

October 22, 2009

#### KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

Kevin Hottmann returned with more information on the proposed Commercial Street Striping. He distributed a handout outlining Merchant Opinion in regard to restriping Commercial Street from four lanes to three lanes.

Go Downtown! Salem helped prepare a survey and distributed them to downtown merchants. Thirty four of 79 were returned. Results indicate a bike lane is not supported, but there is support for three lanes, vs. four lanes.

Staff will be going to City Council with a recommendation to restripe to three lanes which will include Sharrows.

Ms Peterson requested the Board table this decision until the end of the meeting to allow Mr Hottmann a chance to talk to police officers regarding their opinions on the traffic. The Board agreed, and Mr Hottmann excused himself to gather the requested information.

At the end of the Board meeting, Mr Hottmann returned after talking to Sergeant Tony Moore. Sergeant Moore expressed support for wider lands to provide vehicles more room to make choices, and to allow larger trucks to make wide turns more easily. He preferred not have a bike lane.

#### ACTION TAKEN:

Ms Peterson **made a motion** to support staff recommendation. The motion was **seconded** and **passed** unanimously.