

Central Area Traffic Tamers Tour

Saturday, February 28, 2004 - 9:30 AM



Twenty-seven people (including two babies) and a dog met at Bailey Gatzert Elementary school. Our group included residents, property owners, and community leaders from Squire Park and Yesler Terrace, the Seattle Dept. of Transportation (SDOT) artist-in-residence, Harborview Injury Prevention team members, the chair of the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board, and Feet First members. We spent two hours scouring the southwest corner of the Central Area. Additional walks in other portions of the area will be planned. Please contact us if you'd like to join us.

These "Traffic Tamers Tour notes" list the problems we observed on the tour and highlight some possible improvements.

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KEY: There are four categories of items in these notes:



(1) what neighbors can do right now (green dot).



(2) possible with existing funding resources (blue dot),

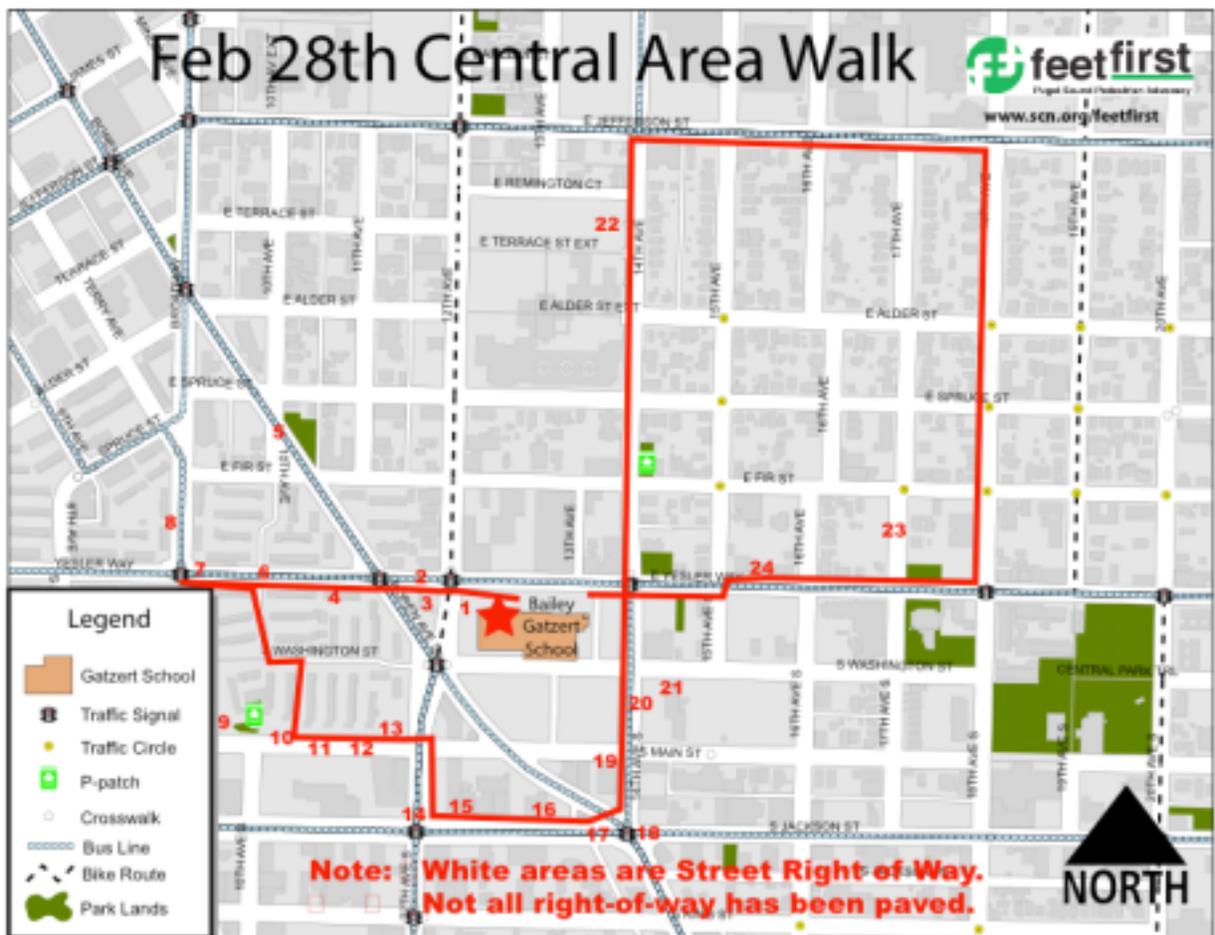


(3) problems that demand new pedestrian funding or policies (purple dot). Neighborhood organizing, contacting leaders, making phone calls, requesting policy changes, and



(4) general interest items.

Map of our Route through the Southeast Corner of the Central Area





1. Goat Trail.

This “goat trail” at the NW corner of Bailey Gatzert School shows that people want to find the shortest way between two points. That makes a walk interesting, but in this case, muddy. It would be nice if the school paved this to keep children free from mud and slipping. The stand of trees creates a nice visual barrier at the edge of 12th Avenue.

2. Sidewalks should be a minimum of six feet wide, but in many places, wider is better. This is an example of a location that deserves better. This is near the school and on Yesler, which is one of the city’s important pedestrian routes.



This photo also shows textured concrete crosswalks. SDOT has piloted a new design which includes a swath of smooth surface in the center while retaining the brick-like pattern at the sides. This new style is not being incorporated in the 12th Avenue improvements under construction, but it will be available for future projects.



3. Someone had to point out this sign.

The triangle of land at Yesler-Boren-12th Ave just looks like a closed gas station to the uneducated eye. Joe Lloyd ran a heating oil business out of this old ARCO station from 1961 through 1995. The future of this parcel is in the hands of a real estate agent. For a history of the parcel see:

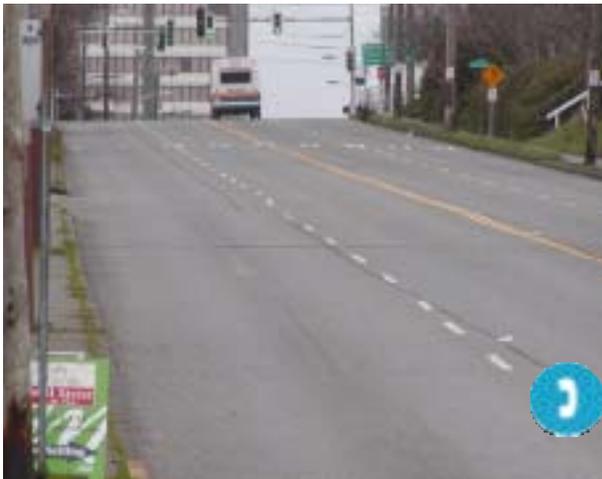
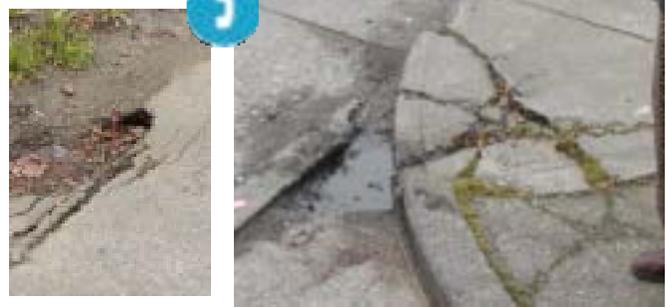
<http://www.nograffiti.com/files/files6/survival.htm>

This location is an important gateway to the community. What are your ideas for what it could be?



4. Sidewalk Maintenance.

Sidewalks should have no cracks larger than one-half inch wide, high, or deep. If a sidewalk has these problems, you can report it to the city. Repair is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. Phone 684-5377 to report an area that needs an inspection. These areas appeared out of compliance. Patching can be done with concrete or asphalt.



5. Boren Mid-block Crossing.

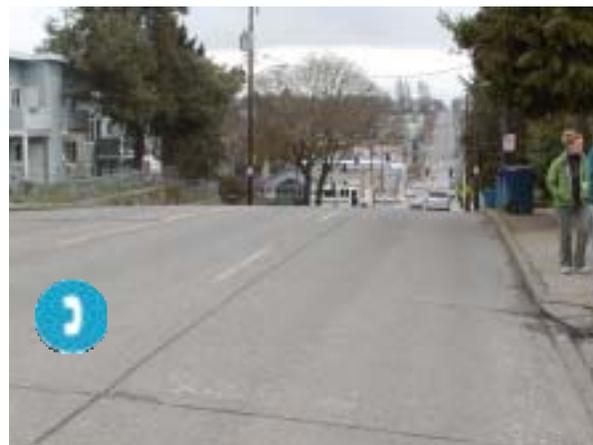
People reported that this crossing feels dangerous. The vehicles are traveling at high speeds on this stretch of Boren, some careening down the hill.

SDOT has assessed all of the mid-block crossings and may have plans for this crosswalk.

6. This Road needs a Diet!

Yesler is a 4-lane street from 8th to 12th, and only 2-lanes on either side of that stretch. Four-lane streets are dangerous because they enable drivers to pass a vehicle that is yielding to a pedestrian. If vision is obscured by the yielding vehicle, the results can be a fatal accident.

It is unlikely that traffic volumes here justify four lanes. Why not put the road on a “diet” from 4-lanes to 2-lanes? This has been done around the city on over a dozen streets—with excellent results.



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7. Incredible Street Trees!

There are some enormous Oak trees and older trees that have grown up on Yesler Way. The city's arborists have generated a list of approved and prohibited street trees. Trees can be prohibited for having roots that crack sidewalks, for brittle limbs that can fall, or even for dropping fruit on sidewalks, of all things. See:

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/transportation/treeswithreservations.htm>

8. Broadway Improvements

Kristin O'Donnell of the Yesler Terrace Community Council reports that this stretch of Broadway north of Yesler is slated for sidewalk improvements from the Neighborhood Matching Fund.

We noticed that the walk phase of the Yesler crossing is presently timed for an average pedestrian (3.5 feet per second). This is a bit quick for some of the older residents in the area. A curb ramp and bulbs on the south side (and other corners) of the intersection are also recommended.



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9. One of the City's Prime Views!

Yesler Terrace is on a very beautiful spot in this city. Few people are aware of the amazing location of this Seattle Housing Authority development. SHA has a responsibility to keep thinking about doing justice to this area. Presently, the nicest piece of property is a parking lot. How could this be better configured for the residents of Yesler Terrace?



10. Danger in the Parking Lot

Parking lots are one of the most hazardous spots for children, due to cars backing up and other cars blocking one's view. This lot was recently resurfaced and striped, but SHA did not make sure that there is a safe passageway for walkers. This stroller is coming off the walkway from the townhouses. But look! There is a parking space marked between here and the sidewalk. There should be a curbed, protected space in this parking lot.



11. Too Much Pavement!

The parking lot and Main Street are too wide. Cut ten feet off the width here at the edge of the bluff, and you could create a beautiful picnic table space—or even a place for more P-Patches. Wouldn't this be a better use of the space than simply making it easy for cars to turn around?

12. Woonerf Alert!

No this is not a type of football!
In Holland, a woonerf is a streets in a residential area that is configured with benches and play areas. Drivers can go no faster than a quick walking speed because of all the obstacles. This makes it possible for children to play safely and for people to use this otherwise dead space. The Dutch name “woonerf” means “living street” in English. The dead end portion of Main Street appears to be an ideal spot for a woonerf.





13. Whose Values are These?

Hmmm. The paving is new, but what about the sidewalks here? Why didn't they connect this sidewalk to make it easy for people to walk from Little Saigon back to one's dwelling. Why did SHA pave the parking before they completed the sidewalk?

14. Right on Red & Scrambles

People asked why we don't have more all-way walk intersections in Seattle. Right now there are three: Pike & 1st Ave, West Seattle's Alaska Junction, and Beacon Hill at the Red Apple. SDOT engineers don't think they get enough traffic through. But people on the walk were asking for more: How about making right on red illegal in Seattle? There is no right on red in the nation's biggest walking city: New York City.



15. Sidewalk Obstructions

You can ask your businesses to do better than this. This sidewalk is obstructed by overgrown hedges (at left of photo) and dumpsters (behind the people). The van below could be prevented from parking illegally by use of signs & curbing. Businesses should be asked to step forward to be partners in leading the neighborhood to become more walkable.



16. Street Furniture

Fear of crime didn't keep this property owner from putting a bench out on the street. The bench is old enough that there is a one-inch thick mass of moss growing in the shade beneath the bench. Showing that you care about the streetscape makes a big difference to others. Elderly residents really care about having good places to rest on their walks.



17. Push Button Torture

Confusing? You bet! Often, pushing the button doesn't even make a difference. Feet First is coming up with a new program to provide information about the functioning of these signals. Wouldn't it be nice to have these buttons more clearly marked? Stay tuned!

18. Rainier-Jackson-14th Problem

Northbound traffic on Rainier needs better signage to guide them to the proper lane here. The congestion at this intersection is relieved onto an unnecessarily wide 14th Avenue, causing rapid and unsafe acceleration approaching the elementary school. Speeding on 14th was reported as a serious problem.



19. Curb Extensions (Bulbouts)

Curb bulbs effectively narrow the street while allowing parking to be retained. They cause drivers to slow down at turning corners and even as they travel straight. Pedestrians are safer, because they are in the street for a much shorter period of time. This spot, at Main and 14th is a great place for bulbs. This is a human curb bulb depicting where the curb line could be extended.



20. Back-in Angle Parking

By changing the parking on 14th Ave from parallel to back-in angle parking, the street could be effectively narrowed between intersections. This has a calming effect on vehicle speeds. It would also generate new parking spaces for local businesses, the school, and the neighboring housing. This is an extremely cheap option for traffic calming, because it is as simple as paint and signage.

21. Stewards of Public Place

There is significant new housing for our elders in this neighborhood. The neighborhood might consider tapping this resource to have an environmental stewardship program run by its elders. Feet First is developing training for public place stewardship and is interested in hearing of neighborhood interest.



22. Spirit of Our Youth

We observed the wavy land next to the youth detention facility and wondered: “Why isn’t that park leveled?” Bill Zosel informed us that (a) it is *not* a park, it is “King County open space” that is administered by the detention facility, and (b) these are intentional “waves” created by the artist Marvin Oliver. Indeed this open space is kept that way by the uneven and soggy soil. But the whale fin is beautiful.



23. Overgrowth

Adjacent property owners are responsible for overgrowth. This is an inexcusable amount of overgrowth. The neighborhood can organize short work parties to address the worst locations such as this one on 17th Ave.

24. Treat Your Bus Riders Well

Bus shelters. Transit is an important element to a walkable community. There were several locations where shelters appear to be lacking along Yesler. Doing an inventory of the spaces where we have to wait for transit is a good way to document how we are treating some of the most crucial and heavily-used spaces in our neighborhoods. Make certain to request stop upgrades from Metro. These can include a concrete pad at minimum and preferably an artistically adorned and well-lit shelter.



Additional notes:

- There is a dead-end sign at 12th & Main that is too low. People are repeatedly knocking this over. Perhaps it is too low for them to see it.
- The sidewalk at the intersection of Yesler and Boren is too narrow. SHA property adjacent to this sidewalk could be provided to improve the width and accommodation of the sidewalk at this location.
- There is a significant concern about problems east of 14th on Jackson Street. We will address these problems in a future walk that centers around 23rd and Jackson. Citizens interested in that area should contact Feet First to arrange a date for such a walk.
- There was significant concern about problems on 18th Avenue north of Jefferson street. Citizens interested in that area should contact Feet First to arrange a date for such a walk separate from the 23rd & Jackson walk.
- We observed that the development at the NE corner of 12th & Jackson did not appear ADA compliant. Design for people with disabilities is important to everyone. Universal design is a new term for design that helps people age gracefully and is accommodating to all of us.
- King County's parking lot at 12th and Terrace is without trees. Apparently, this parking lot was resurfaced in recent years and trees were cut. King County should be a leader, not a shirker of environmental responsibility.
- Three short streets—Remington Court, Barclay Court, and James Court were designated in neighborhood plans as candidates for narrow living streets.
- The NE corner of 17th and Yesler is publicly owned. Could this be put to higher use than as a gravel parking lot?
- A new curb ramp at 14th and Spruce is collecting rainwater. Contact SPU at 684-7506 to report drainage problems. They are often very responsive.
- 14th and Main is an important gateway to the school and neighborhood. Better signage could be installed here to complement the area.

For more information about Traffic Tamers Tours or Feet First, contact us at:

Feet First

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email: feet1st@scn.org

web: www.scn.org/feetfirst

or Visit us at: 1402 Third Ave, Suite 1121, Seattle, WA 98101

Feet First is a 501(c)(3) organization. It is our mission to promote the rights and interests of pedestrians and to encourage walking. We work throughout the Puget Sound region. This Traffic Tamers Tour was conducted as a part of the ACTIVE SEATTLE project which focuses on five neighborhoods in Seattle, including the Central Area. For more information about ACTIVE SEATTLE, visit www.activeseattle.org

