

Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland

1001 SW 5th Avenue, Room 1300
Portland OR 97204



August 9, 2023

To: Great Streets Grant Review Committee
From: City of Portland Oregon Bicycle Advisory Committee
RE: 2024-2027 Great Streets Program: N Lombard/Denver

As the City of Portland's Bicycle Advisory Committee, we are pleased to support the N Lombard/Denver project for the 2024-27 Great Streets Program. This project is one of many envisioned by the North Portland in Motion plan - an effort that has broadly engaged the community in the area and garnered significant support. Our committee has a representative on the Community Advisory Group (CAG) for the project which also includes representatives from neighborhood associations, modal and nature advocacy groups, business organizations, and community. An extremely collaborative development process between the community, CAG, other City advisory groups like the BAC, and the project team resulted in the projects envisioned in and prioritized by the plan.

As one of those, the N Lombard/N Denver project envisions bike lane extensions on N Lombard, bike lane improvements on N Denver, traffic calming features to reduce vehicle speeds, and a full traffic signal rebuild and replacement at the intersection of the two streets to respond to community concerns about multimodal accessibility and safety and vehicle speeds. These improvements also directly align with the key outcomes envisioned for Great Streets program investments.

Multimodal Accessibility

N Lombard connects the North Portland peninsula to more central N/NE neighborhoods and is the travel route of the 75 - a frequent line which saw the 4th highest ridership for TriMet bus routes in 2022. Route 75 has bus stops at N Denver Ave but no shelters. The North Lombard Transit Center is also only five mere blocks from this intersection leading to additional foot traffic from commuters traveling from further West. Additionally, N Denver is designated as a Major City Bikeway offering a key connection to another Major City Bikeway commercial corridor, Rosa Parks Way, and the Kenton business district, park and library via a less stressful environment than the parallel Interstate Avenue. So many people walk and roll along this City Bikeway corridor as well as on adjacent streets like N Denver to access this line and the commercial corridor that's home to Walgreens, the UPS Store, Goodwill, and Fred Meyer. The Kenton downtown business district also hosts a summer-long weekly farmer's market attracting additional foot traffic to the area between the months of June and September.

Safety

N Lombard is classified as a district traffic collector and N Denver north of Lombard is classified as a neighborhood traffic collector - making both busy streets with higher speeds and traffic volumes. N Lombard is also a high crash corridor in the City of Portland. Currently the bike lanes on N Lombard drop off right before the busy and irregularly-shaped intersection with N Denver, making the intersection potentially more treacherous and confusing for bicyclists who are unfamiliar with or trying to navigate the intersection for the very first time.

One member of Portland's Bicycle Advisory Committee lives right off of N Denver in the Kenton Business District, crossing N Lombard on a daily basis. He says, "Safety is my number one concern – not only for myself, but for other community members who appear to express trepidation as they approach an intersection that is very intimidating to cross while on bike or on foot. Each time I cross, I have to look both ways to ensure that cars are actually coming to a stop before I enter the intersection as I've witnessed countless drivers speed up to beat the red light after the signal has turned yellow. It is particularly unnerving to see younger children on bikes trying to navigate crossing the intersection with their parents. Given N Denver essentially also serves as the offramp from I-5 headed South for many drivers coming from Washington, I've also witnessed high speeds from vehicular traffic carrying those accelerated highway speeds right into the city and into this intersection."

Similarly, parents also [have expressed concerns](#) about the speed on N Denver and about the safety of the intersection with N Lombard so far as identifying alternative parallel streets as preferred walking and rolling routes. These streets provide a key walking and rolling connection to Chief Joseph Elementary school (as well as Ockley Middle School). Complete, more visible and improved bicycle lanes and crossings would increase feelings of comfort and safety and reduce conflicts with cars for people walking and rolling up to and through this intersection with a history of serious injury crashes (where 3 out of four adjacent intersections also have crash histories). A new signal could provide an opportunity for additional safety features and the opportunity to provide ADA compliant features. Traffic calming features would create a more comfortable environment for walking and rolling by reducing vehicle speeds.

Equity

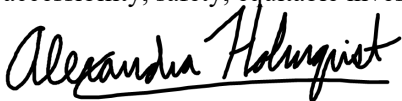
The Kenton neighborhood located north of the intersection has a medium-high equity score on the City of Portland’s equity index and has a proportion of people with limited English proficiency that is greater than the City’s average. N Lombard near the intersection of N Denver also includes many small businesses owned by people of color (Lee’s Laundrette, Umbrella Ink, Yvonne’s Salon, The Beauty Spot) and several important community places and services (7-11, Portland City Market, Oregon Outreach [tutoring services], Kenton Church). Filling the gaps in and further improving the bicycling network in this area will improve accessibility to key destinations for many community members who have been and continue to be marginalized by our institutions and systems, particularly investments.

The intersection of N Denver and N Lombard is also home to the Arbor Lodge Shelter. Up until 2022, the shelter served as a severe weather shelter and then an emergency short-term shelter. Arbor Lodge Shelter is currently undergoing renovations and is planned to re-open in 2024 as a long-term purpose-built shelter. When the shelter was in-use, residents would frequently be crossing the intersection in both directions, with many residents crossing in wheelchairs or residents crossing out-of-turn, which further necessitates the need for traffic calming and slower speeds. As we consider the shelter’s re-opening, we anticipate foot traffic will only increase across these intersections relative to today.

Climate Mitigation

The very first action in the City of Portland’s Climate Decarbonization Emergency Order is “Make low-carbon travel options safe, accessible, and convenient for all Portlanders”. Completing the gap in the bicycle network and improving bicycle facilities and crossings at this intersection will result in a safer, more comfortable connection that encourages neighborhood residents and workers to make more trips by walking, rolling and riding transit and less by car. By providing more green space, the reconfigured intersection also supports adjacent air quality through carbon sequestration and stormwater management through natural runoff reduction and or managed absorption via bioswales. These natural features also help improve safety by providing an additional buffer between cars and people walking and rolling.

As neighborhood residents and/or people who work and play in North Portland, our committee’s members regularly walk, roll, or ride to and/or through the intersection of N Lombard and N Denver and have expressly raised safety concerns shared by other area community members. A 2024-27 Great Streets Program award would greatly improve multimodal accessibility, safety, equitable investment, and sustainability along these important travel corridors.



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