

The cycle track on Roland Avenue was intended to be an enhancement for our community by: slowing traffic, attracting cyclists as a more comfortable and safe alternative form of transportation and to facilitate children riding bikes to neighborhood schools. Those worthwhile goals have not been met and additional concerns have arisen. Our Committee has spent the last year studying the situation, including: walking the entire route, meeting with and seeking feedback from the community, acquiring accident data from the BCPD, considering similar installations in Baltimore and other cities, recommendations from independent consultants and recommended guidelines for bicycle facilities locally and nationally. The cycle track design installed is far from perfect, and a disappointment to many who supported the concept when introduced in the Greater Roland Park Master Plan. We need substantive fixes, not minor adjustments applied to the current problems.

Our Committee has reached consensus on the following issues and recommend the RPCL Board adopt this statement to present to the City and guide next steps.

Consensus Statement

Either restore curbside parking with a wider, safer bike lane and slower traffic, or partner with the community to create a complete street that works for everyone.

A new committee should be formed within 30 days, retaining members of the current group willing to continue, so the knowledge gained this year is not lost. Several new members with pertinent skills should be recruited.

The ALTA evaluation memo (attached) includes a comprehensive definition of a “complete street” and could be shared with the City. We strongly suggest the engineering survey identified by ALTA be requested of the City to begin immediately or within 90 days, for completion by September 1, 2017.

ALTA also mentions a "road diet" concept our committee believes has merit, involving removal of auto travel lanes along some portion of Roland Avenue. The City has recently done so on sections of Maryland Avenue and Potomac Street. We recognize valid concerns have been raised in response to this option centered on peak hour congestion. Technical studies and community input will be necessary before a decision can be made to pursue any form of it. Partial trials may be helpful to test the effectiveness of variations, specific to the goals of traffic calming and an improved bike facility.

Once the City Review is complete in June, we expect the League to begin discussions with City officials to pursue a correction plan and implementation schedule, including some immediate safety fixes. Ongoing community communication and involvement will be vital in the coming months and fiscal year.

Committee: Andrew Marani (Chair), Mary Kay Battafarano, Tracie Choi, Matthew Eshleman, Leslie Goldsmith, Henry Kay, Dan Levitov, Ian MacFarlane, Chris McSherry, Evynn Overton, and Joel Schildbach

A consolidated list of the most egregious flaws in the current Roland Avenue configuration is below. This is not a comprehensive list; aesthetics, maintenance and signage are excluded.

1. Our number one concern: Safety for pedestrians, cyclists and people exiting cars. There is little data showing safety has increased and much showing it is worse: traffic speeds are high, parked car damage and collisions between bikes and cars have increased. The narrow track and buffer leave little room for cyclists and pedestrians crossing the track to avoid each other.
2. There is significant pedestrian traffic across the track along with high parking turnover in two blocks: 5100 (Eddie's/Library) and 4700 (St. David's Church and Preschool). The possibility for a crash between cyclists and pedestrians is very high in these two areas, especially for the most vulnerable: young children, the elderly and those with mobility challenges. Our observations are that many cyclists already avoid the track at these locations. This is an ongoing, highly dangerous safety problem that needs to be addressed immediately. Multiple requests in the past year have been made by our committee and other stakeholders to restore curbside parking in these two blocks; we expect the City to do so at the completion of their review.
3. Slower speeds are needed on Roland Ave. Despite a consistently marked 25 MPH speed limit and the installation of bump-outs, brick crosswalks, and narrow travel lanes; auto speeds remain unacceptably high. Recent speed studies conducted by BCDOT indicate 55 to 95% of drivers are exceeding the speed limit, averaging 10 miles above the stated limit at 35 MPH. This is an indication the current design is failing to achieve one of its most important stated goals.
4. Most of the cycle track is below design guidelines. In some blocks the track is less than 4' wide measured from the curb, with no room for an increase in size without reducing travel lanes, parking space or buffers, all of which are already at minimum widths allowed.
5. The parking lane leaves no space between the parked cars and moving cars. This combined with the high speeds on Roland Ave, a narrow track and buffer have increased the danger to people exiting/entering cars. To highlight the danger, in 18 months we have 5 totaled parked cars, many more sideswiped and an unknown, but very large number of side mirrors damaged. Many near misses have been reported, but no injuries.
6. Conflicts at intersections between turning cars and cyclists have resulted in at least five accidents directly related to this issue: two at Longwood (Southbound), two at Wyndhurst (Northbound) and one at Cold Spring Lane (Southbound). The "daylighting" or weaving is confusing and avoided by most cyclists.
7. Verbal conflicts between cars, cyclists and pedestrians in general have increased. We have all heard the loudly articulated, usually profane, anger expressed both ways between cyclists and people in cars or on foot.