

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WILLIAM JOHNSON, Director
417 E. Fayette Street, 5th floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

November 10, 2015

Ms. Chris McSherry
President
Roland Park Civic League
5115 Roland Avenue, #B
Baltimore, MD 21210
410-464-2525

Dear Ms. McSherry,

The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) is pleased to have worked with the Roland Park Civic League and the Roland Park community on the Roland Avenue resurfacing project. We look forward to celebrating its completion.

We would also like to thank you for the opportunity to attend the Roland Park Civic League meeting on November 4th. We have received requests from a few community members to delay the installation of the cycle track until Spring 2016 in order to further evaluate other alternatives. The BCDOT works diligently to ensure all stakeholders and people using our roadway system are considered. The current cycle track design is supported by the 2015 Bicycle Master Plan, the city's goals to improve safety for all roadway users, meets operational needs of the corridor and the Roland Park Master Plan goals. This letter is a formal notice to the community that the project will not be delayed, and the cycle track will be constructed as it is currently designed.

Additional questions and concerns were raised at the community meeting on November 4th. These questions and concerns are outlined, as we understand them, and addressed in "Attachment A." We have also attached an FAQ sheet as "Attachment B."

Again, we thank you for your time and interest in this project. Should you need any further information regarding this matter, please contact Ms. Veronica P. McBeth, Transit Bureau Chief, Baltimore City Department of Transportation, at veronica.mcbeth@baltimorecity.gov.

Respectfully,

Mr. William M. Johnson
Director
City of Baltimore Department of Transportation



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Cc: The Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor of Baltimore City

The Honorable Sharon Green Middleton, Baltimore City Council

The Honorable Rochelle Spector, Baltimore City Council

The Honorable Mary-Pat Clark, Baltimore City Council

Mr. Khalil Zaied

Mr. Connor D. Scott

Ms. Veronica P. McBeth

Ms. Lindsay Wines

Mr. Frank Murphy

Mr. Bimal Devkota

Ms. Barbara Zetick

Mr. Patrick Fleming

Mr. Graham Young

Mr. Manmohan Singh

Mr. Lok Shrestha

Mr. Paul Goldbeck

Ms. Leslie Berube

Ms. Caitlin Doolin

Ms. Kohl Fallin

Ms. Zelda Summerville

Ms. Simone Smart

Ms. Helen Duplessis

Ms. Chris McSherry

Dr. Phillip Spevak

Mr. Al Copp

Mr. Finn Lepski

Mr. Jim Determan

Dr. Shelley Sehnert

Mr. Jon Laria

Ms. Liz Cornish

Ms. Leslie Goldsmith

Ms. Martha McKenna

Ms. Mary Kay Battafarano

Mr. Harold Davidov

Ms. Nancy Cohen

Ms. Nancy Mugelen

Mr. Nick DAmoroso

Ms. Amy Bonitz Palmer

Mr. Marc Hoffman

Mr. Matthew Mitchell

Reverend Scott Bellows

Attachment A – Questions and BCDOT Response for November 4, 2015 Meeting

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The following are outstanding concerns and questions from the November 4, 2015 community meeting, as we understand them:

1. The recently completed Charles Street Project included a traditional bike lane with similar or higher traffic volume. Why is Roland Avenue receiving a different cycle design?

A protected bike lane was identified in the Roland Park Community Master Plan. There are several differences between Charles Street and Roland Avenue that allowed the BCDOT to remove a travel lane, reduce traffic volumes and implement other traffic calming measures (such as narrowing travel lanes) to reduce traffic speeds. Designing safer streets is one of the top priorities for the BCDOT and a key priority when working with the community to design the Roland Avenue Cycle Track. While the Charles Street project was completed a few months ago, the planning and design started several years ago. The BCDOT completes roadway design based on a case by case basis.

There are currently 230 protected bike lanes in 77 cities, and these numbers continue to grow. Implementing protected bike infrastructure is a priority for the BCDOT and the city will implementing over 8 miles of protected bike lanes similar to the one being implemented on Roland Avenue. National research has shown that cycle tracks not only improve the safety of the street for bicyclist, but for pedestrians and drivers as well. Research published by the American Journal of Public Health (<http://usa.streetsblog.org/2012/10/22/study-protected-bike-lanes-reduce-injury-risk-up-to-90-percent/>) found that cycle tracks reduce the risk of injury by 90%. Additionally, the National Institute on Transportation and Communities found that 80% of residents felt their streets were safer when cycle tracks were implemented. New York City Department of Transportation also found that streets with protected bike lanes decreased the risk of injury for pedestrians by 12 to 52 percent over streets that did not have protected bike lanes. The Green Lane Project has compiled several more statistics about the safety benefits of cycle tracks at the link below as well: <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/statistics/category/protected-bike-lane-statistics>

The data overwhelmingly supports that cycle tracks across the country and in various contexts create safer streets for all road users.

2. The community expressed that they feel traffic volumes have changed significantly since the recent opening of new entrances on Northern Parkway for Gilman and Bryn Mawr schools and that MD SHA Traffic data from prior years is no longer accurate, so should not be relied upon or choice of "appropriate design" of bicycle facility for Roland Avenue. The community has requested revised site specific data on current traffic volume and speed before further lane changes at multiple locations on Roland Avenue.

The design is not impacting capacity on Roland Avenue; therefore is not required to conduct traffic counts before or after this type of project. However, traffic counts from 2014/2015 are available and will be provided. Per the community's request, attached are traffic counts conducted at the following locations in December 2014 and May 2015:

- Roland Avenue/Coldspring Lane
- Roland Avenue/Deepdene Road

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- Roland Avenue/Northern Parkway
- Roland Avenue/Oakdale Road
- Roland Avenue/Wyndhurst Avenue

The peak hour traffic volumes typically account for 10% of the daily traffic. Based on the most recent traffic counts, traffic volumes exceed 8,000 vehicles per day which is the threshold for a protected bike lane with a posted speed limit of 30 mph. Additionally, a major concern community members expressed in the Master Plan was speeding along Roland Avenue. The BCDOT concluded the most appropriate design that would improve the comfort for people on bikes and, consequently, improve safety for all people who use the corridor included a parking protected bicycle lane.

3. The community requested the BCDOT evaluate reducing four lanes to two lanes, making Roland Avenue a single lane in each direction.

As explained above, recent traffic counts are attached. The typical upward capacity for a single travel lane is 800 vehicles per hour, and one-lane roads that carry 800 vehicles in the peak hour typically experience substantial congestion. The most recent traffic counts indicate that one-way traffic volumes exceed 800 vehicles (in one direction) at several points along the corridor. Additionally, Roland Avenue has several points along the corridor that experience drop off/pick up activities, including, but not exclusive too, schools, churches and the Women's Club. Reducing Roland Avenue to one lane would not provide space for through traffic in these areas, creating potential queuing and additional congestion. Based on traffic data and these activities, the BCDOT determined reducing travel lanes on Roland Avenue infeasible.

4. The community expressed concerns regarding the "day lighting" treatment of the cycle track at bus stops. The community suggested an alternative design that places the cycle track along the median to retain curbside parking and remove bus-bike conflicts. The community would like the project to be delayed to investigate this option.

For all design features included in the cycle track, the BCDOT followed best practices and examples from across the country as well as guidance from the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, the leading design guide for urban bikeways. The day lighting treatment at the bus stop has been used in several cities and the best way to make people on bikes visible to bus drivers before they pull into the bus pad. The BCDOT has also evaluated placing the bike lane along the median, as requested. Moving the protected bike lane along the median removes the protection of the parking lane. Many cities have moved forward with parking protected bike lanes because of the added protected for both people on bikes and people crossing the streets. Additionally, a protected bike lane along the median would require implementing flex posts for the length of Roland Avenue, or some other separator, to provide adequate separation from moving traffic which is cost prohibitive.

5. The community expressed concerns regarding fire and emergency response. This was outlined as the most serious objection and should alone stop the cycle track installation indefinitely until addressed completely with proper notice to our community.

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The BCDOT takes emergency response very seriously. The cycle track does not reduce capacity along Roland Avenue, and will be maintaining two travel lanes that will allow emergency response to navigate Roland Avenue similar to how it does today. Additionally, the two lanes and parking lane will allow emergency response to use the parking lane or double park without impeding one travel lane, as they do today. There were also concerns raised as to the impacts of emergency response being impeded by pulling up to the curb. Emergency responders may disregard posted traffic control devices in order to adequately address emergencies. Therefore, emergency response vehicles will be permitted to park in a bike lane in the event that it is necessary.

6. The community asked whether the current parking code allows them to park more than 12 inches from the curb face, which would be the case with the parking protected cycle track.

The referenced city code states that for two-way streets, "In all cases where any vehicle is stopped or parked upon a 2-way roadway, the right-hand wheels of said vehicle shall be parallel to and within 12 inches of the right-hand curb or edge of roadway." ART. 31, § 6-1(a). City code defines a "Roadway" as "that portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular traffic" and define a "Vehicle" as "every device in, on, or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn on a highway, except devices moved by human power or used exclusively on stationary rails or tracks." ART. 31, § 1-1(o),(q). By these definitions, vehicular traffic excludes devices moved by human power (bicycles). Therefore, the protected bike lane is not in the roadway, and the edge of roadway is defined by the portion of the "highway" ordinarily used for vehicular traffic, which will be the area left of the buffer.

7. Since the Cycle Track has been presented as a form of "Traffic Calming", why have none of those city requirements been met?

The purpose of the Cycle Track was to provide a safer roadway design for all users. Cycle tracks are also an effective traffic calming measure. When a roadway repaving is occurring, the Department of Transportation is required to follow the Complete Streets resolution, which would involve evaluating safer alternatives for all roadway users than what is the status quo. A traffic calming study is not needed to justify the installation of a cycle track.

8. What else can be done to protect residents exiting parked cars in the same location deemed unsafe for cyclists?

The location of the previous bicycle lane was not deemed unsafe; however the proposed design is anticipated to provide increased safety for all users. By improving on a previous design, the Department of Transportation is not making a statement on the safety of that design.

Attachment B – Frequently Asked Questions

Roland Avenue Cycle Track

Frequently Asked Questions

BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE BACKGROUND

Q: Why is protected bike infrastructure important?

A: Cities like DC, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have seen bicycling grow by up to 400% by building protected bike lanes. This growth is due to less experienced users feeling comfortable on a bike when using a protected bike lane. Research has irrefutably shown that cycle tracks have improved safety for people on bikes. Research published by the American Journal of Public Health (<http://usa.streetsblog.org/2012/10/22/study-protected-bike-lanes-reduce-injury-risk-up-to-90-percent/>) found that cycle tracks reduce the risk of injury by 90%, while conventional bike lanes reduce the risk of injury by 50%. Additionally, the National Institute on Transportation and Communities found that 80% of residents felt their streets were safer when cycle tracks were implemented. The Green Lane Project has compiled several more statistics about the benefits of cycle tracks at the link below as well; everything from safety, to economic benefits to community livability:

<http://www.peopleforbikes.org/statistics/category/protected-bike-lane-statistics>

Several photos of parking protected cycle tracks are provided below.

15th Street, Washington, DC



Grand Street, NYC



Church Street, Chicago



Kinzie Street, Chicago



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Q: Is the cycle track with parked cars required for all of Roland Avenue?

A: Given the speeds and traffic volumes on Roland Avenue, a protected bike facility is the most appropriate bike facility for Roland Avenue. A parking protected cycle track is used to preserve high demand on street parking for the neighborhood.

Maryland State Highway Administration collected Average Annual Daily Traffic Volumes (AADT) counts on Roland Avenue at Deepdene in 2012, 2013 and 2014. In all 3 years, AADT along Roland Avenue was found to exceed 14,500 vehicles per day (source: http://maps.roads.maryland.gov/itms_public/). Figure 1 details appropriate bicycle facility design based on traffic volumes (y-axis) and posted speeds. Based on the AADT of over 14,000 cars and a posted speed limit of 30mph, a protected bicycle facility is the most appropriate bicycle facility.

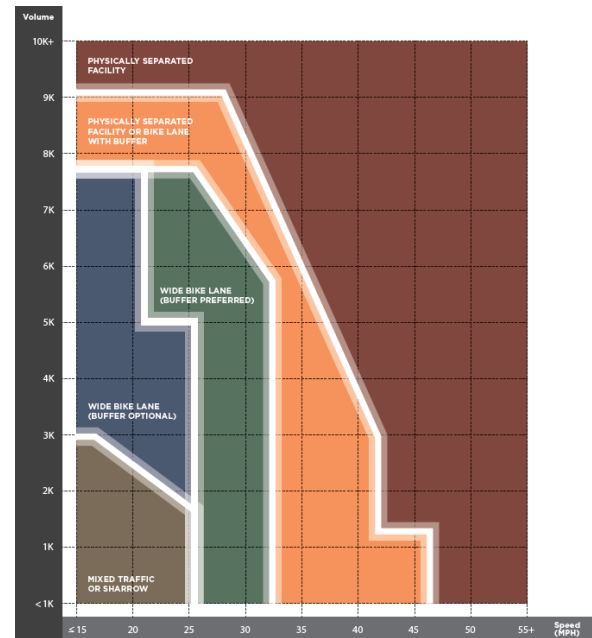


Figure 1. Appropriate Bicycle Facilities based on Speeds (x-axis) and AADT Traffic Volumes (y-axis)

Q: Since rear end crashes are rare for bicyclists, how is the change to cycle track protected by parked cars justified? Please provide statistics and references.

A: While rear end collisions account for one of the lowest crash types for people on bikes, we should not dilute the fact that these crashes tend to be the most severe. Rear end crashes usually occur mid-block when people in cars are at considerably higher speeds than at intersections. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that 57% of bicycle fatalities in the country occurred mid-block (<http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812151.pdf>). Cycle tracks remove the potential for these crashes by separating bikes from moving traffic. Research compiled by the Green Lane Project, outlines more information regarding the safety benefits of cycle tracks at intersections and these facilities have improved comfort and perceived safety for people on bikes on roadways: <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/essentially-everyone-who-sees-protected-bike-lanes-agrees-that-they-are-saf>.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Q: What is the source of funds for the cycle track construction?

A: The cycle track construction is funded through federal funds provided annually for resurfacing. Resurfacing projects are an opportunity the BCDOT leverages to add or improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as part of the project.

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Q: What are the points of inception and termination of the Roland Avenue cycle track?

A: *The cycle track will begin at Cold Spring Lane and end at Northern Parkway. In the medium to long term, the BCDOT will seek to extend the cycle track and have a cycle track on Roland Avenue from Lake Avenue to University Parkway. The BCDOT is currently trying to identify resources to do this. Per some of the community concerns identified in your letter, the current section of Roland Avenue where the cycle track is being proposed will be adjacent to many of the schools in the area where kids have been observed riding a bike to/from school on the sidewalk. It is also important to point out this infrastructure is not being built solely for the use of children. The protected bike lane aims to accommodate people on bikes from 8 years old to 80 years old and to make less experienced or more vulnerable adult users more comfortable on a bike.*

Q: What is the final timeline for the project?

A: *The project will be substantially complete by 12/31/15. This does not mean everything will be 100% complete. The contractor is working on finishing the concrete work along Roland Avenue as first order of business, (adjust ADA ramps, adjust grades at Uplands and Oakdale, lead walks, tie in sections of curb). The drainage work and paving at Wyndhurst is to be complete by 12/31/15. The striping of the bike lane is in line to be complete by 12/31/15. The brick cross walks are going to start this year but may not be completed until spring pending the weather and temperatures through the winter months.*

PARKING

Q: How many parking spaces will be lost on Roland Avenue near the side streets?

A: *Approximately 15 spaces will be lost in total along Roland Avenue to accommodate the cycle track.*

Q: There is a fear that it will be dangerous to enter and exit cars parked on Roland Avenue because of proximity to travel lanes. How will people with disabilities or the elderly be able to enter and exit the car safely? How will parents and children be able to enter/exit the car safely?

A: *The proximity of parked vehicles to travel lanes is not unlike many roadways throughout the city that do not have bike lanes. The widths of the parking and travel lane are national standards that are used all over the City and country. Additionally, narrowing the travel lanes, which will be the case on Roland Avenue, can have a traffic calming effect.*

Disabled people driving with side loading ramps will be able to park in the designated parking areas and put the ramp down in the cycle track. Entering on the driver's side will be similar to doing the same on other roads throughout the city that do not have a bicycle lane between parked vehicles and travel lanes.

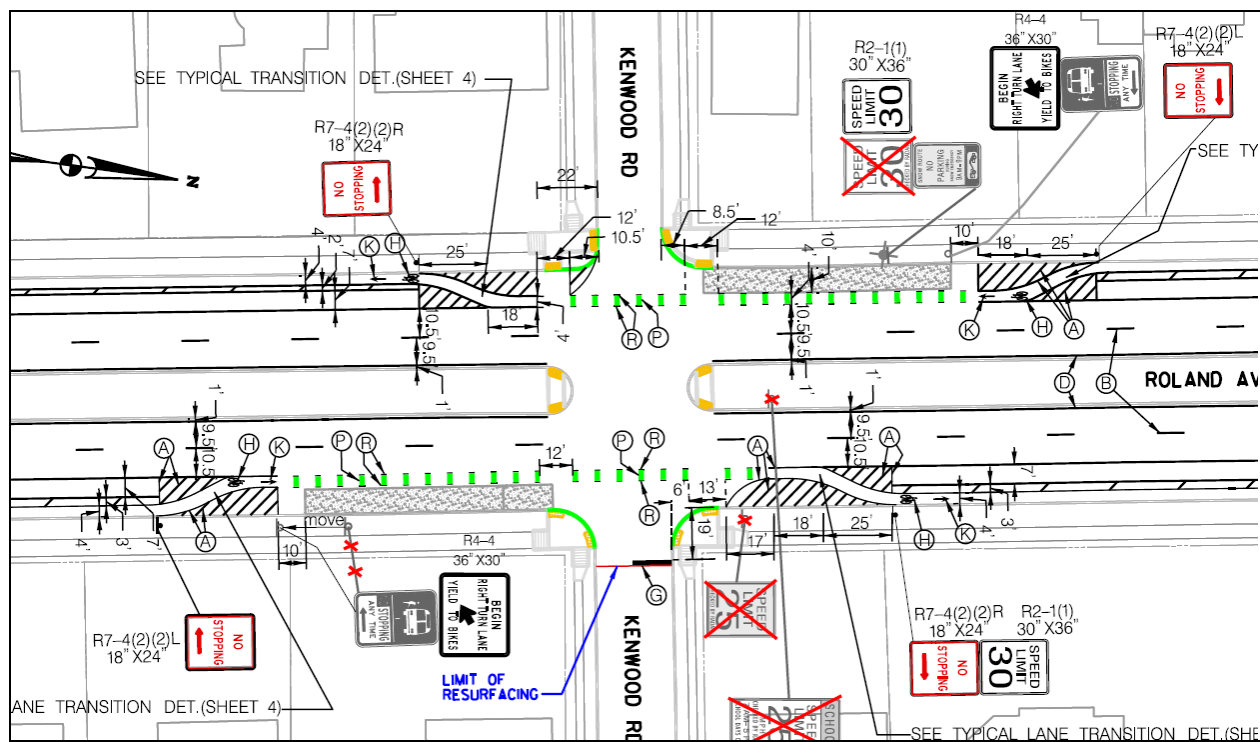
Q: How do we avoid parking in the wrong area because of uncertainty about location of parking lane v. cycle track?

A: *The areas will be delineated clearly, with a striped buffer, bicycle symbols, and flex posts. Additionally, signs will be provided in the buffer indicating that parking is permitted to the left, and only bicycles are permitted to the right.*

A: The installation of the cycle track will not remove any parking along the 5100 block of Roland Avenue. The project will remove approximately 15 parking spaces along the entire Roland Avenue corridor. The community has greatly supported the loss of parking in exchange for the cycle track.

INTERSECTIONS

A: The designs for cycle tracks at intersections are developed to enhance the visibility of people on bikes at intersections. The Roland Avenue Cycle Track will have 'green treatments' at intersections to highlight the conflict zone to cross street traffic. The design also has an element called "daylighting" at intersections where the cycle track is brought out from behind the parked cars and made more visible to people driving. An example of daylighting at the intersection is provided below.



Q: What design measures are in place to prevent cars and bicycles from colliding at intersections?

BUSINESSES AND SCHOOL DROP OFF/PICK UP

A: The cycle track will have flex posts every 10 feet added to the buffer between the parked cars and the cycle track between Colorado Avenue and Deepdene on the east side of the street. The below cross section provides a visual for what this block will look like.

Typical cross section on Roland Avenue between Colorado Ave and Deepdene:



A: The flex posts are being installed to increase the safety of users of the facility and to encourage people less comfortable on a bike to use their bicycles as a mode of transportation. In the long-term, flex posts can be

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replaced with something more permanent and aesthetically pleasing. The green paint is just provided at intersections and serves to alert both people in cars and people on bikes of conflict areas.

Q: Will it be dangerous to cross the cycle track to reach cars/curbs because of cyclists not yielding to pedestrians?

A: People on bikes are required by law to yield to pedestrians. Although 100% compliance may not be an achievable goal, the cycle track ranges between 4-5 feet wide. Compared to crossing a multi-lane street and requiring a person driving to yield, the task of crossing the cycle track will likely be less stressful. Additionally, due to the location of Roland Park being away from downtown, many riders will be riding for recreation and not commuting; therefore compliance rates may be higher in this area than typically observed in downtown bike lanes.

Q: The community is concerned about hitting cyclists in the cycle track. How can this be addressed?

A: The majority of the cycle track will be protected with flex posts and other delineators in a buffer, with parking between the travel lanes and cycle track. The major conflict points are at intersections, where vehicles are required to turn right across the cycle track.

The conflict areas will be striped with green skips, indicating both the path of people on bikes, and that it should be treated similar to a broken white line on the road, i.e., people driving are permitted to cross it to make a turn. At certain locations, right-turn lanes will be provided to the right (curbside) of the path of people on bikes. These locations will have a "Begin Right Turn Lane" sign where it is appropriate for people in cars to cross the path of bicycles. At other locations where no right-turn lane is provided, people in cars are required to yield to people on bikes when making a right-turn.

Cycle tracks have been proven elsewhere to improve the safety and comfort of both people on bikes and people in cars due to the increased separation between the two modes.

Q: Will the cycle track be cleared of debris, leaves and snow to make it safe to use?

A: With the cycle track being as narrow as 4 feet, the clearing of snow will be a difficult task; however, the BCDOT has a narrow plow that they will now be able to use for clearing of cycle tracks. The BCDOT maintenance division has been given a map of on-street cycle tracks, which includes Roland Avenue, and will be able to clear the cycle track once the snow has stopped falling.

Q: Will the travel lanes be wide enough to accommodate the amount of traffic that Roland Avenue carries on week days? Will the cycle track make congestion worse during rush hour periods?

A: The difference in capacity due to the reduction in travel lane width is negligible. As before, two travel lanes in each direction will be provided; therefore the capacity of the roadway will be similar to before. Reduction in speeds may result from narrowed travel lanes, as people who are driving will feel less comfortable traveling at higher speeds.

Q: Will faster cyclist use the cycle track?

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A: Cycle tracks provide a protected space to make more people feel comfortable riding bicycles. However, people on bicycles are still permitted to travel in all lanes. With Roland Avenue being two lanes in each direction, a bicycle in the right-lane does not block people in cars from passing.

Q: Why was the community not individually polled and did not know about it before it was approved?

A: The BCDOT relies heavily on community supported master plan and officially recognized community associations. The best way to be involved and influence decisions is to join and play an active role in your community association. The BCDOT does not have a policy that requires we poll communities on changes or improvements to the street.

Additionally, an extensive community outreach plan was developed and followed. Several meetings have been held in the community, all of which were advertised in the newspaper, in the RPCL newsletter, advertised through email blasts and through flyering the community.

Q: The community feels bicycles are being accommodated but others will be inconvenienced. How is this addressed?

A: Cycle tracks and protected bike lanes have been found to have a multitude of benefits for ALL road users. As previously stated, the American Journal of Public Health has found that cycle tracks reduce the risk of injury for all road users (people walking, biking and driving) by up to 40%. This is because cycle tracks reduce crossing distances, reduce traffic speeds, and include treatments at intersections that make people in cars more aware of people on bikes and foot.

Q: Not many people on bikes use Roland Avenue now, why are we building a cycle track?

A: The perceived safety of the previously installed bicycle lanes was likely an impediment to increasing the number of people using bicycles for transportation and recreation. The new design is intended to increase both the safety and comfort of people on bikes on Roland Avenue; therefore increasing the likelihood of more people riding in it.

Q: Is the current bike lane fine?

A: The Department of Transportation evaluates the configuration/layout of roadways when resurfacing projects are to occur. Because a safer design for bicycles could be provided within the existing right-of-way, without reducing capacity for automobiles, the decision was made to provide a protected cycle track.

Q: Several members of the community do not think speeding is a problem. Why do we need traffic calming?

A: It is the BCDOT's understanding that one of the top concerns identified in the Roland Park Master Plan included speeding in Roland Avenue. This has anecdotally been verified through various community interactions.

Q: What if it doesn't work?

A: The BCDOT has committed to conducting field evaluations next spring and summer (2016) to monitor how the cycle track is working. This will include evaluating traffic speeds, conducting bike counts and surveying community members. The BCDOT will report findings on this evaluation in the Summer of 2016.