MEMORANDUM

TO: The Evergreen State College, Masters of Public Administration Admissions

FROM: Matt Ragsdale, MPA Applicant

DATE: January 30, 2024

RE: Protected Bike Lanes for the River Road Community

Problem

The current bike lane along River Road in Eugene, Oregon is a single lane, separated from traffic by a painted line on the road. This single bike lane is also one of the only bicycle infrastructures in the River Road Corridor. The 2012 Eugene Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan found that there are only six streets with bike lanes in the River Road area, and access to the West Bank path can be challenging.[1] Bicyclists utilizing the River Road lane must also travel alongside vehicles moving at least 35 miles per hour, but generally faster. It is clear that this corridor needs safer bike infrastructure that better connects the community. A two-lane, protected bike path along River Road would improve cyclist safety, increase the number of cyclists in the area, and spur further development of bike infrastructure. This improvement would connect bicyclists along River Road to the neighborhoods to the west, and the West Bank path to the east.

Residents of the area desire road safety for bicyclists. In a 2017 survey about transportation in River Road, residents indicated that they want more bike paths and traffic calming.[2] Another survey conducted in 2017 indicated that 31% of citizens desire dedicated bicycle facilities when creating a more livable neighborhood[3]. A two-lane bike path would create more facilities, leading to better accessibility for bikers and increased safety along River Road.

Recommendations

1. To protect cyclists, the City of Eugene should mandate protected bike lanes for streets with speeds at or exceeding 40 miles per hour.
    a. The purpose of this recommendation is to make cycling safer on high volume streets by installing physical barriers, such as planters, parked cars, or bollards between cyclists and automobiles. 45 mph is the most common speed at which cyclists experience fatalities with cars[4], and studies show that there is a strong correlation between high speeds and cyclist fatalities.
2. The City of Eugene and Lane County should begin a 3-year assessment of roads with traffic data, as well as an inventory of biking, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities to determine ideal locations for road diets to install more non-auto friendly facilities in and along the right-of-way.
    a. The purpose of this recommendation is for the city and county to assess current road and street infrastructure that utilizes space poorly or is unsafe which could be reduced in size and allocate more space for bike lanes, bus-only lanes, and/or wider sidewalks.

Conclusion

Safer bike infrastructure correlates with better safety outcomes for all road users. A 2019 study found that protected bike lanes are associated with fewer fatalities and can have a calming effect on traffic.[5] Clearly, a two-lane protected bike lane along River Road would increase safety and accessibility for bicyclists and community members in the corridor.

Word Count: 49

Endnotes

1. Eugene Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan [PDF file]. (2012). Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nspnvHRULJtFEs6oEO6hr8NuJGtbOesH/view
2. My Idea for the Neighborhood: Transportation [PDF file]. (2017) Retrieved from https://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/38550/My-Idea-Results_Transportation?bidId=
3. Lewis, Rebecca and Parker, Robert. The Contribution of Transportation and Land Use to Livability in Oregon MPOs. NITC-RR-1050. Portland, OR: Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC), 2018.
4. Coleman, H. & Mizenko, K. (2018). Pedestrian and Bicyclist Data Analysis [PDF file]. *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*. Retrieved from https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/812502_pedestrian-and-bicyclist-data-analysis-tsf-research-note.pdf