

Fauntleroy Neighborhood Traffic Concerns

March 2003

Introduction

Fauntleroy community safety is threatened by a number of traffic-related problems, including speeding, limited sight distance, inadequate sidewalks, and narrow arterials without pedestrian or bicycle pathways. As ferry and residential traffic increases, these problems are growing worse. To address these problems, the Fauntleroy Community Association canvassed the neighborhood and asked residents to describe the most critical traffic safety issues. Thirty-five community members responded via e-mail, post, and the FCA Web site. Forty-five people attended a community traffic meeting on January 30 and a planning/steering committee comprising 17 community members met throughout February to further define the problem and propose solutions.

This document outlines the results of that effort. Maps included in the appendix relate to the locations addressed. It is the starting point that we hope will lead to fruitful dialogue with City and State agencies, alleviation of these problems, and a safer community.

Overview

The majority of the traffic problems in the Fauntleroy neighborhood are a result of the large number of vehicles during commute hours going to or coming from the ferry dock. Ferry traffic forces others to seek shortcuts through residential streets meant only for local access. At other times, we see speeding and reckless driving which also need to be addressed.

Comments that can be applied to all of the main arterial streets to and from the dock:

- Drivers generally exceed the speed limit, sometimes by a significant amount. Driving tends to be very aggressive, particularly close to ferry departure times.
- Motorcycles with unmuffled exhausts, or exhausts beefed up to be louder, leave the dock as a pack with each morning's ferry arrival starting at 4:45 am. This is particularly onerous because of the number of motorcycles departing at once and their increased horsepower requirement going uphill. We are certain that many are well above legal noise limits.
- Many cars park too close to the intersections, which results in reduced visibility.
- We would like to see more police presence and enforcement, particularly during heavy traffic periods.

In the pages that follow, we will detail specific problem areas and some proposed solutions that Fauntleroy residents have developed.

45th Ave SW starting at 104th and Marine View Dr SW going North to SW Wildwood Pl (see page A-2)

Description of the roadway: The roadway drops off on a steep gradient. Vehicles must be braked in order to stay within the speed limit of 30 mph. The roadway/shoulders narrow as Marine View Dr SW becomes 45th Ave SW, with an unusual twist in direction and elevation. There are no sidewalks for the pedestrians and bicyclists that frequent this stretch of road. SW Roxbury St enters 45th Ave SW just north of the twist in the road. The road is steep the remainder of the way to the business district with SW Brace Point Dr crossing 45th prior to the four-way stop at SW Wildwood Pl.

General Problem Description: Speed, noise, and limited sight distance at intersections are endemic in this neighborhood.

What Makes This A Problem?: The business district is the pedestrian center of this side of the neighborhood with restaurants, senior housing and various small businesses. We expect to see increased pedestrian traffic when a new restaurant opens there in June. Cars traveling at high rates of speed, poor intersection visibility due to foliage overgrowth, and parked vehicles present a high safety risk.

Possible Solutions:

- Reduce speed limit to 25 mph on all arterials in this area and have greater police enforcement.
- Post speed limit signs appropriately so drivers are reminded more frequently of the speed limit.
- Post signs (or paint curbing) at intersections: “No Parking within 30 Feet.”
- Reduce and regularly maintain foliage obstructing visibility at intersections.

Specific Problem Areas Along this Strip:

Marine View Dr as it transitions to 45th Ave. SW near Roxbury

Problem Description: Speeding cars on narrow arterial that doglegs, blocking visibility for traffic and pedestrians with no sidewalks or shoulders.

What Makes This A Problem?: Narrow Marine View Dr changes at the crest of hill to 45th Ave SW, where speed of vehicles is exacerbated by the momentum of entering a steep downward grade with little warning. Though there is a crosswalk just below the crest of the hill, motorists would see a person in the crosswalk too late to stop. There is no safe place along side of road for pedestrians or bicycles.

Possible Solutions:

- Install sidewalk along either side of the northern end of Marine View Dr.
- Install stop sign northbound just before crest and curve of Marine View Dr above crosswalk.

Intersection of 45th Ave SW and SW Brace Point Dr

Problem Description: Speeding vehicles, noise, and poor visibility.

What Makes This A Problem?: Vehicles speed and often pass on this steep grade in both directions, especially at peak hours. It is a school bus pick-up/drop off zone. Most of the year it is very dark in the morning when children cross the street to board the school bus. This intersection is a gateway to a small business district with heavy pedestrian traffic. Poor visibility at the intersection makes driving across or entering 45th Ave SW very dangerous.

Possible Solutions:

- Install a crosswalk with: a) a pedestrian-activated cross walk with embedded flashing, across 45th SW from SE to SW corners of SW Brace Point Dr; b) a crosswalk with stop signs for 45th Ave SW north and southbound and signs cautioning motorists there is a stop sign and pedestrian crossing ahead; or c) a crosswalk with appropriate cautionary signage preceding it.
- Extend sidewalk on west side of 45th to the SW corner where school buses pick up and drop off children
- Maintain foliage at intersection so it never obstructs visibility.

Business Triangle (see page A-2)

Description: The primary travel through the business district is either on SW Wildwood Pl or 45th Ave SW. The eastbound Number 54 Bus turns right onto 45th with an immediate left onto Brace Point Dr where there is a bus stop. The bus then continues on Brace Point Dr. Eastbound cars turn left onto Brace Point Dr from Wildwood at the stop sign.

Problem Description: Eastbound cars at the Brace Point Dr-Wildwood stop sign cannot tell which way the Brace Point westbound cars are going.

What Makes This A Problem?: Right-of-way follows Brace Point Dr (small street) and not Wildwood (the arterial). The perception is that the cars will follow the arterial, but some continue (legally) on Brace Point Dr with the possibility of collision with the car leaving the stop sign. This accounts for many near accidents.

Possible Solution: Make Brace Point Dr one-way going east to 44th Ave SW and add a curb bulb to narrow street (increase parking with diagonal parking on north side).

California Ave SW (see page A-3)

Description: This stretch of California Ave is bounded by Old Fauntleroy School on one side and Fauntleroy Church/Fauntleroy YMCA on the other. The school building is leased to the Fauntleroy Community Service Agency and houses Fauntleroy Children’s Center, a ballet school, and several businesses, including a busy caterer with in-house banquet facilities. Both facilities are very busy throughout the week.

What Makes This A Problem?: There are times when street parking creates congestion and limits traffic flow and visibility, increasing the potential for accidents. Drop-off and pick-up at the Children’s Center is a particular safety concern. Cars heading either way along the arterial do not anticipate the large number of pedestrians and vehicles moving in and out of parking spots.

Possible Solutions:

- Post signs before the curves entering California Ave SW from each direction that there is a crosswalk ahead.
- Post generic pedestrian crossing signs outside of the bounds of the traffic crosswalk between the Fauntleroy School and Fauntleroy Church parking lot to alert drivers of heavy pedestrian traffic.

Barton Street at Director (Marked One-Way Eastbound on Director) (see page A-3)

Description: SW Director St was made one-way as it approaches SW Barton St. The one-way was installed because vehicles turning off Barton onto Director could not see the on-coming traffic due to the steep hill immediately beyond Barton. The street was narrowed with a bulb and posted “do not enter.” It is significant that the drop-off for students at the ballet school as well as the Children’s Center infant room is just over the hill on SW Director St.

What Makes This A Problem?: One-way street sign is ignored by traffic making westbound entrance. Cars driving up the hill on SW Director St cannot see traffic on Barton, nor do they expect vehicles to come downhill. There have been near misses of head-on collisions and frightened children and parents. Police enforcement is difficult because of the infrequency of the problem, but the impact of a head-on would be major. An auto/pedestrian accident could be even worse.

Possible Solutions:

- Install a larger “DO NOT ENTER” sign at Barton and Director facing east.
- Extend curb bulb.
- Send letters from the Fauntleroy Community Association to the ballet school and Children’s Center parents about neighborhood concerns on pick up and drop off traffic taking short cuts.

45th Ave SW North of SW Wildwood Pl (to where it changes to Fauntleroy Pl SW and Side Streets to the West) (see page A-3)

Description of the roadway: 45th Ave SW continues north from SW Wildwood as a residential street. There is a traffic circle at SW Director St and a “T” stop at SW Cloverdale St. Traffic continues on 45th from SW Wildwood to avoid the ferry dock. Often traffic heads toward Fauntleroy Way SW via Fauntleroy Pl SW, but vehicles also turn down SW Director St, SW Henderson St, SW Concord St and SW Trenton St to reach Fauntleroy Way. Trenton and Director take the brunt of the extra traffic that does not continue through Fauntleroy Pl. Fauntleroy Pl is one-way northbound, so most of the extra traffic on Director and Trenton is southbound ferry dock avoidance.

General Problem Description: Speeding vehicles on residential streets, and higher traffic volume than streets are designed to handle.

What Makes This A Problem?: Non-local traffic operating at high speeds put pedestrians, cyclists, playing children and pets at risk. Some of the traffic appears related to the drop-off at the ballet school and day care in the Fauntleroy School building.

Possible Solutions:

- Send letters from the Fauntleroy Community Association to the ballet school and Children’s Center parents about neighborhood concerns of vehicles traveling at high speeds on the residential streets.
- See below.

Specific Problem Areas Along this Strip:

45th Ave SW North from Wildwood to Fauntleroy Way via Fauntleroy Pl

Problem Description: High speed and high volume of traffic using as a bypass around the Fauntleroy Way arterial. There is a lack of crosswalks and speed limit signs. The side streets do not have street control signs such as stop and yield signs. The crosswalks need repainting.

What Makes This A Problem?: High rate of speed on residential street safety concern. Parked cars have been hit. Existing crosswalks are hard to see because they need repainting.

Possible Solutions:

- Install the new neon colored crosswalk signs on 45th at the following locations: Director, Wildwood, Trenton, and where Fauntleroy Pl meets Fauntleroy Way. All locations need crosswalks painted.
- Install speed signs to be placed on 45th noting “25 MPH Limit.”
- Re-install the traffic circle that the City removed due to one neighbor complaint at 45th and Trenton. (Neighbor had a problem with his motorhome.)
- Install “SPEED LIMIT 25 MPH” in very large letters at Fauntleroy Place north of Trenton and right after entrance to 45th from Wildwood north.

- Install a speed bump and new stop sign where 45th meets Fauntleroy Place.
- Install “Residential Neighborhood” and “Children at Play” signs on Trenton, Director and Fauntleroy Place.
- Apply for neighborhood street funding for 45th Ave SW.

SW Trenton St Between Fauntleroy Way and 45th Ave SW

Problem Description: High speed and high volume of traffic using as a bypass around the ferry dock primarily going eastbound, but with some ferry traffic using it westbound to get in queue.

What Makes This A Problem?: Speed and volume exceed the capacity of this street. U-turns at 46th Ave SW are made by cars turning to get into the ferry queue creating additional congestion. Some U-turns go onto private property. Children, pets and pedestrians are at risk. Left turning cars to Trenton back-up traffic on Fauntleroy Way.

Possible Solutions:

- Install “Residential Neighborhood” and “Children at Play” signs on Trenton, Director, and Fauntleroy Place.
- Prohibit U-turn at 46th and Trenton.
- Install curb bulbs at Trenton and Fauntleroy Way.
- Prohibit left turn from Fauntleroy onto Trenton during evening commute.

Director Street Between Fauntleroy Way to Barton

Problem Description: High speed and high volume of traffic using as a bypass around the ferry dock primarily going eastbound to 45th Ave SW and on to SW Barton St.

What Makes This A Problem?: Speed and volume exceed the capacity of this street, which is the major pathway for walk-on ferry passengers. The street does not have sidewalks and is too narrow to accommodate them. Vehicles must slow down to pass each other on this street and there is a blind corner where it meets Fauntleroy Way (upper Fauntleroy Way) with a heavily used sidewalk. Children, pets, and pedestrians are at risk.

Possible Solutions:

- Install “Residential Neighborhood” and “Children at Play” signs on Trenton, Director, and Fauntleroy Place.
- Install speed bumps.

Fauntleroy Way SW from SW Wildwood Pl to Morgan St Junction (see page A-4)

Description of the roadway: Fauntleroy Way SW is the main arterial into the neighborhood from downtown and serves the ferry dock. In the evening and on busy summer weekends, the ferry queue lines up on the west side of the street past Lincoln Park, often extending to the Texaco Station at Lincoln Park Way SW and sometimes past Texaco and up toward SW Morgan St. Ferry commuters from the south head north on Fauntleroy, find the end of the ferry queue, and make U-turns into the line. Lincoln Park attracts many pedestrians. South of the ferry dock, on the east side of Fauntleroy, there is a vanpool lane. Vanpool vehicles sometimes back up around the corner onto SW Wildwood Pl, forcing traffic around them, which often crosses the roadway centerline as it heads toward the ferry dock.

Specific Problems Along this Strip:

Speeding and Aggressive Driving

Problem Description: Speeding, tailgating and aggressive driving all the way from the dock to Morgan St and beyond. The primary culprits are people trying to make the ferry, or get in line or beat the rest of the traffic to the West Seattle Bridge. This not an occasional problem, but daily.

What Makes This A Problem?: Local vehicles and pedestrians are continually put at risk.

Possible Solutions:

- Install more speed limit signs.
- Utilize speed readout trailer, followed by radar and ticketing enforcement.

Pedestrian Safety

Problem Description: Crossing Fauntleroy Way at several locations is increasingly more difficult, but two crossings are particularly dangerous:

Kenyon St Area: Pedestrians cross to the park entrance serving the baseball and soccer fields, picnic shelters, restrooms and wading pool because no parking is allowed on west side of Fauntleroy Way during peak ferry commuter hours. Peak ferry commuter hours coincide with heaviest park usage, especially in spring, summer and fall.

Possible Solution: Install a pedestrian crossing light, activated by push-button, at or near entrance to park, between Kenyon and Austin streets.

Othello St: This intersection near the Cat's Eye Cafe serves the new Kenney Home garage and is the access from Beach Dr SW and LeDroit neighborhood.

Possible Solution: Install a vehicle-activated stop light on Fauntleroy at SW Othello St. allowing east and westbound traffic to enter Fauntleroy. (This is only one block south of the pedestrian-activated light at Myrtle St, but the community feels this should be a priority due to increased traffic from the Kenney Home's new garage and foot traffic coming down from Gatewood Hill crossing in the area of the Cat's Eye Cafe and access to north park entry.)

Driver Behavior

Problem Description: Drivers make U-turns from northbound traffic into the ferry queue at whatever location the end of the line is with little regard for oncoming traffic, pedestrians, or anything else in the way. Residents are unable to enter Fauntleroy from side streets or driveways when ferry unloads, sometimes the entire length of time it takes to unload the ferry if there is no break in the traffic to safely enter on to the street.

What Makes This A Problem?: U-turns have caused many accidents and near-misses. Residents have up to five-minute waits to leave their homes or side streets.

Possible Solutions:

- Stop lights or other means of breaking up the traffic could help with the local access.
- U-turns could be restricted.

Defining the Ferry Queue Area

Problem Description: Parked cars in the designated ferry queue area force the ferry queue into the traffic lanes causing through traffic to cross the center line. Signage along the ferry queue is very confusing. Ferry queues regularly block driveway and bus stops although they are marked.

What Makes This A Problem?: The resulting traffic tie-ups and sometime road-rage make the commute hour difficult. Residents do not have access to their driveways and buses have to release passengers from the traffic lane instead of at the curb.

Possible Solutions:

- Use a bold line to designate the queue lane. Use orange or yellow to mark driveway curbs and use hashmarks.
- Develop improved language on the signs to designate queue location and no parking hours. Use different color signs to show weekend and weekday hours, Zone 3 Area.
- Provide efficient towing enforcement for violators. Ticket cars nearest the dock first, so that they will be towed before the line builds up.
- Establish visibility area for cars leaving the Lincoln Park parking lots.

Lincoln Park Way and Othello St

Problem Description: Visibility is especially difficult going eastbound out of the LeDroit neighborhood where Lincoln Park Way curves up and to the right.

What Makes This A Problem?: Difficulty in crossing street because oncoming vehicles cannot be seen.

Possible Solution: No parking allowed for a couple car lengths north and south of the intersection, on the west side.

Vanpool Queue on East Side of Fauntleroy Way

Problem Description: The designated vanpool queue area does not extend around the corner onto SW Wildwood Pl.

What Makes This A Problem?: Vanpools sometimes back up around the corner onto SW Wildwood Pl, forcing traffic across the center lane.

Possible Solution: Extend the vanpool queue onto SW Wildwood Pl.

47th Ave SW between Brace Point Dr and 98th Ave SW (see page A-5)

Description of the roadway: 47th Ave SW is the only roadway serving approximately 300 homes south of SW Roxbury St. This is a two lane road with no sidewalks.

Specific Problems Along this Strip: It is generally accepted that majority of vehicles exceed speed limit (25 mph) in this area. Residents living between SW Roxbury and SW Wildwood have long felt endangered by speeding traffic.

History: Over the last four years, residents between Roxbury and Wildwood have worked with SDOT (Seattle Department of Transportation) and the police to slow the traffic down on 47th. These have included:

- Waving down speeding motorists to remind them of the speed limit and ask them to slow.
- Two radar speed watch exercises (1997, 2002), resulting in SDOT sending more than 220 reminder letters to speeding drivers.
- Setup of a SDOT radar trailer to remind drivers of their speeds (1997).
- Hand-delivery of a “Please Drive Sensibly” letter to 400 residences south of Roxbury.
- STD traffic speed monitoring (2000), which found that 375 to 400 vehicles per day traverse 47th Ave. SW, at average speeds of 30.5 mph, and an 85 percentile speed is 31.8 mph; with peak speeds reaching 45mph.
- Change of speed limit signs from advisory yellow 20 mph to “enforceable” white 25 mph. As no speed calming resulted from this re-signage, signs have been changed back to advisory yellow 20s.
- Motorcycle police speed enforcement: on each occasion, police have ticketed up to a dozen drivers.
- With 65% neighbor approval in the affected area, the RPZ (Residential Parking Zone) was lifted from one side of 47th to no avail.

What Makes This A Problem?: High rate of speed on residential street (47th Ave SW) is a real safety concern because children, pedestrians and bicyclists are at risk without sidewalks. The intersections at SW Roxbury St and 47th Ave SW, and at SW 98th St and 47th Ave SW are particularly dangerous.

Functions residents want retained on 47th Ave. SW in any solution to the speeding problem:

- Two lane, two-way road traffic the full 1.1 mile length of the street.
- Clear access for emergency, construction and commercial vehicles.

Possible Solutions:

- Install speed bumps on 47th located on both sides of SW 98th St, and on the level area along the south side of Roxbury and the north side of 46th. These should be low long bumps that are acceptable at 20 mph, rough at 25 mph, and jarring at higher speeds.
- Install stop signs for all streets at the intersection of Roxbury, 47th and 46th. As a minimum, install a stop sign on Roxbury, the more dangerous intersection. This will remain a dangerous intersection in any event.
- Install a traffic circle at Roxbury and 47th. Locate the circle to allow traffic flow and larger truck access to 47th south of Roxbury.
- Install chicanes on 47th between Brace Point Dr and Roxbury to provide a slowed-down-curved road while still maintaining two-way traffic.
- Permanently install electronic radar speed limit signs on 47th northbound and southbound (similar to the type used by Newport Hills and other jurisdictions). These signs tell drivers their actual speed vs. that shown on the limit sign.
- Replace painted white hash-mark lines with actual curb and sod area at the south east corner of Brace Point and 47th.
- Return RPZ signs to east side of 47th when permanent street alterations are completed.

A committee of the Fauntleroy Community Association developed this document:

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Appendix

Area Maps

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