



# Magnolia Community Club

MAGNOLIA'S COMMUNITY COUNCIL

November 4, 2008

VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL

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Marianne Parks  
Tom Tanner

Mr. Bill Bryant  
Transit Team Supervisor  
Policy & Plan Implementation  
Seattle Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 34996  
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3866  
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

**Re: Magnolia Community Club's Issues with the BAT Lanes along the Elliott Avenue/15<sup>th</sup> Avenue W. Corridor**

Dear Mr. Bryant:

I write to you in my capacity as President of the Magnolia Community Club (MCC). The Magnolia Community Club is among the oldest neighborhood community councils in the City of Seattle. First founded in 1924, the MCC represents the interests of the Magnolia neighborhood as a whole. We represent our constituency by actively reviewing and responding to issues that may affect the Magnolia neighborhood and its residents.

We appreciate that you and Eric Widstrand, on behalf of SDOT, have agreed to make a presentation at the MCC's General Meeting on November 13, 2008 about the City's justification for imposing BAT lanes along the Elliott Avenue W/15<sup>th</sup> Avenue W. corridor. The creation of these BAT lanes has caused great consternation among many Magnolia residents. The community largely feels Magnolia's interests were ignored in the BAT lane planning process.

In advance of our upcoming General Meeting, we more fully detail the MCC's positions and concerns. These positions may change, depending on the scope of concerns aired at the November 13 General Meeting and the City's response.

Magnolia  
Community Club  
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**A. Time Restrictions For Northbound Magnolia Bridge Traffic and Southbound Traffic Should Be Eliminated.**

The MCC generally supports the concept of dedicated bus lanes along the Elliott/15<sup>th</sup> Avenue corridor during peak hours only. However, it is the MCC's position that traffic headed for the Magnolia Bridge and Galer Flyover should share the northbound BAT lane *at all times* to facilitate traffic flow. For years, Magnolia Bridge traffic shared the far right lane with no apparent slow down for buses. At the very least, Magnolia Bridge traffic should be allowed in the northbound BAT lane during non-peak hours, during which time we understand that there is an average of only 8-9 buses per hour. We also see no reason why southbound traffic cannot use the BAT lane all the time, or at least in off-peak hours to access Westlake, downtown, and the Viaduct.

**B. If 24-hour Access is not Permitted, Then the Northbound Access Point for Magnolia Bridge Traffic Should Be Moved.**

As described above, the MCC requests that the City allow the entire northbound BAT lane to be made available for Magnolia Bridge/Galer Flyover traffic. If that is not permitted, then at minimum, the access point to the northbound BAT lane for Magnolia Bridge/Galer Flyover traffic needs to be changed to Mercer Place. We believe that the current access point is unsafe because the distance from the access point to the Magnolia Bridge is quite short. In addition, if a vehicle headed to Magnolia merges onto Elliott Avenue W. at Mercer Place, that vehicle must merge out of the BAT lane for approximately one block, before having to merge back into the BAT lane after Prospect. Not only is this unsafe in terms of unnecessary weaving in a short space, but it slows down traffic in all northbound lanes, and creates a chokepoint.

**C. The BAT Lane Signage Should Be Modified.**

Consistent with the MCC's position detailed above, the signage along the BAT lanes must be revised to clearly describe when vehicles may travel in both the northbound and southbound BAT lanes.

In addition, we understand that the City will not ban bicycle traffic in the BAT lanes along Elliott even though a bus cannot pass a bicycle in that lane, and the vast majority of bicyclists cannot pedal the speed limit, meaning that bicycles *will* slow bus (and car) traffic. These slowdowns caused by bicycles sharing the BAT lane with buses and Magnolia neighborhood traffic can at least partially be alleviated by posting signs in both directions encouraging cyclists to use the parallel bike trail along Myrtle Edwards Park.

**D. The Pavement Painting Should Be Modified.**

There are two significant issues with the current pavement painting along the corridor. First, the "Right Turn Only" arrows are problematic. In both the northbound and southbound BAT lanes along Elliott Avenue, the pavement arrows direct "Right Turn Only" at several locations. With the possible exception of the northbound turn onto Mercer Place, we believe all "Right Turn Only" pavement arrows should be removed. For the most part, these pavement arrows unnecessarily direct traffic onto essentially insignificant or dead-end roads. In addition, these pavement arrows create a safety hazard

because of the unnecessary lane-changing before and after each right turn, especially for business access to driveways that are located a short distance beyond one of these right turns.

Second, the solid white line with occasional dashed lines that separates the BAT lane from the other lanes is confusing, unnecessarily restrictive and, therefore hazardous. We understand that it is the City's position that vehicles are allowed to cross the white solid line at any point along the BAT lane and that the dashed lines are advisory only as to where the City deems it safest to access the BAT lane. This position contradicts the public's understanding, namely that solid white lines are not to be crossed. What the City has effectively done with this novel striping arrangement is to unintentionally create a lengthy barrier to access the BAT lanes, as well as create a hazardous situation for access into and out of the BAT lanes.

**E. The Southbound BAT Lane In Front of Staples Should Be Modified To Improve Safety And Eliminate The Chokepoint At The Bottom of The Magnolia Bridge.**

The MCC continues to have safety concerns about the southbound BAT lane at the Magnolia Bridge off ramp, next to Staples. Currently, the sign says the right lane must turn right, which means turning into a dead end street under the Galer Flyover. Given where the yield sign is placed, plus the left and right turn access into and out of Staples that requires driver attention, and the amount of traffic in the center southbound lane during peak hours, there is insufficient space for traffic coming off the Magnolia Bridge to merge safely out of the far right lane before the mandatory right turn under the Galer Flyover.

In addition, this arrangement is creating a chokepoint and causing traffic delays up the Magnolia Bridge during peak hours. One way to alleviate this issue may be to reconfigure the layout at the bottom of the Magnolia Bridge to allow both eastbound lanes to turn right on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue W. We encourage the City to investigate this possible solution, as well as revising the configuration of the southbound BAT lane in front of Staples.

**F. BAT Lane Enforcement Is Premature.**

We ask that any enforcement of the BAT lanes not go into effect until the issues we have raised have been addressed.

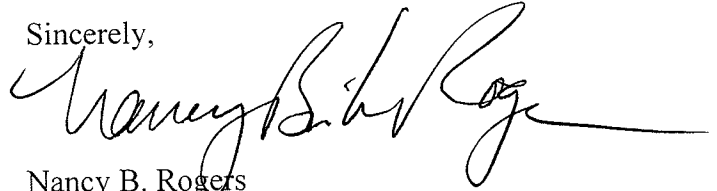
**G. Petition.**

Finally, enclosed is a petition that is being distributed so that residents can express their support for the MCC's position and more easily register their concerns about the BAT lanes.

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We believe instituting that the MCC's proposed modifications to the BAT lanes will both enhance traffic safety and help garner acceptance by Magnolia drivers and bus riders in this corridor. The MCC looks forward to your November 13<sup>th</sup> presentation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nancy B. Rogers", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nancy B. Rogers  
President

Enclosure (petition)

cc: Eric Widstrand, Acting City Traffic Engineer  
Mayor Greg Nickels  
Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis  
King County Councilmember Larry Phillips  
City of Seattle Councilmember Jan Drago  
SDOT Director Grace Crunican  
Seattle Police Captain Steven Brown

