

Transportation Issues

There are a broad variety of Transportation Issues that currently affect our neighborhood and the list is likely to expand dramatically as added development occurs. The development of Union Station as the hub of the region's transportation, the continued growth in the Central Platte Valley and further "infill" development in LoDo's surface parking lots will all result in significant increases in pedestrian and vehicle traffic and changes in transit operations.

Unlike the land use planning and zoning process, there is no review board for actions by the Public Works Department, which has jurisdiction over the City's streets. While land use and development issues are usually the result of private actions and proposals, streets and on street parking are controlled by the City government. The City Charter gives control over City rights-of-way to the Manager of Public Works. There is no formal notification process for Public Works actions to involve neighborhood organizations. Public Works deals with a host of projects and issues city-wide, and must set priorities for use of limited City capital and operating funds. The 2000 Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan contains well over 100 principles, policies, recommendations and items for implementation related to transportation. LoDoNA may wish to establish a short list of priority projects to advocate with Public Works and the City Council to focus attention on our neighborhood's most critical transportation issues and needs.

Transit related issues such as the proposed Circulator currently planned on 18th and 19th Streets, revised bus routes and bus stop locations are partially controlled by Public Works, and partly by RTD. Here again LoDoNA may wish to establish a short list of priorities for the most critical issues that will affect a broad portion of our neighborhood.

Several recent planning efforts with impacts on transportation have involved extensive community participation. Members of the LoDoNA Board have been involved in each of them to communicate and advocate neighborhood goals:

- One of the largest transportation projects affecting Lower Downtown and the Central Platte Valley is the development of Denver Union Station as the regional transit hub. The redevelopment of DUS will bring tens of thousands of passengers on both rail transit and suburban buses into the historic station and will greatly increase pedestrian traffic in our neighborhood. Some of the buses that already come here will be relocated from the Market Street Station and the 16th Street Mall. LoDoNA has participated in the development of the DUS planning process, with one of our Board members acting as Co-Chair of the Union Station Advisory Committee, keeping the full Board updated on issues and progress. Another Board member will serve as one of the City's members on the board of the new Denver Union Station Project Authority.
- The Downtown Multimodal Access Plan (DMAP) was completed in 2005. The two major recommendations of DMAP were development of new Circulator Shuttle connecting Union Station with Downtown and the Cultural Center. The Circulator would connect with the expanded RTD

transit lines radiating from Union Station and would relieve the potential overcrowding of the 16th Street mall Shuttle. The new Circulator was recommended in DMAP to include a one way couplet of lanes on 18th Street and 19th Street. The other primary improvement recommended in DMAP was the development of expanded streetscape along 14th Street for pedestrians. DMAP also developed streetscape design guidelines for a high level of pedestrian amenities in Downtown.

- A new Downtown Area Plan (DAP) was completed in 2007. This plan reinforced the need for the new circulator on 18th and 19th Streets and also emphasized the need to implement the street design and circulation recommendations of the 2000 Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan. The DAP also recommended an intra-downtown streetcar-style transit system along Larimer/Lawrence Streets to connect Auraria and Downtown.
- LoDoNA participated in the development of the Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan completed in August 2000, which identified a series of neighborhood concerns about mobility and parking. An extensive list of principles was part of the plan, with an emphasis on improving the pedestrian experience and minimizing the negative effects of traffic. One of the recommendations eight years ago was to complete Wewatta Street as an arterial around Lower Downtown.
- A LoDoNA board member participates as a member of the City's Parking Commission which is an advisory body to the City's Parking Policy Council. Commission members are charged with considering parking issues in the entire city.

Some of the neighborhood transportation issues developed in these prior studies or that have been brought to the Board's attention include:

- Parking – for residents, businesses and visitors
 - Overnight parking: is it feasible to allow this while maintaining clean streets?
 - Loss of off street parking with new developments: is adequate parking still available?
 - Opportunities for shared parking: can spaces built for new offices be made available to other users evenings and weekends?
 - Parking District: can a new district be established to manage parking in LoDo and as a possible approach using parking revenues to build off street garages?
 - Use of kiosks replacing meters, can this generate revenue for local improvements? Kiosks result in added revenue by eliminating the use of time left on a meter by a subsequent vehicle.
 - On street, can higher meter rates encourage turnover to better serve retail users?
 - Off street structures, is added capacity needed for just peak entertainment times?
- Streets – pedestrian and bike friendly, a more “walkable” neighborhood
 - Widening sidewalks, Larimer Street southwest of 17th Street and 14th Street southeast of Blake.
 - Improved crosswalks with bulb-outs to reduce crossing distances, and added “Barnes Dance” all direction walk cycles.
 - One way vs. two way traffic, conversion of 18th Street to two way between Wynkoop and Blake.

- Improved safety features at high accident locations such as Wazee and 13th Street. (This will be done this Fall)
- Added traffic signals, Wynkoop Street at 17th and 18th Streets, Wazee Street at 13th Street
- Completing/widening Wewatta Street to four lanes
- Transit
 - Circulator options, 18th or 19th Streets or combinations
 - Revisions to the 16th Street mall with wider sidewalks
 - Possible trolley on Larimer/Lawrence as proposed in the DAP.
- Public Safety
 - Late night street closures to prevent “cruising”
 - Improved street and sidewalk lighting

LoDoNA’s Advocacy Role in Transportation

A defined method to assure LoDoNA’s involvement in neighborhood transportation issues is needed. How can we best get involved and stay involved? Public Works has held public meetings on such issues as widening the sidewalks on Larimer Street. RTD and the City have certainly held extensive public meetings in the Union Station planning process. DMAP and DAP also had extensive stakeholder involvement. Working with our City Council person and Public Works and RTD staffs appears to be the best approach to advocate for more specific neighborhood transportation improvements.

Recommendations

- The Board should form a Transportation Committee to sort through the extensive list of issues, projects and policies to develop priorities for early action.
- The Committee should hold quarterly meetings with Councilwoman Montero and key Public Works staff to advocate specific street and parking improvements, reporting to the Board on progress.
- The Committee should hold similar meetings with Councilwoman Montero and RTD staff on neighborhood transit issues.