Dear Members:

It is vital that the Ashland’s bicycle transportation network be safe for everyone – all ages and abilities. Currently, only the brave and the fearless ride downtown.

Lithia, Main Street and Siskiyou Boulevard need protected bike facilities. That is, the bicycle facilities need to be physically separated from adjacent motor vehicles. Without such improvement, these streets will be unsafe for use by more than half of the City’s residents who might choose a bike as their preferred mode of travel.

In a City that prides itself on ensuring that all citizens have equal protection and access to City services, it is shocking that the City would consider designing its transportation system in a way that would exclude so many people. It is critical that bicycle facilities be designed and constructed to ensure the safety of everyone – including youth and seniors riding bicycles. Using transportation jargon, all City streets must be “level of traffic stress” #1 – suitable for everyone.

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and many other organizations have made clear what is needed to create a viable bicycle transportation system. Following NACTO’s publication Designing for All Ages and Abilities (see https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NACTO_Designing-for-All-Ages-Abilities.pdf – graphic attached), it is obvious that Lithia Way, Main Street and Siskiyou Boulevard require separated bike facilities. We recommend that these bicycle facilities be separated from the motor vehicle lane by parked cars (as shown in Figures 12 and 13, Jacobs, Technical Memo 3).
The Technical Memo #3 sets out a false choice between improving pedestrian facilities and those for people riding bicycles (Jacobs, Technical Memo #3, Section 4). That is unfortunate. Rather, the Memo should have utilized 10.5- or even 10-foot travel lanes as a common element in the base case scenario (section 3.1). Ten and a half or ten-foot lanes have been shown to be safer in urban settings. They slow motor vehicle traffic which leads to safer streets. (see USDOT, Federal Highway Administration, https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED_BIKE/univcourse/pdf/swless20.pdf, and https://www.citylab.com/solutions/2015/07/10-foot-traffic-lanes-are-saferand-still-move-plenty-of-cars399761/, and https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/street-design-elements/lane-width/). Had Jacobs incorporated 10.5- or ten-foot travel lanes, there would be adequate right-of-way to provide for safe movement for all modes of travel through the Downtown. Truck and bus volumes are often cited as justification for wide 11-foot lanes. That isn’t the case in the Downtown. Fortunately, Siskiyou, Main and Lithia are not truck routes. Retaining the existing eleven-foot lanes, taking into consideration the pending transfer of OR99 to the City, is not warranted or justified.

It is time to make Downtown Ashland safe for all modes.

Jacobs suggests in Technical Memo #2, that a “bicycle level of stress (BLTS) “of 1 or 2 results in a low-stress, safe, and comfortable environment for people riding bikes. Anything above a BLTS 2 is likely to feel dangerous and inaccessible for all riders.” To read the statement would imply that LTS 1 and 2 will result in similar outcomes. That is untrue. LTS 1 is suitable for everyone whereas LTS 2 is only suitable for teens and adults with adequate bicycle handling skills (see page 14-11, ODOT Analysis Procedure Manual, Version 2). LTS 2 “requires more attention than young children can handle” (ibid) and would preclude use by most seniors because of their heightened concerns for safety and physical challenges. The Jacobs Technical Memo 2, page 29 suggests that “Level 2 is considered a reasonable minimum target for ‘pedestrian’ (bicycle) routes and is suitable for adults and children age 10 and over.” The LTS 2 threshold, according to ODOT is teen which is reflected in Jacobs’ accompanying Figure on page 2. It matters because youth represent a critical bicycle user group. They are the future of the community and, potentially, life-long bicyclists.

The City of Ashland Summary of Policy Options Survey Findings (July 2014) found that: “respondents think multi-modal infrastructure improvements should be focused on bicycles. Improving Ashland’s bicycle infrastructure garnered the most support, and based on the findings seems to be the most likely to encourage the use of non-vehicular transportation methods.” That sentiment is probably true today especially with the ever-increasing use of electric bikes by the City’s residents.

It will be impossible to meet draft “Goal 2: Plan for a safe and functional multi-modal transportation network” (Technical Memo #1) without making the above improvements. The Downtown will not be safe for bicycling except by the “strong and the fearless” which account for less than one percent of the City’s residents. No one can say that the Downtown is safe for bicyclists. “Pedestrian and Bicycle Related Crashes: The higher number of pedestrians and bike crashes (30% of all crashes) have over half of them
being serious injuries. Almost half of the turning crashes are bicycle right-hook crashes where drivers turn in front of bicyclists in the bike lane.” (pg 19, Jacobs, Technical Memo 2).

To not make improvements in the Downtown would not seem to be an option. The Technical Memo #2, Section 4.4, page 42 identifies the following safety hazards:

- "Main Street: The lack of a bike lane on this roadway coupled with several driveway conflicts indicate a poor level of service from the bicyclist’s perspective."
  - "The three-lane section from Oak to East Main Street has the potential to deter all but the most confident riders."
  - "In 2019, a CIP project was completed to add sharrow markings Main Street along its length in the study area. This may somewhat improve conditions but will not completely address the deficiency in the three-lane section."
- "Siskiyou Boulevard: The provided bike lane is a foot too narrow for a four/five lane roadway."
- "Lithia Way: The provided bike lane from East Main Street to Oak Street is a foot too narrow and does not have a buffer to protect bicyclists from door effects from adjacent parked vehicles."
  - "No bike lane is provided from Oak Street to Helman Street."
  - "There is a CIP project identified to add sharrow markings on Lithia Way from Oak Street to Helman Street. This may somewhat improve conditions but will not completely address the deficiency.” (page 42, Jacobs, Technical Memo 2).

Sharrows do little or nothing to improve safety. They serve only as oversized road signs reiterating Oregon law.

In accordance with the stated goals of the Revitalize Downtown Ashland Citizen Advisory Committee to make our downtown truly safe and functionally multi-modal, we need separated, protected bikeways. We look forward to collaborating with the City to create a bicycle transportation system that is safe for all ages and abilities.

Thank you,

President, Siskiyou Velo
NACTO
Contextual Guidance for Selecting All Ages & Abilities Bikeways

PROTECTED BIKE LANE OR REDUCE MOTOR VEHICLE SPEEDS

PROTECTED BIKE LANE OR BICYCLE PATH

BIKE BLVD.

BUFFERED BIKE LANE

AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC (ADT)

Very Low  Low  Median  High  Very High