



City rolls out pedestrian red carpet

Safety measures—some of them novel—are coming to Northwest Portland streets in the wake of a pedestrian fatality in January

The Plan

Four intersections will get curb extensions.

Three intersections will get “ladder-style” crosswalk markings.

Seven parking spaces have been removed on Northwest 21st and 23rd avenues to improve visibility at intersections.

Speed reader-boards will be employed at various locations to let drivers know how fast they are going.

One or more pedestrian caution signs—to be placed on the centerline at busy intersections—will be tested in Northwest Portland.

By Allan Classen

Crossing Northwest 21st and 23rd avenues on foot should become a safer proposition as a result of a series of improvements triggered by a pedestrian fatality here in January.

Working with neighborhood and business representatives, the Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT) is tuning up a multi-phase plan, parts of which are already in place. Seven parking spaces near intersections have been removed to give both pedestrians and motorists better sightlines.

Neighbors began seeing the white outlines of curb extensions on 21st Avenue at Flanders and Johnson this summer. Both extensions are set to be completed this month. PDOT considers curb extensions the best safety upgrade short of traffic signals.

Two 23rd Avenue intersections (Johnson and Westover) will get curb extensions next year. “Ladder style” crosswalks will also be installed at Westover and Savier streets.

“That’s very positive stuff,” said

Northwest District Association Transportation Chair Kim Carlson.

In addition, some new ideas have emerged that weren’t part of the Northwest District Association’s original call for action last winter:

A “Stop for Pedestrians” sign or two, placed on the centerline just before a crosswalk, will be tested in the neighborhood soon. These signs have a spring at their base so they bounce back into upright position should a vehicle strike or run over them.

Carlson said the signs are highly favored by her group because they have been shown to reduce the speed of traffic. The question is how long they will last after taking repeated hits.

Another safety device—a reader board that displays the speed of an approaching vehicle—is being employed at various neighborhood locations, first on Northwest 21st near Quimby and then on Northwest Thurman near 16th Avenue. PDOT planner Rob Burchfield said the signs, which flash the driver’s speed if it exceeds the speed limit, are

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effective in calming traffic.

Help may be coming from an improbable source: an umbrella manufacturer. Carlson said ShedRain, a 51-year-old Portland-based family business, is interested in producing a bright yellow umbrella with a pedestrian caution emblem on the top as a way for walkers to take safety into their own hands. By pointing the opened umbrella at approaching motorists, pedestrians could deliver an unmistakable message, she said.

Carlson said the owners of ShedRain were friends of Sarah Cogan, the pedestrian struck and killed at 23rd and Q^{uimby} this year. Kirstin

Kendall, manager of marketing and design for ShedRain, said a design for the umbrella is expected soon.

As for the overall plan to make Northwest intersections safer, Burchfield wants any changes in Northwest Portland to become part of a consistent citywide policy rather than a specialized response to perceived problems in one neighborhood. As part of the process, the Portland Pedestrian Advisory Committee will consider whether the recommendations make good policy for the whole city at an Oct. 17, 7 p.m., meeting in the Pettygrove Room of City Hall, 1220 NW Fifth Ave.



A spring-mounted pedestrian caution sign similar to this could be tried in Northwest Portland.