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News Release

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Bicyclists craft plan for city's Nueces Bike Boulevard project

League develops details for attracting riders, making boulevard safe and convenient

The League of Bicycling Voters (LOBV) has crafted a detailed plan for the Nueces Bike Boulevard project, and bicyclists will ask the City of Austin to implement the recommendations when the city holds its second public workshop on the project on **Wednesday, Jan. 13, 6 p.m. at Pease Elementary School.**

Bike boulevards are streets designed to give preference to bicycle travel by using signage, traffic calming and other techniques that make key bike corridors more attractive to all bicyclists, but in particular, new riders not comfortable riding in high traffic areas.

"Our plan focuses on techniques to maintain automobile access to the street while also minimizing the amount of through auto traffic so that bicyclists are ensured a quick and safe route from the UT campus area to downtown and back," said Tom Wald, LOBV executive director.

Wald said that the traffic calming and diversions in the LOBV plan are key to a successful project, since the current city plan calls for removing most north/south stop signs on Nueces to make it a more feasible route for bicyclists who are now forced to stop at most intersections. "If you're removing stop signs for bicyclists, which is a good idea, you have to make sure that you're not also attracting new motorists and increasing cut-through traffic on a street not designed for high automobile traffic," he said.

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The City of Austin's current proposal—which includes a Nueces Street bike boulevard from Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to 3rd Street—is a component of several city planning initiatives, including the Bicycle Master Plan, the Downtown Plan and the Street Smarts Task Force. The City of Austin launched a public input process for the bike boulevard with an initial workshop in December, and while it presented a "tool box" of possible traffic calming techniques, it did not detail specific improvements.

The LOBV plan uses a variety of traffic calming devices—such as traffic circles, pinch points and semi-diverters—to reduce auto traffic that should be using nearby arterials, such as Guadalupe or Lamar. It also addresses ideas to give the boulevard identity, such as stenciled streets, signage, gateways and public art.

"About a dozen bicyclists with a tremendous amount of experience with bicycle facilities and traffic calming helped design the LOBV plan," said Rob D'Amico, LOBV president. "We felt the city was moving in the right direction with its planning effort, but that it needed specific input on how the final result should look."

D'Amico said that a completed Nueces Bike Boulevard will be a boon to those living or doing business on the street, since boulevards in other cities have made the areas more bicycle/pedestrian friendly, have increased property values and have been welcomed by businesses and residents on the boulevards.

LOBV first began planning work on the boulevard in early 2009 with a working group outlining recommendations for the top-five bicycle facility investments in Austin. Later, members working with a subcommittee of the Bicycle Advisory Council and city planners throughout 2009 also began developing a framework for what the boulevard would look like. LOBV also researched known constraints for any changes to Nueces, along with detailed notes from City of Austin meetings with public safety stakeholders.

LOBV planners also soundly rejected a possible use of Rio Grande for the bike boulevard route, since the hilly street deters new riders and doesn't offer the same connectivity to key facilities—such as the Lance Armstrong Bikeway—that Nueces does.

The LOBV plan, including a map with proposed facilities, can be found at: <http://www.lobv.org/nueces>.

The League of Bicycling Voters is Austin's voice for bicyclists. LOBV is a nonprofit advocacy organization promoting better transportation policy decisions, justice for bicyclists, and more resources to increase the number of bicyclists in the Austin area.

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