Staff Report: Broadway Improvements – Federal Hill, Downtown, Olneyville – Wards 13, 1, 15 (For Action)
Presented at January 15, 2020 BPAC meeting

Project Background
The City of Providence Department of Planning and Development seeks comments from the BPAC regarding conceptual plans for a two-way urban trail to replace the existing conventional striped bike lanes on Broadway from Greene Street to Valley Street. This will be a conceptual level review of the project and will be the first of two reviews before the Commission.

Bike lanes were installed on Broadway in 2011. Most of the length of the corridor, the curb-to-curb width is 49 ft, with a wider section in Downtown and a narrower section in Olneyville. The bridges over both I-95 and RI-6/US-10 are both subject to some state. The State Bicycle Master Plan conducted bicycle traffic counts at the intersection of Broadway with Dean Street in September 2017 and found estimated annual bike traffic of 169,000, one of the highest counts in the state. Broadway is also a significant transit, pedestrian, and commercial corridor.

Two major safety concerns with the existing bike lane configuration on Broadway. Turning motor vehicles at locations such as Dean Street encroach on the bike lane, and delivery vehicles often stop in the bike lane, forcing bike lane users into vehicular traffic. Besides these two specific concerns, on a street with Broadway’s traffic volume, unprotected bike lanes are not appropriate for achieving an all-ages-and-abilities facility, which is a standard based on making a wide demographic of people comfortable to use the bike lane.
Description of Concept

The concept involves consolidating the bike lanes onto one side of the street and adding physical separation to create a two-way urban trail. Both sides of the street would retain on-street parking, with the south side’s parking floated off the curb. Additional proposed improvements include floating bus islands between the urban trail and the vehicular travel lanes, and pedestrian refuge islands at crosswalks in a similar location.

With two-way urban trails, the transitions at either end require attention. At the Downtown end of Broadway, the urban trail is proposed to connect to a new contraflow bike lane on Greene Street, and then to an extended two-way urban trail on Fountain Street between Greene Street and Empire Street. At the Olneyville end of Broadway, the urban trail will connect to the new north-south off-road bike path being constructed just east of the highway as part of the 6-10 Connector project. Ultimately, the urban trail will continue across the highway to connect with the recently-completed San Souci Greenway, but due to the active construction on the bridge that connection may be a later phase.
Project Map

Respectfully submitted by Alex Ellis.