

S·M·I·L·E

SELLWOOD MORELAND IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE
8210 SE 13th AVENUE, PORTLAND, OR 97202
STATION 503-234-3570 • CHURCH 503-233-1497

July 3, 2025

Portland Bureau of Transportation
1120 SE Fifth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Attn: Rick Nys, Traffic Operations Supervisor

SUBJECT: SE 17TH Avenue between SE McLoughlin Boulevard and SE Linn Street

Dear Mr. Nys,

The Sellwood Moreland Improvement League (SMILE) requests that PBOT perform a traffic safety study on SE 17th Avenue between SE McLoughlin Boulevard and SE Linn Street. Specifically, we request that the safety study collect new traffic volume and speed data, and identify methods to improve pedestrian, bike and motor vehicle safety along this road.

NORTH SEGMENT

SE 17th Avenue between SE McLoughlin Blvd. and SE Nehalem St. is classified as a Local Service Traffic Street, has continuous speed bumps and has a posted speed of 20 mph. It is residential in character, with a heavy tree canopy and on-street parking for much of its length. There are no retail storefronts to attract visitors. This street was once a Trimet bus route, but that bus line has been removed. Residents east and west of SE 17th regularly cross the street on their way to Westmoreland Park, Llewelyn Elementary School, the MAX station, TriMet routes 70 and 19, and the busy commercial corridor on SE Milwaukie Ave.

Traffic counts on SE 17th Avenue from 2010 and 2012 show volumes of about 3,000 vehicles per day (vpd) at SE Knapp Street and 4,100 vpd at SE Ellis Street at the north end. These counts are outdated and may not reflect current volumes. In this 1.4-mile section there are two stop lights, at SE Bybee and at SE Tolman. There are no stop signs. There are long sections of roadway without marked pedestrian crossings.

This section of SE 17th Avenue is marked with a double yellow centerline. SE 17th Avenue parallels McLoughlin Blvd (a State highway) and SE Milwaukie Ave (a Neighborhood Collector) and provides a convenient alternative for both of these routes. SE Milwaukie Avenue, located just one block west of SE 17th Avenue, is often congested due to commercial activity and heavy pedestrian traffic. Impatient drivers often use SE 17th instead. When McLoughlin Blvd is backed up, drivers can easily detour onto SE 17th Ave and bypass the highway traffic for two miles.

One of our concerns is that the current striping centerline striping (double yellow) on SE 17th Avenue, along with the scarcity of controlled intersections, invites drivers to use the street as a main thoroughfare rather than stay on McLoughlin Blvd and SE Milwaukie Avenue, which are designed for the higher volume traffic. The striping makes the street “feel” like a high-volume, high-speed road, which is inconsistent with its residential character and street classification. The only other streets in the Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood that are marked continuously with double yellow lines are SE Tacoma and SE Bybee. Both of these east/west streets are classified as Neighborhood Collectors, have higher posted speeds, significantly heavier traffic volumes, and a mix of commercial and residential land uses. SE Milwaukie Avenue and SE 13th Avenue, the two main north/south Sellwood-Moreland streets, are also Neighborhood Collectors, have higher traffic volumes than SE 17th Avenue, and in places higher posted speeds. Yet both streets are primarily marked with a single broken yellow centerline. These four streets are intended to be used as the primary collector streets through the neighborhood.

For this north segment of SE 17th Avenue, we respectfully request that PBOT do the following:

- Collect new traffic volume and speed data on this section of road;
- Re-evaluate and justify the need for the double yellow striping on this section of SE 17th Avenue;
- Consider installing additional marked pedestrian crosswalks and traffic calming devices, in particular at SE Yukon or SE Knight, as well as other safety improvements deemed appropriate.

SOUTH SEGMENT

South of SE Nehalem Street, SE 17th Avenue is classified as Neighborhood Collector, and is a primary motor vehicle connection with the City of Milwaukie to the south. It does not appear that any recent traffic speed or volume data has been collected on this segment. There are no marked pedestrian crosswalks between SE Linn and SE Umatilla, a five-block span with commercial businesses on both sides of the street. While the posted speed limit is 20 mph, actual speeds appear to be higher when traffic isn't backed up. The posted speed on the SE 17th Ave in the City of Milwaukie to the south is 35 mph, which aggravates the problem. Our primary concerns on this segment are high speeds, and the lack of safe, marked, pedestrian crossings.

For this south segment of SE 17th Avenue, we respectfully request that PBOT do the following:

- Collect new traffic speed and volume data on SE 17th Avenue;
- Consider installing at least one new marked crosswalk between SE Linn and SE Umatilla, as well as other traffic calming or safety improvements deemed appropriate.

Finally, we invite you, or a PBOT representative, to meet with SMILE's Transportation Committee or attend one of our neighborhood meetings so you can hear about traffic safety concerns directly from residents. Please contact me to arrange a time and date convenient for you. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

T. Scott Kelly, Chairman
SMILE Transportation Committee
Scott.Kelly@Sellwood.org

Cc: David Dugan, SMILE President