

## Time to Make Salem a Bike-Friendly Town

When it comes to riding a bicycle in Salem, most people are like me: desirous of doing this, while worried about how dangerous it is.

After all, this town has been designed to bow down before the Altar of Vehicular Traffic Flow.

Making it safe and easy for bicyclists and walkers to get around has been an afterthought, getting occasional lip service in transportation plans without much follow-through commitment from City of Salem officials.

Angela Obery seeks to change things.

She's a long-time resident of the Highland neighborhood who has formed a Salem Bike Boulevard Advocates group.

After talking with Obery I'm super-enthused about her vision. This could be a game-changer for enhancing our quality of life, along with making Salem more attractive to people and businesses thinking of coming here.

A bike boulevard is a residential street that's been optimized for bicycles, which also makes the street friendly for pedestrians, skateboarders, joggers, and other people outside of a vehicle "cage."

Cars are still welcome on bike boulevards.

They just have to travel at a lower speed, sharing the public street space more equitably with citizens getting about on non-motorized wheels.

Portland, Obery told me, has 70 miles of bike boulevards, which are evolving into neighborhood greenways. Plantings, curb extensions, water features, and other means are used to create city streets with a park-like feel.

We can do the same here in Salem. It just will take a different mind-set among both citizens and elected officials.

No more empty words about making our streets bikeable and walkable. No more ignoring a 2012 "Bike & Walk Salem!" report that has sat on an

actionless shelf. No more wasting taxpayer money on unneeded autocentric projects like a billion dollar Third Bridge.

The Salem Bike Boulevard Advocates folks are taking their vision to every neighborhood association, seeking support. I'm confident they'll get it.

Studies have shown that about 60% of people have an interested but concerned attitude toward bicycling. They're reluctant to ride on busy city streets with cars and trucks whizzing by.

As Obery, a mother of two, told me, "A patch of white paint doesn't pass Mommy Radar."

When the pedestrian bridge across the Willamette slough is built, bicyclists will be able to easily ride between Riverfront and Minto Brown parks. I'm looking forward to this, since I often bike at Minto.

But once people like me reach downtown, they'll be in a Horror Zone, aside from the few who are comfortable riding in the same lane as traffic. In no way does a bike symbol painted on Liberty Street asphalt make me want to ride on that road.

Obery has talked with City leaders about making safe and pleasant biking a priority in Salem. Her conclusion: they need to hear that this is the will of the people, not just a few avid bicyclists.

Check out Salem Bike Boulevard Advocates on Facebook. Give them a "like." Then take the action steps you'll find there.

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Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city's Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like. Brian Hines blogs at [hinesblog.com](http://hinesblog.com)