To ACHD Stakeholders:

As I have stated before, my belief is that the need to create bike lanes downtown is more about pedestrians than bicycles. There should be an emphasis placed on making Boise a more walkable city. This means making pedestrian accommodations a priority. I call this concept “The Pedestrian Rules in Boise” (a play on words).

The core of downtown Boise should favor pedestrian travel above all other modes. Secondarily, it should be safe and convenient for bicycles and thirdly efficient for cars and trucks. Once embraced, I believe that the establishment of this hierarchy will make the planning and implementation of changes to downtown much easier.

Pedestrians must be able to travel efficiently and safely throughout the city. Cross walks are provided for this purpose; however, pedestrians are expected to share the intersections with cars and bicycles at the same time. A more reasonable approach would be to make crossing signals pedestrian activated, stopping all traffic so pedestrians can cross in three directions; left, right or diagonal without cars or bicycles putting them at risk. The pedestrian activated traffic control signals would allow the pedestrian crossings to occur between normal traffic sequences. Each time the crossing button is pushed the traffic would be stopped at the next light change. Not only does this provide safe passage for the walkers, it eliminates the obstruction of turning traffic (motor vehicles or bicycles) by people in the crosswalks. When there are no pedestrians queued at the crosswalk the sequence of traffic control would not be uninterrupted.

Signage can be placed at the intersections that would make all users aware of the “Pedestrian Rules in Boise” which also indicates the importance of pedestrians to follow the rules (thus the play on words). This might help to discourage “jay walking” and other illegal or unsafe behavior. Once the priority of pedestrians has been established accommodations for bicycles will make more sense as it justifies moving the cyclists off the sidewalk where they are a menace to walkers.

While buffered bike lanes may be safer, a shared lane can also be an option. The right hand lanes on Main and Idaho streets can easily and inexpensively be change to shared usage, providing a three foot buffer between the bicycle and parked cars on the right and moving vehicles on the left. At the intersection the green turning boxes can provide a safe place for the cyclist to queue up to make a left or right turn, ahead of traffic and beyond the crosswalk.

As Boise grows I believe the mix of pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle use will change. With more urban dwellers will come much more pedestrian activity. It is likely that bicycle use will increase while motor vehicle use in the core of downtown may well diminish. This could be especially true if Boise would consider placing a large parking structure at the end of the Connector with a trolley or other ground transportation system to move people around town.

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