

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE CCRA SPRUCE/PINE BIKE LANES TASK FORCE

INTRODUCTION

You will recall that the Task Force was appointed at the Nov. 12 Board Meeting in reaction to the presentation made to the Board at our Oct. 8 meeting by representatives of the City's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (OTIS) regarding contemplated changes to Spruce/Pine; the numerous responses to that presentation, both at the Oct. 8 meeting and thereafter, overwhelmingly critical of the contemplated changes, particularly the proposal to prevent any stopping in those bike lanes (presently, vehicles are permitted to temporarily stop, for up to 20 minutes, in those lanes); as well as the fact that, on Oct. 17, over the objections of numerous residents of CCRAville, Society Hill, and Wash West, City Council unanimously passed a bill that would prohibit any and all stopping in bike lanes across the City. The Task Force was charged with coming up with possible alternatives to OTIS' plan that would make Spruce/Pine safer for all users (cyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicles), while perhaps acknowledging, at least to some extent, the historical practice of permitting temporary stopping in those bike lanes.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before the Spruce/Pine bike lanes were created, both streets had two traffic lanes and one parking lane. No one thought twice about temporarily stopping in the curbside traffic lane of both streets for the purpose of loading and unloading people and packages. And the City permitted congregants of the churches and synagogues on the two streets to park in the curbside traffic lane while attending services without being ticketed. The bike lanes were first presented to the public in the Spring of 2009 by the Nutter administration. From the outset, there was substantial opposition from the neighborhoods, which focused on three principal issues: (1) losing one of the two traffic lanes would cause substantial congestion and delays on two important East/West streets; (2) for those living on Spruce and Pine (or owning real estate on those streets), loss of the ability to temporarily stop in the curbside traffic lane to load and unload people and packages; and (3) for those who were members of religious congregations who had long had permission from the City to park in the curbside traffic lane while attending services, the prospect of losing that permission. With respect to the first issue, the City stated that the bike lanes would start off as a three month pilot program, and that the time that it took to get crosstown would be monitored. With respect to the second issue, the City stated that vehicles would continue to be able to make temporary stops to load and unload people and packages. And with respect to the third issue, the City stated that the existing religious parking regulations would remain the same. The pilot program started in September of 2009. By mid December of 2009, the Streets Department declared that crosstown driving times were not significantly slower than

they were before the bike lanes, and the Department recommended that the lanes be made permanent with the repaving of Spruce and Pine in 2010.

Without the representations of the City with respect to temporary stopping and parking for religious services, there may never have been any designated bike lanes on Spruce and Pine. (Note that the religious services parking issue is now moot given the “voluntary” agreement (at the request of Philly Bike Action and the Bicycle Coalition) of all of the affected religious institutions to cease using the Spruce/Pine bike lanes for parking during services. Furthermore, the City has given these institutions permission to use other streets for such parking.)

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION

- 1. With clear and conspicuous signage, permit temporary stopping in bike lanes, but reduce the maximum time limit from 20 minutes to 10 minutes, and limit the availability of such temporary stopping to passenger vehicles.** Limiting the availability of this temporary stopping to passenger vehicles (e.g., private cars, ride share, taxis, medical vans) eliminates use by, among others, delivery vehicles and contractor vans which, in and of itself, would substantially reduce the number of vehicles that presently stop in the bike lanes. And the time reduction should accommodate the loadings and unloadings that the residents are concerned about, while also: (a) making enforcement easier; (b) encouraging use of the many existing daytime loading zones (which allow parking for up to 30 minutes, generally between 8 AM and 6 PM, after which they revert to normal parking); and (c) probably reducing the number of interactions with cyclists using the bike lanes. The Task Force recognizes that, given the law passed on Oct. 17 (and signed by Mayor Parker on Dec. 4) prohibiting *any* stopping in *any* bike lane, accomplishing this aspect of our Recommendation will require City Council to approve a Spruce/Pine west of Broad carve-out to the existing legislation. However: (a) there are numerous examples of carve-outs from otherwise City-wide legislation; (b) Spruce and Pine Streets west of Broad are exclusively within the jurisdiction of Council President Kenyatta Johnson; and (c) pursuant to the tradition of “councilmanic prerogative,” there is every reason to believe that, if CCRA were successful in persuading Johnson of the merits of our position, the balance of Council would go along.
- 2. One speed cushion and one raised pedestrian crosswalk on every block between Broad and 22nd Street.** Speed kills. Although the speed limit on Spruce/Pine is 25 mph and there are synchronized traffic lights, we know that vehicles are often traveling at speeds far in excess of the limit. Speed cushions

and raised pedestrian crosswalks are physical features that are proven to reduce traffic speeds. And the raised pedestrian crosswalk, placed across the beginning of each

block (on the western portion of the intersections on Spruce and the eastern portion of the intersections on Pine), will make pedestrians more visible and announce to drivers that these blocks are “different” and they need to pay special attention. (We leave placement of each block’s speed cushion to the experts at OTIS.)

3. **To separate the traffic lane from the bike lane, white plastic delineator posts, generally spaced 30 feet apart, but with the last three on each block on which a left turn can be made, spaced just 10 feet apart.** Delineator posts would provide further identification of the bike lanes (beyond the painted buffers that exist presently), and also serve as a deterrent to drivers who might be tempted to enter the bike lanes (especially drivers seeking to make a left turn across the bike lane). In addition, the mere presence of such posts tends to reduce traffic speeds, much in the way that narrower traffic lanes do. Setting them 30 feet apart would enable passenger vehicles seeking to temporarily stop in the bike lane to do so, although probably approaching at a slower speed than if the posts did not exist. And that distance would also enable vehicles to slowly enter the bike lane if they needed to do so to get around a vehicle that is temporarily stopped in the traffic lane for a quick drop-off or pick-up or attempting to park in the parking lane, including the daytime loading zones, without which the single lane of traffic would come to a complete stop.
4. **No planters.** During its Oct. 8 presentation, OTIS floated the idea of “crashworthy” planters in the bike lane buffer at each corner. The Task Force believes that the concept of planters is a good one, albeit only at the beginning of each block, in that not only would they serve as a physical barrier to vehicular entry into the bike lane, but they also would serve as a highly visible announcement to motorists that they are entering a bike lane street. However, we ultimately rejected this design element for two reasons. First, given the relatively narrow width of Spruce and Pine, together with the single relatively narrow traffic lane, in order to avoid impeding the ability of larger vehicles to turn onto Spruce or Pine, the planters would have to be placed several yards from the corner, thereby reducing their value as a physical barrier and as a “gateway marker.” Second, in the absence of dedicated maintenance, it is likely that the planters would soon become garbage-collecting, weed-strewn eyesores.
5. **No additional loading zones.** Also during its Oct. 8 presentation, OTIS spoke about the creation of new loading zones in the parking lane. Street parking (whether by permit or otherwise) has long been a hot button issue in our neighborhood. And the number of neighborhood garages has shrunk substantially in the last ten years or so. Nevertheless, as far back as Sept. of 2019, seeking to reduce the amount of

illegal parking (including double-parking), CCRA wrote to OTIS requesting that a pilot residential area daytime loading zone program be initiated on Spruce and Pine, between Broad and 22nd Street (the terminus of the bike lanes). It took a while, and the “pilot” was essentially skipped, but signs went up in May/June 2024. Accordingly, there already are daytime loading zones on Spruce and Pine for the length of the bike lanes, generally at the front and/or end of each block, most of which are large enough to accommodate at least two vehicles. While the Task Force would be open to the idea of reconfiguring some of these existing loading zones, we are opposed to increasing the total amount of parking lane curbside currently designated as loading zone space for two reasons: (a) doing so would necessarily reduce the amount of available day time street parking; and (b) permitting 10- minute passenger vehicle parking in the bike lane substantially reduces the need to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

CCRA Spruce/Pine Bike Lanes Task Force