Bicycle Advisory Council Recommendation: Seal Coat Policy

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) is to advise the City of Austin, and other jurisdictions, on all matters relating to the use of the bicycle;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has a long history of coordinating resurfacing with near term safety and mobility improvements;

WHEREAS, loose aggregate from sealcoat applications accumulates in bicycle lanes and on the edge of roadways used by people who bike;

WHEREAS, the accumulated aggregate poses a hazard to people using bicycles and diminishes ride quality;

WHEREAS, the 2014 Austin Bicycle Master Plan calls for Public Works to use alternative preservation treatments on routes used by bicyclists whenever possible;

WHEREAS, studies of bicycle ride quality have established acceptability thresholds of surface treatments that affect comfort;

WHEREAS, people who ride bikes may rate the acceptability of the same surface very differently based on their experience level, comfort, or other attributes, and creating an "all ages and abilities" network requires accommodating all types of riders;

WHEREAS, seal coat treatments roughen the road surface even when successfully applied and loose aggregate is removed;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Bicycle Advisory Council recommends that Public Works

- Work with the Active Transportation and Street Design Division of the Austin Transportation Department to research best practices in engineering literature and in peer cities to minimize the impact of seal coat treatments on people who bike and leverage street resurfacing to enhance the bicycle network;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends Public Works establish protocols to

- Use optimal treatments when possible to extend the life of the road surface while also accounting for the comfort of bicycle travel;
- Use grade 4 or smaller aggregate for seal coat on urban streets and all routes frequented by people using bicycles;
- Ensure streets treated with seal coat are swept again a week or two weeks after work is complete, with a focus on shoulders, bike lanes, and other places where loose aggregate tends to accumulate;

- Consider only applying seal coat to the main travel lanes where appropriate, leaving the smoother shoulders and bike lanes untreated;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends Public Works

- Manage resurfacing projects to minimize the impact on the bicycle network;
- Place advance signage warning of upcoming surface treatments that affect the bicycle network so people who bicycle the route regularly can plan alternate routes;

Date of Approval:

Record of the vote:

Attest: