

February 10, 2022

To: Mayor Sam Steidel and the Cannon Beach City Council

Cc: Bruce St Denis – CB City Manager

Subject: Open Letter to Council re: Traffic on South Spruce Street

Dear Mayor and City Council,

After reading Mayor Sam's article in the latest Community Bulletin, I felt compelled to pen a letter to Council regarding my observations regarding a traffic issue in Cannon Beach.

I live on South Spruce Street at the corner of East Adams. I have owned this property since 2008. In these fourteen years I have had ample opportunity to observe a set of traffic conditions that warrant consideration and discussion regarding safety and need for improvement.

It should be no surprise to Council that South Spruce, from First Street south to Gower Street is a heavily used section of road by families, dog walkers, bicycles, strollers, children and...lots and lots of cars and trucks. This stretch of road is an unmarked 25MPH zone per the Oregon Department of Transportation standard of a minimum 18 feet wide street width. This road has no curbing, no sidewalks and some nighttime lighting.

In my opinion, and observation, it is also one of the more dangerous stretches of road in Cannon Beach.

While South Spruce Street is a 25MPH zone, I would encourage members of the Council to drive Spruce south from First Street to the stop sign at the intersection of Monroe and maintain 25MPH in your vehicle. It should be obvious that at that speed, or higher, the opportunity for a traffic incident with another vehicle, or worse a pedestrian, is imminent. ESPECIALLY heading south toward James Madison Park – that corner is almost blind as it bends left and you cannot see what's around that bend until you're there. This is usually the spot I see cars hitting 'top speed' after accelerating over the crest of the hill at the cell towers (Washington Street) – yet another very dangerous section of Spruce. My opinion is, if you have to hit the brakes at that corner heading south, you're traveling too fast. I walk this section of road almost daily, so I know this to be true from a pedestrian perspective.

I believe both residents and tourists use Spruce as a high-speed bypass around downtown and Hemlock. I say 'high-speed' because I have personally observed either people rushing to find parking or service vehicles rushing to a work site or people that don't consider the danger of 'rushing' on such a narrow section of pavement that is so often populated by people walking, etc. Often cars/trucks will accelerate up the hill on Spruce (at Washington) and then make the turn at Adams to head west to Hemlock, thereby avoiding the intersection of First and Hemlock. I've personally seen cars/trucks carry speed around that corner onto Adams with little to no

regard on what or who might be on Adams. Adams from Spruce to Hemlock is quite narrow and if there are summer visitors parking on Adams it becomes very alarming. Vehicles traveling the opposite direction, east on Adams to turn left/right on South Spruce, can be just as bad. Approximately, 30% of drivers will 'roll' the stop sign at the end of East Adams. This was worse until Public Works cleared some of the brush around that stop sign – thank you.

Or, and this is most common during the summer tourist season, people will come up the hill on Spruce (southbound) at a high rate of speed, literally pull a U-turn at the intersection of Adams, and race back down Spruce (northbound) to secure a parking spot they have seen opening up. This happens several times a day during the summer. With parked cars, pedestrians walking up and down Spruce and traffic to/from East Adams, the opportunity for disaster is present. The fact that we haven't had a traffic accident or, worse, a vehicle/pedestrian incident is almost pure luck.

A couple of positive observations. I've seen increased patrols by the police department on Spruce over the last couple of years. I appreciate that effort – it's needed. More frequency would be even better. Additionally, the Public Works Department responded to some parking issues on the east side of Spruce, south of Adams toward James Madison Park, that were exacerbated due to confusing 'no parking' signage. The Public Works Department made some changes to the orientation of the signage and solved a big summertime parking problem that was making Spruce Street even narrower and even more dangerous. Thank you to Ms. LaBonte and team.

I said I felt compelled to write a letter after reading Sam's article in the Bulletin. As we endeavor to maintain the 'village' spirit and atmosphere of Cannon Beach, I think it is prudent to consider that our tourist/resident traffic continues to increase year-to-year and therefore the pedestrian and vehicle traffic increases with it. The technology in modern vehicles lulls us into a sense of safety that isn't present OUTSIDE of the vehicle. Anti-lock brakes, collision detection and lane departure warning systems don't mean that you can safely drive faster and faster. AND, our roads haven't gotten any wider and sidewalks and curbing haven't sprung up on roads like South Spruce. We may be a 'village', but I think we're experiencing 'city' traffic issues.

I don't have any easy solutions to the problems I've raised. In my opinion, something like either speed bumps, roundabouts or additional stop signs seem to be the only viable solution. I know there's lots of arguments that speed bumps don't work and I think if you've ever navigated a road that utilizes them, they can work. I would advocate for a 20MPH or lower speed limit on South Spruce, but I'm sure that's a non-starter per Oregon law.

I'm writing this letter now to be on record that there's potential disaster brewing on this stretch of road, and I don't want to wait until there's a major traffic incident to raise this issue.

Sincerely,
Gregory Bell – 362 S Spruce