

Improving the Pedestrian Environment on Windward Avenue Between Speedway and Windward Circle

**Prepared by: Richard Stanger for consideration by
the Parking, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee**

Overview:

In September, the Parking, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee put forward for VNC concurrence a list of projects it felt were important to pursue during its next 2-year cycle. One project was to implement the pedestrianization of Windward Avenue from Pacific Avenue to Speedway.

Plans to pedestrianize Windward Avenue further between Speedway and Pacific Avenue have been around since the 1990 Draft Waterfront Restoration Plan. The 2001 Venice Land Use Plan, certified by the Coastal Commission, noted it as a policy objective. It foresaw creating *"an enhanced pedestrian area from Speedway to Pacific Avenue, and establish pedestrian connections along Windward Avenue to Main Street at Windward Circle."*¹ Besides creating a formal plaza between Speedway and Ocean Front Walk, little has been done to make this objective happen (with the unintended possible exception of the al fresco dining policy during the COVID-19 period). For this reason, this analysis includes a pedestrian connection along Windward Avenue between Pacific Avenue and Windward Circle.

What follows is a description of several concepts that could improve the pedestrian environment in this important Venice location. The graphics that follow are simple drawings, accurate enough to understand the basic concepts put forth, but are not intended to be measured drawings or definitive.

A. Pedestrianizing Windward Avenue between Speedway and Pacific Avenue:

After checking, the feasibility of closing Windward Avenue to all motor vehicles is effectively not possible. Rather than fight that battle, the existing travel lanes were retained but repositioned. Increased pedestrian space can be achieved by relocating the two traffic lanes from their center position to the north side of the street. This allows the remaining two-thirds of the street to become a pedestrian plaza. The 19 parking spaces located on this block would be relocated. Changing parallel parking along the south curb of Windward Avenue East of Windward Circle to diagonal parking would result in 23 added parking spaces. See Figures 1 and 2.

¹ **Policy III. B. 1. 1990 Waterfront Restoration Plan and 1995 Venice Beach Ocean Front Walk Refurbishment Plan. (Page V-6)**

Windward Avenue and Circle: In response to community support to create a pedestrian oriented environment in the area of Windward Avenue and Circle, the 1990 Draft Waterfront Restoration Plan proposes several conceptual designs. This would involve providing better linkage between the Ocean Front Walk and Pavilion area on the beach, and Windward Avenue from Speedway to Windward Circle. The Draft Plan would create a formal plaza between Speedway and Ocean Front Walk, create an enhanced pedestrian area from Speedway to Pacific Avenue, and establish pedestrian connections along Windward Avenue to Main Street at Windward Circle. The improvements to the Circle would establish it as a central focus for pedestrians and vehicles.

Figure 1: Increasing Pedestrian Space on Windward Avenue Between Speedway and Pacific Avenue



Figure 2: Possible Relocation of Windward Avenue Parking Spaces - to Windward Avenue between Windward Circle and Riviera Avenue



B. Pedestrianization along Windward Avenue between Pacific Avenue and Windward Circle:

In this block of Windward Avenue the roadway is far wider than needed for a traffic lane in each direction. It is 60' wide at Pacific Avenue, but double that at the pedestrian walkway at its eastern end. Relocating the traffic lanes results in a lot of "left-over" space that could be used for a pedestrian plaza or park.

Figure 4, Concept 1, shows one possible arrangement. The two traffic lanes are repositioned from the center of the to the northern curb.

Figure 4: Concept 1 for Reconfiguring Windward Avenue between Pacific Avenue and Windward Circle



Figure 5 shows Concept 2 for Windward Avenue between Pacific Avenue and the Circle. It splits the westbound and eastbound lanes placing the pedestrian plaza in the middle of the roadway. The westbound lane would be along the north curb, the eastbound lane along the south curb. The result is less pedestrian space but one that is centered down Windward Avenue and its famous "Venice" hanging sign.

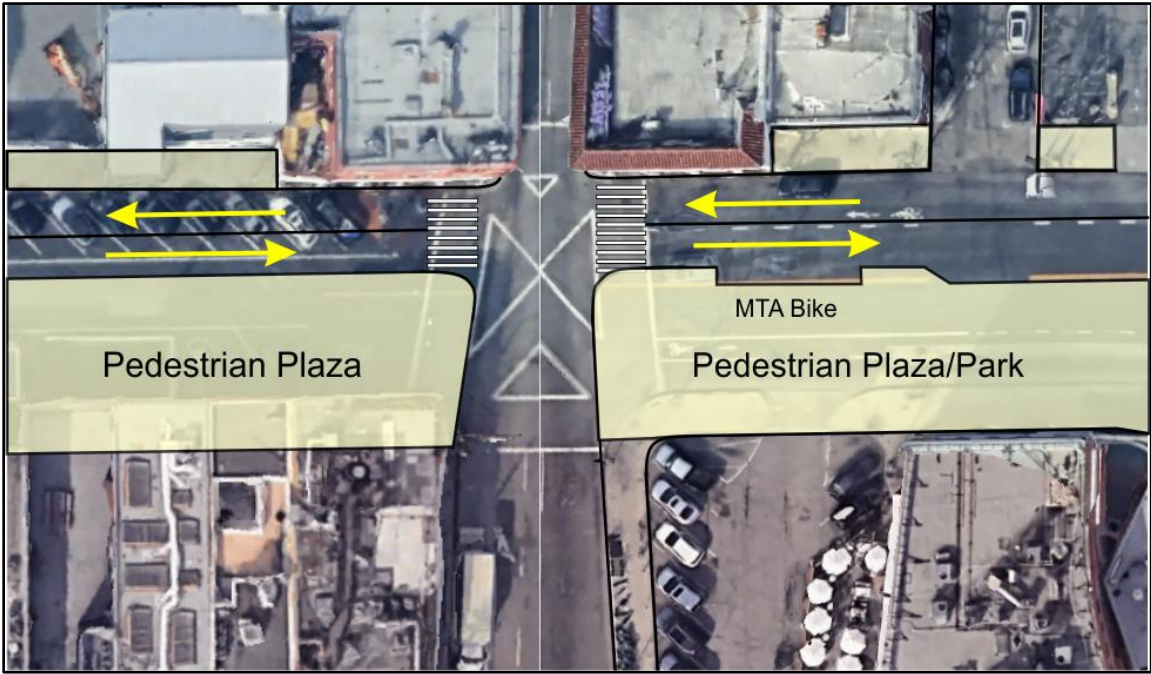
C. Combining the Windward Concepts at the Pacific Avenue Intersection:

Figures 6 and 7 show the two blocks coming together at the intersection of Pacific Avenue. Figure 6 shows the two roadways lining up. This would be a clearer crossing for pedestrians to navigate. Figure 7 shows the more complicated intersection with Concept 2. Both should retain the pedestrian "scramble" signal phase.

Figure 5: Concept 2 for Reconfiguring Windward Avenue Between Pacific Avenue and Windward Circle



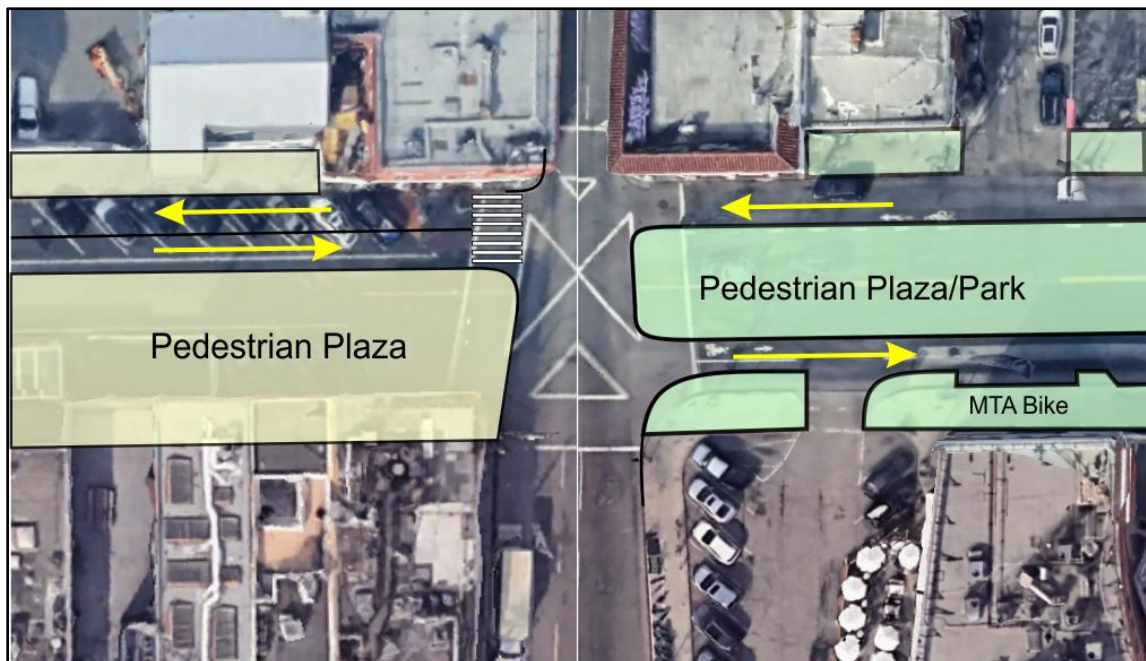
Figure 6: The Intersection of Pacific Avenue and Windward Avenue with Concept 1



D. Summary:

Increasing the pedestrianization of Windward Avenue west of Pacific Avenue can be achieved by relocating the two center traffic lanes to the north. This will free up roughly two-thirds of

Figure 7: The Intersection of Pacific Avenue and Windward Avenue with Concept 2



the roadway width for pedestrian activity. The area would be raised to the sidewalk level and extended to the traffic lanes. The al fresco protections could be eliminated and the increased area protected with bollards. The only downside would be the need to find replacement parking for the 19 parking spaces lost. This could be done by eliminating the center lane on Windward Avenue between the Circle and Riviera Avenue and replacing the curb parking along the post office property with diagonal parking.

Retaining two traffic lanes on Windward Avenue between Pacific Avenue and Windward Circle probably means a bus transit center becomes at most a mini-transit center. While the pedestrianization of this block has not been a stated objective, it too can be done by relocating the two traffic lanes. In Concept 1 they are both moved to the north side. In Concept 2 the eastbound lane is re-positioned to the south curb, the westbound lane to the north curb. The remaining roadway can be curbed and raised 6 inches to form a pedestrian plaza or park with trees, etc. The asphalt covering this block is way more than is needed to handle the traffic. It makes sense to turn most of it over to pedestrians.

Finally, any reconfiguration of Windward Avenue will take money. However, it should not take that much, especially for the conversion of Windward Avenue west of Pacific Avenue. Possible funding sources will be being researched.

E. Next Step:

These concepts should be shared over the next several months with the public, the Venice Beach Business Improvement District, those property owners directly involved, and others to receive feedback. From there the Committee can either move forward with any concepts that are received favorably or, if none, stop pursuing this element of its work plan.