

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 8 July 2009

6PM-8PM, Seattle City Hall Boards and Commissions Room L280

1. Call to order and introductions (6:00)

SPAB members in attendance: Tom Williams (Chair), Mark Bandy, (Vice Chair), Howard Wu (Secretary), Leanne Do (Get Engaged), Christina Bollo, Celeste Gilman, Kristen Lohse, Jon Morgan, Seth Schromen-Wawrin, Ben Smith

Absent: Vanessa Lund, T Frick McNamara, Lindsay Pesheck (SBAB liaison to SPAB)

SDOT staff liaison: Brian Dougherty

Presenter: Jennifer Wieland, (SDOT); Amalia Leighton (SvR Design) Haven (SDOT), Sheryl (SDOT) and Mike Ward (SDOT)

Public: Rebecca Deehr (Feet First), Doug Beeman

2. Meeting Minute Approval (6:02)

June meeting minutes were approved pending the amended sentence that Jon pointed out.

3. Public Comments (6:02)

No public comment

4. Proposed Repeal of Employee Hours Tax Discussion (6:03)

A significant number on the Council wanted to defer the vote on the employee tax. Rebecca noted that five council members wanted to defer the vote.

Christina thought that the tax was not hard to calculate for employers. Tom noted that it was the exemptions that make it hard to calculate. Tom mentioned that the City financier's biggest problem was with the tax compliance. Celeste had no problems with the tax as long as the funding comes in for pedestrian projects. She did not want to become involved with the politics. Christina added that for small firms, it made sense since they were exempt.

Mark was more concerned about getting the funding more than the actual politics. The key is that the Council or SDOT should have projects prioritized for funding, not just the incentive for reducing single-occupancy vehicles. He understood the business concerns. Regardless of the money issue, we need to get the prioritization of projects figured out for the money that we do get. He felt that we should not be silent on this issue and change the talk to prioritization. Ben brought up the "Bridging the Gap" (BTG) levy as an example as to how we

should be spending the transportation money. He felt that the same should apply to the parking and head tax.

Jon noted that BTG is not enough to pay for the backlog of projects. So, the parking and head tax is needed to make up for the deficit, and the tax will become political with the upcoming election. Jon felt that the Board should be proactive on this issue and bring up the issue for protecting the implementation of the Pedestrian Master Plan. Rebecca noted that \$4.7 million from Employee Hours Tax is not peanuts. She felt that pedestrian activists need to make a stand for having funding for implementation. She would appreciate a letter to support the tax for funding pedestrian project implementation. Mark and Jon will work on a statement letter on behalf of the Board. Rebecca will keep the board up-to-date.

5. Pedestrian Master Plan Update/Discussion – Jennifer Wieland, SDOT (6:20)

Jennifer's presentation will go over the updates to the Pedestrian Master Plan. The changes include adjustments to the website and schedule, response to the Board's letter, and an overview of the "Knowledge, Attitudes and Behavior" (KAB) Survey.

Schedule

The updated schedule is as follows:

- July 21st
 - 5 PM, City Council public meeting for the Pedestrian Master Plan;
 - 10:30 AM, Meeting with City Council will go over the KAB survey.
- August 4th, The Council will need to get the resolution to the Clerk.
- August 18th, The transportation committee will review the plan and bring it to full Council to vote.
- September 8th, 2 pm the resolution will go to City Council for approval, should be done by 4 PM.

Pedestrian Board Letter Response

Jennifer then went over the Pedestrian Board's Letter Response and the changes as a result.

- Shared ownership piece, coordinating between the master plan with the neighborhood plan updates. The website will have links to the latest neighborhood plans. Most SDOT staff and elected officials feel that the neighborhood plan updates should take their cues from the Master Plan.
- Mark had concerns with having the local voice getting heard and having their prioritization recognized. Jennifer recognized that the local community would know the priority of the local projects, but the City will feed the neighborhoods would feed the data to the neighborhoods. The City has insight into the overall City needs, balancing the needs of other

neighborhoods. This is an opportunity for coordination efforts with DPD and SDOT.

- Jennifer reassured Brian that the Neighborhood Street Fund and Matching Funds prioritization will not be replaced.

Website

Jennifer next went over the Pedestrian Master Plan website update.

- Issues occurred in the “Pedestrian System” and “Implementation” pieces.
- SDOT will beef up the FAQ section that will include common questions about the plan, not just how to use the plan.
- The “Plan Background” will include Existing Pedestrian Policies/Program and include Issue Papers and other City Initiatives.
- Under “Project Recommendations” section, they would put the pedestrian system and prioritization pieces together.
- The “Building the System” section will include Funding and Early Implementation sections. Accessibility would be added.

Celeste felt that the “Toolbox” should be the heart of the plan and not as a stand alone piece. Seth had trouble looking for a particular document; it seemed buried. He would like a resource tab that would list them all. Jennifer confirmed this and that all the PDFs will be collected in the “Appendix” and will also add a “Glossary”. Celeste felt that the “Toolbox” should be under the “Building the System”. Mark concurred but does not like “FAQs” and would like to put it to the end.

Celeste does not feel that “Accessibility” should be separated out and included throughout that Plan. Jennifer agreed and most of the Accessibility issues are stated throughout the plan. However SDOT wanted to highlight the good things that are being done in the City. Tom did not mind the redundancy of the Accessibility issues. In general most of the Board felt the new structure works better.

Celeste thought that the “Building the System” should be renamed “Making it Happen”. Mark wanted to make sure that the “Resources” tab would have links to external sources. Rebecca wanted to see some of the more exciting topics to be brought out earlier in the Plan. Tom encouraged the use of lots of images and video. Jon wanted the plan to be dynamic, have the plan highlight different aspects of the plan and various times.

Seth imagined people who will use this site will have their interpretation of the topic headings. So there should be some links to overlap so that people can navigate horizontally without going back to the root. Jennifer pointed out there had been arguments for both moving sequential versus horizontal. Christina felt that the webpage should reflect the multiple layers of pedestrian issues.

“Knowledge, Attitude and Behavior” Survey

Jennifer then explained that The “Knowledge, Attitude and Behavior” (KAB) Survey was a component of the Pedestrian Master Plan to identify a marketing strategy and education campaign. This survey will have a follow-up survey to see the effectiveness of the plan implementation. The survey tools were developed by EMC research and SDOT staff members were consulted. The survey methodology relied upon telephone surveys. The sample was weighted by race, location, and ethnicity to reflect the population composition of Seattle.

Attitudes about Walking and Driving

The survey revealed that Seattle’s attitude towards pedestrian safety is that it is not a big problem, only 46% disagreed. This percentage reflected the areas where people walk more. The places with a higher percentage of where “people do not feel safe crossing” include: 41% in Downtown, 50% by neighborhoods (more in Southeast, least in Downtown). By subgroup, “close call as driver” had the highest percentage versus “no close call as pedestrian” as the lowest percentage. Age does not seem to be a factor. When asked, “What would make you feel safer crossing”, the Board felt the statistic for “Other, 20%” needed to be included. On “Attitudes about Walking and Driving,” 83% of respondents often see drivers who do not pay enough attention to pedestrians. Conversely, 82% of respondents often see pedestrians who do not pay enough attention when crossing. 70% of respondents thought drivers go too fast in their neighborhood.

Seth wanted to know if there was question relating to waiting time to cross. Jennifer does not know but suspected that the question was not included because of the purpose of the survey is pedestrian safety. 68% of driver worry about hitting a pedestrian. 35% of respondent felt engineering could help pedestrian safety.

Walking and Driving Behavior

60% of Seattle drives often, the lowest percentage was in the in Northeast and Downtown; When asked about how frequent one walks, the area with the highest percentage of regular walkers was in Downtown; the lowest areas include the Southeast, Southwest and North. When asked, “how many days a week do you travel outside the home for trips,” most people travel four to five days per week. The travel mode breakdown is as follows: 51% SOV, 20% transit, 14% carpool/vanpool, 7% walking, 3% biking. When you breakdown the drive alone category, the highest percentage of SOV occurred in the following areas: Northwest 60%, North 59%, and West 59%. Downtown (40%) and Northeast (42%) had the lowest percentage of SOVs. The Southeast had the highest percentage of transit users. Downtown had the highest percentage of walkers. The Southeast had the highest number of working vehicles with the Northeast having the lowest percentage.

Looking at self assessment, as a driver, most feel that they do enough to avoid pedestrians, 69%, while 30% felt that they could do more. Of this group:

- 29% felt that they could pay more attention,
- 27% felt that they could be more careful/alert/watchful.

Most drivers think they have good driver behavior:

- Not blocking the sidewalk, 90%,
- Check left and right for pedestrian, 80%,
- Stop for pedestrians waiting to cross at intersections that have no traffic light, 71%.

The Board thought it would be useful to break these categories down by location.

The breakdown for drivers who engage in sub-optimal behavior showed that:

- 68% pull into the crosswalk when waiting to turn on a red light,
- 57% at a red light turn before pedestrians are at least a full lane past your side of the road.

Looking at self assessment as a pedestrian, most feel that they already do enough; only 20% thought they could do more. On pedestrian behavior, 98% of pedestrians continue to look around when crossing. Only 71% begin crossing when the don't walk signal blinks.

The breakdown for pedestrians who engage in sub-optimal behavior showed that 73% cross in between intersections where there is no crosswalk. When looking at close calls and collisions, as pedestrians, 49% reported that they were either hit by car or had a close call (12% hit by car, 37% close call). From a driver's perspective, only 29% reported to have had a collision or a close call with a pedestrian (70% no, 27% close call).

Mark wanted to know if there were other similar surveys done in other cities. Jennifer did not do a search, but suspects not too many cities have done it.

Knowledge about Walking and Driving Regulations

97% of respondents knew not to use cell phones while driving. 80% of respondents knew that they may not pass a car that is stopped for a pedestrian at a crosswalk. 71% of respondents knew that all intersections are legal pedestrian crossings even if there is not a marked crosswalks, 52% of respondents knew that pedestrians may not begin crossing if the "don't walk" signal is flashing.

However, the response to the next series of questions showed a disconnect between awareness and behavior. 39% of the respondent who knew about the cell phone law still used their phones while driving. Of the 71% who knew that all intersections are legal pedestrian crossings, only 72% regularly stop for pedestrians at unmarked crossing. For those drivers who are aware that drivers may not proceed if a pedestrian is in their half of the roadway, 55% still turned before pedestrians are at least a full lane past their side of the road. For

pedestrians, for those that are aware that pedestrians may not begin crossing if “Don’t walk” is flashing, only 37% never crossed when the “don’t walk” signal started while 61% did cross.

Respondent Demographics

- 51% Female/49% Male;
- 60% have completed college or higher;
- Household mean, 2.53;
- Number of children in Household mean 0.71;
- Ethnicity 65% white. Asian 11%, Multi-race 10%, 8% African American, 5% Latino
- 77% English spoken regularly at home

Respondent Suggestions

- 19% suggested more awareness and people paying attention;
- 14% suggested more/better driver/pedestrian education;
- 11% suggested people should follow traffic laws/being responsible/careful.

6. Upcoming Agenda Items (8:05)

Tom reminded the board that next regular meeting will be a field trip on the light rail. He will coordinate with Ben on the details. Tom reminded that the lady from Gehl Architects will be coming July 23rd at 5:30 PM.

Mark talked about the last tri-party meeting. He was concerned with the cycle track design along Alaskan Way and how it would work with pedestrian crossing, He felt that we should coordinate with the Bike Board.

Brian wanted to remind the board that the listserver messages are open to the public.

8. Adjourn Meeting (8:15)