

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 11 February 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), Randy Earle, Celeste Gilman, Kristen Lohse, T Frick McNamara, Jon Morgan, Paul Niebanck, Ben Smith and Chris Tachibana, Lindsay Pesheck (SBAB liaison to SPAB)

Absent: none

SDOT staff liaison: Brian Dougherty

Presenter: Angela Brady, (SDOT); Barbara Gray (SDOT), Jennifer Wieland, (SDOT)

Public: Peg Staehli, Molly Leland, Jacob Struiksma

2. Meeting Minute Approval (6:03)

Tom made a call for the approval of the January Meeting Minutes. The Board made a voice vote approving the minutes.

3. Public Comments (6:04)

Tom asked the public for any comments. No comments were provided.

4. West Mercer Project Update - Angela Brady, (SDOT) (6:04)

Angela started off her presentation of the Mercer Street Corridor Plan by going over its history. The project has been in the works for the past 40 to 50 years. She has worked on it for the past tow years. The project extents are along Mercer street from I-5 to Dexter and from Republican to Aloha Street. This project will create a two-way Mercer Street, removing the existing couplet that uses Fairview Avenue and Valley Street.

It will widen Mercer Street to the north by 80 feet, and have a 3-lane boulevard configuration in each direction with left turn pockets. This will remove the weave movement with the current couplet configuration. Valley Street from Dexter to Fairview Avenue N becomes two lanes with bike lanes with wider sidewalk. It will become more pedestrian and bike friendly, more urban scale. The urban design will work with the reconstructed Lake Union Park and bring some of its features on to Valley Street. Fairview Avenue N will be reconstructed from just north of N Valley Street to south of N Republican Street. Currently, only transit can make a southbound, left-turn on to Fairview Avenue. The future Fairview Avenue N will allow lefts for all vehicles and access to I-5 at Mercer Street. Westlake and 9th Avenue N will become two-way through Aloha Street. The work will replace all

existing underground utilities and underground transmissions lines from N Valley to N Mercer Street. The project will work with King County Metro along Fairview Avenue N to remove the trolley bus lines. The trolley lines will be down in October, 2010 for two years and will eventually be replaced.

The City will start advertising the construction work in late June. Construction will start in September. Since widening is occurring to the north side of Mercer Street, the eastbound traffic will experience minimal impacts. Traffic will shift to the north when this portion of the widening is completed to allow for widening work to occur on the south side. Each phase of widening will take one year. The work will be completed around 2011. N Valley St will then be completed a year later, 2012.

On the west end, the two-way Mercer Street can not be completed between N 9th and N Dexter Avenue until the plans are completed. The "hook" will be the temporary connection to Broad Street until the design for the west end is completed. The "hook" is located at the 8th Avenue alignment. The budget is roughly \$200 million; much of the cost is towards right-of-way purchase. \$150 million is secured. \$50 million is requested from the Federal government, perhaps in the Stimulus Plan. The City has WSDOT and the City's support for funding the project. However, there is a contingency plan in place if that falls through. She and Grace will go to Council to ask to lift the proviso on the funding. If this occurs, they will get the green light to go to ad for the construction work.

Mark wanted to know more about the contingency plan.

Tom wanted to know what the funding contingency, maybe the "Bridging the Gap" funds?

Angela explained that the state needs to designate the money quickly. The City is looking at the surplus property sales as a way to fund the project. They expect around \$30 million for the Broad Street vacation. Freight is concerned about the 3-lane configuration. Curb bulbs are at each intersections. "Green fingers" are added so that big boulevard trees can be planted. The "green fingers" bulb out into the parking lane.

Mark brought up the issue of a potential seventh or eighth lane along Mercer Street as well as the street car priority.

Angela explained that the streetcar currently has signal preemption at N Valley Street and Westlake Avenue N. This project will eliminate the streetcar preemption. It will slow down the streetcar a bit, but will allow better traffic flows along Mercer Street.

Jon wanted to know how much will the removal of the signal exemption slow down the street car.

Angela discussed that currently there is only two streetcars running at any one time. In the future, there will be three cars running together.

Jon is concerned about the slowing of the streetcars especially in the context of the future streetcar network.

Mark explained that the delay will probably be around 60 to 90 seconds. The timing of the corridor will be offset by each cross street by 10 seconds or so. From this calculation, the delay probably is not as bad but probably will be worse along N Westlake Avenue for the streetcar, especially with a future line on 1st Avenue.

Celeste wanted to know how much the signal timing will make a big difference especially for pedestrian crossings.

Ben mentioned that the same situation occurred with the streetcar signal exemption in Tacoma. The City did not like how it disturbed the vehicle traffic. Now, the signals are set to fixed, pretimed patterns, but the service has slightly suffered due to the small window for the light rail to catch the opening.

Lindsay suggested that the preemption could occur during the off-peak period.

Angela agreed with her suggestion.

T wanted to know about the planting, if there will be structural soil. No retainer wall in the back. Check the detail for what is underneath the sidewalk so that it allows for larger green canopy to occur.

Angela the landscape designer took that account. That wall is for a bench, concrete bench.

Leanne wanted to know what the freight concerns are.

Angela explained that freight wanted the extra one or two lanes to save 10 to 15 percent in times, maybe one or two minutes. The extra lane would take away the bulb outs and "green fingers". The freight community only wanted the extra lanes in the eastbound direction. Council has heard the arguments for the curb bulbs and "green fingers". SDOT staff is going to meet with Council on February 20 to discuss this issue. She thought that it would be great to have a representative or letter of support for this project to the Council.

Mark wanted to know if the added crossing timing factor included in the one to two minutes of savings for freight.

Angela felt that the curb bulbs is a win-win for pedestrians and traffic because it shorten the time for pedestrians to cross, which allows for a shortened cycle length for traffic to get green. Council's attitude is that Mercer is not a freeway, but more of an urban street.

Celeste felt that the "green fingers" and curb outs make the difference.

Mark pointed out that the delay does not take into account for the north-south crossing across Mercer Street for comparing delay savings with freight.

T understood that the space between the green fingers will have parked cars but wanted to know how the center median would be landscaped and if it will use rainwater for irrigation.

Angela described it as a wet median and will have swales. Nature will treat the runoff. The median will be 10 feet wide to the west block and 20feet wide to the east. All the drainage on Westlake Boulevard will go to rain gardens. This natural drain treatment has Seattle Public Utility's (SPU) approval.

T though it would be nicer to have a wider median throughout the 3 blocks.

Kristen wanted to know if there is a refuge for pedestrians.

Angela confirmed that each intersection had one. The signal timing will be set so that the average person can make it across Mercer Street but will have space for slower pedestrians.

T wanted to know if there will be any temporary irrigation installed.

Angela explained that it is SDOT's policy to implement it.

Mark wanted to know when the "hook" is scheduled to be completed in relation to other projects and how it will align with Mercer Street across SR 99 construction.

Angela responded that it should be constructed at the same time as the two-way Mercer is opened up. Currently, construction crossing Aurora Avenue is not funded; it is part of the Viaduct project. Though it is part of the City's funded project, it is not a done deal on that section. The City is trying to find another way not to build the "hook".

Mark wanted to know how the land can be sold if it is still being used.

Angela noted that there are other properties throughout the project that can be sold.

Tom wanted to know how much of the \$200 million will be used for property acquisition.

Angela stated that \$60 million goes to property acquisition.

Mark wanted to know more about crossing across Boren Avenue N especially the pedestrian crossing restriction on the east leg of Boren Ave N/N Mercer Street intersection.

Angela indicated that there will be a large public art sculpture at Boren to discourage crossing at that location. It is a wider section to cross and harder to get the timing to work. Improvement between Mercer and Valley Street will be done as a separate project. Staging will occur in this area.

Mark wanted to know when Lake Union Park will be completed relative to the Mercer Street work.

Angela thought that the park will be completed in 2010 and MOHAI will be renovating the Armory building, maybe done by 2011. All those properties will be removed eventually.

Jon noted that with the new park, pedestrian movement in the north-south direction will increase. He wanted to know if there is another plan or idea to improve pedestrian movements to the south along Republican, John and streets to the south.

Angela explained that as redevelopments occurs in S Lake Union, SDOT has directed Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and developers to put in pedestrian improvements at corners and streetscapes.

Peg added that with a three year project, the bid project plan will have a pedestrian and traffic management plans. Sometimes, a project of this scale would have construction staging plans with detours but more emphasis on the pedestrian.

Angela acknowledged that pedestrians should be accounted with new developments. DPD has decided that they needed the flexibility and cost effectiveness of simplifying the requirements and wanted to see what the contractor brings and goes into it.

Barbara also added that the City is putting additional efforts into pedestrian access through construction zones. The street use group is working with contractors, and street usage group to revise the standards for getting pedestrian through construction zones. They will try to maintain direct pedestrian paths when possible taking up parking spots or building scaffolding to protect pedestrians on an active construction site.

Angela added that the Mercer Street project is at the 99 percent point before final review. The project is pretty much done.

5. Pedestrian Master Plan Update - Barbara Gray (6:52 PM)

Barbara started her presentation by passing out handouts that were used during the Tri-party meeting with bike, pedestrian and freight. Her presentation then goes through the goals of the master plan including the 5 Es. The challenge with the plan is how SDOT structures the plan to encapsulate the goals. Goals include:

- Safety (reduce crashes),
- Equity (all users, distribute info to people, service people, capital investment),
- Vibrancy (great places, how support the economy),
- Health (promotion of health and prevent disease).

These goals are not too different to Bicycle Master Plan on the safety issue. SPAB's vision of the Plan is: strongly rooted, powerful, lively, directive, and forward looking. The following are the highlights of the plan.

- Strongly rooted (probably well on its way with the current consultant)
 - Well researched and well documented information (State of pedestrian environment, pedestrian toolbox)
 - Moving beyond transportation, not just transportation focused, but looks holistically such as natural systems and climate change (Race & social justice, inter-agency coordination, ecology & health)
 - Making great places (enliven public spaces and public life).
- Powerful Plan includes recommended themes (walkable zones, intersection visibility, complete streets, place making, funding, communication, promote walking)
 - Broad strokes and small steps close to home
 - Trying to change the culture at SDOT to make things happen
 - Far-reaching process to inform and build ownership (PMPAG/developers and advocates) by talk about their interests and recommendations
 - Roundtable, surveys and outreach
 - City and agency partnerships, especially SPD; communication is very important
 - SPAB: stewardship
 - Lots of interest in the community and need to reach them perhaps social networking sites.
- Key Elements (deliverables)
 - Inter-agency collaboration
 - Public engagement and surveys
 - State of pedestrian environment report

- Pedestrian toolbox, data driven GIS pedestrian system plan
- Near and long term recommendations and strategy (programmatic actions, policies & regulatory actions, implementations).
- Powerful Plan (walkable zones): currently 27% do not have sidewalks
 - Regardless of what people want, every street needs to be walkable.
 - Strategies for maintain walking zones: 6' W x 7' H clear zone, encroachments & maintenance, construction closures, trees & sidewalks, data collection & management
 - People do not like to be told to be told where to park, taking out walls and landscaping, need to talk to Council about enforcing encroachment issues.

Tom wanted to know how does the Council get involved with the walkable zone and how it would it affect one property owner or even one block.

Barbara responded that it has to be strategic in how you address enforcement. With enforcement, there will be political backlash. There is also a need to find funding for encroachment removal.

Tom wanted to know Barbara's sense of Council's feeling for encroachment removals.

Barbara informed us that the Council is already aware of the issues, but SDOT has to get the momentum of the public to get the Council's approval. SDOT needs to get the plan to clarify the encroachment issue.

Peg added that If the plan has it documented, it would be easier for Council to state stronger on encroachment issues.

Barbara continued to list off the issues relating to the appropriate locations for planting trees, landscaping and sidewalks as well as their maintenance. There are issues with maintaining a 8' clear zone. Right now maintaining a 8' clear zone would be difficult because Seattle codes are all over the place.

Mark wanted to know how the 6' by 7' zone would work with the sidewalk café ordinance.

Peg noted that there will be an exception for some usage where some places the sidewalks may get down to 4'. The City will try to minimize this, but there will be a rationale for any encroachments.

Mark noted that when he was walking in downtown along Madison Street, the clear zone was cluttered by street furniture at the crosswalk.

Peg acknowledged the issue and their work is finalizing the wording for the clear zone, not to declutter, but simplify the crossing intersection.

Barbara noted that SDOT is starting to stripe stop bars.

Ben applauded the 6' x 7' clear zone. This concept changes his way of thinking on things, especially on streets with no sidewalks as well as sidewalks with street pits that take out usable space.

Barbara noted that it is critical to have separation of the roadway from the pathway. The robust pedestrian pathway GIS data set is only as powerful if it is updated. She then talked about the factors that go into intersection visibility:

- signal timing
- push button removal (if push buttons are not working & enough people are using it, SDOT is reviewing locations where they will have a fix time)
- audible & vibrating signals
- on-street bicycle parking
- crossing flags
- curb ramp placement.

Barbara wanted the Board to give locations for places where push buttons can be taken out.

Peg then explained that in the future, push buttons could be used by slower pedestrians to extend the crossing time.

T wanted to know if the plan addressed maintenance issues at intersections. She cited an example where crosswalk markings are being removed due to maintenance issues.

Barbara responded by requesting T to discuss this issue further outside of the meeting. She then noted that SDOT are stripping stop bars to prevent vehicles from encroaching into the crosswalk. Striping is based upon the crossing guidelines.

Tom then commented that he wanted to know enough information on the plan so that SPAB can chime in on the draft master plan as well as stewardship.

Barbara continued her presentation talking about how the plan will address complete streets and place making. She noted that with pedestrian lighting, there are still lots of issues to resolve. With speed management strategies SDOT needs to consider: posting signage needs, street design and reevaluation of street use. The plan will also address developing lively public places and right-of-way reallocation such as clear zones.

T noted that complete streets do not get to place making.

Barbara acknowledged this and added that the activation of all public space need private investments.

T hoped that place making gets more emphasis in the Plan.

Peg added that this is where SPAB has more stewardship to the Plan to get these issues resolved. To achieve these goals, SPAB and SDOT needs cooperation with many groups to get it done.

Barbara then continued with her presentation by talking about how the Plan will promote of walking and look at connections to transit and destinations. The plan will include issues of maps and wayfinding signage, safe routes to programs (parks, schools, and transit) and the Summer Streets program (car-free day).

The pedestrian plan include the “Lively Plan”, which celebrate and replicate Seattle’s best pedestrian environments. These places will be identified by using GIS tools that will use for demand analysis and catalogs system improvements. The GIS tool is a layering model and looks at pedestrian generators and takes into account for population and employment density. However, it needs to look at parks. The tool should focus on demand or spread out infrastructure improvements. The high priority areas will be identify through the following goals: vibrancy 40%, equity 35%, and transportation 25%

Molly added that condition assessment has not yet been accounted, which could be part of the next analysis.

Peg noted that the maps are static and need to be updated constantly to be meaningful.

Mark suggested what could be missing from this analysis is looking at land bridges, where a group of low pedestrian generators can only get access by certain bridges.

Molly responded by indicating they have assessed bridges and stairways as pedestrian generators.

Barbara continued stating that the plan is a directive. For the plan to succeed we need sustained and persistent advocacy by leaders, agencies and Seattleites and, it will never go away. She suggested that SPAB can contribute to the plan by ensuring accountability and acting as stewards. The Pedestrian Mater Plan is a forward looking plan that relates to the visions and accessibility (web based plan) and continued cooperation with ownership and stewardship within SDOT as well. Looking at the 5E’s, enforcement stings has been successful and speed vans will be expanded. An education plan for schools as well as drivers is in the works. SDOT is evaluating the crossing flag program. On the engineering side, SDOT have installed in-pavement flashers, stop bars, and set new standards for

pavement materials. The plan will have six public reviews. The draft will be ready by May.

Barbara saw SPAB filling three roles:

- comment and recommendations on the draft by seeing it online access and evaluating how useful it is
- spread the word, publicize the draft
- play the key stewardship group similar to SBAB role.

SBAB reviews the work plan to be consistent with the Bike Master Plan. They usually review the plan during the fall.

Mark pointed out that the implementation will be a bit different, compared to bicycle, because pedestrian issues go through many other agencies, not just SDOT. It could involve parks, DPD or other groups.

Barbara responded that SBAB does do look at other issues, but more rigorous on the capital side, but could need a further conversation on other agency reviews.

Mark thought that perhaps SDOT can coordinate with other agencies to bring them to the Board when there is concern for pedestrian issues.

Barbara thought that it could be done.

Ben wanted to know if there is a policy work plan.

Peg responded that It is on the way. The majority of the policies will take time. For example, the clear zone regulations may get done by the Draft. They are putting a budget for policy updates too. Some policies may need to be reviewed annually versus a one time review.

Barbara added that SDOT will keep track of the key milestones as to when key review times for specific policies such as design guidelines are needed. Lighting policies will take awhile.

Ben wanted to know if some of the web based draft plan is available now for the SPAB to view or they needed to wait for the public review.

Barbara confirmed that SPAB will have access when it is ready for the public review. She will also have PDFs and some hard copies available upon request.

Ben followed up wondering if there will be a hard copy or CDs, a static version of it.

Peg explained that there will be so much of it that links to other sources; it would be hard to keep it static. It is a different writing style for this type of living document.

Barbara credited Jennifer for the great images in the presentation.

Mark wanted to know if there will be a summary of the public comments. He felt that it would be useful to see the public's comments. It be useful for the Board to see.

Barbara agreed and though it might be interesting to see any conflicting comments.

Peg then took a group picture of the Board for the documentation

6. Round Robin and Upcoming Agenda Items (7:57)

Chris brought up the fact that the traffic enforcement legislation is going the state legislation. But it may force the City's laws to get state's permission. She will get a letter written up to address this legislation.

Tom wanted to thank Paul and Chris for all their great work their. The presentation for next month will be on the Viaduct.

T wanted to know if there has been any feedback on the Board's letter on the road diet on Faunletroy.

Brian responded that the roadway diet will go through but the design at the job still being looked at. He talked to Doug about the 2009 projects. The projects have already been decided and the list is completed. The preliminary Pedestrian Master Plan criteria were applied and that list is a lot different than the previous pedestrian criteria that were vetted by the Board. After applying the smell test, the Pedestrian Plan criteria look better. He then wanted to see if the Board would be comfortable with the new criteria.

Celeste feels good about the Pedestrian Master Plan criteria.

Mark wanted to see what the eight projects that were chosen and where they are located.

Brian would send to the Board the new list and criteria.

Celeste wanted to know more about the Cheshiahud Loop Trail if there is nothing else on the Agenda.

Brian mentioned that Jena Kaufman would be the contact person.

Kristen added that David Grays would be another contact.

Ben suggested that the Cheshiahud Loop trail could be a field trip in August.

Kristen mentioned that it is 6.2 miles long. Streets for People has a kickoff event for it tomorrow.

Jon wanted to know more about the Governor abolishing the state's Pedestrian Advisory Board. He wanted the Board to address this issue. He suggested that he could write a letter.

Ben wanted to know how much money the State is really saving by this action.

Tom responded that it is roughly \$15 million.

Brian suggested that we should write a letter in support of the Mercer Street.

Chris volunteered to write a letter to Jan Drago and the Council.

Mark was not comfortable with the funding relying on future property sales.

7. Adjourn Meeting (8:12)