

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 10 January 2009

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

1. Call to order and introductions (6:05)

SPAB members in attendance: Tom Williams (Chair), Mark Bandy, (Vice Chair), Howard Wu (Secretary), Leanne Do (Get Engaged), Celeste Gilman, Kristen Lohse, Jon Morgan, Paul Niebanck, Ben Smith and Chris Tachibana

Absent: Randy Earle, T Frick McNamara and Lindsay Pesheck (SBAB liaison to SPAB)

SDOT staff liaison: Brian Dougherty

Presenter: Captain Mike Fann, (SPD)

Public: Susan Moore, Jacob Struiksma

2. Meeting Minute Approval (6:06)

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

3. Public Comments (6:06)

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

4. Captain Mike Fann, (SPD) (6:08)

Captain Mike Fann started his talk on working collaboratively on the Pedestrian Master Plan, with the Police focusing on the three E's (education, encouragement, and enforcement). In the traffic section, there is a squad assigned to each precinct to do enforcement. The "Don't Block the Box" program has been reinstated, to prevent gridlock mainly in the downtown corridor. They do a focused enforcement every single week. Another program they are working on is doing three pedestrian stings. However, they are very staff intensive and the chosen location must fulfill lots of court requirements. SPD needs to measure out the appropriate zone for vehicles to stop driving at 30 mph. Film has been used to backup work their work. Some have argued that these stings are a case for entrapment, but these stings have been upheld in court. November 21st was the last sting operation. The location was at the intersection of 1st and Stone Way. 17 citations were written. At the intersection of MLK and Alder Street, 29 citations were written within an hour. For 1 hr, the sting got 20 pedestrian citations.

Chris wanted to know if the stings were only conducted at marked crosswalks.

Captain Fann confirmed that, but also noted that there needs to be an education piece to let drivers know that all intersections have crosswalks and not just at signalized intersections.

Mark wondered why not do it at unmarked locations. He thought it might relate to legal issues.

Mike responded that for specific stings, there is more scrutiny, and the Seattle Police Department (SPD) worked with City's attorney so that the stings had no loopholes. Having said that, SPD do enforcement for pedestrian crossings at unmarked locations

Mark wanted to know what the fine is for the failure to yield to a pedestrian crossing the street.

Captain Fann indicated that it is over \$100.

Kristen wanted to know how were locations were chosen.

Mike responded that they look at collision locations as well as area conditions. Some places lend themselves for drivers not pay attention. SPD is working with the community to find locations in each precinct. The goal is to do a sting once a month.

Celeste wanted to know if there has been any publicity for this enforcement.

Mike indicated that there was no publicity, but he thought that some may come out of the master planning efforts. SPD may promote it when the plan comes out., but has not done it yet. SDOT talked about sending a flyer out with the citation to educate the public.

Celeste wanted to know what has been the public reaction to the stings.

Mike responded by saying that some people are very self-righteous, but businesses really like it. Reactions have been across the board.

Celeste offered the Board's support for any of these stings if needed in the future.

Ben asked about the causes for driver's inattention and wanted to know if it was caused mostly by local residents.

Mike felt that people get caught in their own world, but thought that engineering could help.

Tom wanted to know what engineering would help.

Mike listed the following:

- remove road clutter
- add signage
- better lighting
- many things can be done in the environment.

Tom confirmed that no major work or anything structural is needed.

Mike responded that each location has unique solutions. It can as simple as adding road buttons, but the key is driver's awareness.

Susan wanted to know if there was a pattern to the citations, perhaps time of day is a factor.

Mike explained that the 1st sting was done between 10 and 11 AM. The second sting was conducted between 1 and 2 PM. The three stings that he has been involved in are during the middle of the day, and the weather is dry.

Tom suggested retroactive publicity, releasing the statistics of the sting operations.

Mike continued that the city council and mayor get the results, but the results have not been made public.

Mark wanted to know if the stings have been publicized in the neighborhood papers.

Mike thought that one may have shown up at Wallingford community paper, but not at the other locations. He thought that there needs to be a system for publicity and information dispersion.

Jon suggested that we need to keep in mind of people's psyche. If you pre-warn people, the public will adjust their behavior for a specific time. He thought that it would be better to catch the public in their normal state and off guard to the extra patrols.

Mike pointed out the difference between awareness and enforcement. With awareness, you need to publicize. But with enforcement, you do not need publicity. You can do a little of both. However, one is not better than the other.

Jon emphasized that the enforcement component is absolutely necessary. There should be a citywide education program. For example, vehicles need to stop at unmarked crosswalks as well as at crossings with multiple lane areas. There needs a stronger education component., perhaps advertising on buses.

Mike mentioned that there were some public ads for two holiday periods. They have done ads warning against drunk driving. However, there has not been a sustained effort.

Jon indicated that the Board would like to be involved with any publicity.

Mike mentioned that SDOT has been working with the traffic safety council and Washington State Patrol (WSP) to do safety awareness along SR 99 between the Battery Street tunnel to N 145th Street. The corridor has unique characteristics throughout. The Bagley Elementary school is located near 80th Street and Stone Way. Also, elderly housing near N 143rd Street has many people walking in the area. WSP has been doing spot enforcements. The safety awareness program may be implemented by April of this year.

Mark added that whenever he has worked with safety corridors, there is a local law enforcement presence.

Mike indicated that the west precinct squad is responsible between the tunnel to the bridge and the north precinct squad is responsible between the bridge and N 145th Street.

Susan wanted to know more about the Rainier Avenue corridor safety.

Brian offered to send more information on the results of that safety corridor enforcement.

Leanne wanted to know how the sting was conducted.

Mike explained that plain clothes people, both male and female, walk out from the curb.

Leanne then wanted to know what the compliance rate was.

Mike did not know whether or not if that statistic was kept but thought it would be good to keep.

Paul wanted to know if the motorist behavior changes after the spot enforcement.

Mike indicated that for a period, people do change their behavior, but eventually, people's behavior reverts back. That is when they get a call from the public to do more enforcement. SPD needs to pick and choose their locations. That is why each precinct is involved.

Paul wanted to know how many spots in Seattle are critical for enforcement.

Mike answered that it is in the hundreds, but there are certain locations that problem areas. They include: Highland Park, Admiral, Aurora, Lake City is off and on, and some places along Greenwood. During rush hour, it is pretty bad everywhere. But specifically, between eight and ten locations are pretty bad. Marginal Way just north of the bridge is also pretty bad. Highland Park is a big problem area; the same people appear to speed in that location.

Mark wanted to know if the stats for pedestrian issues and speeding get reported to the city council.

Mike indicated that the traffic statistics are reported every quarter, but not specifically on pedestrians. A few council members have talked to him directly about stats.

Jon wanted to know what aspect of traffic behavior returns to “normal”.

Mike responded that all aspects of driving behavior return to normal. It is not surprising for drivers to not know what speed that they are driving. A large percentage is that way.

Mark felt that the challenge is with car technologies that now insulate the driver from their surroundings.

Mike agreed. It is a constant challenge.

Jacob cites an issue of people parked on a crosswalk.

Mike reminded him about the “Don’t block the box” program targets that area.

Jacob mentioned that the University District is a problem area.

Mark wanted to know if there is a consistent crosswalk marking, which specific marking is found to be more effective.

Mike felt that for some locations, it does not matter what markings are put down. He does not have a preference and does not have a sense if one marking is better than another. It more relates with area and the geography.

Brian added that SDOT removed the ladder style to the piano style.

Jacob indicated that he can feel the piano style, which is a good thing.

Howard wanted to know if SDOT is now including stop lines at intersections.

Brian indicated that it is now SDOT policy to include stop lines.

Celeste wanted to know how far back are they painted.

Mark responded that it depends on the type of intersection control.

Mike indicated that he will try to meet with the board more regularly.

5. Board Discussion - Snow Falling on Sidewalks (6:45 PM)

Tom talked about the recent issues with the recent snow storms, found an ordinance that stipulates all owners or residents are required to shovel their sidewalk. This issue was brought up on the listserver.

Jon was struck by how the City functioned after the 1st major storm. Everyone was walking; no one was driving and the buses were not on their routes. People could only get around by walking, but the sidewalks were covered in snow and ice causing people to slip and fall. He then cited a person's problem with the snow and had to stay in a hotel nearby due to stoppage of the bus. He wanted to have a brainstorming session about the snow removal efforts. He wondered how can the citation be enforced for snow removal on sidewalks, maybe subsidize shovels. He felt that we need to inform people to move snow the first day, so that it doesn't refreeze and turns to ice. He wanted to educate Seattleites.

Ben felt that the storm was very unusual. Snow usually melts away within a day. Most Seattleites and people from other places on the west coast need to be educated. He noted that the snow removal compliance was varied. It seemed like people did not know what to do. No one knew who was responsible for what.

Chris suggested that it could be a simple message to get the word about it especially when a storm is forecasted to hit.

Ben saw messages about removing snow from gutters for floods but not about snow.

Celeste felt that it would be a great idea for the media to be engaged.

Jacob thought that the news did a poor job about preparing for the snow, but great when it snowed.

Ben saw people clear their own sidewalk, but not the adjacent sidewalk. He felt that they should do it.

Mark reminded everyone that it was a rare event, but he noted that it is a personal responsibility to keep the sidewalk maintained, including removing snow as well as patching for cracks. However, a lot of the snow hit on the weekend. So a lot of businesses were not around to clean it until Monday.

Howard suggested getting the word out through the neighborhood watch program.

Ben also felt that strong neighborhood groups could get the work out. He had a better appreciation for the marked crosswalk, they will stop when they see it when the snow is not covering it, but they did not stop when it covered. The snow is great for getting people out meeting people, and you also see where people are walking to and from. This is knowledge that you did not see before.

Howard wanted to know if anyone cleared the bus stops for snow.

Ben indicated that Metro more likely will take on the major snow routes and will probably clear the major stops.

Tom wanted to know if there is any action plan the Board need to take or communicate it to a specific people.

Mark suggested that it could be part of the education element to teach people about snow removal.

Brian wanted to know if there is a penalty for not maintaining the sidewalks.

Celeste thought that there probably is but it is not enforced.

Jon mentioned that DC does enforcement, but does not see that happening in Seattle.

Ben felt that it will probably be enforced on a complaint basis.

Mark felt it was better served to deal with more common infringements than once every 10 year events.

Tom suggested that we should add snow removal as part of the pedestrian plan as part of the education component and maintenance ordinance.

6. Safe Routes To Schools Update – Brian Dougherty, SDOT Update (7:05)

Brian summarized the 2008 progress on the “Safe Routes to School” program. This past year, the program improved the walking routes to five elementary schools and one high school. At Cleveland High School, the roadway was narrowed while the sidewalk was enlarged from 3.5 feet to 10 feet. At Sacajawea Elementary School, bus zones and a nearby crossing were improved. At the Concord Elementary School, the curb radius was reduced at the corner of 7th Avenue and Trenton. WSDOT funded the sidewalk improvements. At Kimble Elementary School, new sidewalks were installed along S Hanford St as well as some sidewalks were fixed. At Blaine Elementary school, curb bulbs

were added. At North Beach School, the existing sidewalk was extended, and landings were added to all 4 corners. If there is any money leftover, speed cushions will be added. Speed cushions are smaller than a speed table but larger than a speed bump.

Tom wanted to know when SDOT comes up with the project list.

Brian responded that they were selected in September. The criteria that were used to select these locations were based on the existing conditions. SDOT talks to the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) as a sounding board for proposed actions. The larger PTAs have a committee assigned to these projects. They will do walking tours to showcase the needed projects. Generally, the proposed improvements focus on adjacent sidewalks and crosswalks. Where a PTA does not exist, he enlists parents and neighbors.

Tom asked how do you do a project at schools that are on the closing list.

Brian responded that it is hard to know, it's a moving target. No one knows. Some projects in the past are at areas where the school has since been closed.

Mark noted that even if the school is closed, the area will still be used for some community use, and any improvement will be usefully for neighbors in the area.

7. Update on Board Candidate Recruitment (7:12)

Tom reported that there were ten candidates that were scheduled for an interview. One was a no-show, and one decided to drop out. There were lots of good candidates. Three were picked. The overall process went well.

Brian added that the Council and Mayor's office representatives were both there. The interviews all were conducted all in one day. Next year, he will do better outreach for visually and physically impaired.

Tom also noted that they did get someone from the south end of the City. This will be especially important with light rail operations starting this year.

Chris wanted to know how many board positions that are open.

Brian answered that there were three including Chris.

8. Board Discussion – Upcoming Projects and Initiatives

Howard recapped the efforts from the November work where the SDOT project list was filtered out for relevance to SPAB. Ben, Mark and T participated and the filtered down list was e-mailed to the group through the list serve. It was suggested at the previous meeting that board members should sign up to follow

the projects of a specific project manager. It was also noted that larger projects and planning efforts may not show up the SDOT list, including Metro's Rapid Ride, WSDOT's Alaskan Way Viaduct, SR 520 and the neighborhood plan updates. Howard then asked board members to select their preference for project managers that they would follow up on with projects. The updated list will be e-mailed after the meeting.

9. Round Robin (7:45)

Paul talked about what does the Board wants to have as the Master Plan form. The plan appears to have morphed from a traditional master plan to something unique. He is not sure how it compares to other plans. He asked, "how does the Board want to be involved in its critique of it?" We have our previous work to what our idea plan as a benchmark. There have been appeals to the board that we should look at the Master Plan as critical as well as the effort that went into the ideal that we came up with. It is critical that we look at the micro level just as we did in the meeting on the plan. It will be viewed by the public with great interest. He views the incoming Obama administration will bring more public interest in everything. There will be anticipation for support for the public money into the pedestrian master plan. He hopes that one day Seattle will put into action these issues. For the waterfront issue, he has great hope for the reconnection to the waterfront, such as the international district. Any Waterfront plan needs to integrate with Pioneer Square. It could create a gateway for the activities along the waterfront. The possibilities could be so dramatic and so exciting. Any and all designs would have pedestrian interest and take account for the pedestrian experience. If the tunnel does not happen, the City still needs to make street and transit improvements. The board needs to stay on top of that as well. We need to emphasis the walking experience and the reintegration of the waterfront with Pioneer Sq and the International District. He still has great interest in it. The Board needs to do a lot of work on the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Celeste indicated that she does not have any pressing updates, but mentioned she is looking forward to the pedestrian master plan efforts. Even being on the committee, she does not have a grasp on the plan. The plan feels like tools that can be used versus a document. She has not seen how it works online, but hopes it will be effective.

Leanne announced that the "Get Engaged" program has a monthly meeting to do a presentation, and she wanted to get people's input into talking about transportation issues at the next monthly meeting.

Celeste suggested Barbara Gray as a person to talk at the meeting. She is the project manager of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Leanne also invited the board to come to the meeting. There will be also a transportation 101 presentation on 2/1/2009. It is a Monday meeting.

Chris mentioned that she was gone a few months. She has been to Oslo, Berlin, and Copenhagen. She liked to test out the walkability of different cities. Her experience was that Oslo was not as good, but Berlin has more things to see along the way. She then pointed out the pictures that she took for pedestrian signals. The images of the signals are popular too. As a writer, she wants people's input into ideas for topics.

Jacob expressed concerns with day to day operations of the sidewalk. He felt the need for more publicity for maintaining the sidewalks e.g. sandwich boards, snows, etc.

Jon mentioned he had a walk through with City Light. The City Light representative talked about the technical aspects. He also mentioned that there is money to put into pedestrian lighting. Jon thought that the Board could be instrumental in shaping that. Right now, the installation of pedestrian lighting is based on complaints.

Celeste reminded us that SDOT has a GIS database that analyzes the high pedestrian activity locations, which can drive where pedestrian lighting should occur.

Jon then added that \$12,000 could add pedestrian lights along Boren. He then noted that he will be going to DC and NY for ten days. He will be taking many pictures. He also tried to get to in touch with Senator Patty Murray about getting more pedestrian and bike work into the stimulus plan.

Howard mentioned that at the last SBAB meeting, there was a presentation on the Sodo Action Plan. It appeared to have some pedestrian action items listed, but it was at point where comments are no longer needed. Most pedestrian action items are focused along the light rail stations and commercial areas. He then discussed his pedestrian survey finding at the NE 45th Viaduct. Perhaps the most interesting information to come out of it was that many people walk between the University District and the University Village due to the lack of transit service to the Village.

Ben talked about street lights. He noted that at 16th Avenue E, there is no city lighting on that block. It is lit up only by porch lights or Group Health buildings. When he was on the east side of 5th Avenue at the intersection of 5th Avenue and Marion Street, one side has don't walk signal on one side but not the other side. The reason is that SDOT put in a protected left turn. He believes there is a red-light camera at this location.

Brian mentioned that the signals group is under pressure to coordinate signals to move traffic through downtown as well as making streets more bikeable and

walkable. There is also a push for transit flows. He thought that signals could be another topic for future discussion.

Kristen talked about how her office just moved downtown. She finds it more convenient to walk and to take her kids on the express bus.

Mark discussed how he, Tom, and Jon were at the Mercer Street open house. It was a nonevent. Construction could start in September. He felt it would be important to track the project during construction.

Tom noted that next month's agenda will be packed. Two presenters are scheduled, including a PMP presentation. He is also looking for suggestions on future agenda items.

10. Adjourn Meeting (8:15)