

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 8 April 2009

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

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

SPAB members in attendance: Tom Williams (Chair), Mark Bandy, (Vice Chair), Howard Wu (Secretary), Leanne Do (Get Engaged), Christina Bollo (new member), Celeste Gilman, Kristen Lohse, Vanessa Lund, Jon Morgan, Lindsay Pesheck (SBAB liaison to SPAB), Seth Schromen-Wawrin

Absent: T Frick McNamara, Ben Smith

SDOT staff liaison: Brian Dougherty

Presenter: Brian DePlace (SDOT), Jonathan Dong (SDOT)

Public: Jacob Struiksma, Max A

Tom called for the approval of both the February and March meeting minutes. The Board approved both monthly meeting minutes

Tom then passed out some handouts relating to the Pedestrian Master Plan. SDOT and SvR Design wanted the Board to write a paragraph about their role. One of the handouts was a draft. SDOT and SvR wanted the Board's feedback written up by 4/13 Monday. Tom wanted the Board's comments to him on the draft by Friday. They are not looking for an evaluation at this point, but wanted to put the Board in a historical context in relation to the Pedestrian Master Plan. On the week of April 17, we have an opportunity to review the draft Pedestrian Master Plan. The other handout has an outline of the document.

2. Public Comment (6:09 pm)

None

3. Sidewalk Closures (6:10 pm)

Brain DePlace Right-of-Way (ROW) management (SDOT) gave a presentation on SDOT's sidewalk closure program

Brian began his presentation by talking about his group, street use and how their group worked with the City auditor on the issue of construction zones. He walks to work every day and is familiar with pedestrian issues especially at construction sites. In late 2007, during the height of construction season, City Council wanted the auditor to look at SDOT's policies relating to pedestrian and bicycle issues around construction zones. He worked closely with the auditor in 2008, and their group embraced the findings. They looked at best practices and came up with their own recommendations.

This process developed 6 general recommendations as the following:

- Develop methods for routing pedestrians through/around construction sites;
- Develop preferred alternate directions;
- Enforce ADA;
- Provide more public information/communications;
- Gather stakeholders to inform these routes (builders, pedestrian community, SDOT staff, etc);
- Replicate the existing pedestrian pathway as much as possible (reduce the amount times pedestrians need to weave across the street).

Among the tools that the ROW management group employs for sidewalk closure include:

- Business process - traffic control plan is required for any development;
- Technology – for staff to review concurrent impacts affecting the street e.g. multiple developments;
- Legislation – noncompliance enforcement tools;
- Economic disincentive to use the right-of-way such as increasing the fee schedule for roadway occupation;
- Policy – developing a clear standard for routing pedestrians around construction sites.

One of the biggest issues that Brian D's group faces is big block developments where developers take up a lot of ROW. They need to be more strategic about use of ROW for pedestrian pathways and try to avoid creating environments that create a weave path. Brian D then cites the Four Seasons example where the west side of 1st Avenue sidewalk was blocked due to the sidewalk construction, which blocked the alternate pathway.

Mark wanted to know if there was a difference between the street cost versus sidewalk cost or if they are the same. Brian D replied that the street classification is the basis for the cost where the higher street class would have a higher rate. But the ROW occupation cost between the sidewalk and street are the same. He then reminded the Board that the draft recommendations will be ready for comment in June.

Mark followed to ask if the same cost rates apply to the rest of the City departments. Brian D responded that SDOT is exempt, but other City departments are charged.

Mark mentioned that Washington State Department of Transport (WSDOT) have incentives and disincentives for state projects using the ROW and wanted to know if SDOT has one as well. Brian D responded that the disincentive is that there would be shared costs for use of ROW.

Christina had a question about the cost for scaffolding / covered walkway. Brian D indicated that covered walkways would have a one time charge and should have openings. Celeste added that covered walkways should be the preferred mitigation and

should make it more expensive to close of the sidewalk than to put a covered walkway. The second preferred sidewalk closure mitigation is to take up a parking/travel lane.

Kristen wanted to know if there were any policies for coordination with King County Metro and cited the Post Office location example where the sidewalk clearance is inadequate for the bus zone along 3rd Avenue. Brian D responded that SDOT will work on standard widths for specific locations, especially in Downtown.

Christina felt it was important to provide public information about the closure. Lindsay added that the closure signs need contact information posted so that problems could be logged e.g. sign is posted poorly. Jon suggested the addition of closure dates similar to parking restrictions. He agreed with Celeste prioritization of mitigation with the covered walkway as the preferred, then taking up travel lane with jersey barrier separation for the alternate pathway. Jon liked the concept of a progressive fee, but felt there should be a hard cap to the duration of the closure.

Jacob noted that physical barriers need to be designed for sight impaired. Brian D agreed and mentioned that they are developing specifications for ADA users. Their group is having discussions on what the appropriate threshold for closing off traffic/parking lane. Right now there is no cap on the duration of a sidewalk closure because it is tied to the construction duration. But he thought it is a good idea to set up a threshold for the length of the duration closure. Tom noted the problem is with closures lasting a long time especially during an economic downturn when the site is left untouched. Brian D is aware of the issue and will address that issue.

Jacob wanted to know if the Virginia Street/6th Avenue intersection has been cleaned up. Brian noted the problems at that location and added that there will be new standards in place and their group will have better enforcement techniques. They are looking at appropriate barriers and channelization for sidewalk closures to avoid the problem at the Virginia Street/6th Avenue intersection.

Tom questioned about additional funding for an additional SDOT inspector for enforcement. Given the budget cuts, Brian D felt that the additional inspectors should have funding.

Seth felt that the longer the project is in place, a more permanent detour should be in place, something that feels more permanent.

Vanessa wanted to know about another threshold that can be applied to other parts of the city. Paul D suggested looking at urban villages and commercial centers as one group and the rest of the City at another standard.

Celeste was concerned about street crossing for sidewalk closures. Christina wanted to know if Brian D's group looks at each traffic control plan on a case-to-case basis. Brian D confirmed that. Tom wanted to add the safety issues in addition to access, and wanted to know who develops traffic control plan. Brian D told the Board that his group

reviews them and works with operations depending upon the complexity. Many different consultants work on these plans. Celeste felt the need to train those who make and review the plans. Brian D noted that training is going on within the department.

Jon wanted to know that if traffic operations could adjust the signals when there is a long sidewalk closure duration. Brian Dougherty mentioned that the signals people may come to the Board to speak about that issue

Jacob noted the problems with improper display and storage of detour and construction signs. They are laying on the ground or encroaching on the clear passage which is a tripping hazard. Brian D said that his group should address this issue.

Jon wanted to know the timeline for the stakeholder group recommendations. Brian D replied June as the timeline for comments. By September a Director's rule would be in place. Then, any changes in the fees may go to Council. So the hope it would get done and implemented by late this year.

Celeste hoped that the standards consider about the weave conditions and coordinate with other closures along the street/block. Brian D agreed and his group would be looking at the larger picture, consider both sides of the street.

Christina would like to see a preconstruction process where everyone buys into the plan, where developers and SDOT coordinate their actions.

Tom wanted to know if SDOT was still looking at DC model as the plan. He wanted to make sure we keep the strong policies in the DC plan. Brian D confirmed that the strong language was still in the plan but did not want to copy it. He liked the DC model but wanted it to be Seattle specific due to the unique site conditions. He would keep the strong policies in the Seattle version.

Celeste pointed out that the pedestrian master plan was doing a lot of mapping and thought that the group could use the mapping efforts as a tool to inform the closure process. She then followed by asking where does the money from the fee/fines for the ROW closure goes. Brian D indicated that the money goes towards Street use cost center; the excess funds go the general fund. Seth followed that there could be an incentive for keeping the ROW closed since the group is funded by these fees. Brian D replied that the use fees were only a small percentage of their funding sources. Celeste thought that the fees could be used for improving the pedestrian environment.

4. Rapid Ride (7:00 pm)

Jonathan Dong (SDOT) gave an update on the transit priority corridors and Rapid Ride planning efforts.

Jonathan explained that he is part of the policy and planning group. They are responsible to implement the goals and plans under the Bridging the Gap program for the transit improvements. The strategy under the Transit Plan is to shift single occupant vehicles (SOVs) to transit to achieve a mode split goal of 80% HOV/other and 20% SOV for downtown by 2030. In 2005, SDOT's Transit Plan provided the blueprint for how the transit system will grow. It identified a network that has service running 18 hours a day with 15-minute headways. The plan identified seven corridors, urban village transit network, (UVTN), to form the transit spine for the City. Transit service improvements would include improving the speed and reliability of buses. The UVTN included W Seattle, Rainier Avenue, Greenwood, Ballard, Aurora, 23rd Avenue, and 45th Street). Currently efforts are focused on implementing improvements along the W Seattle, Rainier Avenue and Ballard corridors. The tools for improving service include:

- transit signal priority – signals that give buses green time priority;
- queue jumps - modifications in the roadway that allow buses to advance in front of traffic;
- “bus bulbs”– extension of the sidewalk to allow for in-lane bus stops which reduce delays for buses to pull into traffic.

Bus bulb improvements have a lot of pedestrian elements including: updating for ADA ramps, looking at pedestrian signals where warranted, pedestrian lighting and upgrading crosswalks.

Metro is implementing the bus rapid transit (BRT) program called Rapid Ride connecting to Ballard and W Seattle. The Route 15 would be adjusted for more frequent service. Metro has also budgeted for BRT service along Aurora for a later date. With BRT, transit service will run more frequently. BRT service will have low-floor buses, faster fare collection method, real time information at bus kiosks, and better shelters.

Jonathan noted these key community issues:

- What is the delay for general traffic due to in-lane stops? Transit times improve significantly and the additional delay to general traffic will not be as much.
- What is the effect of parking removal due to tight ROW? Community support it due to transit service improvements
- What is the effect of bus stop consolidations? Stops will be spaced between 1/4 and 1/2 mile apart. Some fear the effect of pedestrians walking further.

The schedule is to do the design process now with bids going out next year and Rapid Ride service by 2012. Jonathan's group is starting design for the Ballard to University District corridor in the next year.

Vanessa wanted to know the time savings and ridership increase with the new BRT service. Jonathan reported that the time savings would be 10 to 20 percent and ridership will go up 10 percent in 2 years. He cited the service improvements for Metro Route 358 as an example. Seth wanted to know if the travel time accounts for additional time for pedestrian walking distance to get to a stop with the stop

consolidations. Jonathan responded that it did not, but the wait time for the bus would be less.

Mark felt it is key to have the off board payment system to get the transit time/general traffic time savings because the dwell time will go down. Jonathan added that the buses will have an extra door (3 doors) for quicker boardings and alightings. Currently the W Seattle and Ballard lines are the only funded Rapid Ride corridors with Aurora in the future.

Given the economic climate, Tom wanted to know if there are any budget issues. Jonathan responded that the capital improvements are already funded through Bridging the Gap and FTA funds. The Ballard route needs an additional \$2 million. County Council is debating whether to cut service in other areas of the county or raise fares. Celeste wanted to know if the County would consider performance based evaluation as way to determine future service versus 40/40/20 rule. The rule indicates that 40 percent of new Metro service should be created in East King County, 40 percent in South King County, and 20 percent in Seattle. Jonathan was aware of this issue, and it is a concern of the City.

Christina wanted to know the timeline for implementing the University District-23rd Avenue corridor and would it wait until SR 520 project was completed. Jonathan indicated that it would wait for the SR 520 project. After evaluation of the remaining corridors, the Ballard – University District and University District-23rd Avenue are the next highest priority.

Jacob felt that parking restrictions need to be in place to remove bus interactions with parking maneuvers and east-west corridor route is needed out of downtown. Jonathan acknowledges those issues, and their group is still working on it. One way they are addressing the parking issues is to reroute the Rapid Rides to 3rd Avenue. Stewart Street is also under study for east-west connections. Jon suggested Madison Avenue.

Jon also felt that Jonathan's group needs to disseminate the transit priority corridors information to the public more so that they can get more public support. Jon then wanted to know if Rapid Ride will make connections to Snohomish County so that there would not be a transfer needed. Jonathan pointed out that Metro service does not cross county lines. A connection to Snohomish County's BRT, SWIFT BRT, would occur at the Aurora Village station

Jon then wanted to know where future BAT lanes would occur. Jonathan mentioned that 15th Avenue NW was considered for BAT lanes, but the community was opposed to them. The 23rd Avenue NW BAT lanes will be implemented. The previous Aurora Avenue BAT lane implementation was messy, but they will revisit this corridor later.

Seth felt it would be good to show the benefits for increased transit service through the BAT lanes. This argument could show business owners who are opposed to BAT lanes

how much additional business exposure they would have with an increase in transit riders.

Jon wanted to know if pedestrian improvements would extend throughout the BRT corridor. It is important for pedestrians to have a safe way to get these stops. Jonathan responded by describing the improvements at Maynard Avenue/Jackson Street intersection where a bus bulb will be added. As part of this work, the sidewalk adjacent to the bulb would be redone, roughly 100-feet from the stop. The Orcas Street improvement efforts are coordinating with the sidewalk construction program.

Jon wanted to know if there would be an overlap of the proposed streetcar network with the Rapid Ride network. Jonathan explained that they have been working with Ethan Malone, the project manager for the streetcar. They have been coordinating along 1st Avenue as well as Jackson Street.

Jon then asked if these BRT corridors are setup for future upgrades for light rail service. Jonathan responded that they are not really thinking about that specifically, but their work does not preclude it.

Celeste pointed out that with bus stop consolidations, the planning needs to look at the new routing for pedestrians and how they can still access the new stops. She cited the "Avenue" as a good example of a successful use of bus bulb outs and stop consolidation. Pedestrian signals should be automatic for these BRT stops, with no waiting time. Jonathan mentioned that they are currently looking at funding for upgrading signal heads. Jacob did not want this work to waste money "tweet/chirp" additions or the installation of truncated domes at the end of the ramps.

Vanessa cited her BRT experience in Pittsburgh where there was bus collisions with pedestrians because people became complacent and were not expecting buses in the bus ROW.

Jonathan wanted the Board's feedback for the spacing of stops, 1/2 mile spacing or 1/4 mile. The Board felt that a 1/4 mile was better. Jonathan noted that their work is at 30 percent design.

5. Round Robin (7:50 pm)

Tom sent out a schedule for the Pedestrian Plan review and mentioned that one can sign up for more than one session. He felt that the 3 hour review is not enough time. He suggested that board members should look at specific areas. If people do have specific interests, Tom would like board members to let him know before the Friday, the 17th. He reminded the Board that the Council is looking towards the Board's comments for guidance. The Board needs a responses and recommendations just after the June's meeting. He has not heard anything about a Saturday session for reviewing the master plan.

Tom heard from T that the retreat could now start at 12 PM and end at 4 PM at Mithun's offices. The Board's preference would be this time slot.

Mark talked about the Tri meeting. The discussions did not have too much relating to pedestrians, mostly about bicycle use along the waterfront with the Alaskan Way Viaduct project. However, the waterfront may have potential conflicts with pedestrians along the waterfront.

Jacob brought brail maps of various locations around DC for the Board to sample. Seattle does not have anything that is comparable.

6. Upcoming Agenda Items (7:59 pm)

Next month will have presentations on the Cheshiahud Lake Union Loop Trail discussion and SDOT's sidewalk repair group.

7. Adjourn Meeting (8:00pm)