

Sounding Board Meeting #1

Summary

June 30, 2015 9-11 AM

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue, Room 1660

Sounding Board member attendees

Member Name	Interest Represented	Attendance
Cara Bertron	IDEA Space at the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda)	Present at follow-up meeting*
Don Blakeney	Downtown Seattle Association	Present
David Blandford	Visit Seattle/Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau	Present
Tim Hillis	Charlie's Produce; Freight Advisory Board	Present at follow-up meeting*
Steve Kennedy	Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board	Present
Lyn Krizanish	Clise Properties	Present at follow-up meeting*
Jenne Neptune	Alexis Hotel; Seattle Hotel Association	Absent
Kristi Rennenbohm Franz	Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board	Present
Greg Smith	Urban Visions Sustainable Real Estate	Present at follow-up meeting*
Leslie Smith	Alliance of Pioneer Square	Present
Jessica Szelag	Commute Seattle	Present

*Members who were unable to attend the first meeting attended a follow-up meeting on July 21.

Appendix A summarizes key points from the follow-up meeting.

Staff attendees

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)

- Dawn Schellenberg
- Sam Woods
- Scott Kubly
- Kristen Simpson

Toole Design Group

- Kenneth Loen

EnviroIssues

- Lauren Stensland
- Sophie Cottle
- Sara Colling

Note: *This document is a summary of issues and actions in this meeting. It is intended to be an overview of the discussion, rather than a transcription.*

Welcome and introductions

Dawn Schellenberg, SDOT Communications Lead, welcomed the Sounding Board members and introduced the Center City Bike Network project team as well as SDOT Director, Scott Kubly. Scott shared that his experience downtown is as a pedestrian and emphasized the need to make downtown Seattle safer for all users. He notices there is often animosity between people in cars and people on bikes, and the intent of this project is to improve conditions for people walking, biking and driving. The bike facilities will create more predictable streets and improve the urban experience for everyone. He noted interest in expanding the existing Second Avenue protected bike lane to create a broader network that serves all users.

Dawn led the group through a round of introductions and asked each member to describe their vision for a more vibrant city and safer traveling experience downtown.

- Leslie Smith, Alliance of Pioneer Square, noted Pioneer Square has a large transit hub but still has too many people in their cars. She expressed interest in embracing multi-modal transportation and in embracing the cultural transition toward biking and walking. She added that the Second Avenue protected bike lane has calmed the street and made the intersections more predictable.
- Kristi Rennebohm Franz, Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, emphasized the need to make biking downtown an option for all ages and abilities. She agreed with Scott that there is animosity between users on the street, and added that improving infrastructure to create calm, predictable streets can help address this. She also noted the need for considering social equity as part of this project.
- Steve Kennedy, Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, explained that as a bike commuter, he has always considered downtown the black hole of his commute due to the lack of protected facilities. The protected bike lane on Second Avenue caught everyone's attention. Now the task is connecting the facility to the rest of downtown while balancing the many interests in the area.
- Kristen Simpson, SDOT Division Director, noted the City's Vision Zero plan to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030 and how this project supports that plan.
- Jessica Szelag, Commute Seattle, noted she represents the interests of downtown commuters and the concerns the business community may have. She suggested that more data on how a protected bike lane can calm the street or improve economic activity would be helpful during the outreach process. She agreed that the protected bike lane on Second Avenue is a great facility, but it needs to be connected to the rest of downtown to create a network.

- Don Blakeney, Downtown Seattle Association, explained that from his past experiences with the construction of protected bike lanes, it is important to bring stakeholders into the process early and to connect bike facilities to create a network. He sees great potential in the Chinatown-International District and in starting a discussion about changing the priorities of downtown.
- David Blandford, Visit Seattle/Seattle Convention and Visitor's Bureau, explained that biking is not a particular concern within the tourism sector. He mainly hears concerns from tourists that parking is expensive and hard to find. Because downtown is relatively compact and easy to navigate on foot, there is not a high demand for bike infrastructure.

Presentation and discussion

Dawn started the presentation with SDOT's mission and values. She reiterated the project's main goal: safety for all users, and provided an overview of the project background and history.

- Don asked how many bike network connections or "spines" SDOT anticipates creating throughout downtown.
 - Sam Woods, SDOT Project Manager, responded that the majority of downtown streets are being evaluated. The protected bike lanes on Second Avenue and on the waterfront are already planned, and a protected bike lane on Fourth Avenue or Fifth Avenue is likely. However, because evaluation has not been completed, she cannot say for certain how many spines will be created.
- Leslie commented that Ballard bike commuters are very interested in seeing the Second Avenue protected bike lane extended to Dexter Avenue N.
- Jessica asked how the connection to Eastlake and the University District would be considered.
 - Sam and Kenneth responded that an arrow can be added to show that people do travel in that direction, and that other projects are evaluating that connection.

Sam presented the technical analysis piece of the project and Kenneth Loen, Toole Design Group, discussed the evaluation tools and criteria in further detail.

- Jessica asked if there has been outreach to tell people about the use of the Strava phone app as an evaluation tool.
 - Kristi and Sam responded that there has been some discussion of the tool within the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board and on bike blogs.
 - Kristi added that people should not feel excluded if they do not have a smart phone or use Strava.
 - Kenneth responded that for this reason, Strava data is only one of the many evaluation tools.
- Kristi noted that topography is critical to getting people of all ages riding bikes.

- Leslie commented that loading zones vary dramatically from block to block and have many different uses. She emphasized the need to look at loading zones individually, so different needs and uses are considered.
 - Kristi added that tracking Uber vehicles and their load zone use would be helpful.

Sam noted that the Center City project area is very unique compared to other bike facility areas. She emphasized that safety is the highest priority for the project team. On the Second Avenue protected bike lane, every turning movement is protected, meaning each mode has their own signal and designated time to cross each intersection. She added that alleys are very important in the Center City area, and their usage is increasing, the intersections between streets and alleys will require evaluation. Sam asked the Sounding Board for feedback and what indicators they find important.

- Several Sounding Board members commented that the evaluation criteria and process must be easy for the general public to understand.
 - Kristi offered the example of using the term “connections” rather than “connectivity.”
- Jessica suggested a survey of the properties on Second Avenue to collect data showing support for the facilities as well as impacts to businesses.
- Leslie commented that information on retail sales near bike facilities would be helpful.
 - Jessica responded that Portland State University recently published a report on the positive economic impacts of protected bike lanes.
- Leslie commented that in many businesses, the managers are more cautious of the negative impacts of protected bike lanes, but the employees and businesses themselves don’t feel those impacts.
 - Dawn added that in her experience there is acceptance. While businesses owners are not necessarily celebrating the Second Avenue protected bike lane, many people who didn’t support it now accept the change.
- Steve asked if the City has noticed people who have completely changed their position on the Second Avenue protected bike lane, having opposed it initially, and now supporting it.
 - Dawn responded that there is now acceptance, but not necessarily ardent support.
- Leslie noted that part of the challenge for businesses that need load zones on Second Avenue is the steep grade between Second Avenue and Third Avenue, which can be too steep for loading/unloading.
- Kristi noted the project needs to listen to business needs ahead of time.
 - Don agreed that the City should communicate with businesses regarding their needs. As growth continues, communication between the City and private properties is crucial.
 - Kristi added that the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board is working to engage with the Department of Planning and Development as well as the Design Review Board to improve the permitting process. Currently, developers are getting this information at the end of their projects instead of being informed at the beginning.

- Jessica asked if there are examples of a ramp within the bike lane that acts as a pedestrian walkway.
 - Dawn responded that would be possible around some areas like Benaroya Hall.
Ramps will exist on Roosevelt Way at transit islands and at one passenger load zone.
The ramps can also act as calming features.
- Don cautioned that the public may see the project map with highlights on almost every street and get the sense that this project is just phase 1 of all streets having protected bike lanes. The project team needs to message that this project is about making spines through the city, not about creating protected bike lanes everywhere.
- Steve added that the evaluation criteria is too focused on bicyclists. He suggested changing the criteria to appeal more to the effects on other users.

Lauren Stensland, EnviroIssues, reviewed the tentative timeline for Sounding Board meetings, thanked everyone for their participation, and adjourned the meeting.

Appendix A: *Summary of key points from July 21 Sounding Board follow-up meeting for members who were unable to attend the first Sounding Board meeting*

Dawn shared the project vision and provided a brief overview of the history and background. Sam outlined components of the project's technical analysis.

- Greg Smith, Urban Visions, asked if the City has a projection for the percentage of street usage for freight, transit, bikes, etc.
 - Sam and Dawn responded that the City conducts ongoing curb space analysis to see how curb space is being used and where there is flexibility. The City is also considering guidelines such as a minimum number of load zones.
- Tim Hillis, Charlie's Produce, emphasized that more load zones are necessary. He also noted that people on bikes need to follow the rules of the road.
- Lyn Krizanish, Clise Properties, commented that other cities have the luxury of space that Seattle doesn't have, so it is especially important to look at these plans across all modes.
- Greg asked if there is a minimum sidewalk dimension or if sidewalks can be narrower.
 - Sam responded that the design team would look at all options for best accommodating specific corridors.
- Lyn commented there is parking near her building on Second Ave and Union Street that creates confusion.
 - Dawn noted that is good feedback and the City will evaluate that intersection likely in the fall.
- Cara Bertron, SCIDpda, asked if population needs and current level of service are being considered as part of the evaluation criteria. For example, a protected bike lane on Dearborn doesn't necessarily help the residents and businesses in the Chinatown-International District.
 - Sam noted the team is also considering a greenway for King Street.
 - Dawn added it will be helpful to have Cara's input to know who to reach out to in the Chinatown-International District.