

## Sounding Board Meeting #2

### Summary

September 23, 2015 9:30 AM-12 PM  
 Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5th Ave, Room 4155

### Sounding Board member attendees

Member Name	Interest Represented	Attendance
<b>Cara Bertron</b>	IDEA Space at the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda)	Present
<b>Don Blakeney</b>	Downtown Seattle Association	Present
<b>David Blandford</b>	Visit Seattle/Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau	Present
<b>Tim Hillis</b>	Charlie's Produce; Freight Advisory Board	Absent
<b>Steve Kennedy</b>	Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board	Present
<b>Lyn Krizanish</b>	Clise Properties	Present
<b>Ron Machòn</b>	Towne Park valet services	Present
<b>Kristi Rennenbohm Franz</b>	Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board	Present
<b>Greg Smith</b>	Urban Visions Sustainable Real Estate	Present
<b>Liz Stenning (alternate for Leslie Smith)</b>	Alliance of Pioneer Square	Present
<b>Jessica Szelag</b>	Commute Seattle	Present

### Staff attendees

#### *Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)*

- Dawn Schellenberg
- Sam Woods

#### *Toole Design Group*

- Craig Schoenberg

#### *EnviroIssues*

- Lauren Stensland
- Sara Colling
- Sophie Cottle

**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 a new member of the Sounding Board, Ron Machòn. Ron shared that he will represent valet operations. Dawn then led the group through a round of introductions.

## **Presentation and discussion**

Dawn started the presentation with SDOT's mission and values. She presented the project vision map which depicts the project goal of creating a north-south spine and east-west connections to develop a Center City protected bike lane network. Dawn emphasized that the project team revised the map based on feedback from the Sounding Board and others to make it easier to understand.

## **Open house overview**

Dawn gave an overview of the first project open house, including the number of attendees and common themes that arose in the comments.

- Greg Smith, Urban Visions, asked how the commute statistics of those who attended the open house compared to how people on average commute in Seattle.
  - Jessica Szlag, Commute Seattle, responded that of daily commuters to downtown Seattle, 31% drive alone, 45% take transit, 7% walk, and 3% bike.
  - Dawn added that SDOT would like to increase the percentage of bike commuters to 12-15%.
- Ron Machòn, Towne Park valet services, asked if SDOT is attempting to shift trends from driving to biking.
  - Sam Woods, SDOT project manager, explained that because Seattle is growing so quickly, increasing the percentage of people biking does not necessarily mean decreasing the number of drivers.
- Steve Kennedy, Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, asked if Dawn can send the open house summary to the Sounding Board.
  - Dawn responded that the summary is currently on the project website, and that she would send a link to the group after the meeting.

## **Bike tour overview**

Dawn gave an overview of the Sounding Board bike tour in downtown Seattle on August 20. She thanked Jessica Szlag at Commute Seattle for planning the tour. Jessica added that another opportunity for Sounding Board members is a tour of bike facilities in Vancouver, BC. Commute Seattle went to Vancouver, BC last year to learn from people working on multimodal streets in the city and will be going again October 18-20, 2015. This trip will focus on retail businesses, especially those adjacent to protected bike lanes. She invited all Sounding Board members to attend and noted that Commute Seattle is able to cover all expenses except lodging.

## 2nd Ave protected bike lane improvements

Dawn listed the additional outreach the project team had been working on since the last Sounding Board meeting. She described the upgrades coming to the 2nd Ave protected bike lane (examples pictured below), such as raised driveways and pedestrian crossings, as well as planter boxes to create a nicer looking separation between bikes and cars. She asked for input on whether to locate the 2nd Ave bike signals on the poles (near the pedestrian signal) or hanging overhead (near the vehicle signal).



- Liz Stenning, Alliance for Pioneer Square, asked what the difference is between two of the renderings.
  - Sam explained that one rendering shows a raised pedestrian walkway and the other rendering shows a driveway.
  - Several attendees commented that the driveway rendering is unclear and should be changed to show the garage it is entering into. SDOT staff agreed to make that change.
- Steve added that in his daily bike commute, something similar to a raised pedestrian walkway would help keep people biking from speeding down the hill.
- Kristi Rennenbohm Franz, Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, commented that adding “slow” in large letters in the lane is also helpful.
- Greg asked how these upgrades would work with new buildings in development.
  - Dawn responded that when new buildings are built along planned or existing protected bike lanes, coordination between SDOT and the design team could help with easy incorporation. She told Greg they should connect separately to discuss this in detail.
- Greg asked where the planter boxes would go.
  - Sam responded that the planter boxes would be strategically placed to allow space for parked cars to open their doors.
- Cara Bertron, SCIDpda, asked how the number of planter boxes would affect the overall cost, and if planters would mean less money for other projects.
  - Dawn responded that the planters would not affect funding allocation for other projects.
- Ron commented that at night it can be difficult to see pedestrians and suggested adding lighting to raised walkways to ensure pedestrian safety.
- Liz commented that in other countries protected bike lanes are raised to the sidewalk level. She asked if that is something SDOT considered.

- Sam responded it is very costly to extend the curb to create a raised protected bike lane, and it does not provide as much flexibility to make adjustments to the network in the future.
- Kristi asked if it would be possible to put bike traffic signals above the lane as well as on the side pole. She added there has not been as much of a focus on the tension between bikes and pedestrians, so the placement of the signal both above the lane and near the pedestrian signal would serve two purposes: tension between bicycles and cars, as well as between bicycles and pedestrians.
- Ron suggested putting the signal on the near side of the street before the intersection, so only the bicyclists see it. This would help reduce confusion for drivers.
- Cara suggested making the “bike” sign attached to the signal larger or more prominent.
- Jessica commented that the bike signal next to the pedestrian signal might make bicyclists more likely to speed through the light as they watch the pedestrian signal count down.

### **Technical analysis of 4th and 5th avenues**

Sam presented the technical analysis for protected bike lanes on 4th and 5th avenues. She described the north end, central end, and south end of both streets and asked for feedback throughout her presentation.

- 4th Ave north end:
  - Cara asked what a left turn pocket is.
    - Sam explained that a turn pocket stops the turn for cars while pedestrians and bikes go through the intersection, unlike a permissive turn, which allows cars to turn if bikes and pedestrians are not present.
- 5th Ave north end:
  - Don Blakeney, Downtown Seattle Association, asked how angled parking compares to parallel parking under the monorail.
    - Sam responded that she has not analyzed it, but it is a very tight area and angled parking may not be possible.
  - Cara commented that on-street parking slows drivers in a very natural way as drivers try to angle into a parking space.
  - Steve added that the extra space in this area is important as an opportunity to create an enhanced space that works for a lot of people.
    - Don noted that you cannot expect a public area to be activated if the programmatic elements are not relevant to the area.
  - Jessica suggested looking into using the monorail as the buffer space and creating a turn lane on the west side of the monorail.
    - Sam responded that would be complicated because drivers would have to cross the monorail in the intersection before they turn. She noted that she would check into whether crossing under the monorail is legal.
  - Lyn Krizanish, Clise Properties, commented that parking under the monorail with reduced visibility due to the columns seems risky.

- 4th Ave central area:
  - Don asked if there would be left turns allowed along other parts of 4th Ave, because left turns would be restricted in this area.
    - Sam responded that left turns would be allowed elsewhere on 4th Ave where the space is not too constricted.
- 5th Ave central area:
  - Several Sounding Board members commented that reducing this area to one through lane would be very problematic, given the existing congestion on 5th Ave.
  - Kristi commented that many drivers compensate for heavy traffic by speeding up immediately when they get an opportunity which is dangerous.
  - Jessica suggested that the team analyze 5th Ave as it is today to understand why it has traffic problems currently.
- 4th Ave south end:
  - Ron asked how this concept would impact Hotel Monaco which has an inlet for loading.
    - Sam responded that the protected bike lane could be shifted or curved, or the loading zone could be relocated.
  - Steve asked if there is a lot of transit that travels on 4th Ave.
    - Sam responded that there is transit on 4th Ave currently and there will likely be more as buses come out of the tunnel.
  - Lyn commented that 4th Ave is a major corridor for fire and emergency vehicles.
    - Sam noted that 4th Ave would still have emergency priority.
  - Lyn expressed concern that increasing the width of the transit lane and protected bike lane would require eventually removing a travel lane.
    - Sam responded that the protected bike lane does not need to be widened, and it could actually be narrowed, so a vehicle travel lane would not be removed.
  - Lyn asked if a narrower protected bike lane buffer space would be possible.
    - Sam responded that anything narrower than two feet is undesirable. The idea is to make people feel safe and comfortable while riding in the protected bike lanes.
  - Cara asked if it would be possible to reduce width of one of the travel lanes.
    - Sam responded that on 4th Ave there are many skip stops for transit, meaning that buses alternate stopping on different blocks and often use the travel lane to get around other stopped buses, so a narrow travel lane would not work in this area.
  - Liz asked if the team considered having two one-way protected bike lanes on 2nd and 4th avenues.
    - Sam responded that the space gained by creating a one-way protected bike lane instead of a two-way protected bike lane is not enough to gain a travel lane, and creating two one-way protected bike lanes would be more costly.

- 5th Ave south end:
  - Jessica commented that people drive at higher speeds in this area, and a wider protected bike lane would help slow traffic.
  - Kristi commented that in her experience driver behavior is significantly improved around the construction site in this area.
  - Greg asked if there is still a need for as much surface street parking.
    - Lyn expressed concern that removing surface street parking would discourage people from going downtown.
    - Greg responded that education for tenants, vendors, developers, etc. is critical.
- 4th and 5th avenues combined:
  - Lyn commented that the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association supports Bell St being a multimodal corridor within the Denny Triangle neighborhood.

Dawn and Sam opened the floor for discussion of the network and how the information presented to the Sounding Board can be presented to other stakeholders and the public.

- Ron asked how open house invites were sent, considering the high percentage of bike riders that attended.
  - Dawn responded that invites were sent to all addresses within a certain radius of the project area.
- Jessica commented that the team should explain to the public that population growth will lead to growth in other modes of transportation modes, which informs multimodal designs.
- David Blandford, Visit Seattle, suggested describing what the Center City area will be like in the future if the project is not implemented, and how transportation will be impacted by growth.
- Kristi commented that for many the Bike Master Plan signifies loss of parking and dramatic changes. Setting the context so people understand the plan is not just about bikes, but about improving transportation in the city is important.
- Jessica noted that she would like to see how the network will connect.
  - Dawn responded that at the next Sounding Board meeting the team will present information about 7th, 8th, and 9th avenues.
- Steve asked if 7th, 8th, and 9th avenues are being considered as alternatives to, or in addition to, 4th and 5th avenues.
  - Dawn responded that they are being considered in addition to 4th and 5th avenues.
- Cara asked why protected bike lanes do not extend to Jackson St and King St.
  - Sam responded that the protected bike lane would connect to a greenway on King St.
    - Cara noted that seeing that connection, especially south of Main St, would be helpful.
- Steve asked when the evaluation criteria will be examined.
  - Sam responded that at the next Sounding Board meeting, the evaluation criteria would be discussed.
- Jessica suggested using a pie chart to show the analysis comparison, similar to what was used

for the street car evaluation.

- Liz commented that Town Hall Seattle is a difficult location to get to and suggested that the second open house be held somewhere else.
- Kristi commented that when sharing this information with the public, the team needs to present a robust explanation of the benefits of protected bike lanes for all users. The team needs to be prepared to show where parking can be in each route, and to have follow-up conversations about other hot button issues. She suggested the team also be prepared with a menu of ways to communicate with stakeholders.
- Lyn suggested that the team augment the presentation with modeling and analysis to explain what was and will be considered.
- Cara commented that fun activities like a monthly public bike tour could help engage people.
- Liz suggested working with the Downtown Seattle Association and others to learn parking occupancy rates.
- Steve noted that it is important to put the project in a larger context, especially once the light rail and transit system is fully expanded.
- Kristi commented that the team should also acknowledge the younger generations for whom buying a car may not be an option, and biking may be an economical transportation option they choose. She suggested presenting information about cost and time required for the different travel modes.

Lauren Stensland, EnviroIssues, thanked everyone for their participation, and adjourned the meeting.