

Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Group (PMPAG) Meeting #18

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue

Room 4050/4060

January 23, 2009 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Attendance

Suzanne Anderson, Sean Ardussi, James Bush, Rebecca Deehr, Tony Gomez, Brian Johnston, Rob Kaufman, Bea Kumasaka, Mark Landreneau, Kate Martin, Paul Niebanck, Paulo Nunes-Ueno, Chas Redmond, Betty Lou Valentine

Staff and Guests: Brenda Belcher, Charlie Bookman, Tracy Burrows, Shane DeWald, Dan Eder, Michael Fann, Barbara Gray, Ben Hansen, Megan Hoyt, Mark Jaeger, Tracy Krawczyk, Maria Langlais, Amalia Leighton (SvR Design), Tony Mazzella, Brooke Magnusson, Allison Phillips (SvR Design), Karen Selander, Amy Shumann, Peg Staeheli (SvR Design), Marcia Wagoner (Read-Wagoner), Eric Widstrand, Jennifer Wieland

The meeting was facilitated by Co-Chairs Rebecca Deehr and Paulo Nunes-Ueno.

PMPAG Issues, Opportunities, and Concerns

Becca welcomed the group and, having no co-chair report, opened the floor for issues, opportunities, and concerns.

Kate Martin noted that the opportunity to submit amendments to the Comprehensive Plan is approaching and recommended that PMPAG begin to think about amendments that might come out of the Pedestrian Master Plan, referencing the transit stops amendment that was adopted in 2008. Barbara Gray added that the timeline for amendments has changed slightly—it is now a March to March cycle—but she suggested that there will be opportunities to submit amendments in 2010.

Paul Niebanck commented that he was very happy to be back with the group after his six month absence and wondered when the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board (SPAB) might receive a briefing on the plan. Barbara responded that the project team will brief the SPAB in February on the process and will return when the plan is released. Sean Ardussi added that the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board would also like a briefing; project staff will arrange this.

Bea Kumasaka provided highlights of the Belltown Community Sidewalk Survey on January 17, when members of the community were joined by Liz Ellis (SDOT Sidewalk Maintenance Program) and Jennifer Wieland to look at existing trees and locations potentially affected by upcoming sidewalk repairs. Bea noted that the community members offered recommendations about pervious pavement in parking areas and learned that the project is already at 100% design. She shared her frustration that the community was not provided with information or an opportunity to comment on the paving project at an earlier phase.

Bea highlighted several additional concerns including: the need for coordination between utility work and Bell Street's existing Green Street designation; a desire for sidewalk café regulations to limit the amount of space that a business may occupy (especially in areas with significant sidewalk

width) and to charge appropriate fees for use of the right-of-way; and the importance of thinking about projects in a timeframe that makes sense for residents (i.e., a 20-year project is too long).

Barbara responded to Bea's concerns, noting that the Bell Street Green Street has been in place as a conceptual plan for quite some time, and utilities work must respond to these planning efforts. Also, the Department of Planning and Development is taking the lead on revising the sidewalk café standards, which will include a review of conditions to ensure that more than six feet of clear space is maintained on sidewalks when possible. There are some existing sidewalk cafés in Belltown that are not properly permitted, and this is something the City needs to address.

Ben Hansen (SDOT Street Maintenance) noted that his group is the sponsor of the 2nd Avenue repaving project, and they have been working with Seattle Public Utilities to examine opportunities for new approaches (e.g., permeable surfaces, swales). He will inform the project manager of the community's interest in the project and their frustration at the limited opportunity to provide input. Ben noted that this repaving does not preclude additional work taking place in the next 20 years—this particular work is focused on repairing bus lanes and crossings, but more work will be needed.

Chas Redmond asked whether a decision has been reached on the Fauntleroy Way rechannelization project, and, to save time, Barbara offered to send an update via email.

Becca noted that the PMPAG Steering Committee discussed SDOT's Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors (KAB) survey on January 20, and she suggested that those who were unable to attend the meeting should provide comments on the draft survey to Jennifer via email. Rob Kaufman recommended that the survey be tested for length and flow. Jennifer added that a revision of the survey instrument will be circulated for final comment via email during the first week of February. The final questionnaire will be pre-tested before it is launched.

Staff Report

A hard copy of the SDOT staff report was distributed and is posted on the PMPAG website at: www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm_agendas.htm.

Overview of Meeting Format

Barbara explained that the goal of the meeting and the small group sessions was to examine the first draft of plan recommendations and to provide feedback on missing items. The seven recommendation themes each include numerous actions at varying levels of detail. After the meeting, the project team will address the gaps and revise the recommendations to make them more specific by attaching owners, partners, measures, costs, and a timeline to each recommendation.

Barbara introduced staff and members of the plan's Inter-Agency Team, noting that these individuals would be participating in the small group discussions in order to help clarify particular items and to hear feedback from PMPAG members on the recommendations.

PMPAG members were divided into three teams and spent 20 minutes discussing each of the three groups of recommendations. The comments from each of the three recommendation groups are provided in the appendix to this meeting summary.

Once Around

Following the small group sessions, the full PMPAG reconvened and each member was asked to share her/his general impressions or comments about the recommendations and small group discussions.

Brian Johnston suggested that SDOT develop and launch a “dashboard” portal for reporting key indicators of success in the Pedestrian Master Plan, focusing on specific, measurable goals and the progress made toward meeting those goals.

Paul noted that the language has changed in an important way over the course of developing the plan, pointing out that the group now talks about “crashes” as opposed to “collisions or accidents.” He explained his role in advocating for institutionalized individuals, and stressed the importance of street-level design considerations for these groups of people. Paul wondered about the stewardship and oversight of the plan and suggested that SPAB must be involved. He also commented that the transition of the plan into a Web-based document likely will be a positive development, but he expressed the need for continued testing throughout.

Suzanne Anderson commented on the need for a realistic approach to the recommendations, based on the current economic climate. She emphasized the necessity of promoting walking, even in the absence of funding for infrastructure improvements. Suzanne recommended expanded wayfinding efforts, particularly at transit stops, and additional intersection crossing flags. She also noted the importance of pedestrian accessibility in construction zones.

BettyLou Valentine stressed the need for a timeline to be attached to the recommendations and actions, commenting that people (especially seniors) need to know that something in the plan will make a difference tomorrow.

James Bush expressed the need for a hierarchy among the recommendations, which could be established in a number of ways (e.g., time, cost, complexity). He noted that was pleased to see so many of the comments from the PMPAG reflected in the recommendations.

Rob shared his desire for a recommendation about speed limit reductions, including a recommendation for a speed limit of 20 mph in downtown Seattle. He also stressed the value of stop lines and the need to site them an appropriate distance from the intersection.

Bea focused on improving SDOT coordination, cooperation, communication, and oversight, adding that the plan should provide people with information to fix the pedestrian environment. She commented on the need for inter-agency communication as well as the public’s need to access the various agencies and their services.

Kate noted that lowered, enforced speed limits are her top priority and seconded the need for prioritization among the recommendations. She suggested that funding must be the first recommendation and the strongest, moving beyond the priorities of current elected officials. Kate recommended that a citizens’ advisory board on funding be established to reallocate existing funds to better meet the needs of all modes. She also commented that the Department of Neighborhoods is no longer functioning effectively as a coordinating body that helps residents navigate the various City agencies.

Tony Gomez suggested a greater focus on regional coordination, particularly in approaching funding and enforcement. He noted that organizations such as the Association of Cities, engineering associations, and the police chiefs' association would be valuable partners. Commenting on the issue of lowered speed limits, Tony added that mobility and safety must be a part of the decision in setting these limits. Public Health has a project underway to share information about pedestrian safety among King County cities, and he hopes that this will help to build momentum for future collaboration.

Mark Landreneau explained that safety is his top priority, adding that a safe walking environment is the way to get more people walking. Particularly for seniors and people with disabilities, the ability to walk in a place where they feel secure is the most important consideration.

Sean commented that the success of the Pedestrian Master Plan will be tied to meaningful performance measures, and he encouraged the project team to focus on developing these measures.

Chas noted his interest in pursuing a pedestrian zone around community centers, parks, and other generators of heavy pedestrian traffic and recommended that this be implemented in the near term. He also expressed a desire for more engineering treatments in these areas—and in urban villages generally—noting that the raised crosswalks on California Avenue have been effective in slowing drivers.

Becca stressed the importance of making the recommendations specific and suggested that the funding section be expanded. She noted that, at this time, many people in Seattle still do not understand the concept of a pedestrian-friendly city; this must change for the plan to be effective.

Paulo recommended that the group consider ways to make improvements for pedestrians and cyclists in terms of cars, using the Pedestrian Master Plan to champion a key issue for drivers. He suggested a congestion pricing scheme as a way to address driver concerns and to fund pedestrian improvements: a win-win for everyone.

PMPAG Reminders

Becca and Paulo adjourned the meeting and reminded the group that the next two PMPAG Steering Committee meetings are February 4 at 12:00 p.m. (Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4080) and February 18 at 12:00 p.m. (City Hall, Boards and Commissions Room). Topics for discussion include the outreach strategy for launching the plan (February 4) and funding (February 18).

Next PMPAG Meeting

Date and Time: February 27, 2009; 8:00-10:00 a.m.

Location: Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4050/60

APPENDIX: SMALL GROUP COMMENTS

Group A: Walkable Zone / Intersection Design

Trees

- Use the appropriate tree species in planting strips
- Use curb bulbs for planting trees (especially legacy trees) to help with “meaningful” canopy
- Placement of trees/position trees out of zone

Public Spaces

- Encourage private sector opportunities; activate public spaces
- Revise sidewalk café zones
- All buildings have street-level pedestrian-friendly design entry
- Street furniture design, aesthetic, placement, signage, wayfinding, cluster, places, detail
- Neighborhoods and corridors must engage all people—especially low income, immigrant, disabled, isolated

Encroachment

- Prioritize encroachment enforcement (i.e., pick battles wisely)
- Need to know current state of enforcement and education about use of pavement and encroachment—specifically allowable time to come into compliance
- Education of enforcers (e.g., police and magistrates)—how to move to education then enforcement/compliance (judicial level?)

Communication

- Improve coordination, permitting, oversight
- SDOT should develop a listserv for projects in specific areas

Intersections

- Intersections (major ones), especially transit transfer points, should use all-way walk
- Right turn prohibitions are good
- Stop bar so cars are 10 ft back—create visibility at intersections

Parking

- Stripe or somehow indicate where the 30 ft setback from intersection is located
- Parking of cars interferes with sight distance and space.
- Consistent enforcement of laws that exist (i.e., 30 feet).

Separation & Buffers

- Separating cars and pedestrians will reduce injury risk
- Separation and clear area will passively control/reduce risk

LOS & Space Allocation

- Need pedestrian level of service and demand data for opportunities; process to reassign space; observe whether pedestrian = high, vehicle = low

- Establishing guidelines for percent of right-of-way for each mode—x bus, x pedestrian, x freight, x vehicle, x tree
- Concept of pedestrian zone must adapt to scale of street (greater than 6 ft x 7 ft at times)
- Shared streets—more signage, green infrastructure, sidewalks; implement as a temporary way to create walkable zone
- Great to have process to prioritize/reassign and engineer right-of-way
- Eliminate poorly placed vendor boxes, bike racks, parking meters/discs
- Vendor use of right-of-way—how does this happen, is it permitted
- Urban walk zone needed, especially in urban villages
- Green Streets = Urban Open Space = Belltown

Signals

- Evaluate and revise current signal timing processes to move toward a “pedestrian corridor,” giving consideration to pedestrian movements
- Involve Lighthouse for the Blind in signal set-up—need to set up with the audibility and mobility officers to verify that the installation is correct
- Regular signals need to be closer to corners so people do not have to search for them
- Larger push-button balls are preferable to small metal button
- Countdown signals are perceived as safe
- APS signals need both vibration and sound; must be set up properly to follow the engineering lines of the roadway; arrows directing people to signals are not set up properly; funding needed
- Re-examine locations of pedestrian push-button signals and remove
- Identify smart signals (when you have to push a button and when you don't)
- Establish maximum pedestrian wait time, especially at transit transfer points

Curb Ramps

- Diagonal curb ramps are a significant challenge for people with visual limitations
- Make truncated domes color standard

Crossings & Crossing Time

- Suggested special fob that allows increased signal crossing for special groups
- Overpass for pedestrians
- Landings at stairs and overpasses (especially on aurora)
- Give more time on regular walk phase
- Create standards and guidelines for crossing islands
- Need more pedestrian crossings, especially signalized crossings
- Review locations where mid-block crossings would assist in pedestrian access (including a review of engineering, enforcement, education)
- Consistent sidewalks and crossings needed (especially on aurora)

Transit

- Locate transit stops closer to intersections, include all-walk signals at major transit stops
- Coordinate with King County Metro on location of bus stops, especially at transfer points and intersections

Construction & Viaduct Replacement

- Construction closure work group—give warning and accessible alternative route during the construction period
- Viaduct plan—specifically on Western and Elliott—must account for both freight movements and pedestrian safety
- Consider viaduct impact on surface streets, sidewalk widths, and pedestrian movement
- Need accommodations for pedestrians and cars during construction of viaduct

Group B: Complete Streets / Placemaking / Funding

Stewardship, Oversight & Accountability

- Need to know resources and authority for oversight, as SPAB not currently capable of taking on this role
- What does “reasonable/sustainable” mean for long-range plan?
- Who “owns” actions within SDOT?

Funding Plan

- Fund pedestrian facilities as vehicular mobility improvements are funded (e.g., Denver “Catch-Up” program); LID approach unfair
- Sidewalk repair budget is too low
- How much money is spent to promote driving v. to promote walking?
- Why is public responsible for pedestrian facilities fronting buildings?
- Need maintenance dollars for replacing crossing flags
- Implementation and funding key

Placemaking

- Activate public spaces through loop walks
- Add elements like street repair actions, art
- Strengthen lighting element (and include pruning recommendation)
- Need to better coordinate sidewalk work with private development—bring everything together

Coordination

- Reformat “revise ROWIM” recommendation to include all related actions together
- Revise “multi-modal LOS” recommendation to say “develop and implement”

Intersections

- Revise practices regarding pedestrian walk cycle
- Revise “curb radii” recommendation for better clarity
- Stop bars—4 ft standard practice too short; use 6-10 ft
- Need to standardize ADA requirements at crosswalks
- Enforcement of blocking crosswalks needed (e.g., SPD vehicle blocking crosswalk while waiting to turn right on red)

Group C: Communication / Promote Walking

Communication

- Improve communication and engagement with neighborhoods regarding upcoming projects
- SDOT neighborhood-specific project information available by subscription (e.g., online/email)
- Communication needed regarding sidewalk clearance—educational brochure should include snow and ice removal
- Place for pedestrians to report problems should be clearer than “pothole rangers” online form
- Develop online “dashboard” to use for tracking and education
- Improve internal SDOT communication

Encouragement

- Awareness of group living/institutions to focus encouragement efforts; use high priority area maps to focus campaigns
- Promote inter-generational interaction
- Encouragement campaign: “Wednesday walk-to-work day”
- Safe Routes to Schools should include private schools and universities
- Want more outreach to employers regarding walking to work (commute trip reduction programs)

Education & Training

- City and County agencies engage in revision of pedestrian information in driver’s manual and put pressure on Department of Licensing
- Need more emphasis on driver training and retraining
- Include pedestrian education in DOL identification card for non-drivers
- Emphasize training for staff
- Education with liquor establishments regarding walking and alcohol, including expansion of Last Call program

Campaigns

- Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior (KAB) Survey should be used to address health disparities
- Need more information than KAB Survey for social marketing
- Be more specific regarding outreach (e.g., how and to whom)
- Make campaigns fun (e.g., true/false call-in show)
- Include evaluation component

Car-Free Events

- “Car-free day” to mean more than closing a street; more about using non-motorized travel to go about your day; might alleviate business concerns
- Summer Streets about reclaiming space for people
- When there is snow, would like a Mayor’s directive (“Do not drive; go have fun in snow, etc.”)
- Measure economic activity on snow, car-free, and/or summer street days
- Improve communication between City and businesses regarding summer streets

Enforcement

- Enforcement should not only focus on drivers, but pedestrians too (e.g., risks in running out in street, crossing when “don’t walk” begins)
- Continued support of enforcement of speeding drivers

Transit

- Encouragement with transit (e.g., “Ride Free Day”)
- Crossing improvements needed where pedestrians will cross, such as at transit stops
- Evaluate training of transit drivers, including ways to prevent crashes by controlling bus exits; discouraging passengers from running/crossing to catch a bus
- Evaluate location of transit stops to reduce problems for pedestrians
- Map a half-mile radius around every transit stop to see if there are ways to improve pedestrian access around those stops
- Transit connections—call out walking destinations/outdoor locations

Health

- Most Important: Focusing on benefits of walking and public health, especially regarding transit (make transit inviting)
- Not hitting health component enough with programs—maybe add another campaign, health messages on buses, 100 steps program
- Emphasize SDOT’s partnership with Public Health

Wayfinding

- Wayfinding is an especially powerful tool to encourage walking
- Metro maps/routes to parks (e.g., Carkeek and Golden Gardens are really hard to get to)
- Very concerned regarding implementation—three past wayfinding efforts were not implemented
- Big gap in map production to meet needs
- Wayfinding is a very cheap encouragement tool
- San Francisco bus stops have maps of immediate surrounding areas for pedestrians
- Wayfinding partners need to include transit
- “Travel Right” brochure should include both regulatory information and encouragement. For example: great neighborhoods for walking; locations of “Cardio-Hills” for those wanting to walk for exercise; assist in finding hidden staircases
- Portland-walking guide might be a model (produced through a partnership with Kaiser Permanente and City of Portland) or Powell’s map is good
- Wayfinding maps at transit stops could include contact number for pedestrian issue reporting