

Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Group (PMPAG)
Monthly Meeting
SMT 4050/4060
December 28, 2007
8 – 10 am

Meeting Summary

Attendance (14)

Suzanne Anderson, Ana Brown, James Bush, Jean Healy, Kirste Johnson, Rob Kaufman, Bea Kumasaka, Kate Martin, Michael McGinn, Paulo Nunes-Ueno, Charles (Chas) Redmond, Jim Schultz, Richard Staudt, and BettyLou Valentine.

Benita Horn (facilitator) and Seattle City staff: Wayne Wentz, Susan Sánchez, Barbara Gray, Hannah McIntosh, Katherine Bush, and Traci Ratzliff.

PMPAG co-chair Paulo Nunes-Ueno led the meeting.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Staff Report

Barbara Gray, PMP project manager, presented the staff report. She gave an update on the status of the City Council-mandated pedestrian safety and education campaign and provided more detailed information on its three components:

1. School-Focused Program
2. Traffic Safety Corridor
3. Citywide Education and Awareness

In addition, Barbara updated the group on the latest Council Pedestrian Safety Committee meeting and ongoing meetings with members of the blind and deaf/blind community on audible crossing signals and detectable warning plates. Finally, she announced that SDOT has entered into scope negotiations with the SvR/Toole Design Group team as the PMP consultant.

In response to questions about the pedestrian safety and education campaign, Council staff clarified that although the City was not required to issue an RFP for the consultant they chose to do so in order to open the field to as many respondents as possible. Two firms responded and the Royer group was chosen for the contract.

A question was asked regarding the results of the Rainier Corridor Traffic Safety Coalition work and concern expressed that the Safe Routes to School campaign is following a suburban model pioneered by a Republican congressman.

In response to a request for increased involvement from the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board, PMPAG members clarified that Celeste Gilman and Paul Niebanck sit on the PMPAG in order to provide a close link between the two advisory groups. As mentioned at the previous meeting, Celeste will distribute SPAB meeting notes to the PMPAG as they are ready each month.

Update on Consultant Selection

Barbara Gray commented briefly on the high quality of the teams selected to interview for the Pedestrian Master Plan project. She said that SDOT is now using scope negotiations to ensure that the right blend of data, vision and implementation is reached in the consultant team. She also announced that Peg Staehli, the project manager for the SvR/Toole Design Group team, would join the group for a casual conversation at the end of the meeting. Barbara thanked the PMPAG members and staff who spent time reviewing proposals and sitting in on the interviews.

Other PMPAG members who participated in the SOQ review and interview process echoed Barbara's sense that the finalists were extremely qualified for the work, even as they each exhibited a unique approach to it. Many members remarked that three of the four interviewees seemed particularly qualified and they would have been pleased to see any of them selected.

Public Engagement Strategy: Neighborhood Walks, Stakeholder Roundtables

Paulo Nunes-Ueno then opened the floor for discussion on the stakeholder roundtables and neighborhood walks elements of the larger public engagement strategy.

Comments on the neighborhood walks included:

- Their active nature is more likely to attract positive media attention than a standard meeting.
- Judging from past experience with walks, they tend to attract a participant that does not generally attend public meetings. However, they will require strong, affirmative outreach to encourage strong attendance.
- They will give us an opportunity to hear from people where they think the network gaps are.
- Care should be exercised in the language around the target audience for the neighborhood walks – we should be asking to hear from everyone in the City of Seattle.
- The walks are extremely valuable as neighborhoods have unique information that we need to hear that does not always show up on a map.
- People at the walks will be interested in pointing to and prioritizing gaps.
- People at the walks will also be generally interested in improvements on a micro-level. Staff and PMPAG members working on public participation will need to be able to translate and abstract trends from those micro-level issues into a macro-level that can impact the entire pedestrian environment.
- With both the walks and all other public involvement and outreach, the delivery of the PMP's goals and objectives must be simple and consistent. It is important that all participants get the same message about the PMP and are offered similar opportunities for input.
- The walks can also provide an initial opportunity for public education, perhaps on the rules surrounding pedestrian countdown signals and walk signal phases.
- The walks are something fun and creative that engages people's minds and bodies who aren't part of the regular public meeting crowd.
- It is not possible to identify the most important network gaps, even through a neighborhood walk. City rehabilitation needs to be comprehensive, and business owners need to be responsible for the walkways outside their businesses.

The group spent the bulk of the meeting focused on the neighborhood walks with little time available to discuss the roundtables. Comments on the roundtables included:

- Because district councils have varying levels of website development and communication mechanisms, they do not offer a level playing field for the roundtables.
- In clarification, staff noted that the roundtable attendees will be invited from specific affinity groups in varying combinations.

In addition to specific comments on the neighborhood walks and the roundtables, PMPAG members discussed the need to garner input from a large and diverse group of people. The recent Parks Department open houses were put forth as an example of well-advertised events that were still sparsely attended. And the West Seattle walking map process took a full two years and was very intensive. Encouraging wide public participation will not be easy. The point was also made that with the failure of Proposition 1 there is a sense of disappointment and lack of trust in government, making meaningful and transparent public participation in this process even more crucial.

Specific tools and strategies for encouraging wider participation included:

- Particularly when dealing with populations with disabilities and seniors, it is important that staff go to places where regular groups already meet, rather than expecting people to come to special meetings on pedestrian issues. PMPAG members can be available to lead and attend these meetings.
- The online tool, walkscore.com, might provide a fun and personalized way to introduce people to walking issues.
- Again, meeting people where they already are and making it as easy for them to participate as possible is crucial. Staff and PMPAG members should attend regular meetings of established neighborhood and affinity groups, such as those found in Northgate.
- Intercept interviews at common destinations such as coffee shops, grocery stores and bus stops are expensive, but could provide powerful insight into why people choose to walk or not to walk to these places.
- For all activities, it is important to offer an opportunity for non-verbal input because in a large group one or two people tend to dominate verbally. Written forms are valuable here.
- A large map of the area where an activity is taking place that people can mark up with “wish lists” or observations has proven valuable in the past. However, for those who are not comfortable writing or drawing in front of a large group, individual maps and handouts are crucial.
- Surveys are also a good tool for meeting people where they’re at. They work well for people who don’t want to talk publicly and can be filled out in the privacy of someone’s own home. While expensive, hard copy, self-addressed surveys are the way to reach the widest audience most equitably.
- Surveys and maps could be distributed in libraries, neighborhood centers, even in the slots for bus schedules on buses and in the Department of Licensing offices.
- In addition to *asking* for information and participation from people, we need to be *giving* them something in return. Recognition, publication in an anthology of short pieces on walking, prizes, the opportunity to adopt a crosswalk – all these are creative ways to involve people and stimulate participation.
- An inventory of what other pedestrian master plans have done for participation would be helpful – it seems as if many have struggled with low public participation.
- Two King County councilmembers recently held a series of workshops where they asked a randomly selected group of participants to answer a series of questions about priorities using a handheld recording device. Something similar might work for the pedestrian master plan.
- Engaging business owners could create a series of neighborhood champions around walking investment.
- As a part of public engagement, we should find a way to emphasize the *positives* about walking in Seattle.
- A traveling booth that could be taken to standing meetings (such as those in senior centers) would work well for delivering a consistent and polished message about the PMP.
- A “car free” day for major roads in places like Delridge or Greenwood could send an exciting signal to residents, and could show business owners that revenues don’t fall when car volumes do.

- A single and ongoing point of contact for people to provide input (at all levels) on the plan will be important. A phone number or email address could work for this.

In addition, the group discussed the idea that the public needed to be educated about pedestrian issues as a first step in the participation process. The counter point was made that, because positive change so often comes from the fringe, the group should not assume members of the general public need to be educated before they can give meaningful input on the pedestrian master plan. There is already a lot of good thinking going on around pedestrian issues, and that needs to be tapped from the beginning. In response, the point was made that PMPAG members already *know* a lot of what members of the public will bring up. It is more important to share relative costs and implementation hurdles with people and then hear their priorities and issues. It is also important to educate them about the difference between routes used for walking for recreation and for destination-oriented transportation. The group remained unresolved on this point.

Year-in-Review

Paulo Nunes-Ueno provided a summary for the group of their achievements to date. They include:

- Held seven PMPAG meeting and several more steering committee meetings
- Created protocols to guide our collaboration
- Established governance for the group: co-chairs and volunteer steering committee
- Set a working time line and scope for the project
- Established a public engagement strategy
- Shared concerns about the issues we think need to be addressed in the plan
- Began to understand the set of data available
- Received presentations from the Bike Master Plan Advisory Group members and about the SDOT sidewalk inventory results
- Took a disability awareness training
- Selected a consultant

In addition, the group was reminded to continue to be accountable to each other and the greater project in their attendance and in the tone that is used both in person in meetings and in email and online forums.

The group was then introduced to Peg Staehli of SvR. Peg expressed her excitement about beginning work on the plan. In response to a question on the greatest challenge facing the plan, she pointed to the aggressive timeline and the need to put together not just a physical product but mechanisms that will keep planning ongoing. She also indicated that outreach to youth, especially middle and high school-aged students, is important for the project.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Kirste Johnson announced that the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is holding the first of a series of public meetings on the scoping for the regional transportation strategy, Destination 2030. The meeting will take place on January 10, 12:00-2:00 pm, at the PSRC offices in Seattle (1011 Western Avenue, #500). Interested PMPAG members are invited to attend.

Next Meeting

Date: Friday, January 25, 2008

Time: 8:00 – 10:00 am

Place: Seattle Municipal Tower, 40th Floor, Room 4050/4060