



Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

Stewards of the Pedestrian Master Plan

David Seater, Chair
Anna Zivarts, Vice Chair
Han-Jung Ko (Koko)
Emily Meltzer

Pending Confirmation:

Bianca Johnson
Debra Kahn
Jennifer Lehman
Emily Mannetti
Esti Mintz
Maria Sumner

The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor and all the offices of the city on matters related to pedestrians and the impacts which actions by the city may have upon the pedestrian environment; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the city's planning insofar as they relate to the pedestrian safety and access.

-City Council Resolution
28791

April 8, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Han-Jung (Koko) Ko, Emily Meltzer, David Seater, Anna Zivarts

Public Present: Gordon Padelford

SDOT Staff present: Polly Membrino, Brian Dougherty

Public Comment:

- Doug: Potential fatality on Aurora and people in the community are concerned
- Doug: Pleased to see the Sidewalk Repair Policy presentation from SDOT and Evans School, especially because the topic is overdue and it would be good to see these recommendations owned by senior people at SDOT
- Gordon Padelford: Seattle Neighborhood Greenways just released a proposal for Safe Streets in the Time of Social Distancing, which includes converting more streets for people to travel and recreate in, allowing walking on non-arterial streets, and more

Rapid Ride R Line Update

Jerry Roberson, Robyn Austin - King County Metro

- Partnership between SDOT and King County Metro to upgrade Route 7 in late 2024
 - Involves Seattle Transit Master Plan, Move Seattle Levy
- Goal is to connect 11,200+ daily riders
 - Some alignment of the route may change through the International District
 - Aim to improve service quality and reliability
- RapidRide R Line features better focus on speed and reliability and passenger facilities including lighting enhancements
- Focus is also on safe crossings, particularly along Jackson
- Community conversations will help inform access for Prentice Loop and areas between Rainier Beach and Renton
 - Community engagement so far includes:
 - Initial Outreach 2017-2018, Needs Assessment Spring-Fall 2019, Preferred Concept outreach Fall 2019-Spring 2020 (wrapped up in early March)
 - Aiming to come back to the community with final concept in Summer 2020

- Inclusive engagement included:
 - Translation and interpretation in nine different languages and five different languages for online engagements
 - Drop-in visits outside of Safeway and other locations
 - Media ads and posts in different languages
 - Focused tabling and community briefings
 - Compensated CBO
 - Two open houses along the corridor
 - Engagement reached over 2,000 people (including approximately 900 people in person)
- Most people approve of BAT lanes replacing car lanes
- Focus on equity
- Sidewalk access improvements include adding sidewalks where they are missing along Rainier or are in very poor condition along Rainier
- Some Route 7 stops will be removed, or may only serve other bus lines
- Crossing Improvements include painted crosswalks and improved lighting
- Bike access improvements will include implementing the Bike Master Plan
- Next steps include refining the preferred alternative, completing the 10% design, final design phase (2021/2022), construction (2023/2024) and launch of RapidRide R Line in Fall 2024
- SDOT is working to improve existing Route 7 between now and 2022
- Q&A
 - King County Metro is still trying to assess the need for Prentice Loop and other areas to figure out final design
 - Over the next four years, Metro may be able to offer improved services which could become part of the RapidRide R
 - Metro is also considering low-income housing that is being built in the area
 - Emily Meltzer—Hoping that safety is being considered for those who need to transfer at Henderson or consider service that can avoid the transfer
 - Metro is hoping to reduce transfers to not create a large burden on people using RapidRide R
 - Sue Duvall—What are the funding sources and have they been secured? Is the funding secured given the budget hit from the Coronavirus?
 - Metro says that the funding is secured for this project because the funding sources are not impacted by the economy
 - However, the projects that SDOT may be impacted by the budget cuts resulting from impacts of the Coronavirus
 - Lisa Harrison—no word about impacts as of now and the SDOT design milestones should still be on schedule

- o Emily Meltzer—What are the improvements to be made on sidewalks that connect Rainier and MLK, specifically Henderson and connection points for light rail stations?
 - The south side of Henderson has been prioritized for adding and improving sidewalks
 - East/west corridor improvements are planned near station locations
 - There will be a meeting to refine these locations next week and once the projects are fully identified in the preferred alternative, Metro can make that list available to SPAB
- o Sue Duvall—Are the bike and sidewalk improvements likely to be cut?
 - Seems unlikely that these improvement would be cut in the event of budget cuts
- o Anna Zivarts—“Since COVID, I’ve seen a huge uptick in cyclists along Rainier. It seems massively shortsighted to re-wire/rebuild the bus route without a bike lane, as Rainier or MLK are the only flat options for SE Seattle.”
- o Anna Zivarts—“How much does stop elimination save on time? How does that compare to other ways to speed up the route or increase reliability?”
 - Time saving is one of the elements of stop consolidation, but there is also a priority to locate the stops where the bus would be less likely to get stuck
 - Saving on travel time is a lower consideration for stop location
 - A dedicated bus lane would increase speed and reliability
- o Anna Zivarts—“I see my local stop slated for elimination. It’s usually busy. Why not a dedicated bus lane?”
 - Metro is adding dedicated bus lane where possible and looking at other speed and reliability improvements including replacing parking with bus only lane

Sidewalk Repair Policy - Ross McFarland and Evans School of Public Policy and Governance

Advancing Equity and Accessibility Through Improved Sidewalk Repair

- Resolution 31908 directed SDOT to come up with new policy and programs around sidewalk maintenance
 - o Current zeitgeist around sidewalk repair policy, discussed by SDOT, City Council, etc.
 - o Working toward April 20th first draft of the report, with SPAB input
- Evans students started the project in early January
- Initial findings:

- o Lack of awareness from property owners regarding responsibility for sidewalks
- o Administrative burden—difficult to navigate the process
- Peer City Case Studies
 - o Boston--\$6M budget for all sidewalk repair, mostly from state gas tax
 - o Denver-
 - o Portland
 - o Vancouver-
- Next Steps
 - o Aiming for rough draft by the 20th
 - o Possible recommendations:
 - Focus enforcement efforts in higher-density neighborhoods
 - Streamline contractor process and collaborate between work groups/departments to make the process less complicated
 - Government-Property Owner Cost sharing (similar to Denver), include low-income discount program
 - Change Washington code to allow cities to take on entire cost
 - o Get community input on research direction
 - o Continue interviewing peer cities (including Ithaca, NY)
 - o Complete analysis
 - o Provide actionable recommendations
- Community Feedback
 - o Have you reported a sidewalk issue? What was your experience?
 - o Have you gone through the process of repairing a sidewalk adjacent to your property?
 - o Do you have suggestions on other people or groups we should reach out to?
- Other input/thoughts:
 - o David—liked seeing possible recommendations, which looked good. A common theme from other cities is a long timeline to get sidewalks repaired; what would need to happen here to get a more responsive repair program?
 - Interim shim/beveling/other mitigation type repair will hopefully be part of a five-year rotation across the city, which could take \$3-5M per year (which is currently the total budget). Currently about \$1M goes toward shims and bevels, which means it would require a greater budget increase
 - Based on the 2017 sidewalk assessment, there is an estimated backlog of \$500M to \$1.5B in sidewalk repair need. The question is what timeline to address the backlog—50 years? 100 years?
 - Even if the timeline is 50 years, it would still require about \$20M to address the backlog for sidewalk repair.
 - o Sus Shawan—“Is pedestrian traffic defined as transportation? Is road repair charged to adjacent property owners?”

- Not sure if pedestrian traffic is defined as transportation
 - From an ideological and policy perspective, the roadway is treated as government-funded. In Washington State, the language in the municipal code comes from the revised code of Washington, so most cities in the state grapple with the relationship between sidewalks as public vs private infrastructure.
 - The state defines the gas tax as something to be used for roadways and highways, not pedestrian infrastructure. However, Seattle could be a policy leader in this realm to get gas tax to fund pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Tacoma, Spokane, and other cities of similar age may also support getting more funding at the state level.
- o Anna Zivarts—“This feels like a really difficult thing to push for in our economic reality. It was going to be hard before the pandemic/economic crisis. But I’m having a hard time imagining any elected leader moving in this right now. Can you talk about funding for the bevel and shim program, which I think is maybe the most we can hope for?”
- If we had the money and staff, what would it look like to bevel and shim the whole city on a five-year rotating schedule? It would likely be about \$3-5M and that projected budget would be shared with SDOT Director Sam Zimbabwe.
 - There could be an infrastructure stimulus that could fund major infrastructure needs across the country.
- o Sue Duvall—“A few years back when we finally woke up to the importance of the built environment for public health (because sidewalks enabled exercise), I believe there were grants available from the feds for improving the walking infrastructure. Now is totally not the time to be asking for monies for this, but I may not know enough about all of the pots of monies out there...Any sense of this?”
- The federal government has had various grants and side pots of money that have gone into pedestrian/bike projects, but the current presidential administration largely redirected discretionary funds from these areas back toward road/airport/seaport projects.
- o Question from presenter: what is the ideal way to fund sidewalk repair—should it be mostly on the City? Adjacent property owners?
- Anna Zivarts—“Ideally, sidewalks are part of our transportation network and should be city responsibility. There’s also the whole question of curb ramps. The city IS responsible for those.”
 - David Seater—“There should not be a flat fee for everyone because of various income levels”
 - Emily Meltzer—“I agree with Anna and David”

- Sue Duvall—“I agree with this sentiment. I think a challenge may be that the property owner owns the sidewalk. IS there any kind of legal issue if the city does the maintenance on private property? I mean, right now, the property owner is required to shovel the sidewalks on the off chance we get snow. So, legal, doesn't that extend the maintenance responsibility to the property owner? This is a tough one, because I agree that the city should see this as part of the overall transportation network.”
- Sus Shawhan—“Re: shared responsibility for funding. Is there any group working with business orgs/agencies about the advantages of providing better-safer pedestrian access-foot traffic (i.e., businesses would have a burden of parking lot costs, etc.)? I ask because at the time businesses pay considerable costs to accommodate cars.”
 - Haven't done too much looking into business organizations, but maybe some LID/local improvement districts where businesses add to a fund.
 - Small businesses may not have the funds to repair sidewalks if the onus is put on them to repair the sidewalk.
 - Historically, Seattle has not taken advantage of transportation impact fees, although Bellevue has. There is a conversation around exacting a certain fee from businesses to invest in nearby pedestrian infrastructure beyond sidewalks . This could be part of the recommendation for Seattle.
- SPAB can reach out Ross, Polly or Evans students with questions

Board Business

- In the process of adding new members to the board, although Council may not be able to convene until early June
- March minutes approved unanimously by all present board members
- Discussion regarding streets and closures for better social distancing
 - o Current SDOT language:
 - We are concerned about helping people social distance safely
 - SDOT encourages people to use neighborhood greenways and bike facilities
 - o Idea to eliminate jaywalking penalties and other regulations
 - o Idea to close roads in parks—better to see pedestrians on these streets than cars.
 - o Anna Zivarts—Biking to go to Seward Park and saw people jogging in the street and cars were weaving around pedestrians and cyclists. There is no reason for

motorists to use that as a thru-way. There is plenty of road space for people to social distance, but when people have to step off sidewalks along Lake Washington Boulevard, it could be helpful to have street closures like it is for Bike Sundays.

- o Specific recommendation to SDOT for closing Lake Washington Boulevard.
- o SPAB could write letter, send in specific ideas, and/or endorse Seattle Neighborhood Greenways recommendations
- o Anna Zivarts—Could SDOT lower speed limits on streets where pedestrians are able to walk in the street? Could be an opportunity to try something new as the City is in crisis mode and responding quickly.
- o Coco—Could suggest a few roads between parks for people to walk a loop.
- o Sus Shawhan “Re: Lake Washington Blvd. or closure of one lane with the other lane being one way for the time being?”
- o Sue Duvall—“You could also consider streets like 20th and 22nd in Ballard or the street that runs parallel to California in West Seattle, or for that matter, California itself and encourage people to go on that parallel street. 19th on Capitol Hill and the CD may also be possibilities.
- o Anna Zivarts—Could consider closing down farmer’s market streets even though they are not very long. At Seward Park, there were backups of angry drivers trying to find parking because parking at the park was restricted, so it is better to encourage others to go outdoors. If more streets were closed to cars, people may not feel the need to drive to specific parks.
- o Sue Duvall—“I think we naturally go towards our major parks, or down Lake Washington Blvd. because it’s a nice bike ride/has trails on the side. But if we open up streets in more neighborhoods, less people may pile into Seward Park, for example.”
- o Sus Shawhan—“Some streets could use more ‘traffic calming’ since there is so much more pedestrian-bike traffic now (thinking of Madison, MLK...)”
- Majority votes for David Seater to write a letter on behalf of SPAB regarding streets for pedestrians for social distancing.
 - o David will send out a draft to board members.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.