

# Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

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## MCAAE Meeting Summary January 17, 2025

**Members:** Benjamin Abe, Charlotte Antoine, Pamela Williams, Paula Williams, Claudette Thomas

**Members Absent:** Rita Howard

**ADS Staff:** Michael Adusah

**Guests:** Armand Shahbazian and Stefan Winkler, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT); Tiffany Toms (prospective MCAAE member)

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### 1. Welcome & Introductions – Claudette Thomas, Vice-Chair

### 2. SDOT deployment of autonomous vehicles presentation

Today's presenters from SDOT were Stefan Winkler, and Armand Shahbazian, who were invited to share their work on autonomous vehicles. Armand discussed the vision, mission, values, and goals of SDOT, focusing on transportation safety, affordability, and equity. He provided context on autonomous vehicles (AVs), their testing in Washington State, and the potential for full deployment. The importance of safety, reducing carbon emissions, equity, and collaboration in the development of AVs were highlighted. SDOT's milestones were highlighted, including the launch of an AV testing permit program and the creation of an AV strategic vision with the City of Bellevue. Discussion of SDOT's engagement with the AV industry, advocacy for stronger State legislation, and collaboration with other cities. The AV Inclusive Planning Cohort was introduced, a project aimed at understanding community needs and priorities for AVs.

Discussion of the functionality and cost of autonomous vehicles, with Armand explaining that while the vehicles can drive themselves, they may require human guidance in certain situations. The cost of the service is currently heavily subsidized to encourage people to try it out. Claudette asked about customer feedback, to which Armand responded that people generally like the experience, as the vehicles follow traffic laws and are cautious drivers. He also mentioned that people in the blind community are optimistic about autonomous services, but cost is a concern. Members asked about the number of vehicles planned for release once the law is passed, which would likely be an incremental approach due to the need for fleet support.

### 3. ADS Director's Update

Mary Mitchell was unable to attend today.

### 4. Other Updates & Debriefs

Members discussed potentially supporting legislation during the ongoing 105-day legislative session. Pamela expressed her intent to email Michael about a specific bill she wants to support.

Michael announced that the next meeting will be an in-person retreat on **February 21<sup>st</sup>** and will likely occur at the usual location, however, Pamela suggested having the retreat at a different venue. Michael will speak with Eldad about alternate locations when she returns in early February.

### Meeting Adjourned