

Committee Members

Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Co-chair

Lisa Bogardus

Vicky Clarke

Samuel Ferrara

Joseph Laubach

Inga Manskopf

Nick Paranjpye

Ron Posthuma, Co-chair

Hester Serebrin

Patrick Taylor

Bicycle Advisory Board

David Seater

Pedestrian Advisory Board

Todd Biesold

Freight Advisory Board

Alex Rouse

Transit Advisory Board

City Budget Director

Ben Noble

Committee Staff

Rachel McCaffrey

rachel.mccaffrey@seattle.gov

(206) 771 – 0480

The Levy Oversight Committee is an advisory body that monitors revenues, expenditures, and program and project implementation. The Oversight Committee advises the City Council, the Mayor, and SDOT on responding to program and project cost savings or overruns.

The Oversight Committee reviews SDOT's program and project priorities and financial plans and makes recommendations to the Mayor and City Council regarding the spending of levy proceeds.

Council Bill 118402

March 30, 2020

RE: Move Seattle Levy Oversight Committee 2019 Report to the Mayor and City Council

Dear Mayor Durkan, Council President M. Lorena González, and members of the Council:

The Move Seattle Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) transmits its 2019 annual report consistent with the Move Seattle Levy legislation. This report summarizes the LOC's observations of successes and shortcomings for the Move Seattle Levy in the past year and offers recommendations for moving forward.

2019 Assessment

This past year represents the largest annual expenditure of funds used for Move Seattle Levy projects (\$222.3 million). Of this expenditure, \$111.5 million came directly from the Move Seattle Levy. The LOC applauds the increased use of these funds. The LOC also commends SDOT's strategic leveraging of other funding to complement projects in the Move Seattle Levy portfolio.

This past year was marked with major movement on some important Move Seattle Levy projects. The Fairview Bridge project broke ground. This project replaces the last timber vehicle bridge in Seattle. The Northgate Pedestrian Bridge project had its design finalized with plans to break ground in 2020. The LOC also saw commitment from SDOT this past year on continuing the effort to secure Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding for some of the multimodal projects in the Move Seattle Levy portfolio. The LOC hopes to see the momentum from 2019 carried into 2020.

Oversight and Transparency

The LOC has been able to improve its effectiveness based on the legible and consistent reporting SDOT staff, Rachel McCaffrey, has provided to the committee. The LOC receives quarterly reports from SDOT that summarize progress and expenditures

on Levy projects. Rachel compiles information from many parts of the department, ensuring accountability to the LOC. The change over several years ago has been impressive. The tone of the interactions between Department representatives and the LOC has improved considerably, which is a credit to department leadership as well as Rachel. These reports have allowed the LOC to provide oversight continuously throughout the year. A recent LOC retreat organized by Rachel has resulted in increased involvement by many of the Committee members. The quote below from LOC co-chairs in the SDOT blog is an example of oversight guidance the LOC has been able to offer from our review of the quarterly reports.

“We were glad to see the arterial paving accomplishments noted in the 3rd Quarter Report. SDOT contractors and crews have already completed almost all the work scheduled for this year and even begun work on projects scheduled for next year. This kind of accelerated project delivery is critical to restoring and improving transportation infrastructure in our fast-growing city. Underspending in a few areas, though well explained in each case, needs to be monitored carefully to stay on track.”

Ron Posthuma and Betty Spieth-Croll, Co-Chairs, 11/6/2019

The LOC was given a briefing on the 2020 budget prior to its approval and was given the opportunity to comment. The LOC wrote a 10/8/2019 memo with recommendations for the 2020 transportation budget. One recommendation was to use proceeds from the Mercer Mega Block sales to fund Move Seattle Levy projects. Both the Mayor and City Council chose to add additional funding to Levy projects from the Mercer Mega Block sales in the adopted budget. The LOC commends this decision.

In addition to finding the quarterly reports helpful, we particularly appreciate the agency’s efforts to be transparent regarding its pursuit of funding the multimodal corridor projects. Understanding the steps the agency has taken—and has to take—in seeking key multimodal project funding from, for example, the FTA, has allowed us to be in a better position to offer perspectives on where limited funding should be spent. The Committee encourages SDOT to work toward fulfilling the voter-approved Levy multimodal commitments of redesigning major streets to improve connectivity and safety for all travelers, whether they walk, bike, ride transit, or drive. As the LOC stated last year, even with limited funding, the original goal of holistically addressing the needs of all travelers should not be abandoned.

Vision Zero

In 2019, at least 25 people died in traffic-related collisions in Seattle. The majority of them (16) were killed while walking or rolling. This is close to the highest in over a decade and is not acceptable, especially considering there are proven ways to prevent pedestrian deaths. One of the Move Seattle Levy goals is to advance the City’s Vision Zero Plan for eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030. In 2019 Levy funds were used to complete six Vision Zero projects. This is not enough. While the LOC will continue to work with SDOT so that Vision Zero projects funded by the Levy are implemented as quickly and effectively as possible, we urge the Mayor to take further measures to address this crisis. We applaud the Mayor for reducing city-wide speed limits, establishing leading pedestrian intervals, and conducting additional studies,

but further measures are needed in a growing city like ours to reduce fatalities and serious injuries among people who are simply walking and rolling along our city streets.

Neighborhood Street Fund

The LOC participated in the 2019 Neighborhood Street Fund (NSF) project selection process. The LOC credits SDOT staff for making a concerted effort to provide outreach to underserved communities.

Small groups of LOC members visited the finalist projects. The committee then deliberated as a whole to select the projects that would receive funding. The LOC emphasized equity as a major criterion in selecting projects that were to receive funding. Projects that were in areas of the city that have been historically underserved received priority. The LOC was happy to see SDOT mirror this emphasis on equity in their outreach efforts to the public for the NSF process.

The NSF projects varied in scope and estimated cost. Some of the larger projects that were considered in the NSF selection process appeared to be outside the spirit of the NSF program. Larger projects approved in the 2019 cycle such as the Broadway and John Street signal improvements as well as the 51st Ave South and Renton Ave South Safety Enhancements are projects that appear to offer benefits to the city as a whole (not just the neighborhood in question). The LOC would like to see SDOT find funding outside of NSF funds in the future for projects similar to these.

Bicycle and Transit Improvements

In 2019 there was an increase in the number of people biking on many routes in the city; bike counters throughout the city showed higher volumes of bicycle travel. Our improved bike networks are getting more people to ride. The Center City Bike Network improvements completed in 2019 provide new and safer connections for people bicycling. But there are still many significant gaps in the bike network.

The original Move Seattle Levy deliverables included building approximately 50 miles of new protected bike lanes and 60 miles of greenways, completing over half of the Bicycle Master Plan citywide network. By the end of Q3 2019, only 13.7 miles of protected bike lanes and 14.8 miles of greenways were completed (Levy Deliverable #5). The Committee encourages SDOT and city leadership to prioritize building a complete bike network. Active and healthy transportation is critical to moving people safely through the city and decreasing carbon pollution. Our Vision Zero goals and climate change goals both depend on completing the connections in the Bike Master Plan by 2030.

Transit use also continues to trend upwards in the city. As Seattle grows, the population will become more dependent on reliable transit. The LOC hopes to see continued priority given to transit projects in the Levy portfolio (specifically the ones in Levy Deliverable #18 - Multimodal Improvements). The Transit/Multimodal subprogram has thus far shown the least deliverable progress of any major portion of the Levy program. While some projects are dependent of

Federal Transit Administration approvals, greater attention to projects that do not require significant federal funding may yield better and timelier results.

TNC Fees Projects

In 2019 the LOC was tasked with oversight responsibilities over the Transportation Network Company (TNC) Tax funding of transportation projects. The city council identified six projects in the 2020 budget that would be funded by the TNC tax:

- Thomas Street Redesign
- West Marginal Way Improvements
- Fortson Square Redesign
- Market to MOHAI
- Home Zone Pilot
- Public Life Study of Capitol Hill

The LOC was disappointed to see revenues from this new tax used for new projects when there are existing Move Seattle Levy projects that are not currently being funded. In 2020, the LOC hopes to see the City Council plan to use TNC revenues to fund currently unfunded projects.

Moving Forward

The LOC commends the increased spending and corresponding deliverables in 2019 and looks to see this trend continue in 2020. The LOC anticipates continued progress in 2020 to complete Move Seattle Levy deliverables as these were promised as part of a voter-approved tax initiative.

Finally, we wish to thank all those who served and retired from the LOC in 2019: Betty Spieth-Croll, Brian Estes, and Councilmember Mike O'Brien. We would also like to extend thanks to the SDOT staff who have aided in informing us of the Move Seattle Levy progress. In particular we would like to thank Director Sam Zimbabwe, Deputy Director Lorelei Williams, Nick Makhani, and Rachel McCaffrey. The LOC appreciated Director Zimbabwe's strong leadership during his first full year as director. We also would like to thank Councilmember O'Brien and the Mayor's office for their active engagement in our work. In 2020 the LOC looks forward to working with our new councilmember – Alex Pedersen.

We look forward to continuing our oversight duties in 2020 with the help of Director Sam Zimbabwe, Deputy Director Lorelei Williams, Rachel McCaffrey, Nick Makhani, and SDOT staff.

Sincerely and on behalf of the 2019 Move Seattle Levy Oversight Committee,

Rachel Ben-Shmuel
Co-Chair (2019/2020)

Ron Posthuma
Co-Chair (2019/2020)