



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

City of Seattle
Policy & Operations Advisory Group

POAG Meeting Summary — June 2020 (Meeting #1)

Thursday, June 25, 2020

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Electronic Meeting via WebEx Events

- SDOT Director Sam Zimbabwe thanked the 15 POAG members for joining and sharing their insight. He emphasized the importance of this group to serve as a model for engagement on the policy and operations challenges facing SDOT, and that it presents an opportunity to discuss how we can design and operate the transportation system for more equitable outcomes.
- SDOT Division Directors Adiam Emery (Transportation Operations) and Tracy Krawczyk (Policy & Planning) provided an overview of SDOT's work, the purpose of the POAG, and a look-ahead of the questions and topics to be covered over the course of the 6 meetings.
- SDOT staff from Transportation Operations, Dusty Rasmussen and Laura Wojcicki, provided an introduction to signals operations, including background on key concepts and current practices. This introduction will serve as the foundation for the next meeting, which will cover some proposed policy changes to pedestrian signals.
- Questions from the POAG group included:
 - Q: What is the threshold for considering pedestrian volume to be “low”?
 - A: This is something we will be directly addressing in the policy we will be discussing. Historically, we have had a policy of when to remove a pedestrian button if there are low pedestrian volumes, which is based off of the frequency of use. Our previous policy used the threshold: if they are used less than 50% of the time during the whole day or less than 75% of the time during peak periods, then they are considered “low” volume intersections. This is the starting point for our updated policy.
 - Q: Do you observe induced demand (or the opposite) for pedestrians and other mode choices? If cycles are long, will pedestrians avoid crossing?
 - A: We want to take these trends into consideration. We have to go with the data that we have available; sometimes the only data we have to go off of leaves us in a reactive stance rather than proactive. Our policy is attempting to facilitate more proactive reactions to address these kinds of issues.

- Q: How does safety figure into the equation for signals operations, if the emphasis is on speed and reliability? For instance, how are left turns into pedestrians accounted for at high collision intersections?
- A: We always look at safety when we time signals and it is integrated into our process. When we add protected movements (e.g., left turns) and leading pedestrian intervals, it results in delay for all users. This is a trade-off, but something that we have been pushing for in order to improve safety. Safety is critical and our highest priority. We are aiming to build a reliable system, not a fast system. By slowing people down, we can create a balanced outcome. We work with our Vision Zero partners to protect our most vulnerable users—pedestrians. This aligns with our work to reduce the speed limit for 75% of our principal arterials.

- Q: Do you take into consideration the grade of the street for the signal timing, particularly on major truck streets?
- A: We do use models that do not necessarily take into account grades. However, we supplement that by going out and observe traffic to make adjustments.

*Next meeting:
Thursday, July 23, 2020
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM*