

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 12 November 2008

6PM-8PM, Seattle City Hall Boards and Commissions Room L280

1. Call to order and introductions (6:00)

SPAB members in attendance: Celeste Gilman (Chair), Ben Smith (Vice Chair), Howard Wu (Acting Board Secretary), Lee Ann Do (Get Engaged), Mark Bandy, T. Frick McNamara, Jon Morgan, Lindsay Pesheck, Ben Smith and Tom Williams

Absent: Mark Bandy, Kristen Lohse, Paul Niebanck, Chris Tachibana (Board Secretary)

SDOT staff liaison: Brian Dougherty

Presenter: Stephanie Brown (SDOT), Trung Pham (SDOT)

Public: Christina Bollo, Ian Macek (WSDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator), Jacob Struiksma

2. Meeting Minute Approval (6:05)

Celeste makes a call for the approval of the October Meeting Minutes. The board made a voice vote approving the minutes.

3. Public Comments (6:10)

Celeste asks the public for any comments. No comments were provided.

Brian then let the board know that there is an Open House for the Fauntleroy Road Diet coming up. Mark then asked about the funding for the restriping of the lanes. Brian explained that the restriping is part of a paving project. T then noted that along Fauntleroy there are express buses, ADA ramps, but no marked crosswalks. T wanted to know if any new crosswalks would be marked as part of the road diet. Brian responded that no additional marked crosswalks would be added but it would restripe existing crosswalks. It would not include additional signals.

4. West Mercer Project (6:20)

Stephanie Brown, SDOT

Stephanie explained that the West Mercer Project is the completion of the Mercer Corridor project between Dexter Avenue N and Elliot Avenue W. The first phase of the project is between I-5 to Dexter Avenue N. It would shrink Valley St down to 2-lanes. The second phase of the project would rechannelize the roadway between Elliot Avenue W to Dexter Avenue N.

At Elliot Avenue W and Mercer Place intersection, the improvement would remove the northbound right turn slip lane and add a sidewalk up the hill as well as tighten the intersection geometry. At Queen Anne Avenue N and 1st Avenue

N north of Mercer Street, these streets would become 2-way operations. On N Roy Street between Queen Anne Avenue N and 1st Avenue N, the westbound direction would be converted to a 2-way operations. N Roy Street would be one lane in each direction with 5-foot bike lanes and built bouts at intersections. One side of the street may have parking. Mercer Street would be 2 lanes in each direction with a 2-way left-turn, center lane. The underpass under Aurora Ave N will depend upon the Alaskan Way Viaduct (AWV) project. Various options would have signals at the side streets on Aurora Avenue N. It may also include an underground shared use pathway under Aurora Avenue N near Roy Street.

Tom asks about the controversy for the funding of the Mercer Street project, if there was any funding for the western section. Stephanie notes that the '09 budget does not include this project, but SDOT will be looking at various funding sources, funding matched, and partners. Construction looks better for 2011. They would partner with the state on this project, as part of coordination with the AWV project. Tom then followed up with a question about the inclusion of the sidewalks towards Elliot Avenue W. Brian informed the board that the sidewalk project is at 60% design and could be built first without additional funding.

Mark questioned the 2-way operation conversion at Queen Anne Avenue N, 1st Avenue N, N Roy Street, N Mercer Street.

Stephanie notes that the Ballard bus rapid transit project times will with the Mercer Project. It is at 15% design and should be completed around 2011 as well.

Tom asked if the intersection at Aurora Avenue N and N Mercer Street is at grade. Stephanie replied that it will remain as a underpass. Mark added that other Aurora Avenue N cross streets could be at street level.

T then asked what in the project is in design now, in the grand scheme. Stephanie told her that the conceptual channelize plan is done. Right now, the VISSIM modeling is being done between Elliot Avenue W and I-5. SDOT is curious to see what the travel times for the traffic and freight will be like. T followed up if it included pedestrians and bicyclists. Stephanie confirms its inclusion. Ben expressed concern for the north-south movement across the corridor such as Dexter and Queen Anne Avenue. Stephanie responded that it will take account for this as well as the streetcar line.

Tom wanted to know what is the ideal timeline scenario for this project to proceed. Stephanie responded that it would be completed before the Viaduct work, 2012.

T wanted to know if all interested groups were represented as part of this project. Stephanie said that there is a stakeholder group to look at this. Tom wanted to know how often they met. He felt that it would be nice to be kept informed.

Stephanie mentioned that Marnie Hefron is the facilitator. The Uptown businesses sponsors the stakeholders group. She will pass along the contact information to Brian to pass to the board for those who are interested to be involved.

Jon wanted to know about the Broad Street closure from N Mercer Street to Taylor Avenue N. Stephanie said that the closure is dependent upon the AWW work. Mark explained that the closure is dependent upon a combination of agreements between the City, WSDOT, and the Gates Foundation. Essentially, if 6th Avenue is reconnected to Mercer Street, then Broad Street could be vacated. Stephanie mentioned that the street vacation has not been decided upon. Mark added that the 6th Avenue depended upon what is decided upon for the north side of the AWW project. Stephanie said that there is an agreement with the Gates Foundation to put in 6th Avenue N and vacate Broad Street if 6th Avenue is completed by 2011.

Celeste expressed her happiness to see the underpass pathway near Roy Street. Stephanie indicated that many people have expressed big interest for this underpass. Celeste then followed up that the underpass needs to be well designed as well as allow connectivity to Mercer Street.

5. Curb Ramp Prioritization (6:30)

Trung Pham, SDOT

Trung started his presentation stating that the City has an updated curb ramp inventory and that the City wanted to be more proactive with addressing missing curb ramps. They also want to target areas of higher use. The proposed prioritization program would have 70% of ramps based upon prioritization and 30% based upon requests. Mark wanted to know if this 70% to 30% ratio has been finalized. Trung responded that he wanted the board's feedback. Mark then followed up with asking how it would the implementation of this prioritization process be measured, perhaps through funding numbers. Trung explained that the intent of this presentation is to talk about the prioritization of funding curb ramps.

T wanted to know how the points for the prioritization were developed. She felt that the transit area was scored too low, lower than seniors. Trung responded that higher priority was given to seniors and the disabled. T felt that transit should be scored higher since more seniors and disabled users would use it. She then asked what geographic unit is used to apply the prioritization criteria. Trung said it would be based upon the Census tract. Celeste is concerned with the Census tract size that it may dilute the true characteristics of the area. Ben was concerned that the boundaries may create orphaned ramps on opposite side. Trung responded that it is SDOT's policy to design the ramps on both sides of the street. T wanted to know if it would include striping crosswalks. Trung said it would not, only the curb ramps.

T felt that the point system should also account for young children, for example, parents who have children in strollers. Ben would like to bump up the points for parks and schools and then wondered if there was a way to include biking as part of the prioritization. Mark wanted to know how this process related to walk-route to schools. He felt that the criteria should not be based upon the distance from a school and saw a potential connection with the school-walk route to school with bicycling. If sidewalks had curb ramps along these routes, it may encourage more kids to bike to school. Trung explained that there is a separate walk-route to school program. Brian added that this program does not pay for all curb ramps. T noted that there will be some overlap.

Tom wanted to know how many ramps have been built in a typical year. Trung said that in the 1990s, SDOT built 300 to 400 ramps. In the past 5 years, only 200 or so have been built. This only accounts for the curb ramp program alone. Tom followed up if the reason for the decrease in ramp construction related to a shift in funding to other projects. Trung explained that a combination of reduced funding and increased construction costs were the reason.

T wanted to know if the design of truncated domes have been relooked in the light making curb ramps more economically efficient. Trung said that SDOT is no longer doing color contrasts and the current design meets federal standards. Celeste questioned the location of ramps, and how they should line up with crosswalks. She cited that many times, that direct pedestrians into the middle of the intersection. Trung explained that the ramps need to be perpendicular to the curb as part of State and Federal guidelines. However, because the curb radius is larger at some locations, the ramps need to be shifted to where they are today. T thought that SDOT should look at an alternative standard where it can work with the guideline while orient pedestrians to a crosswalk.

Ben added that Issue 3 could include points to account for major retail such as a supermarket by itself. Celeste noted that in the prioritization, only 2 separate groups for pedestrian generators. She felt that it seemed arbitrary; perhaps each land use could be separated out. Brian suggested that perhaps the weight for the generators remain at 60, but the separate uses would add up to 60. Celeste agreed with that suggestion. Ben added that it could add points for urban centers. Jon suggested a gradation of points based upon the distance. T added that the gradation could be for 1/2 mile and 1/4 mile radius.

Mark wanted to know how many curb ramps there are in the City. Trung said there are 40,000 in the City. Mark then asked if this process will evaluate all 10,000 intersections. He can see problems with generating so much data. Trung explained that the curb ramp analysis would be an automated process using GIS and Census data. T wondered how SDOT can show the need given the scale of needed curb ramps. Mark suggested that there should be a plan to attack the need and provide a timeline such as address the top 10% by a certain year. This process needs to look at it globally. Trung added that CIPs included

an additional 600 to 700 ramps being built. Mark felt that SDOT needs to see how the scoring plays out; check to see if it covers too many or too few of the top 10% projects. T noted that pedestrian safety is not isolated but is part of a system. SDOT needs to consider marked crosswalks and how it all fits together. Brian cautioned that there would be situations where the criteria would not overlap because of the nature of the road. T felt that it is contradictory to provide ramps without marked crosswalks. Such improvements, i.e. the installation of new curb ramps, at crossing locations has the potential to psychologically provide a false sense of safety for pedestrians with impaired mobility or young children; pedestrians that often require a longer crossing time when in actuality no revisions may have been done to reduce speeds or other factors to improve pedestrian safety at the new ramp crossing location. T cited the new ADA ramps currently being installed on Fauntleroy as an example where it is currently very dangerous to cross the roadway, which is a major bus route, due to vehicular speeds and site distance visibility but new ramps without marked crossing or crossing improvements are being installed. Celeste added that SDOT needs to look at marked crosswalk opportunities.

Celeste questioned the 30 points for Section 4, "Demonstrated Need". She felt that "requests" were double counted. Mark felt that it should be lowered to 10 points and raise transit connection points. Section 4 could be used as a way to address unaccounted issues, perhaps future building projects with large pedestrian generators.

T wanted to know how the requests would be prioritized. Trung explained that SDOT looked at the nature of the request and the date. Ben wanted to have weight given based upon the number of requests. Tom wanted to know if SDOT works with SPU. He is frustrated with the lack of coordination. Trung acknowledged this issue and there is not trigger to catch opportunities for coordination. Celeste wanted to know how this process and curb ramp work is coordinated with the pedestrian master plan. Trung said it does not at this time.

Trung asked the board to address the question about prioritization process for locations with 1 existing ramp versus replacing it with 2 ramps. Mark felt that it was more important to address those locations where none existed. Ben felt that there should be a separate prioritization process for this. T added that there is a need for prioritization for receiving ramps.

Lindsay wanted to know the goal of this prioritization process, if it was to address efficiency. Trung explained that it is SDOT's effort to be proactive with installing curb ramps in places where more people use them. Mark felt that efficiency may work better if they are within the same geographic area even though they are not in the top 10%. Trung responded that SDTO will try to group projects where possible.

Ben felt that question 2 on the second page of the hand out could look at the balance of cost with use, especially at bridges that funnel a lot of people such as Pine Street over I-5. Mark added that perhaps an addition criterion would be to note priority links, which also could be used as a balancing factor. Brian told the board to send any additional comments about the prioritization to him, and he will pass it along to Trung.

6. Projects Subcommittee (7:15)

Howard Wu

Howard summarized the committee meeting that occurred prior to the regular monthly meeting. Howard provided a list of current SDOT projects, both funded or in the pipeline, CRRS Schedule Milestone Report dated June 2008. It was noted that as this list was updated back in June, that most of the projects listed as 60-90% complete are likely close to 100% documentation or under construction. The focus of the project prioritization was to review the projects in the pipeline, in the planning stage and at 30% design status; those that we could provide the greatest level of feedback at the critical time in the design process. Ben, Mark, Howard and T met to review the list of projects for the first time. Howard will be summarizing the meeting outcome and the list of projects that the team marked for tracking. He will circulate this list to the board for review. He would like folks to volunteer for a few projects to be the point person or contact for that particular project(s) to streamline the process. The goal is to move forward in a proactive fashion to allow the board to be more influential and to serve as a better resource for SDOT and the community.

Celeste asked if there was a particular project that stood out from the list. Ben described the different categories of projects, from repaving, trail extensions, overpasses, transit priority corridor improvements and bridge rehabilitation projects. He mentioned the bridge rehabilitation projects where there are typically very narrow pedestrian pathways as a big opportunity for updates and improvements, such as appropriately scaled sidewalks along both sides, to improve pedestrian connectivity.

It was noted that the list reviewed did not include WaDOT projects. T asked how the board could get a list that would also include the projects that other departments are undertaking, such as OPM and DPD. Brian said he would investigate this.

Leanne asked for clarification on why the committee was reviewing the list and identifying contacts to track them. Howard explained that many of these projects are on a rapid timeline and that in the past the board has felt out of the loop; often finding out about a project too late in the design schedule to provide useful and efficient feedback. Ben mentioned that it is a way to be on the departments radar, so the PM is aware of the board, our diversity of expertise and how we can serve as a resource to the project design process. Brian mentioned his role is to be an advocate to the board, that if the project PM is not being responsive,

he will serve as the liaison to give the PM a little nudge on how the board can serve as a resource.

7. Elections (7:30)

Celeste gave a brief description of the responsibilities of each of the office positions: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Afterwards, each of the nominated candidates gave a statement about their nominations.

Tom began by expressing his surprise by Celeste's nomination and how honored he was. He stated his passion for pedestrian issues and that he can focus a lot of his energy during the middle of the day. His employer is very supportive of his involvement. Even though he does not have a transportation background, he felt that his background in finance complements his skills to be chair.

For the Vice chair position, Mark first stated up front that he applied for a position at SDOT, which preclude him from the Board. However, he expressed his enjoyment serving on the Board. He felt that he brought his energy and expertise to the position though he did not feel he has the time commitment for being Chair.

The second nomination for Vice chair is Jon. He stated that it was his first year on the Board and he stays active and keep on top of things. He is very passionate about pedestrian issues. He stated that he has the confidence to be Vice chair, but not enough commitment time to be Chair. With his background in politics, he would like to get the Board more involved in Olympia. Tom asked him a theoretical question if Mark was elected, but then had to step down, if Jon would be willing to step in. Jon confirmed he would.

Howard said it would be honor to serve as Secretary. He has had filled in for Chris in past and would work hard to get the minutes out in a timely manner. He also would like to get the Board to take advantage of the Yahoo groups page.

After each candidate gave their statements, Brian passed out ballots for each board member to cast their votes.

8. Announcement (7:50)

Jon mentioned that he and Tom with the Post Intelligencer writer to talk about sidewalk construction closures. The interview took an hour. The journalist was **Carrie ?** Jacob mentioned that on Madison Street between 7th and 8th Avenue, there was a closure on the south side of the block, but he could not find the detour route. Ben thought there was a detour route. He could not understand why in Downtown, a detour route is not provided, but outside of Downtown, a detour route is provided. Tom pointed out that with the credit crunch, many of the construction sites will stop and the sidewalk closures could up a lot longer

than anticipated. Tom felt the Board needs to keep an eye on this and needs to follow up. T mentioned the Vitamilk site at Green Lake.

Ben talked about the past Tri-group meeting and that they looked at the Viaduct projection from north to south. He felt that it was very useful; both bicycle and freight representatives chimed in. Ben felt it was great to have Grace Crunican present. She posed a question to the participants as to how this group could continue in the future. Currently, the group is to meet a couple more times.

Jon mentioned that he did not have a meeting with City Light. Celeste mentioned the new maintenance plan by City Light that will replace all bulbs every 4 years. Jon felt that should be good, in addition to use of better bulbs. He felt that the number reported to be out was low. T asked the Board if anyone has heard that some street lights were out for conservation reasons. Jon felt that it was the City Light explanation in regards to a 4 to 6 weeks turnaround for bulb replacement to be realistic. However he noted that this turnaround time was not as good as the rate 10 years ago.

T mentioned that on Fauntleroy, SDOT put out a new speed sign that indicates to drivers their speed.

Brian announced the election results: Tom is Chair, Mark is Vice chair, and Howard is Secretary.

9. Upcoming Agenda Items (7:55)

Brian mentioned that Doug Cox requested to be on the December agenda. He is the project manager on new sidewalks and would present the 2010 projects and wanted to discuss with the board about changes in the sidewalk project selection process for 2011. Brian explained that Doug would like the future process to go through the Board. Brian also mentioned that Dawn Shaunberg wanted to give an update on the Aurora Avenue and Rainier Avenue Safety Corridor Project.

10. Adjourn to restaurant (8:00)