



Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

April 22, 2020

*Stewards of the
Pedestrian Master Plan*

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To: Mayor Durkan, SDOT Director Zimbabwe, Councilmember Pedersen
Re: Stay Healthy Streets

The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board (SPAB) is excited to see SDOT and Mayor Durkan following the lead of other cities in creating more open space for people to walk and roll safely outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many neighborhoods have sidewalks that are too narrow, aren't accessible, or are missing altogether, creating challenges that have only been exacerbated by the need for people to stay 6 feet apart. We hope to see the Stay Healthy Streets program expand to more neighborhoods soon to provide a safe and connected network between people's homes, our neighborhood parks, and essential services like grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical centers.

SPAB recognizes the critical importance of following the recommendations and orders of local public health officials, and with those in mind we discussed ways that the City of Seattle can help promote safe travel options for pedestrians. Our suggestions are based partly on the "Safe Streets in the Time of Social Distancing" proposal from Seattle Neighborhood Greenways, which we support.

In the short term, SPAB suggests:

- **Expanding the Stay Healthy Streets program citywide** to connect people's homes, our neighborhood parks, and essential services like grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical centers.
- **Increasing space inside of parks** by closing the internal roads and parking lots, which also helps to limit the number of people visiting the park.
- **Creating more open space in neighborhoods by closing streets** that are sometimes used for events, such as Farmers Markets or Bicycle Sundays, on an ongoing basis (without planned events).

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*

- **Decriminalizing walking in the street** on non-arterial streets so that people walking and rolling don't need to risk a jaywalking ticket to maintain proper physical distancing while traveling on streets that aren't part of the Stay Healthy Streets program.
- **Public outreach and messaging** for both pedestrians and drivers to make sure that everyone has the same expectations for these new uses of our shared public space.

As we turn the corner on the pandemic response and begin to relax the restrictions on work and social opportunities, more people will begin travelling around the city again. Given the reductions in transit service and the summer weather it's likely that people will choose to walk and bike to their destinations, leading to more crowding on narrow sidewalks in our dense neighborhoods. To address this, SPAB suggests:

- **Expanding arterial sidewalks** using cones or barricades to close parking or travel lanes so that people can travel to neighborhood business districts (and downtown, for central neighborhoods). Bus stops can be accommodated using modular plastic bus islands as seen in recent years in Oakland and New York.
- **Give pedestrians the green** by setting traffic signals to automatically give a walk signal, without required people to push a button and wait in a group for the signal to change. Crosswalk buttons should be re-labeled to indicate that pressing the button is required only to activate the audible and tactile accessibility features.
- **Create car-free recreational routes** connecting parks and essential services across the city, giving people places to socialize while maintaining proper distance from each other.
- **Continue efforts to reduce speeding** by moving ahead with plans to reduce speed limits and make changes to the design of streets to encourage drivers to behave more safely.

SPAB looks forward to working with City staff and leadership to further develop these suggestions into plans that can be put into practice in the coming weeks and months.

Sincerely,

David Seater

Chair, on behalf of the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board