



Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

*Stewards of the
Pedestrian Master Plan*

Jennifer Lehman, Co-Chair
Emily Davis, Co-Chair
Ori Brian, Comms
Erin Fitzpatrick
Akshali Gandhi
Bianca Johnson
Han-Jung Ko (Koko)
Emily Mannetti
Esti Mintz
Hang Nguyen
Greyson Simon
Maria Sumner

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

August 11, 2021

Virtual Remote Meeting

Attendees:

Board Members:

Jennifer Lehman
Emily Davis
Esti Mintz
Han-Jung Ko (Koko)
Jennifer Lehman
Maria Sumner

Akshali Gandhi
Bianca Johnson
Ori Brian
Hang Nguyen
Greyson Simon

Non-board members:

Polly Membrino, SDOT
Brian Dougherty, SDOT
Eleen Trang, SDOT
Arianna Laureano
Camille Gix

Doug MacDonald
Jason McCodd
Brian Townley
Steve Welch

Approximately 3 other members of the public joining by phone

Public Comment – 5 min

Doug MacDonald—We need to know whether or not crosswalks are getting painted. Is SDOT thinking about where we need crosswalks and if they are effectively and proactively getting new crosswalks in. The meeting topic today on homelessness has a lot to do with some observations I have made on Aurora Ave N and sidewalk, but I will address that another day. Additionally, I went on a long walk along Rainier Ave S looking at sidewalks. We need a lot more crowdsourcing on sidewalk conditions because there is a lot that SDOT needs to address regarding sidewalks that are not in good condition or accessible.

Life on Broken-Down Wheels: presentation by Dee Powers

- Dee (they/them) has lived as a resident in an RV since 2015 after leaving their apartment in Pioneer Square due to the high cost of rent in the city.
- Currently parked in a space that does not require them to move around parking spaces frequently

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*

- Living in an RV in SODO:
 - They have no access to water, no running water and limited access to groceries due to living in a food desert due to a recent grocery store closure
 - Errands take an hour or more and they use a cane to navigate sidewalks
 - Sixth Ave is difficult to access due to sidewalk conditions
 - Closest shower is at the train station is 20 minutes on the bus and then a wait for a 15 minute shower; closest laundry facility is in Capitol Hill
 - RV has been pushed out to SODO, under the flight path and near traffic
 - Used to live in Pioneer Square a block to the transit center and walking distance to multiple grocery stores, but now living in a food desert. Access to food is much farther
- The Pioneer Square apartment was convenient and close to services, but it is harder to access these services in SODO
- During heat waves, more unhoused people are at public amenities and on buses to keep cool
- Many people have their belongings thrown out by police during sweeps. People have to be present and advocate for their belongings to get into storage facilities.
- We need to learn to share spaces with people who are trying to survive
- As of April 1 Seattle has started to sweep again—forcing evictions
 - People lose their belongings during these sweeps because they are seized and people are not allowed store wet belongings which makes it difficult in the winter
 - City Hall park is slated to be swept on Friday morning and people will not be able to use it for months. Currently about 50+ people live there and there will not be enough shelter beds for everyone to be housed. Some people will move to the next location down the road
- Seattle’s current methods are not working and people are struggling to survive
 - People are not able to keep their feet dry and can get trench foot or other health problems
- There are some housing groups that are working for better housing justice and advocating against Compassion Seattle, which is a charter amendment that does not provide enough beds for people
- Washington state is ranked one of the worst for mental health and it is a challenge for people to access services

Q&A

- Emily Davis: The SPAB advises SDOT and City Council and the Mayor. Is there advice for how we can be better for unhoused and disabled people?
 - Dee: Wider sidewalks, better painted crosswalks, and sidewalks with ramps would be helpful. There are lines of people with walkers and wheelchairs and canes who need the same access that the general population does. We need to advocate for more sidewalks in the outlying areas as well because people get pushed out during non-pandemic times. During the pandemic, more people have moved to more centrally located spots to access services.
 - There is bad sidewalk access in Georgetown. A friend of mine was hit by a semi truck in Georgetown by Harbor Freight and passed away.

- Esti: I live by the Burke Gilman trail and sometimes I see a homeless person lying in the middle of the trail. You don't know if they are hurting or in trouble or if they are sleeping. How should you react if you come across a person in the middle of the road or the sidewalk or trail?
 - Dee: If it is within your capacity, be a good Samaritan. Pause and ask if they are ok. They are probably having a hard day if they are on the trail. If you have a bottle of water or a granola bar then that is a good way to start a conversation.
- Esti: How do you start? I use a wheelchair and I can't reach out to someone. There was a situation where someone was on the trail and someone touched the person and that person jumped up and hit him.
 - Dee: Touching is a big deal. Everyone out here has some form of post traumatic stress. If you were sleeping and someone touched you then you would also be startled. I would try talking to them and then if someone is passed out or on drugs then you can call the medics for help.
- Akshali: I have a question about calling medics and how that works. Assuming that someone is experiencing homelessness, they probably don't have health insurance. Are some people perhaps scared of having medics come and how they will pay for that?
 - Dee: A lot of people qualify for Medicaid, so we can take a trip in the ambulance or go to the ER without a problem. People can always refuse transport to the hospital and that is their decision. There are also a lot of veterans and the VA can help take care of them.
- Bianca: I appreciate you sharing your story. This is a hard subject to talk about in a public forum, so thank you for sharing. Are there things the City is doing now because of Covid that you would like to see continued? I would also like to hear more about the sweeps and what that is like.
 - Dee: Sweeps happen when encampments become too big or too unwieldy and the sweeps will happen when the encampments have trouble or they are very visible. An organization called REACH comes and is supposed to have shelter beds for everyone, but that does not always happen. Notices get stapled and tape up in English and Spanish with a date and time that the encampment is going to be swept, which is usually very early in the morning. The helpers and mutual aid groups show up the day before and on the morning of the sweep to come help, including a group called Stop the Sweep Seattle. During the sweep, Seattle Police will come in and Seattle Parks will have dump trucks to take away people's belongings and then people will leave with the belongings that weren't taken away that they can carry. You can find more information online on the Facing Homelessness site. It is the worst day in a person's life. They may lose their birth certificate or their baby photos, shoes, and other personal belongings. Sometimes storage is provided, but the person has to be there to advocate for themselves, otherwise unclaimed property is thrown away.
 - Up until April, there weren't any sweeps at all. No sweeps allowed for more stability for people and outreach workers and social workers could find people. Cell phones are commonly stolen so people don't have reliable phone numbers. It is better to not have sweeps so people can be stable and in the same place.
- Hang: Can you tell us more about Be:Seattle - the goal(s) of the organization and if Be:Seattle is in communication or some sort of partnership with the city or other local orgs to help with displacement?
 - Dee: Be:Seattle is a non-profit organization that does homeless rights advocacy and also works on a program where businesses can provide a sticker in their window to show that

they can provide things to homeless people like a place to sit or charge their phone. It is a small organization that works on advocacy and it is a great organization. They also run workshops on building tenant power and the next workshop is on disability and housing justice.

- Jennifer: There are lots of solutions being suggested since we are in an election season. Are there policies that you think are more effective or helpful than others?
 - Dee: Yes, we have found communicating with people on the street that when people are offered shelter, their first choice is a tiny house, their second choice is a hotel, and the last choice is congregate shelter housing. We are also lacking RV safe lots that have wraparound services. Having an RV park with the amenities that tiny house villages have would be helpful. Tiny house villages have social support workers, hygiene stations, community gardens, and other amenities that allow people to live dignified lives in shelters. We have some vehicle-only safe lots in King County, but they don't allow anything bigger than a minivan. About half of unhoused people live in vehicles and about half of those people live in RVs or oversized vehicles and they are only allowed to park in industrial areas. When people in RVs are moved they are not able to come back because the City puts up barriers, which is similar to fencing a park. Community driven solutions are the best option. Hotels and congregate shelters can be hard for people to transition too, but single occupancy tiny houses provide more stability and dignity.
- Akshali: You mentioned the sweep on Friday and you mentioned that you help provide food and storage boxes and totes. Can we as a group help with funding that?
 - Dee: Yes, my venmo is @waystation and you can send funds for donuts and coffee and heavy duty bags for people to move their belongings. You can also show up in person and help and see what the City is doing on a regular basis when the City engages in sweeping an area.
- Greyson: Can you talk more about the parking enforcement that you mentioned earlier?
 - Dee: Parking enforcement has recently resumed. When the City decides that a vehicle has been somewhere for too long, they put a large sticker across your windshield and if it rains then it gets stuck to your windshield. Then you have 3 days to move your vehicle or your vehicle will be impounded. If someone's vehicle is impounded then they usually will end up living in a tent. If someone is less mobile or parked amidst an RV and in a car then they will be treated the same, but cars are more mobile. RVs stand out more and need somewhere to go, but currently there is nowhere to be. Hopefully the City will start building safe lots so that people can be safe and stable and move towards transitioning indoors.
- Emily: You mentioned that some safe lots exist for cars, but is there a movement for that to exist for RVs?
 - Dee: Yes, LIHI is working on this and reached out to me about this, but the funding has to come from the mayor. Hopefully the next mayor will offer the funding that is needed so we can have an RV safe lot with wraparound services and shade. There was one before, but it was on train tracks and had no shade or wraparound services. It was shut down because people weren't moving inside, but it is really hard to get people to move inside if they have no wraparound services and support.
- Jennifer: A topic that came up recently for the board that we have been thinking about. Some members of the public reached out to the board that were concerned about encampments on

the sidewalk that limits people walking and rolling down the sidewalk. The Board advocated for the City to take space out of the vehicle lane to ensure sidewalk users have space to navigate through the city, but this is a complicated issue and we would love to hear your perspective on the problem.

- Dee: Recently the City implemented a new model of care called Just Care, which is a blend of multiple social services including Chief Seattle, REACH, and other organizations. They offer everyone shelter and do intensive outreach before a sweep. Because of this, the encampment dissolves rather than being swept. People go to tiny houses and hotels instead of being forcibly removed. The sidewalks need to be accessible so people can walk and navigate the sidewalks, but people also need somewhere to go where they have access to services and food and not have the fear of their belongings being stolen. We need more tiny houses and hotel rooms because there are 12,000 unhoused people in King County and there are not enough places for people to live. During the pandemic, people were emboldened because the sidewalks were empty and they wanted to be closer to food banks and services such as meal programs rather than being on the outskirts of the city where they are 2 hours away or more. The Just Care worked beautifully on 3rd Avenue and will work well in the future if they have beds to offer people.
- Jennifer: The Just Care model sounds good and we are trying to learn more.
- Dee: Not every encampment gets the Just Care model. The City Hall encampment is receiving Just Care support, but they are not providing enough spaces for people to go, so there will be people living in tents who were removed from here because of this.
- Esti: Is there talk of people converting some of the office space or real estate in the downtown area to become housing?
 - Dee: I don't think there have been real conversations about this. There will be pushback from businesses because a lot of them don't want people living there. If there is vacant office space, businesses will probably sit on the property until things change. This would be great housing for people if it did happen.
- Maria: We have a lot of overlapping goals and things we care about like Vision Zero and the goal of having zero pedestrian deaths. What does success look like in the long term? Are tiny houses long term success?
 - Dee: Tiny houses work brilliantly. They have a high success rate and are very highly desired by the homeless community because they have a locking door, electricity, and the option for hot meals, showers. I have been to a tiny house village that had community gardens. I would like to live in a tiny house village, but I am not a high priority because I do not live in a tent. We need more tiny houses and hotel space for people. We need to build more tiny houses until needs are met and eventually we can scale down. With the eviction moratorium expiring, this problem will get a lot worse before it gets better.
- Greyson: I just want to note that the Business Association is pushing for Compassion Seattle.
 - Dee: Yes, they are against more funding for housing and homeless services. They are also against the Jump Start tax. We need a lot more shelter beds than just 2,000, which is what Compassion Seattle recommends.
- Koko: I do research on ageism and stereotypes. For your community, how does this look and how can we help resolve it? How do we understand people better?

- Dee: We are people's family. 90% of Americans are one missed paycheck away from an eviction. I wish people could see us as more than just a threat. Unfortunately, the people who are most visible are dealing with drug addiction or severe mental illness. A lot of us spend time trying to not look homeless because of that bias. Until mental health services are greatly expanded, we are going to see the stereotype that homeless people are dangerous because there is mental illness plaguing the houseless community.
- No other questions from the board.

Board Discussion on Pedestrian Access and Homelessness

- Jennifer: This is a time to discuss the presentation and next steps for the board. We have taken action previously including writing a letter to the City recommending the City create areas for people to move around without disturbing residents in tents. We also just learned about Just Care as a model.
- Maria: I was relieved to hear that there was a compassionate approach to helping people in the Pioneer Square area where there was an accessibility issue and people who were living on the sidewalk. I hope there are more instances of the Just Care model.
- Emily: Maybe we can advocate for the City to use something like the Just Care model in all instances.
- Dee: The Just Care model has not been used across the whole city. It is mostly used on the high profile encampments in the public eye. It is fairly good and works better than three days notice and sweeping the encampment. It isn't perfect, but it is much better than sweeps.
- Greyson: It's hard to know what the scope of the board is. Can we talk to someone about the decision for using Just Care? Can we find out about who to talk to about this and learn more so we can encourage this to be the primary model?
- Jennifer: I think we can learn more about this. We talked about it in March or April. I think Brian suggested that we invite someone from the Human Services Department to come explain that approach. That might be a next step and so we can learn more about SDOT's involvement. Dee shared that some of the sweeps involve multiple city agencies, so it would be interesting to know more about SDOT's involvement.
- Emily: That is a good idea and maybe we can talk about it next week when we discuss next agendas. It would be good to dig in deeper on this topic.
- Esti: Do you want to schedule an upcoming September or October to discuss before winter comes and makes life difficult for people out on the street? Maybe we can help with this.
- Jennifer: Yes, we can talk more about this when we talk about future meeting topics later on the agenda. Typically the tool that we have are strongly worded letters, but does the board feel like we ought to write a letter or take another action? We did invite Councilmember Pedersen to join this meeting, but he could not attend. I believe one of his aides might be listening in on the call. We could draft a letter to people at the City or SDOT and talk about Just Care and that we heard this was a good model for moving people into housing. What do board members think about that?
 - Emily D: I would be on board with that.
 - Greyson: The reason that I asked about bringing people in to discuss is also to learn more about figuring out who we should send the letter to based on who has power.
 - Jennifer: I like the idea of talking to SDOT and we can bring it up at the next agenda setting meeting. Are there concerns or drawbacks that anyone wishes to express?

- Koko: I know issues related to pedestrians are various, but when you ask specifically about what we can do regarding sidewalks and public spaces, safety for the homeless community seems limited. We should talk about how everything is specifically related to pedestrian safety. I don't know what the boundary for the board is, but we can advocate a lot, but I'm not sure what is beyond our scope.
- Maria: When we look at the org chart at SDOT we could learn more about how this is an access issue and a safety issue. I agree that we don't necessarily know the extent.
- Koko: When I joined the board, I was trying to advocate for people of all ages, especially older people. In this case, there are a lot of stereotypes associated with homeless people and we could advocate for them.
- Emily D: It sounds like we need to make sure any letter we write ties back to pedestrian safety. At this point, since we don't know enough about Just Care, we should learn more about this, especially as it refers to people living on the sidewalk. We could learn more on our own or try to get a presentation. We could also try to have a working letter that addresses these topics.
- Jennifer: I am going to call a vote about getting more information about Just Care as it relates to getting people shelter and making sidewalks more accessible. All in favor say "aye", all opposed say "nay".
 - All board members say "aye", no board members opposed.
- Jennifer: Will anyone volunteer to start the letter?
- Maria: I can start the letter, but will need help.
- Emily: I can help with the letter.

Board Business

- July meeting minute approval
 - Emily: motion to approve the July meeting minutes
 - Koko: seconded
 - Board unanimously approves July meeting minutes
- Jennifer: We are not seeing the meeting minutes past 2020 on the SPAB website.
- Greyson: I received an email that it is being worked on. It was my understanding that they will be updated to the current month by the end of the month.
- Vision Zero subcommittee update
 - Maria: The Vision Zero subcommittee had our first meeting last Wednesday and it included me, Hang, Allison, and Polly.
 - The Vision Zero team has some big goals coming up and they are trying to be proactive.
 - Vision Zero is updating a current focus on downtown safety including restricting right turns and having more protected left turns
 - Vision Zero is also looking into advocacy at the city and state level
 - Vision Zero is continuing to work on enforcement and prioritizing safety issues rather than things like expired tabs and broken tail lights.
 - How the board can help:
 - Amplify VZ goals and strategies at meetings
 - Put pressure on elected officials
 - More conversations between SPAB and VZ

- Talk to other community groups and collaborate
 - Possibly work with other groups or as SPAB to honor the day of remembrance for pedestrian fatalities in November
- Current statistics
 - We have already had 19 fatalities even though it is only August and we normally have about 20 fatalities in the entire year. We need to take more steps to bring this down to zero.
- VZ subcommittee did not debrief after the meeting, but it would be great to keep meeting with Allison and the VZ team and see if other people want to join the subcommittee. It could be good to do a quarterly report or update, possibly from Allison, to keep the public and the board informed.
- Esti: I am in the middle of a move, so I have been preoccupied. Once I am settled in my new place, I would love to join the VZ subcommittee.
- Akshali: I would also like to join the VZ subcommittee.
- Jennifer: I like the idea of quarterly updates too.
- Hang: Great summary, Maria. I don't have much to add, but we should be intentional about what we ask VZ to share and when they share, keeping in mind the budget cycles. We want them to provide updates before it is too late to advocate for more funding in the Vision Zero budget.
- Maria: It sounds like there is time to discuss topics that VZ is hoping to bring up at the state level, such as getting rid of jaywalking laws at the state level, possibly income-based fines at the City level, and restructuring enforcement.
- Emily D: Seattle Greenways just had a meeting and Transportation Choices Coalition has funding to support other groups efforts to stop over-policing in public spaces. They have funding and are looking for other groups to partner with, so we could possibly work with them or ask them to come to our meetings.
- Maria: Are there other questions on VZ and the subcommittee?
- Jennifer: I think the subcommittee could also work on policy and recommendations to support VZ. If you want to work on letters or actions, that would be a great workgroup for those things.
- Future meeting topics
 - Jennifer: We only have four more meetings. We have a few items, but don't have specific presentations lined up. We have talked about the following topics:
 - ADA Transition Plan
 - Talking to Sound Transit about safety concerns for stations built at grade
 - PMP Progress Report (October)—goal is for the report to be ready for review in September, but it depends on the review from the Mayor's Office
 - Just Care discussion
 - Possible board retreat in January, depending on the Governor's Proclamation
 - Jennifer: Are there other topics we want to explore or are the four topics listed the main priorities?
 - Maria: I wonder if we need a presentation on the Just Care topic, but it might depend on what data we can find.
 - Jennifer: Perhaps the December meeting would be good to talk about Just Care

- Emily D: I still haven't heard from Sound Transit, but we could also have Transportation Choices Coalition come talk about Vision Zero and enforcement.
- Akshali: Who did you contact from Sound Transit?
- Emily D: I just sent an email to the general contact, but let me know if you have a contact. We are hoping to have someone come discuss pedestrian safety at light rail stations that are at grade.
- Akshali: I think the person who manages access planning is Alex Kriegh, but he can be difficult to get a hold of. If not him, then we could reach out to ADA coordinators.
- Emily D: Can I send the email to you to forward or you could loop them into the email thread?
- Akshali: Yes, sounds good.
- Jennifer: It is timely because Greyson brought up these two fatalities and there was also a third fatality at the Columbia City station this year, so there is a safety concern at that station.
- Jennifer: We also have our agenda setting meeting next week, so if you want to attend then Polly can send the invite.

Public Comment

- Steve Welch: This is Steve Welch and I am in North Seattle and listening on the phone. When you do research on Sound Transit at Columbia City, you may want to learn about how it is used intensively traveling from that station to Department of Services for the Blind. I used this station many times, but I was trained to work with the traffic noise and navigate through the area. Many people who use this station are blind. Also, my audio service does not read out the date for the next meeting, it just reads the bottom date for the next meeting for the following month.
 - Polly: Thank you, Steve. I will look into getting the date on the website.
- Doug Macdonald: I want to reinforce the importance of getting in touch with Alex Kriegh. He was the chair for the Levy Oversight Committee and he is the right person to lean on at Sound Transit for this topic.
 - Emily D: Thank you, Doug. I will reach out to him.
- Greyson: I believe Erin on our board does similar work regarding access for people who are blind and she might be good to touch base with regarding Vision Zero and the Sound Transit light rail station at Columbia City.
 - Emily D: Yes, I will get in touch with Erin to see if she is interested.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58pm