



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

McCaella Daffern and David Goldberg, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, September 14, 2023

Approved Meeting Minutes

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| Commissioners Present: | McCaella Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Radhika Nair, Dalton Owens, Julio Sanchez, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple |
| Commissioners Absent: | Rick Mohler, Dhyana Quintanar, Monika Sharma, Lauren Squires |
| Commission Staff: | Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator |
| Guests: | Radcliffe Dacanay, Seattle Department of Transportation; Xio Alvarez, Incoming Get Engaged Commissioner |

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/meetings>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 3:06 pm and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Goldberg offered the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, we'd like to actively recognize that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people who have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time and continue to do so today. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities. We commit to identifying racist practices and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'

Co-Chair Goldberg noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners and staff participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in the Boards and Commissions Room at Seattle City Hall. He asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for volunteers to select one or more of the norms to read aloud. He suggested to Commissioners that they collectively agree to abide by these norms.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, reviewed the format of the meeting. She noted that public comment could be submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the start of the meeting or provided in person by members of the public attending the meeting at City Hall. Ms. Murdock stated that full Commission meetings will be recorded and posted to the Planning Commission's website. She noted that these recordings are not in lieu of the Commission's minutes, which are approved at the next full Commission meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson moved to approve the August 24, 2023 meeting minutes. Commissioner Jamie Stroble seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Commission Business

Ms. Murdock thanked Dalton Owens for his one year of service as the Get Engaged Commissioner and welcomed Xio Alvarez, the incoming Get Engaged Commissioner.

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this portion of the meeting.

Discussion: Draft Seattle Transportation Plan staff draft comment letter outline

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, presented a draft outline for the Commission's comment letter on the Draft Seattle Transportation Plan. The outline included the following sections:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) General Comments
- 3) Goals and Performance Measures
- 4) Integration of Modal Plans
- 5) Prioritization Framework
- 6) Implementation
- 7) Racial and Social Equity
- 8) Transportation Choices
- 9) Multilane Arterials
- 10) Access to Daily Essential Needs
- 11) Safety/Vision Zero
- 12) Freight Mobility
- 13) Climate Change/Resilience
- 14) Repurposing the Right-of-Way
- 15) Anti-Displacement
- 16) Integration with the Comprehensive Plan
- 17) Regional Coordination

Mr. Hoey provided an overview of new content that has been added to the outline as a result of the Commission's recent discussions. Below is a summary of those additions.

- 1) Introduction
 - a) We commend SDOT for an unprecedented community engagement and outreach effort.
 - b) Support the Plan's vision: ""The draft STP is a 20-year vision for the future of Seattle's streets, sidewalks, and public spaces informed by thousands of people who live, work, and play in Seattle.""
 - c) The STP generally considers the priorities the Commission has identified as needed (equity, safety, climate, etc.).
- 2) General Comments
 - a) Readability and user experience
 - i. Digesting the information in this Plan is very challenging.
 - ii. The Plan should include a glossary for the overall document, not each individual plan. There are many new and vague terms introduced in the document.
 - iii. Almost all the photos are of beautiful sunny dry days. The Plan should include more representative photography that highlights the problems of our transportation system and what needs to change on rainy, snowy, extreme heat, or smoky days.
- 3) Goals and Performance Measures
 - a) The Plan includes ambiguous goals that hinder bold and ambitious policy.
 - b) We are interested in seeing metrics and targets, including how to account for different outcomes and policies.
 - c) Performance measures are poorly defined. What is the baseline that everything will be measured against?
 - d) Performance targets are listed as TBD. When can we expect those targets to appear?
 - e) The plan does not provide readers with a simple way to look at the existing vs. proposed miles of infrastructure improvements by type.
 - f) A useful graphic would show how SDOT proposes the multimodal network to be built out.
- 4) Integration of Modal Plans
 - a) SPC is disappointed by the Plan's inability to fully integrate the modes.
 - b) Inter-connections across modes are not easy to follow.
 - c) It is not apparent how layering these elements results in a comprehensive "One Seattle Transportation Strategy".
 - d) The draft STP's network integration guidance process graphic (Part II, page 16) is a useful first step.

- 5) Prioritization Framework
 - a) The draft Plan does not include a prioritization framework.
 - b) Need clearer definition of "Catalyst Projects" to understand how these projects will be prioritized.

- 6) Implementation
 - a) SPC is concerned about pragmatic implementation of this Plan.
 - b) We would like to understand how SDOT is intending to implement the STP vision in an incremental fashion over time for each element.
 - c) Would like to see a clear framework for prioritizing input with equity.
 - d) Want to see more clarity around results-based accountability in the decision-making process to ensure not just those with access to power are heard when tradeoffs are made.

- 7) Racial and Social Equity
 - c) Discussion of vulnerable communities does not sufficiently include those with disabilities or limited mobility.
 - d) Every citywide map or figure of transit networks should include the Racial and Social Equity composite index as the background and include clear symbology between existing and proposed connections so we can see clearly where exactly investments are proposed to be made relative to the RSE index.
 - g) Disappointed to not see economic development as a goal.
 - i) Small businesses depend on convenient transportation and will thrive if mobility choices are based on both efficiency and convenience.
 - ii) Part 1 pdf p 68 mentions more than 80% of Black and Indigenous survey responders want to prioritize a transportation system that supports a strong economy.

- 9) Multilane Arterials
 - a) The Plan should articulate and illustrate a comprehensive, integrated strategy for multilane arterials.
 - b) The overall strategy for multilane arterials should:
 - i) Draw from each "element" to show how multilane arterials will be transformed.
 - ii) Show how modes will be "integrated" to increase transit speed and reliability; eliminate deaths and serious injuries; expand People Streets for high-population areas; ensure a complete and safe bike network; allow for safe passage of freight.
 - iii) How will parking policies change to allow these to occur?
 - iv) Use maps to:
 - (1) Show, prioritize the "collision-prone locations" (according to equity framework and safety ranking).
 - (2) Identify speed reduction strategies for corridors.
 - v) In high-population areas with limited green space, identify and prioritize opportunities for people streets, green stormwater infrastructure and increased vegetation (critical for safety, equity, climate action, livability).
 - vi) Show the modal integration moves for each corridor.

- vii) Accommodate electric vehicle charging if there is also parking.
- viii) Address health considerations such as emissions from single-occupant vehicles.

11) Safety/Vision Zero

- c) Vision Zero should be a separate element with a comprehensive strategy for getting to zero deaths by 2030 (or an updated target with express moves to get there).
 - i) Should include a strategy to implement speed-reduction measures and track progress on speed humps, curb bulbs, speed limits, effectiveness of enforcement, elimination of slip lanes and high-speed turns, leading pedestrian intervals, no right on red, other tactics.
 - ii) The Plan should include priority projects to meet the urgency of the City's Vision Zero goals.
- f) The Maintenance and Modernization Goal feels like it is missing explicitness around the nuance of past transportation planning decisions resulting in ongoing harm.
 - i) The Plan refers to the Transportation Equity Framework, but SDOT should explicitly acknowledge that the part of the framework should be considering when to maintain vs. when to remove or reroute networks to repair harmful past decisions.

13) Climate Change/Resilience

- a) The Plan must include strategies aimed at addressing air quality, emissions, heat island, tree canopy, stormwater flows, flooding, etc.
 - ii) The Climate section does not sufficiently address extreme heat.
 - iii) Climate Action Key Moves #2 could be reworded to strengthen and be explicit by changing it to "...to better handle extreme heat and increased storm event intensity in a changing climate."
 - iv) The STP should include other ways to increase environmental sustainability and climate resilience in communities beyond just increasing tree canopy.
 - v) Include green infrastructure in parts of the city where development is not already planned.
- b) The concept of electrification of the citywide transportation network is intriguing but should not be prioritized.
 - i) De-emphasize Climate Action Key Move #4 about electrification and instead move up Climate Action #5 about mode shift.
 - ii) Strategies for electrification of the transportation network should prioritize charging for underserved, low income, and BIPOC communities.
- c) SPC wants to learn more about the development of a low-emissions neighborhoods pilot program to improve air quality, mobility, and community health.

14) Repurposing the Right-of-Way

- c) The People Streets section does not reflect the shift that we experienced during the pandemic.
 - i) We need a map of "streets that should be closed to cars."

- d) While there is a lot of verbiage in the “curbside management” section about techniques for regulating parking, there does not appear to be policy guidance vis a vis parking in relation to all the other “elements”.
 - i) For example, parking is not addressed in the transit element, although it has been the primary obstacle to expanding transit lanes.

16) Integration with the Comprehensive Plan

- d) The STP implementation plan will need to align with the anticipated travel demand generated by the selected growth strategy and associated land use patterns.
 - i) Population and job density targets will be necessary to determine if the STP implementation strategy matches the growth strategy.
- e) STP should recognize that the pandemic fundamentally shifted our commuting patterns.
- f) It will be necessary to answer the question “Is our transportation network complete enough to support the future number of people in each neighborhood as we grow?”

Mr. Hoey stated that the Commission will approve the final Seattle Transportation Plan comment letter at the October 12 meeting, in time to meet the Draft Seattle Transportation Plan comment deadline.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners suggested that the economic development goal could be moved to the fifteen-minute city discussion. Commissioners recommended moving this discussion to the rapid transit section, as the fifteen-minute city concept does not accommodate all workers.
- Commissioners stated that the Plan’s vision statement does not include transit, biking, and walking. Commissioners stated that the vision statement reflects the City’s future investment in infrastructure, not individual modes.
- Commissioners recommended stronger language on climate action as the draft Plan currently includes lofty goals of decarbonization. The fifteen-minute city can be a strategy for climate action.
- Commissioners highlighted Table 6: Innovative Transit Streets in the Transit Element (page T-49) recognizing potential streets that could shift to a different mode. Commissioners recommended layering in equity and environmental justice as an integrated approach to provide a clear picture of what areas are receiving investments.
- Commissioners recommended editing comments to be as action oriented as possible.
- Commissioners stated that Vision Zero does not receive enough emphasis and recommended making it a standalone element with a comprehensive strategy, performance measures, and priority projects.
- Commissioners highlighted Transportation Policy 2.8 (Part II, page 129) as an example of strong language.
- Commissioners expressed frustration with understanding the proposed role of streets without the land use strategy in the upcoming Comprehensive Plan.
- Commissioners recognized that the Seattle Transportation Plan is being driven by the upcoming need for renewing the City’s transportation levy.

- Commissioners stated that policy direction in the upcoming Comprehensive Plan should be driving a lot of what the Seattle Transportation Plan proposes.
- Commissioners stated that a clear strategy on arterials should address integration of multiple modes and Plan elements.
- Commissioners recommended an equity-based prioritization framework with specific examples.
- Commissioners stated that language in the Plan about “co-creating with community” should include vulnerable communities that are typically left out of decision-making. Implementation often comes down to political decisions.
- Commissioners stated that the draft Plan includes a lot of aspirational language that the Planning Commission can support. For example, the Plan includes goals for public space on the City’s rights-of-way.
- Commissioners expressed concern about how aspirational safety goals will be translated into actual plans and projects.
- Ms. Murdock encouraged Commissioners to identify issues that they would like to see SDOT address between the draft and final Plan. For example, “we look forward to seeing the prioritization framework and an implementation framework to flesh out the TBDs.”
- Commissioners stated that modal integration could follow the Complete Streets model.
- Commissioners stated that they would like to see performance measures/targets and a dashboard to track implementation progress.
- Commissioners recommended emphasizing the section on climate change. If we are to be a thriving city, we need to get ahead of climate change.
- Commissioners expressed frustration that the Plan is not searchable and does not contain hyperlinks.
- Commissioners recommended combining comments on the prioritization framework with a focus on racial and social equity. Maps of transit networks could include vulnerable communities. Commissioners expressed frustration that the definition of vulnerable communities in the draft Plan is very broad.

Update: Seattle Transportation Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Radcliffe Dacanay, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)

Mr. Dacanay provided a high-level overview of the Seattle Transportation Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). He stated that the main document is five hundred pages with a lot of maps. He stated that the DEIS is a non-project EIS, meaning that the analysis is much more broad-based than a project-specific EIS. The DEIS alternatives are analyzed against the upcoming Comprehensive Plan’s Alternative 5, which includes the most intense growth strategy and land use scenario. The DEIS includes three alternatives - No Action, Moderate Pace, and Rapid Pace. Mr. Dacanay stated that the DEIS does not identify any significant adverse impacts, as all impacts can be mitigated. He stated that the DEIS comment period ends on October 16.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if SDOT expanded the scope of the DEIS to include impacts on vulnerable communities. Mr. Dacanay stated that is outside of the scope of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements for an EIS. SDOT considered whether they should look at that and were counseled on staying within the rules of what state law requires. He stated that the term “co-create” is used in the DEIS. This term might be different for various communities. SDOT is currently working with various communities. The results of this community engagement may not be reported in the EIS but hopefully will be shown in the final STP.
- Commissioners requested more information on how changes to the network (for example, introduction of bike lanes) and resulting impacts on traffic level of service are addressed in the DEIS. Mr. Dacanay stated that more information will be presented in the Final EIS. He stated that this is a chicken and egg scenario. Removing a general-purpose lane for adding a bike lane would be considered an impact to drivers but could also be seen as a benefit for more efficient means of travel. An appropriate measure would be people throughput, not vehicle throughput. Impacts to drivers, for example, would be mitigated by moving more people.
- Commissioners asked if it is more helpful to SDOT to review and comment on the DEIS or the Plan. Mr. Dacanay stated that the Plan will have a lot more visibility for decision makers. The EIS will present a broad look at impacts and mitigations to address those impacts. SDOT is hearing from the community to address equity, climate, and other issues. Mitigations are the best investments to address impacts of growth.
- Commissioners asked if there are issues that stand out in the DEIS analysis, for example, climate. Mr. Dacanay stated that the analysis provides nuance in how SDOT looks at sea level rise maps. In a warmer climate, there will be places that are vulnerable. SDOT will either address those issues to stay out of harm’s way or build projects to be more resilient.

Mr. Dacanay thanked the Commissioners for their attention to the DEIS. He stated that the document is difficult to process and offered to answer additional questions in the future.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.