

Bicycle Advisory Committee and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Joint Meeting Notes

Lovejoy Room, City Hall
March 14, 2017 6pm to 8pm

BAC Members Present:

Ian Stude, Christopher Achterman, Elliot Akwai-Scott, Roger Averbeck, Jim Chasse, Reza Farhoodi, Rithy Khut, Betsy Platt, Shayna Rehberg, Kari Schlosshauer

PAC Members Present:

Roger Averbeck, Anthony Buczek, Arlene Kimura, Rebecca Hamilton, Chase Ballew, Eve Nilenders, Doug Klotz, Brenda Martin, Elaine O'Keffe, Gena Gastaldi

PBOT Staff Present:

Leah Treat, Michelle Marx, Daniel Soebbing

Guests:

Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, Leah Robbins of Trimet, and Matt Bihn of Metro.

Introductions and Opening Remarks

6:00

Commissioner Dan Saltzman

6:10

Summary of Commissioner Saltzman's Opening Remarks:

Thanks to all who participate on the BAC and the PAC

Citizen participation is very important.

The Commissioner is committed to the goal of having multi-modal transportation that is safe for the citizens of Portland.

The Commissioner was presented with a list of questions that had been presented by the two committees in advance of the meeting. Question topics included Vision Zero, racial equity in policing and enforcement, and transportation priorities in response to growth in Portland neighborhoods. The following are summaries of the Commissioner's responses to the prepared questions:

Commissioner is excited to head PBOT. Been on the job for 3 months. Lots of winter weather issues consumed the first six weeks. Following weather events, Vision Zero has been the primary focus. Emphasis on street design and safety. CBO has recommended PBOT to receive 1.5 million. Commissioner wants to see money go to CIP and to lower speeds on high risk corridors. Noted that speed cameras have been implemented in East Portland in the last week.

Wants to see improved markings and technology for pedestrian crossings. Even if the ped crossings impact vehicle movement, these are important. The commissioner will take the heat for those impacts.

Police captain is a top notch police officer. There has been good info flow and cooperation between PBOT and the police department. Less certain about the ability to get ODOT to agree to PBOT's priorities for traffic safety, such as lowering speed limits on arterials.

Technology offers a good opportunity to focus on traffic safety equitably. Speed cameras are a good, “color blind,” traffic safety patrol device. We also need to be mindful of issues that impact people of color in Portland.

Does PBOT have capacity to deal with rapid growth? Yes, but it will never be at the resource level that we need, which is true of all infrastructure spending in the City of Portland. Traffic safety and infrastructure improvement is more a vision than a reality. Of all the infrastructure needs in Portland, Transportation has the biggest gap between what is necessary to spend to maintain the system sustainably and the actually capital outlay that has been dedicated to the Bureau.

Balancing improvements in places in the City that lack infrastructure in relation to neighborhoods that already have adequate infrastructure. Guiding principal is recognizing who is not in the room, because those who are not here are typically not represented by any advocacy organizations. Equity issues need to be recognized at the highest level. In order to serve the needs of East Portland neighborhoods that lack parks it may be necessary to reduce investment or limit open hours of parks in more affluent neighborhoods.

Best way to assure the needs of groups that lack advocates in transportation planning: The disability community needs more advocacy work, because of the inherent challenges that they face. Elderly have AARP and other organizations to speak for them. One of top budget requests that have been made is for 5,000 curb ramps, and around \$5 million.

Following his responses to prepared questions, Commissioner Saltzman fielded questions directly from members of the 2 committees. The topics of the questions are listed in bold text, and the Commissioner’s responses to the questions follow:

Legislative and regional transport funding and improvements

The Commissioner serves on JPACT, one of the few committees that have real power. They hold purse strings on regional funding decisions. Making decisions about widening I-5, 217, etc... are important. But what is important to Portland voters is funding for multi-modal transportation initiatives. The Commissioner also feels that SW corridor light rail is a very important priority. In addition to freeway improvements, the Commissioner believes that money for bike lanes and pedestrian improvements are big priorities.

Jurisdictional Transfer

The commissioner doesn’t want to accelerate the transfer of assets unless we have the resources set aside to maintain those roads. We shouldn’t rush it, but we shouldn’t put the question off forever. We need resources to come with those roads, because we will never deal with it if we don’t do it at this time.

Big supporter of taking a regional transport funding package to voters. Wants to get a package that voters and City Council can support, including balanced investment in different modes of transportation, including bike/ped.

Maintenance Backlog

The City doesn’t have a comprehensive strategy to overcome existing backlog. FOS was a big step toward getting on top of maintenance issues. A regional funding package would also be a big help. Every bureau except for sewer and water have chronic funding issues because they

don't have dedicated funding streams. The gaps might be as great as \$200 million per year to get infrastructure up to the standard that it needs to be at.

Bike transport, transit and achieving City Goals

The growth and maturity of bike system in last 15 years is remarkable. Congestion would be much worse if it wasn't for the growth in bike commuting. The number of bikers is almost as great as those that commute by car. All demands on public right of way need to be balanced. As a former critic of Biketown, the Commissioner believes that the City bike share seems to be doing well. The Commissioner believes that all bike lanes should be separated, even though it would be a great expense.

Protecting and Maintaining Pedestrian Realm

Big supporter of making sure the ped environment doesn't become marginalized. The City investment in ADA ramps demonstrates this commitment.

Vision for the Bureau

Very concerned about safety. Big supporter of Vision Zero implementation plan. Proposal by Portland Art Museum to add a structure, Rothko Pavilion, to join the 2 buildings. Would allow ped access during business hours, but it would create a superblock. The Commissioner would ask advocates to take a look at the proposal and weigh in on their opinions on vacating the right of way to create the structure.

Should bike/ped improvements be made in areas other than the I-5 Rose Quarter improvements?

The commissioner wants to see such improvements throughout the City, but he wants to make sure that ped/bike safety improvements aren't engineered out of design in this specific area.

Spillover Traffic into neighborhoods

The commissioner is interested in accelerating the investment in controlling spillover traffic from congested collectors or arterials. Needs to work with engineering department and also traffic enforcement to control cut through traffic in neighborhoods.

How far would you go in supporting 20 is plenty for all City Streets?

Has learned a lot about speed issues since taking over the bureau. It is important to reduce speed, but to not do it so much that people won't pay attention to speed limits. Need to reduce speeds, but to do so in a way that isn't inconsistent with the body of knowledge that traffic engineers have produced.

Tolling Freeways? Congestion Pricing Downtown?

The Commissioner is aware of the issue, is open to it. But isn't aware of any specific proposals to employ it in downtown Portland. Long and short is he is open to the idea.

Perspective on voices not present in this room. Is congestion damaging the economic health of our region? Are improvements to bicycle facilities going to come at a cost that we can't afford?

The Commissioner would disagree. Investments in ped/bike safety have to be made. They haven't been made in the past. We need to make sure that those options are available and that they are safe. There might be specific instances where he would feel otherwise, but in general, these investments need to be made.

How do we achieve the City's mode share Goals?

The Commissioner is impressed by the number of people that are commuting by bike. We need to make sure that newcomers to Portland are drawn, in part by these investments in bike infrastructure. New business owners are choosing locations that are in close proximity to bike infrastructure. These issues are important beyond just the safety issues.

The City's Modal Hierarchy places peds, bikes, and transit above cars. How do we get out of being stuck in a car centric cycle?

Comes from being diligent and working away at these issues. We can't allow auto traffic to overwhelm us, as it has in other cities. Portland has a history of leadership in promoting bike and pedestrian access. Advocates need to continue holding commissioners' feet to the fire.

Stay focused on East Portland. Outer Powell boulevard improvements are ready to be implemented, but ODOT isn't ready to fund it. Similar issues are experienced in the Southwest.

East Portland in Motion task force is being mirrored in the Southwest in Motion effort.

Rideshare and Self Driving Vehicles. Has had negative encounters with rideshare vehicles, but likes to use rideshare, as well.

The Commissioner wants to aggressively crack down on distracted driving. Distracted driving has led to an increase in crashes. Not sure about how soon self-driving cars are going to be a reality, but knows that it will be a big future issue. PBOT is taking a strong look at driverless vehicles, and the potential perils involved. Anyplace where automated driving will take place, we need good digital maps, which we may not necessarily have. All of the money that is being invested by big firms shows that there is a strong interest in making self-driving vehicles more widespread.

We don't have comprehensive Citywide plan that prioritizes routes that kids take to school. How do we get multiple bureaus and the state to look at this issue?

The commissioner is a big supporter of SR2S. But hasn't drilled down into what it really means, in terms of crosswalks, traffic crossings, etc... Doesn't just mean that kids get to schools safely, it can benefit others as well, and most Portlanders can identify with. Will spend more time on issue in the future.

Are there plans to expand red light cameras?

Yes. Red light cameras are an effective deterrent, is all for more.

How does he prioritize trails that are on the book but are not developed?

Looks at ped trails as being grade separated transport routes, and deserve high level of investment, just like grade separated bike trails.

Citywide Parking Permit Program

The council decided that we need to slow down on citywide parking permitting. A program should be targeting areas that are specifically impacted by commuter traffic. The Commissioner is not aware of a plan that is ready to go before council. But he believes that council will be ready to look at the issue in 6 months or a year.

Break

7:05

Discussion amongst committee members regarding the proposed Art Museum Street Vacation

The Art Museum doesn't need to have the ability to close the right of way. Closing the right of way would impair access to the streetcar stop.

What problem is the museum trying to solve? What alternatives have they looked at? Would like more information from the art museum.

This is an important street connection in the Central City.

A follow-up for the PAC will be needed to get more context around the street closure before the PAC can make a decision.

The group is prepared to draft a letter opposing the street closure contingent on additional information.

The PAC believes that a closure would impair access for Peds/bikes.

Majority of Committee was in favor of opposing the street vacation. One member abstained pending additional information from the museum.

SW Corridor LRT Project Update

7:10

Leah Robbins from Trimet and Matt Bihn from Metro presented an overview of the SW LRT project to the 2 committees. At various points, they fielded questions from committee members. Questions made by committee members are presented in bold text.

Leah Robbins opened with an overview of the presentation and a timeline of key milestones in the planning process, with specific emphasis on opportunities for public involvement in the planning process.

Project Timeline

Focus on Portland Segments

Light rail alignment options and stations

Roadway, bike, and ped projects.

SW LRT Project Schedule

Project has been talked about for many years, but projects like these take a long time. We are in the midst of working on a draft environmental impact statement. Anticipating public and agency

review in the December/holiday season. Next big point for public participation is at the completion of the DEIS.

Final environmental review will follow in the succeeding years.

Once environmental review is completed, design can begin.

Best case scenario has project completion in 2025.

Matt Bihn continued the presentation. He discussed possible rail alignment options, and how the various alternatives would impact other transportation modes.

Portland Segments of SW LRT

Segment A

Proposed connection to the green line. New bike and ped connection to SW 4th Ave. A new bridge over 405 is proposed. Everywhere where the rail is planned to be built there will be pedestrian and bicycle facilities included.

A committee member noted that the I-405 ped/bike crossing is a very important connection that has been desired by a number of stakeholders. There are SDC matching funds that are available to help with funding of a 4th ave connection.

Alternate alignment on Naito with a major station at Gibbs which would tie into a pedestrian bridge to the South waterfront area.

One possible project alignment would include reconfiguration of Ross Island bridgehead ramps. This would convert Naito from essentially a freeway ramp into a neighborhood street. Other option would leave bridgehead untouched.

Marquam Hill Connection could be included if the Barbour alignment is chosen. There are 4 different options for connections. There are path/elevator combinations, some including tunnels, which could be used to move people from the rail stop to the campus.

Some configurations would allow buses to travel on the rail right of way near downtown to allow buses to bypass traffic.

Ross Island Bridgehead reconfiguration could also be accommodated in the Barbour alignment.

How would the ramp realignment accommodate pedestrian transportation?

There would be a big improvement over the current situation, where there are a number of existing ramps that are poor environments for pedestrians. Possible signalization at the ramp could allow pedestrian crossing.

Segment B

There are several locations where the LRT could cross I5. There are several options, some would allow the rail to follow Barbur the whole way. Other options have the rail line follow I5 right of way. The adjacent to I5 alignment would avoid impacts to auto traffic on Barbur. If the train runs down the middle of barbur it could impact access to businesses, and prevent left turns. Alignment on I5 avoids these impacts. There would be new signals on Barbur, which would mean more pedestrian crossings. If rail is adjacent to I5 there would be no benefits for

peds. Alignment on Barbur would have positive impacts on Barbur, in terms of supporting redevelopment. Barbur would be rebuilt with bike lanes if alignment is on Barbur. The bike lane could potentially be buffered, but design is still in preliminary stages. There could be a jurisdictional transfer of Barbur.

A committee member noted that design that would attract transit riders isn't necessarily design that minimizes impacts to motor vehicles. Transit riders want stops to be near where they live, work, shop. Stops in a freeway trench aren't necessarily attractive to potential riders.

Trimet wants to eliminate alignments adjacent to I5. But there isn't support analysis from the EIS for these options yet. There isn't a big difference in train travel time or cost between running the train adjacent to the freeway or on Barbur.

There is a video on the website that includes interviews of commuters that use the I5 corridor that shows that there are widely varying opinions about traffic conditions for commuters.

There would be a new bike and ped connection on 53rd, which would exclude motor vehicle traffic. But there needs to be a mechanized connection, as well. There would be a bus or automated shuttle that could carry passengers up 53rd ave, from the 53rd ave station.

Additional bike and ped improvements to station areas along alignment. Funding is still uncertain about how many projects will be included in the project. There is a limit to the total amount of funding that can be asked for these projects:

Segment A-

Proposed 1st ave bikeway

Grover Bikeway

Hamilton Sidewalks and Bikeway

Segment B-

The majority of projects are in segment B

-some are just adding sharrows. Others have additional enhancements.

Regarding infrastructure improvements on Barbur, what would be included if the I-5 alignment is chosen?

Would like to do Barbur improvements regardless of alignment. But the funding would be easier to get if the alignment is actually on Barbur.

Biggest pressure on LRT projects is the top end cap on funding. How much money is available from federal sources and local sources combined. The more projects that we include that add money costs to the project the more uncertain funding becomes.

Jurisdictional transfer of Barbur is currently being negotiated contingent on construction of the project.

Bicycle improvements should be considered parallel to the rail line, not just investments at the stations, themselves.

Park and ride lots will be built, but the capacity of lots isn't guaranteed.

SW LRT should work in conjunction with SWIM and other City projects to make sure that there is maximum level of coordination.

Key issue in project is alignment decision: freeway vs. Barbur. Committee members feel that the correct choice is Barbur, and not the freeway. Demand for the rail line will be much higher if the alignment is on Barbur. Modeling does not demonstrate the difference between different alignments. The qualitative differences between the alignments are known, but there is no way to quantify the advantages/disadvantages of the different options.

City of Portland is interested in traffic impacts. Question of the bridgehead improvements, as well. So both of the Segment A alignments are still options, at this point.

No decisions will be made by the steering committee about Segment B alignments at this point. The best time for the committees to send a letter would be the December/January period, when public comment will be accepted on the DEIS. There will be some chance for public engagement through the steering committee at an earlier date, but comment will be most powerful at the later date.

The Committee Chairs thanked the speakers for their presentation.

Meeting adjourned

8:00