

City of Portland
Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting



Tuesday, February 20, 2024
6:00 – 8:00 PM at The Portland Building
1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 216

6:00-6:10 – Public Comment (10 min)

- There was no public comment.

6:10-6:30 – Committee Business (20 min)

- Welcome & Introductions
- Hot Topics
 - Census Commute Data: Based on U.S. census data from 2016 to 2022 (the latest data available) the share of walking has recovered more than other modes, though it's still below 2016 levels. See PDF for details.
 - [Oregon-friendly driver](#) program from Oregon Walks: This is a free, 75-minute, classroom-style training to teach people who drive (particularly professional drivers) how to drive safely around people walking and biking. If any organizations/businesses want to host a training, contact Oregon Walks. Sponsored by ODOT.
- Vision Zero Moment
 - Since we last met, nine people have died in traffic crashes. Year-to-date, 10 people have died compared to seven in 2023 and 12 in 2022.
 - Some PAC members raised concerns about the use of “died” versus “killed” in describing traffic fatalities. “Died” puts the focus back on the victim.
 - Gena Gastaldi, PAC staff liaison, provided some background on the “vision zero moment”: The practice was adopted from the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), which reads the names not as a recap, but rather as a moment of reflection. The BAC doesn't go into the same level of detail about each crash that the PAC now does. Would it be more appropriate to have a moment of silence? Should we read the names? This is not a Vision Zero committee, but it is up to the PAC to determine how they want to handle this practice.
 - PAC members discussed:
 - Calling it “vision zero” seems wrong—this could be renamed on the agenda. Perhaps a moment of acknowledgment. We honor victims by saying their name.
 - PAC Member: One tool we have is to write a letter to city council, PBOT, or a Commissioner. That would be a way to be proactive. Reading the names feels reactive.

- PAC Member: When reading the names, please be explicit about the time frame and start with the total number of fatalities (# people have died since X date). Please describe the graphic that compares the number of fatalities-to-date to past years.
- A PAC member brought up the Modal Committee Eval and asked if the purpose of the PAC has been decided.
- Kristin Hull: The purpose of the PAC has not changed. We were almost done with the evaluation, and then PBOT's budget issues came to a head and we weren't sure we could staff the committees with such a large budget reduction. That issue has mostly passed (by May we should have an answer on the budget) and we need the director to decide how we move forward now.
- Gena Gastaldi: The fact that Civic Life gave us the green light to recruit for new members is a positive sign.

6:30-7:00 – E-Scooter program update (30 min)

Jacob Sherman & Bryan Nguyen, PBOT

PBOT staff provided an update on the current E-Scooter program, the RFP (Request For Proposal) process, and the transition to a long-term E-Scooter program in 2024.

- See presentation for details.
- PAC member questions:
 - How does 3,500 – 5,000 scooters compare to BIKETOWN bikes?
 - Currently we have 2,000 e-bikes in the fleet with about 1,500 deployed at any time.
 - How can we report scooters blocking sidewalks? This is particularly problematic for people with low sight.
 - Call 311. They will take the location and ask for any other identifying features. PBOT is working on adding braille to scooters so people with low sight can identify the brand for reporting. The city will then call up companies and give them 1 hour to remove the problematic scooter. E-scooters are supposed to be parked in the furnishing zone of the sidewalk.
 - How do we ensure that companies and users are held accountable for parking/placing scooters in appropriate spaces?
 - The scooter companies will be required to reeducate users about how to use scooters under the new system with the lock-to requirement (that requires scooters be locked to a rack similar to BIKETOWN). Through audits, spot checks, and complaints, PBOT will be able to assess whether companies are being effective or if some correction or fine is appropriate. With continued noncompliance, PBOT could reduce the number of scooters they're permitted on the street or, in an extreme case, pull the contract.
 - Who would be fined for noncompliance issues?
 - Users are not fined. The scooter company is.
 - How do you change behavior unless you hold users directly accountable?
 - People can be and are banned from services by scooter companies if they continue to not follow the rules.
 - Is it possible to require companies to pass the fine onto the users in their contracts?
 - The contracting process is a negotiation, so we could introduce new ideas. However, were this a reality, it would be hard for the city to know if a company has actually passed the fine on to the user.

- What is the employment model used by the scooter companies?
 - Today, most companies have left the gig model behind. Full-time employees or subcontractors are the norm. That has been precipitated by cities pushing for greater accountability. Relying on gig employees wasn't workable when companies needed to respond quickly (within the hour) to issues of scooters blocking access, etc.
- What are the climate impacts of scooters?/Do scooters reduce walk trips?
 - Most e-scooter users were not existing active transportation users. Some trips do replace what would have been a walking or transit trip, but they also replace SOV trips and a lot of uber/lyft/taxi rides. Because of that reduction in driving, on balance, e-scooters come out as a positive climate benefit.
- Can we make companies do the user (re)education?
 - Yes, companies will be required to provide information for new users and incorporate in-app quizzes that recur depending on usage and in multiple languages. Portland was the first to require user education in-app, with PBOT having the authority to approve the content. Other cities have followed our lead.
- What do crash rates with e-scooters look like?
 - We've worked with the Multnomah County Health Department to dig into information on e-scooter crashes. We found injury rates were low and people mostly hurt themselves. Most injuries happened on people's first, second, or third ride. There has been one shared e-scooter fatality and it was a hit-and-run so we don't have much information about the circumstances.
- Education is notoriously difficult because it takes a lot to be effective. There was a Parking Kitty video with a local rapper that was oriented to a local audience.
 - Micromobility safety is tied to bike safety which is tied to active transportation safety broadly.
 - With our contracts, we have every trip, not just a snapshot, so we can look for patterns. We're starting to look at how small capital improvement projects have influenced trips, which has helped reinforce what we've known—build it and people use it. We can use this data to counter the common "people don't bike here" arguments, because we can pull up the data that clearly shows people do bike "here." We can also use the data to see where there is user demand for infrastructure.
- Jacob Sherman: If the PAC is interested, we could invite the companies to join a future meeting to dialogue directly with you.

7:30-8:05 – Committee Discussion (30 min)

PAC Members, lead by Gena Gastaldi, PBOT staff liaison

- Pedestrian Planning in Portland
- Purpose of the PAC
- PAC Member: I've heard frustration from committee members in the past. With the I-5 bridge presentation, it felt like they were just checking a box, whereas the scooter presenters tonight were receptive to our questions and listened. Could we become more of an activist committee, focusing on one or two things a year and focus our function as a group to see if we can move that forward?
- PAC Member: There is a lot of frustration. There's no real way to know if our advice was implemented or even considered unless people come back to the committee and say as much.

- PAC Member: There are parts of pedestrian safety that don't have anything to do with fatalities. Speed is the major factor in most fatalities. At 35mph there is a 50% chance that a pedestrian hit by a car will survive. The profession didn't consider the effects of high-speed until more recently. There are two aspects of this—1) fatalities, 2) pedestrian safety and comfort. When we look at systemic factors affecting fatalities, it's higher speeds, multilane roadways, and darkness. Darkness is an impairment. I'm not sure what the PAC can contribute to our understanding of or action around fatalities, versus improving comfort and general safety. Conditions in which most people are dying are not the conditions most people are walking in.
- PAC member: One tool to be proactive is writing letters. We can ask what is being done, and what can be done.
- PAC Member: We know roads are most dangerous in lower-income/POC neighborhoods, but also parts of Marine Drive, etc. Should we be spending time focusing on the highest crash corridors—that we don't have much power over & that the city is already aware of—or think more broadly about how we can improve the pedestrian experience in Portland?
- PAC Member: Vision Zero is failing, what can we do...
- PAC Member: Fatalities are a small part of the pedestrian experience—but the shape of this issue is unknown. Do we need to address the whole issue to address fatalities? Hard to know without knowing the full shape.
- PAC Member (Richard): We should ask why is Vision Zero failing? Is the city doing bad job, is it a lack of funding, an inability to change human behavior?
- Kristin Hull: The amount of influence advisory committees like the PAC have is not always visible or a direct line. Bureaucracy is not linear. For example, BAC members have advocated for improved bike lane maintenance for years. When thinking about how to align PBOT work with PCEF funding, one of the first things we thought of was active transportation maintenance. BAC members had brought the idea up so many times it was one of the first things that came to mind. I would recommend working with Gena to dig into PedPDX, which is full of actions that have not been advanced to see which you would like to see move. There's also space to help Gena prioritize small-cap/quick build projects, one of the only discretionary sources of funding that don't have multi-year timelines. Our modal coordinators deliver letters and are responsible for getting a response.
- Gena Gastaldi: There has also been some internal movement around vision clearance, but it's unclear where that's going to land. I know there has been interest from the PAC about this. A letter could be influential in this space.
- PAC Member: Would it be appropriate to have the PAC help advocate for funding? We'll have 25 crossings on the High Crash Network that will have design and cost estimate, but where do we find the funding? Could PAC be part of that?
- Kristin Hull: We're not going to do all 25 crossings at once, but will prioritize by location or criteria. We will share a list of funding opportunities from state.

The PAC decided to write two letters. One in support of more daylighting citywide (to be written by Tabitha Boschetti) and another supporting/prioritizing 25 crossings on the High Crash Network (to be written by Rebecca Sanders).

8:05 – Public Comment

- There was no public comment