

City of Portland
Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes



Tuesday, February 21, 2023
6:00 – 8:00 PM

6:00-6:10 - Public Comment (10 min)

- Comment 1: I am concerned about the crosswalk closings happening. I have noticed one crossing in Llyod (Broadway & 13th) that hasn't been closed yet but a notice of closure is obstructing the sidewalk. The crossing at Williams near New Seasons is also a concern. I would like to support more pedestrian access. I live near MLK Blvd which is already hard to cross.
- Comment 2: Will e-scooters be included in the Modal Committee Evaluation? I appreciate the work of the committee and PAC members for donating their time. (PAC Co-chair/Staff response: More information on the Modal Committee Eval will be available in March, but this is an evaluation of and the structure/processes of PBOT's existing modal committees—pedestrian, bicycle, and freight—so e-scooters are not directly addressed.)

6:10-6:30 - Hot Topics/ Updates and Announcements/Committee Business (20 min)

- Vision Zero moment: Since the January meeting, there have been four people killed in traffic crashes in Portland.
 - o PAC members had some comments/questions about how information was being graphed and how the information should be interpreted.
- Crosswalk Closures
 - o Staff: last week ODOT released a list of intersections where crosswalks were being closed in the name of ADA compliance and safety without specifying what leg(s) of the intersection were being closed or why. PBOT was not given any additional information or advance notice. When PBOT staff contacted ODOT with questions and requested more info, ODOT detailed which leg of the intersection would be closed and their justification. Upon review, most of the closures would fall within PBOT's own criteria for crosswalk closures, though there has been a lot of understandable concern given the lack of information and context initially provided by ODOT.
 - o Co-Chair (Tiel Jackson): 1. There was no public process or input, which makes it hard to build any trust with/in ODOT. 2. These closures (yet again) put the burden of safe behavior entirely on the back of pedestrians; drivers are not being asked to accept any commensurate changes to keep people safe. 3. These closures do not support city or state climate goals by making it harder and less desirable to walk. 4. Were these

closures vetted against any equity matrix or crash statistics? What problem is this trying to solve?

- Staff response: It appears that ODOT is formalizing the closures to comply with the terms of a settlement concerning ADA accessible crossings. Closures are one way ODOT can bring a crossing into compliance but there is a formal process that must be followed to document those closures. All closures are reviewed by the state engineer.
- Oregon walks has some concern about these closures.
- The crossings being closed exist in a wide variety of contexts and are being closed for different reasons.
- A PAC member asked how much it costs for the state to close a crosswalk like this (materials and staff time), but staff did not have that answer for when ODOT or PBOT close crosswalks.

6:30-6:50 – Springwater Trail connection at 115th (20 min)

Roger Geller (PBOT), Tressie Word (BES)

BES and PBOT staff seek written PAC support for a short trail that will connect the Springwater Corridor Trail to SE 115th and 117th Avenues. The trail is subject to a BDS environmental zone hearing and must demonstrate that the public benefits outweigh all significant detrimental impacts (Title 33.430.250.C.2). The trail is to be built as part of [the Springwater Wetlands and Floodplain Restoration Project](#).

- This trail would fill in a network gap between two major bike and pedestrian corridors. There is a slight realignment from original policy (the “paper street”) to keep trail on higher ground and out of the main flooding area.
- Concerns about new trail connections bringing crime or undesirable elements to an area are frequently raised when such connections are proposed, in Portland and across the country. Those concerns never come to fruition—as advocacy organizations like Rail to Trails Conservancy have documented—and people generally recognize the benefits trail connections have once they are built.
- The PAC could draft letter and vote on it at the next meeting (March 14, a joint BAC/PAC meeting). Devin Harness and Mark Raggett will draft a letter in support of this connection.
- See short presentation slides for additional details.

6:50-7:20 – RTP Call for Projects and Financial Forecast (30 min)

Francesca Jones, Eric Hesse (PBOT)

Every five years the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is updated. The update must be completed by December 6, 2023. Francesca Jones and Eric Hesse will discuss the RTP process and PBOT’s approach to this update. The project team will return to a planned joint BAC/PAC meeting in March for further discussion. There will be time for committee members to ask questions and discuss.

- The presentation primarily focused on the RTP update process and how projects are prioritized. Dues to inflation, other cost increases, and future funding outlooks, fewer projects can be proposed as immediate regional priorities than in previous plans. See presentation for additional details.

- More detailed discussions of projects can occur in March.
- Even with Portland City Council recommendations for what projects to include in the plan, the ultimate decision maker on the RTP is the Metro council.

7:20-7:35 – Modal Committee Evaluation Update (15 min)

Francesca Jones (PBOT)

The process has been delayed due to some tragic circumstances and the consultant contract for this project was extended to accommodate that need. This also held up the evaluation and the synthesis of feedback from the workshop and transportation justice focus groups. The intention was always to share the feedback and potential next steps with bureau/city leaders.

PBOT has received the first draft of the report from the consultant and done a deep dive and provided some feedback. In March, there will be a longer, more detailed presentation with more specifics and an opportunity for final feedback from the committees. Given the number of major changes recently and coming—new interim PBOT director, new PBOT commissioner, charter reform and new city government structure—it’s hoped that the results of the evaluation can provide a time to breathe and reflect rather than urging hasty action.

- PAC members were generally appreciative of the transparency and update, even though it was lacking a lot of detail. Several PAC members had inquired about the evaluation, so staff felt it important to provide a quick update if only to say we’re still working on it and there is more information coming soon.
- One PAC member suggested a “Handbook of Aspirational Practices” that could be a product of the work, even if the feedback and potential changes identified aren’t immediately actionable due to the broader structural changes at the bureau/city.
- For more information about the Modal Committee Evaluation, visit the [project website](#).

7:35-7:50 – Extra Time for Committee Business (15 min)

Discussion on crosswalk closures continued:

- PAC Question: How does someone who’s blind know if a crosswalk is closed
 - Staff Answer: A post shaped like an upside-down staple (or bike rack) is installed with a sign saying crosswalk closed. There would be an obstruction that someone would feel as they approached. There are also no truncated domes at the corner indicating a crossing/transition into the roadway.
- PAC Question: How long do crosswalk closed signs stay up?
 - Staff Answer: They are generally up indefinitely, as is the case when PBOT does similar closures.
- PAC Question: How can the PAC best respond? What would be the best way to construct a letter that would be more impactful? We would like guidance on how we can target our time and energy with a letter.
 - Staff Answer: The PAC can respond however it sees fit. ODOT staff could be asked to come present and discuss. The PAC could write a letter.
- PAC Question: Is there any plan to improve crosswalks being closed and reopen them in the future?

- Answer: unclear. ODOT has not indicated they are pursuing any improvements beyond closure.
- Additional PAC Comments:
 - Many of the complaints about ODOT crosswalk closures could also apply to PBOT
 - The PAC is asked to work with/support ODOT on several projects, yet the complete lack of process makes it very hard to trust and continue to work with ODOT.
 - Infrastructure is expensive, but these closures feel like ODOT is just giving up. I've heard about "school streets" in other places where they close or limit a street to local traffic around school start/end times to make streets safe. It's relatively cheap and quick to implement. We (or ODOT) need to do more thinking outside the box rather than just closing crossings and washing their hands of the issue.

7:50-8:00 – Public Comment (10 min)

- Comment 3: I'm concerned that the modal committee evaluation is part of a movement to have less public input. You [PAC members] are members of the public and I value your time and effort you put in. I think neighborhood associations are also in the crosshairs of government and developers. Just putting it out there.

Reminder: The March PAC meeting will be a joint meeting with the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and will be held on March 14th, a week earlier than the normal PAC date. The 2040 Freight Plan, 82nd Ave, a PBOT presentation on orphaned state highways, RTP projects, and a potential appearance from Commissioner Mapps are all on the agenda.