

# Joint Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting Notes



**Tuesday, July 11, 2023**  
**6:00 – 8:00 PM on Zoom**

## **6:00-6:10 – Public Comment** (10 min)

- Eric shared a story about Terwilliger, which has narrow painted bike lanes and traffic at 35mph and asked that PBOT stop painting yellow centerlines on streets with incomplete (i.e. a single line of paint) bike lanes. He also shared frustration with the new investments on SW Capitol Highway between SW Garden Home Road and SW Taylors Ferry Road that provide bike & ped infrastructure that is unconnected to any other bike/ped infrastructure. “Let’s make a bike network that incentivizes using it. Stop wasting money on car infrastructure.”

## **6:10-6:20 – Vision Zero Update** (15 min)

- 5 people were hit and killed by drivers since last month’s meeting, including one pedestrian.

## **6:20-7:10 – Commissioner Mingus Mapps** (45 min)

- BAC Co-chair Ally Holmqvist introduced Commissioner Mapps
  - She notes his personal engagement in meetings about bike/ped infrastructure and that he responds to committee letters.
  - Ally shared some points of interest among committee members including repurposing public space for people instead of cars, the decline in biking, and the Division Transit, Better Naito, SW Capitol Hwy Rose Lanes, and Shake Shack plaza projects that shows the city’s modal hierarchy at work.
- Commissioner Mapps gave some opening remarks:

- He's been on council for 2 years and became PBOT's commissioner 6 months ago.
- There has been a lot of diversity in that time: a major snow storm, losing the PBOT Director to the Governor's office, etc.
- His top priorities for next 18 months are restoring PBOT's financial stability, improving road safety, meeting climate change goals, and preparing for next the new form of City government. With change, the Commissioner will need the expertise of bike and ped committee members at the table.
- Committee Comments/Questions
  - (BAC member): Commissioner Mapps being a bike rider who rides with kids is encouraging; the first biking commissioner of Transportation since Sam Adams. How can we increase cycling and make the bike master plan a reality?
  - Commissioner:
    - Build it: Agreed that we need more biking. He has a philosophy of build it and they will come—not just bike infrastructure, but also looking at larger land use policies. Inner city biking compares favorably to best cities in the world, but as you get away from the city core you have fewer people biking. The city has been adding infrastructure, but land use hasn't caught up so it's not convenient to ride bikes in some places.
    - E-bikes: We are at an interesting pivot point. The widespread use of electric bikes makes it more convenient to go 5 or 7 miles on a bike rather than 2 or 3. Partnering with BikePortland and other folks to activate electric bikes.
    - Safety: The commissioner's kids commute to and from school, and he worries about their safety. He sees people running red lights daily, and people driving way too fast. We will continue to install bike lanes and other multimodal systems.
  - (PAC member): We hear a lot about unsafe drivers. I became someone who bikes in 2013 and it astounds me how many cyclists think they're above the law.
  - Commissioner:
    - It's not just bikes. One of the things that happened in pandemic was change in commutes and how people look at and use the roads. Public education about being a good commuter and more enforcement is needed. Everyone needs to look out for each other.

- (BAC member): How do you feel about more pilots and demonstrations projects? What about a program like “Friends of Portland Streets,” akin to the Friends Groups at Parks & Rec?
- Commissioner: Yes
  - Pilots: we’ve done a lot with pilots, like dining on the streets during the pandemic. That was so successful we’re making it permanent. A similar model of innovation, seeing what works and tweaking to make it better is part of the culture I want to bring to our work.
  - Friends of PBOT: I will endorse and also plead with committee members. The fate of our transportation system and our ability to make progress creating a greener/safer future is at stake and we need more people involved. Let me know what my office can do to support.
- (PAC member): I’m a passionate, congenial pedestrian who is blind. The Commissioner mentioned he’s lost track of how many times he’s seen cars speed through traffic lights. The difference: you can see them. The increased danger to pedestrians is real. I plead with you to do whatever it takes to slow people down. Oct 15 is white cane day, but it’s actually every day and night. Use me.
- Commissioner: I will draw upon your expertise.
  - The challenges you talk about I’m very familiar with. If I’m scared for my kids, I can’t imagine how terrifying it would be to navigate our streets right now without sight. This is our top priority.
  - We have taken actions to clear sidewalks and right-of-way to make it clear for people with mobility challenges.
- (BAC member): On Wednesday (July 12) Council will have a hearing to adopt the 2040 Freight Plan. I’ll preview some of my testimony: This is a new plan that has no hope of being implemented, just like bike plan. Vision Zero hasn’t made any progress. We say these things are priorities and then we don’t fund them. PBOT was supposed to get a share of the utility license fee for cutting into right of way, and PBOT has never received that. The transportation system is a chronic problem, not acute, but unless council changes its attitude... How short sighted can we be? How do you bridge the knowledge gap for commissioners that have never been in charge of PBOT?
- Commissioner:
  - I’m much more optimistic about ability to implement the freight plan. Many of the top priority projects are funded and will move

forward. However, in order to implement plans, we need to move council and the public. That's why these groups (the BAC & PAC) are important. You know more about these issues than council.

- We need to do a better job of doing a job of educating other councilors about PBOT's budget and how it operates.
  - I agree with you on the license fee and there are active discussions happening on this issue.
  - It's nice that PBOT is not dependent on the general fund. But given the budget, the Comm'r will be asking for funding from general fund for projects, along with state and federal dollars. Voters will be asked to renew the gas tax in the next 18 months to renew gas tax. Tried to float a street fee like 30 other jurisdictions in the state use. It was not well received, but that doesn't mean we'll stop pushing for it.
  - This work never ends; The Commissioner is deeply committed to working together.
- (PAC member): PBOT had a serious budget cut recently and is anticipated to take another devastating cut. My concern is safety projects will be first on chopping block. Which projects will you prioritize?
  - Commissioner: There's good news and bad news
    - Bad news: This is a rough year for PBOT, facing a \$30million funding cut, after years of cuts. It's impossible to absorb funding reductions like that without it impacting projects and people. Safety is our top priority.
    - Opportunities: This is a unique moment in transportation. The Biden admin has put a lot of dollars into transportation and we can leverage what funding we do have to get federal funds. Look at [future] upgrades on 82nd & 122nd Avenues. The goal is to make them safer and greener. We will not cut safety.
  - (PAC member): Can we find funding to reinitiate some of the programs PBOT had run before like the street prototype program that gave people opportunity to be directly engaged in fixing their own streets. Committee members wanted to do more during the pandemic like a neighborhood initiative for safer streets. This could be like city sanctioned tactical urbanism. It could initially focus on Local streets or maybe greenway. We did some outreach for letters of support for an idea like this and people were hungry for it. (Can forward those letters

to the Commissioner's office.) This could give people an outlet for people's angst. It will take a little upfront investment—staff reviewing designs and offer a permit—but there's a force multiplier with community. How do we make this happen?

- Commissioner:
  - To meet needs of the community, we need to engage community members. At BES they enlist people to maintain bioswales, which is different but invokes the same instinct of hyper localism and getting people involved and invested in infrastructure. Please follow up with Shannon.
  - A new form of government will be in place by 2025. One consequence is likely to be a much more localized focus on how services are delivered. Your great idea fits with the direction the city is moving. More exploration is needed, and there is still a lot I don't understand—like building speed bumps is much more complicated than one would think.
- (PAC member): We need to change the culture in the city. Pedestrian deaths have been rising since 2010 (nationally) and in Portland more recently. Speeding, red light running—general lawlessness—but there are real equity concerns with enforcement. How do we blend these together to get to a place where folks have respect for each other without harming communities of color?
- Commissioner:
  - I share you passion as a person of color and single dad with two brown boys. They're starting to explore the world on their own and I want to live in a city that treats them fairly and keeps them safe. We're trying to bring these sentiments to public safety enforcement and have made some progress:
    - the [public apology](#) from a police officer charged with assault. Police are expected to uphold city values.
    - new criteria to identify stolen cars that looks at vehicle characteristics rather than its operator. (Ex: a rear punched out window or poorly done tinting are correlated with stolen vehicles). This has increased recovery by a factor of 30 and it takes profiling out of the equation.
    - doubling the number of speed cameras we have this year. I would increase it by factor of 10, but there is a supply shortage.

- (PAC member): Everyone says we want safer streets, but safety doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. Every safety project requires something else to not happen (fill pot holes or do safety). People want to make these choices, but want to do it in a way that has buy-in.
- Car culture is the default and we're submerged in it at all times. We can't change that culture overnight, but how do we address that without offering different incentives. How do we present these choices to make our city more livable?
- Commissioner:
  - That is absolutely correct; we will have to make difficult choices in tight budget times. The only way to get it right is to engage community in the decisions. The commissioner has done a lot of talking with people about budget and over next 12 months he will be talking to councilors and the public about tradeoffs. As we have this conversation, please weigh in and help Portlanders understand the trade-offs and opportunities to make our system better.
- (PAC member): A minority of business voices are complaining about projects on outer division. What are you doing to engage and educate people/businesses to get their buy-in? What data are you gathering? How are you communicating that data?
- Commissioner:
  - I hold community meetings, like at the Russian grocery store, and a store parking lot. The commissioner is in dialogue with locals to explain tradeoffs and why this is how it is.
  - We want people to be happy, but if we can get people to a place of understanding, that will be okay.
- (BAC member): BAC sent a letter to extend/expand various paving projects. Have you made and decisions?
- When can we have a bike friendly sister city?
- Commissioner:
  - I love our sister city program and partnering with cities rocking it in transportation space.
- Commissioner, in closing:
  - Invite me back! The fall is going to be very important when the budget process starts & the rubber hits road with a new form of government. We'll be asking where advisory committees fit in.
  - We have great challenges moving forward with goals in the face of budget cuts. Many people on these committees are far more

expert on the transportation system than I am and I need you to reach out to other councilors and friends/neighbors to help educate them.

- I am incredibly optimistic about moving to a multimodal tranpo system, but will need you all involved.

### **7:10-7:50 – PBOT Budget Update (20 min)**

*Shoshana Cohen, Sara Wright, & Mark Lear (PBOT)*

See presentation for details.

There are structural problems with PBOT's funding sources that are not easy to solve and that have become acute. There have been significant cuts over the last four years (totaling about \$24 million). Next year PBOT will have to cut another \$32 million. If the gas tax is not renewed by voters, that would be another \$20 million in budget cuts.

Committee Questions:

- Does pbot get money from speeding tickets.
  - Answer: No net revenue
- Can we get an inventory of PBOT assets? Lots of places that look like they'd be great for diverters. If we're doing temporary stuff, let's put it all out there.
  - We need to think about what's possible with limited resources
- What action is city taking to push legislature to implemenmt a road usage fee?
  - The City has been involved in user charge conversations. As cars become more efficient/electric, there has been a lot of movement in this space, but this is a longer-term solution. It might help in 10 years. A political climate where the legislature moves quickly on this is unlikely.
- What kind of analysis are you doing to see equity impacts of cuts and what opportunities will there be to engage once those scenarios are released publicly?
  - This is a non-traditional budget season and we're still working on developing scenarios. It will be very important to hear from the PAC and BAC on those scenarios but don't have a clear timeline for when those will be ready. We will keep these committees engaged.
- How do we avoid this in the future?

- Utility transportation fees, staying engaged with legislature. We submit our budget in January.
- If we think about all the things PBOT does, a lot of things around safety come back to speed. Even with roadway maintenance, speed has an impact there too. Is this one place where PBOT can dig in and say, as a city, we are going to slow down. The community can be engaged; we can use temporary materials a la Janette Sadik-Khan.
  - Doing something dramatically different at this time would be a hard choice. There will be tradeoffs.
  - Commissioner's Staff: We're open to the conversation. Mapps sees value in community engagement. Could we use the budget to pivot to something like that, analogous to pivoting to street seating to save businesses.
- How do we stay engaged?
  - We will keep coming back to these meetings.
  - Commissioner's Staff: Try to schedule meetings with the other offices because these are citywide advisory committees. The focus tends to be the transportation commissioners, but these are council wide decisions. We'll do our part to engage and educate, it but would be great to meet with other Commissioners.
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- Comment: Committee letters are addressed to all commissioners, but the other commissioners never respond.

### **7:50-8:00 Public Comment**

- There is a [SW neighborhood bike fair](#) on July 23rd from 9-noon at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.

Committee Reminders: The BAC will have its first hybrid meeting in August with new members.