

City of Portland
Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting



Tuesday, October 17, 2023

Meeting Minutes

6:00-6:10 – Public Comment (10 min)

- Lajune Thoreson has been contemplating comments, particularly Rebecca's, about vehicles getting heavier at the last PAC meeting. She's well aware as a driver (of a prius) and a pedestrian, but notes vehicle weight isn't part of vision zero data to her knowledge. She request that vehicle weight data is include so we can measure the effect of vehicle weight.
- Lindsay Huber shares that Sunday November 19 is World Day of Remembrance. This event honors road traffic victims in the last year and includes some advocacy with Families for Safe Streets and the Street Trust to decrease the number people being killed. More information can be found online:
<https://www.thestreettrust.org/programs/events/wdr/>

6:10-6:25 – Committee Business (15 min)

- Announcements
 - There are four upcoming openings on the PAC that will need to filled in January. The posting for that is now live on the city's website. An [email announcement](#) will go out tomorrow (Wed, Oct. 18). Please share the posting with your networks. The first meeting with new members will be January 16, 2024.
 - Is there interest among the committee for an in-person/hybrid PAC meeting in January? Gena will follow up with PAC members via email to gauge interest.
 - For PAC members whose terms are ending in February 2024, email Gena if you'd like to renew for another 2-year term (just need email confirmation).
 - Recruitment sub-committee members are needed. It will require one virtual meeting between mid-November and end of year. Contact Gena if you are interested.

- Hot Topics
 - Josh: with the lack of budget and staff shortages, I've been pushing a concept for city program to permit people to do low cost traffic calming on low vol neighborhood streets (not big roads), like a Neighborhood-Initiated Safer Streets program. Could be focused on safe routes to schools routes and neighborhood greenways and other low traffic streets and include putting planter boxes out to support goals around safety, climate, and support equity by developing a toolkit and/or building one in our neighborhood and another one for a different neighborhood. Had some progress in discussions with Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty progress and did some similar work with Arletta Triangle. The Foster Powell Neighborhood has continued to push on this with their Better Center work focused on improving Center Street. Josh would like feedback—what are the barriers to making this happening and helping Portlanders meet the city's goals. <https://fosterpowell.com/better-center-project/> <https://www.instagram.com/bettercenter97206/>
 - MaryLee: National white cane safety day was this past Sunday. It is on October 15 every year. MaryLee challenges people to celebrate that event all the time, not just on one day.
- Vision Zero—recognizing the people killed in traffic crashes since the last PAC meeting.
 1. At approximately 5:57 a.m. on Tuesday, September 19, Jason Ruhmshottel, a person riding a bicycle, was struck and killed by someone driving on N Portland Road south of Marine Drive (between Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area and Heron Lakes Golf Club). The crash occurred during nighttime (dusk to dawn).
 2. At approximately 11:14 p.m. on Thursday, October 5, Jeremy Clement, a person driving, died in a single vehicle crash at SE 52nd Avenue and Harney Drive (near Errol Heights City Park). According to initial reports, factors include speed and intoxication. The crash occurred during nighttime (dusk to dawn).
 3. At approximately 12:43 a.m., on Saturday, October 14, a person driving was seriously injured in a crash at S Hood Avenue and Gibbs Street (below the Portland Aerial Tram, south of the Interstate 5 and the Ross Island Bridge intersection) and later died of their injuries at the hospital the following day. Their passenger was uninjured. The crash occurred at nighttime (dusk to dawn).

6:25-7:00 – Meet and Greet with PBOT Director (35 min)

Director Williams (PBOT)

PBOT Director Williams will introduce herself and greet the PAC members. The following notes are paraphrased.

- *Director Williams:* Thank you Gena for all your work. Thank you to Tiel and Tabitha for your leadership on this committee. Conversations that come up as a part of this work can often be really challenging and multilayered, but I am committed to being part of convo and working with you to craft.
- I've only been the PBOT Director for a few months, but I know work of committee and its import to the Bureau's success. I previously worked at PBOT from 2017-2021 and became acquainted with PAC then. I have often engaged in projects that advance ped goals to make it safer to walk everywhere.
- There has been an increase in deaths on roadways, with 16 pedestrian deaths this year. Staff have shared their frustration and anger in their inability to reverse this trend. As director, I'm committed to vision zero and a safe systems.
- My major focus is on the Bureau's historic budget crisis with a \$32 million shortfall of general transportation revenue. We must cut 1/3 of our discretionary funding next year. At last month's city council work session, we discussed how without new funding, PBOT will have to make extreme cuts to staff and services. We have a strong capital improvement program, but cuts mean we would have to reduce quick build projects and ped safety education & programing. Cuts in recent years have already affected these areas of work. I need your help to show city leaders the importance of funding this work with stable sources not tied to fossil fuels.
- In addition to the budget, the new City charter and form of government is upon us, and our historic maintenance backlog is growing.
- I hope to be partner and leaders going forward, despite my rocky beginning
- Responding to Josh's discussion earlier, I am interested in making sure we have the opportunity to engage community. My greatest concern with a neighborhood initiated program like this is around risk. What level of risk can we assume as a city and what can we place on you, the resident. That's challenging, but it is not impossible. We need a strategy and plan to realize a program like this. There have been instances of folks doing unsanctioned work themselves, which might appear to help, but the work had to be removed. There were safety concerns and the maintenance team found it was degrading our assets, and the tools were problematic. But we don't want to be in a place were people feel they have to do this themselves without support. I imagine that Commissioner Mapps would be interested in having a conversation.
 - I am looking more broadly at a volunteer core that could do a lot of those things, being out in community and empowered to do something. I have some experience managing large scale volunteers. And PBOT has a set of skills aligned with mine and community engagement.

- Yes, we can do something. Will be doing that regardless of our funding gap or not.
- And to the discussion about the weight of vehicles: yes, they are getting larger, heavier, especially electric vehicles. It's a data point but we haven't been able to draw causation between weight of vehicle and severity of the crash. We are looking at how we can account for weight and accurately incorporated it in analysis and in our data.
- *[Comment in the chat about the Broadway Bike Lane]*
- *Director Williams:* It was not without controversy that we had thought of removing the bike lane and restoring original state. I have decided not to move that forward. If we're making improvements on streets/sidewalk, we need to do so in a way that is supportive of all users. To make adjustments necessary to make it work for all users. I've urged staff to replicate what's happening on SW 4th Ave where there is very clear separation of modes.

Discussion

- *Tabitha:* There are multiple issues: the bureau's limited budget, infrastructure posing issues and failing, rising deaths on the street. I'm concerned about how things are being prioritized. I would want to see PBOT investing in safety [rather than] the Broadway bike lane. Folks with disproportionate power lead priorities that conflict with urgent community needs. How, moving forward, can we have trust that critical safety needs are going to be prioritized?
 - *Director Williams:* Most projects 98% are moving forward as discussed. Louder voices aren't causing a change in direction, it's that they are critical of our choices and whether it meets the goals of the project.
 - There is a list of projects close to construction with design. There may be some tweaks, but when we make changes, we will engage. Like on Division: we needed to shorten median segments to enable movement of vehicles, not because of loud voices.
 - When you see something that goes against expectations, we would typically engage. My order to staff to review changes does not mean we would not engage and that you can't trust our team or me. Every choice we make should be servicing communities. One solution in one part of town is not necessarily the solution we should use in every part of town.
 - I made some mistakes/missteps in the past few weeks and have made changes and corrected that.
- *MaryLee:* Thank you, as congenitally blind pedestrian I want to have it on the record that consistency is the friend of blind consumers. I understand how downtown treatments might be different from neighborhoods, but consider consistency. And painted guidelines do nothing for the blind.

- *Director Williams:* There is safety and also beauty in consistency. Having every ADA ramp have the same treatment means you know what to expect at every corner. I'm going to challenge my team to make sure there is consistency in what we're designing to allow for predictable movement.
 - Take Broadway for example: there are conflicts on that stretch because there are treatments that are unfamiliar for people at all, regardless of mode—driving, walking, biking, rolling. Treatments people haven't seen. I want my team to be creative, but we are hearing from people that they don't know where to look—we want people to slow down, not to confuse them. As we move things forward, want to consider that consistency is a component of safety. So people know what to expect.
- *Tiel:* Communication is really important in creating an informed public. I happened to find out about the bike boxes from a billboard while riding the bus. Had I not been on that route or had I been driving, I wouldn't have read the billboard and known what the bike boxes were.
 - *Director Williams:* We recognize that we can improve on education. You will sometimes now see a rose lane, then a green lane, then a floating bus stop and people don't know what to do. I have had conversations with streetcar operators who have seen people unsure of how to use rose lanes and it has caused some crashes.
 - I to want communicate what we are doing. I said I wanted a Mr. Yuck or something iconic—you see the green Mr. Yuck symbol and you know not to touch it. We want something that is immediately recognizable in the street, so people see it and know what to do.
- *Tiel:* We're often told there isn't enough space for tree because of utilities or lack of space and I ask for bushes or shrubs or grass if a tree won't work, but it always defaults to concrete. I don't understand why when there are so many intermediate steps, like smaller/lower plantings that would be better. Is there a way to establish something like that in case we can't have a tree.
 - *Director Williams:* There are limits around trees, especially in median strips because of underground water.
 - *Kristin Hull:* We not able to plant trees often because of water lines. 82nd avenue does not have that limitation. As far as shrubs, that has more to do with maintenance of that landscape element. Gena is working with the maintenance operations group to try to introduce green elements when we can't put in a tree.
 - *Gena Gastaldi:* Tiel, I have been parroting what you've been saying about greenery. I've been working to figure this out and I actually had meeting today and found myself saying we need ground cover not just concrete. I will follow up offline.

- *Richard*: There are plans to “remove” parking in my neighborhood with no parking signs. If people have no respect for the church there, they won’t have respect for any parking signs.
 - *Director Williams*: When I was asked what we could do, I said removing parking won’t fix this. It will push problem somewhere else. This is systemic, not a parking issue. We did clear corners, improving visibility. And we did put up no parking signs, which allows for police officers doing enforcement. If a vehicles parked in a no parking area, if something nefarious is going on, they can be removed. We are Hoping to slow traffic in that area with the wide, straight thoroughfare. Signs and paint won’t necessarily change behaviors we need to address, but we can ensure sense of order around things happening as we return to a social contract. Transportation response should not be the blunt object we use to solve society’s problems. There have been 10-15 times I’ve gone out to see the issue myself, and I said that’s not a parking issue, that’s something else. We’re going to put bumps down to address speeding, and if it doesn’t work, we’ll keep trying.
- *Director Williams*: I am always happy to engage whether it’s in a formal meeting or offline.

7:00-7:45 – Powell Boulevard Updates (45 min)

Shelli Romero, Jen Bachman (ODOT)

ODOT staff will provide an overview on Powell Boulevard, including an update on the jurisdictional transfer for the corridor, along with ODOT’s near and long-term plans for the corridor.

- Thank you for asking us to be here to answer questions about the outer powell project.
 - Jen is the ODOT region 1 project manager, Shelly is the ODOT area manager.
 - Project goes back to East Portland Action Plan (2006), and a top priority was Powell. Segment 2 was built first because it had the highest # of crashes so it was a top priority. The rest of the segments 1,3,4 will be built as 1 project.
 - Once the project is done, Powell will be transferred to Portland’s jurisdiction.
 - 3.25 of 4 miles to go before project completion.
 - See presentation for details.

Committee Questions:

- We have yet to understand the crash reduction potential for protected bike lanes, and this would be a good opportunity to gather good count data, like a couple days of observation before construction (not just the peak 2-hour counts)
- *Tabitha*: With the crossings that ODOT has put in, I have heard they are not the same level of quality as what PBOT would put in.

- FHWA encourages not having half signals and replacing them with flashing beacons.
- *Tiel*: How is ODOT managing pedestrian crossings with the third center lane
 - Center turn lane is not continuous. Will have pedestrian islands in center of the roadway at crossings.
- How is ODOT getting right of way?
 - Required ROW agreements with 255 property owners. A record for ODOT projects. Had to take a few properties (2 out of hundreds). In some cases the public ROW was being used for parking and it surprised some folks when we needed that space now for sidewalks.
- Will inner powell jurisdictional transfer be coupled with outer powell?
 - We are not having conversations about inner powell. There are a lot of needs to be addressed before being transferred, and there is no funding identified for that.
 - PBOT, ODOT, and TriMet are working to identify immediate safety improvements. ODOT has 2 projects: an RRFB crossing at 36th, and upgrading 4 corners of 92nd & Powell with ADA ramps. There has also been some school zone signing put in.
- *Rebecca*: Is there potential for a half signal rather than RRFB with 4 lane cross sections on Powell? It's very dangerous, and unlike half signal, for RRFB people don't have to stop.
 - It's far enough along in design that at this point we will be doing RRFB. This is also [FHWA guidance](#).
- *Tiel*: Do you anticipate that driving speeds will increase on Powell with the center turn lane? Are there any plans for monitoring speeds.
 - PBOT was really good at pushing for lowering speeds. Doing so requires a speed study. We [ODOT] waited until segment 2 was complete to do the study because that segment used RRFBs so people will have to slow for crossing pedestrians. The same thing can be done for other segments.
- *Devin*: Have there been any conversations about speed bumps?
 - It's a freight route. No we didn't look at speed bumps.
- What standard would the speed study use? 50th or 85th percentile?
 - We are used to using 85th but we will check on that.

7:45-7:55 – Public Comment (10 min)

David Binning: His first PAC meeting and he is interested in Powell. He wants to thank the present committee members for asking the questions they did and hopes that they can keep following up on them. He really appreciated Rebecca's question.

Catie Tam: Wants to connect with Josh about the community driven projects. She lives in Woodstock close to him and thinks her neighborhood association recently formed an accessibility committee to address lack of on gravel roads. She would be really interested in that or any other opportunities to collaborate.