



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Linda Amato, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION APRIL 9, 2009 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

### COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chair-Linda Amato, Catherine Benotto, David Cutler, Jerry Finrow, Mark Johnson, Kay Knapton, Kevin McDonald, Christopher Persons, Michelle Zeidman

### COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Director, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Vice-Chair Chris Fiori, Colie Hough Beck, Josh Brower, Leslie Miller, Martin Kaplan, Amalia Leighton, Matt Roewe

### GUESTS

Wayne Barnett, Ethics and Elections Commission; Bill Bryant, Barbara Gray, Seattle Department of Transportation

### IN ATTENDANCE

Bob Corwin

*Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.*

### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Linda Amato called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

### COMMISSION BUSINESS

#### ▪ Minutes approval

Commissioner Kevin McDonald suggested some minor changes to the minutes.

**ACTION: Commissioner Kevin McDonald moved to approve the March 26, 2009 minutes as amended. Commissioner Mark Johnson seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.**

- **Chair's Report** - Commission Chair Linda Amato

Chair Amato announced the upcoming meetings: Tuesday, April 14, Executive Committee; Thursday, April 16 is our annual retreat; Wednesday, April 22, will be a special meeting to discuss the Seattle Transit Communities report; Thursday, April 23 is the next full commission meeting; Tuesday, April 28, is a lecture on sustainability with Helle Soholt from Gehl Architects.

Barbara Wilson reminded Commissioners to fill out their volunteer hours log. She also briefly described the agenda for the retreat.

## **BRIEFINGS & DISCUSSION**

- **Briefing: Ethics and Elections**
  - Wayne Barnett, Ethics and Elections Commission

Wayne Barnett provided a general overview of the City's Ethics Code and noted that disclosure and recusal is most important way to meet the code's requirements. He stated that if commissioners have financial interest in the ultimate decision to be made, they need to recuse themselves from any discussion and votes. Mr. Barnett added that when a commissioner's involvement on a project does not involve a direct financial interest, they just need to disclose that involvement. He reminded the commission that the primary goal is to provide transparency for citizens about the decision making process and to avoid the appearance of conflict.

Ms. Wilson reminded the commission that if they ever have a question about following the ethics code, it is best to ask Mr. Barnett for his opinion. Mr. Barnett agreed that the Ethics Commission is always available to answer questions ethics issues. Ms. Wilson noted that the Ethics Commission has always responded very quickly to answer specific questions from Planning Commissioners.

Commissioner Michelle Zeidman asked about how Planning Commissioners can be involved in elections. Mr. Barnett replied that Commissioners can certainly participate in the electoral process as a private citizen but that they cannot use City resources to advocate for or against any position or candidate. He noted that there should be a bright line between when one is working as a Commissioner and as a private citizen.

Diana Canzoneri asked about the housing levy. Mr. Barnett agreed that it is a more complicated subject and that while the Commission can help craft the best levy possible, nothing the Commission distributes should promote a yes vote. He suggested that the Parks Department produced a great example last year for the parks levy of how to provide factual information about a levy without actually promoting its passage.

Commissioner Jerry Finrow asked about the difference between a political benefit and a financial one. Mr. Barnett replied that it is always better to disclose any relationship because it helps supplement the public record.

Commissioner Catherine Benotto asked about serving on the Commission as an owner in an architectural firm that regularly works on projects throughout the city. Mr. Barnett responded that

there has to be direct financial gain. He provided an example of a library contract that was being awarded through a competitive process as one in which Commissioner Benotto would *not* have a financial interest.

Mr. Barnett reminded commissioners not to take anything of value from someone, such as going out to dinner or a sports event. He noted that, in the case of an old friend, that relationship just needs to be disclosed.

Commissioner Zeidman asked about what would be appropriate in terms of searching for a job. Mr. Barnett replied that Ms. Wilson can certainly write a letter of recommendation and that one's involvement with the Commission can be mentioned but that prospective employers should not hire you in order to help their position.

Mr. Barnett noted that Commissioners do not need to disclose why they recuse themselves from a discussion.

- **Briefing: Urban Village Transit Network and Transit Master Plan**  
- Bill Bryant and Barbara Gray, Seattle Department of Transportation

**Recusal & Disclosure:**

- **Commissioner David Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, is working on the McCellan station area under a contract with the City.**

Chair Amato welcomed Mr. Bryant & Barbara Gray.

Ms. Gray noted that SDOT is just kicking off an update to the Transit Master Plan and that the department would appreciate the Commission's feedback

Commissioner Finrow asked about the public process for the update. Ms. Gray replied that SDOT has just gotten started and that while there will likely be some sort of public advisory committee, SDOT staff would appreciate the Commission's feedback about the public involvement process.

Ms. Gray outlined the proposed schedule for updating the Transit Master Plan, which would tentatively be completed with a final draft in the summer of next year. She noted that one of the gaps in the plan is that it does not include a project list. Mr. Bryant also noted that another frequent comment is that the monorail is still listed as one of the transit networks. He indicated that while there are a lot of basic updates that need to be made, SDOT will not completely start from scratch. Ms. Gray included that the format will likely change and that the Pedestrian Master Plan, which will be an on-line plan.

Ms. Gray noted that SDOT hopes to reinforce the connection between transit and land use, and describe the distinctions between different modes in the Transit Master Plan.

Ms. Wilson asked how the Transit Master Plan gets used on a daily basis. Ms. Gray replied that one key aspect relates to how projects, such as signalization, are prioritized in order to help reach target speeds for transit routes.

Commissioner McDonald suggested that a definition of what is considered a transit corridor would be helpful for the Commission's Transit Communities report. He asked if SDOT has a definition. Mr. Bryant replied that the Transit Master Plan does not currently define transit corridors, which is one of the shortcomings. He also noted that not all transit corridors are the same. Ms. Gray noted that when the Right of Way manual was developed, street types were defined in relation to adjacent land use. Mr. Bryant noted that it will be a good discussion to have as the project moves forward.

Commissioner Finrow noted that parking is an important consideration and asked how it would be addressed in the Transit Master Plan. He noted that parking is frequently the first topic brought up in public meetings. Ms. Gray replied that parking, walking and biking are key aspects of transit trips. She also noted that 'if you build it, they will come' in terms of providing single purpose parking. Commissioner Finrow suggested that while DOD, the Planning Commission, and a few others advocate for the reducing parking minimums in dense areas, there is not a strong coalition in support of this idea. Ms. Gray replied that it is a great suggestion that will be taken into consideration. She noted that the City does not have a parking plan and it warrants further discussion.

Commissioner Christopher Persons asked why the City has an aversion to creating parking around stations for those who do not live within walking distance. Ms. Gray replied that while it does provide utility, it just encourages people to drive. Mr. Bryant added that parking is both very expensive and the lowest possible land use, so that it does not make sense to build within the city. Ms. Gray noted that King County has developed some shared park and ride lots, e.g. the [Village at Overlake Station](#), but that the City of Seattle does not plan to develop any similar projects.

Ms. Canzoneri asked about how elderly and disabled people will be able to access transit. Ms. Gray noted that accessibility was a very important issue in the Pedestrian Master Plan and that SDOT looked at health data and socioeconomic data, for example, to determine where people need improved access, which determines the highest priority for investment and improvement. She noted that this is a way to prioritize improvements for people who are more dependent on transit.

Commissioner Kay Knapton asked who SDOT is trying to serve in these plans. She noted that when the focus is on commuters, a lot of segments are not being served, for example there is less service in the evening around entertainment centers. Mr. Bryant replied that SDOT is trying to take an overall approach to improve the mode split for transit across the board. He noted that the goal for the Urban Village Transit Network is to provide service that operates 15 min or less, 18 hours a day, 7 days a week. Ms. Gray noted that is the 20-year goal; it has been implemented on some corridors, but not yet all.

Commissioner Zeidman asked how projects get prioritized. Mr. Bryant responded that the criteria still need to be developed.

Commissioner David Cutler asked Ms. Gray and Mr. Bryant to expand on transit street classifications. Ms. Gray replied that they were originally assigned in 1984 to identify service levels for Metro. Mr. Bryant added that they did not specifically relate to land use. Commissioner Cutler noted that these classifications provide a great opportunity to integrate sidewalks and streetscapes as they relate to transit. Ms. Gray noted that the street types network does a better job, but still does not address transit effectively. I'm not sure what it look like yet.

Commissioner Finrow agreed with Commissioner Cutler's comments and suggested that transit planners ought to address urban design in terms of the nature of the street. He suggested that a section about urban design should be included in the plan. Commissioner Finrow noted that way finding is also an important aspect of how people use streets and trails. Ms. Gray noted that Kristan Koefed [with DPD] has been working on street features that are transit supportive that could help implement this suggestion.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the focus of the current plan is primarily to serve Seattle residents or does it have a component for inbound commuters. Mr. Bryant responded primarily, it focuses on what happens on routes within the city. Commissioner Johnson suggested that considering transit users coming from outside the city could help improve the system for all users. Mr. Bryant agreed that is an important perspective. He noted that Metro's Transit Blueprint focuses on relieving peak hour transit pinch points coming into downtown; it accepts general purpose traffic congestion in order to keep transit moving.

Chair Amato noted that safety is an important concern, for example around King Street Station, which has reasonable connections during peak periods, but not late at night. Mr. Bryant agreed that there needs to be better way finding between transit modes and that it will be addressed in the Transit Master Plan. Ms. Gray noted that in June, SDOT should have draft recommendations from Gehl Architects related to way finding and urban design around transit.

Commissioner Finrow noted that the Livable South Downtown plan includes encouraging 24/7 activity on many streets and that lighting and public safety will be critical. Ms. Gray agreed that lighting is a critically important issue and that SDOT is working to address that with City Light.

Mr. Bryant stated that "Bridging the Gap" is based largely on the existing transit plan and includes more than \$20 million over the life of the plan, \$13 million of which is dedicated for transit service. He noted that there are four transit corridors, two of which are Rapid Ride corridors:

- (1) downtown to Ballard;
- (2) downtown to West Seattle; federal law requires us to stop at 30% until we complete a NEPA. As Metro is in charge of that process
- (3) downtown to Rainier Valley, which connects with LINK in several places; and
- (4) University District to Market via North 45<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Bryant stated that design of the Rainier corridor will be complete by the end of the year and construction will start next year. He indicated that improvements along these corridors could include building sidewalk extensions out into the parking lane; allowing buses to stop in the lane of traffic, rather than pick up passengers in a pull out; expanded space for people waiting for the bus; signal priority and other changes to channelization that prioritize buses over general purpose traffic; and consolidating stops along some routes. Mr. Bryant noted that some routes have six to eight stops per mile.

Commissioner McDonald mentioned rider activated lighting at transit stops as a tool that helps drivers know when there is someone to pick up when it might otherwise be too dark to see that person. Mr. Bryant agreed that that is part of the tool box for passenger amenities and that SDOT is installing the conduit so that Metro can install the lighting at selected stops. He noted that the lighting does not actually serve as a beacon for the driver but does make it easier for the passenger to be seen. Mr. Bryant acknowledged that there is a complex web of decisions that have to be made to

implement the transit corridors and that Metro has agreed to include many of these elements with the Rapid Ride routes.

Commissioner Finrow asked if the Ballard and West Seattle routes include bus rapid transit. Mr. Bryant confirmed that they are scheduled Rapid Ride routes and that SDOT is designing the roadway and signalization priority whereas Metro is designing the shelters and buses. Commissioner Finrow asked how these routes were selected. Mr. Bryant replied that they were selected based on several things including ridership and connectivity.

Commissioner Persons asked about reducing the number of stops along some routes. He noted that while that is great for some people, others who are more transit dependent might have a harder time accessing the stops if they are further apart. Mr. Bryant noted that the location of low income and disabled households will be considered among the factors that influence which stops are eliminated. He also offered to have the project manager contact the Commission to provide more information. Mr. Bryan noted that consolidating stops would also allow more amenities to be provided at the stops that remain, including better lighting and real time transit information.

Chair Amato noted that time had run out for discussion and invited Mr. Bryant and Ms. Gray to come back for further discussion.

- **Project Update**

- Sound Transit: University Link Light Rail Review Panel, Commissioner Kevin McDonald

Commissioner McDonald presented a PowerPoint about the University Link Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP). He noted that the design of the two stations change significantly based on the LRRP input.

- **Project Update**

- Shoreline Master Plan, Commissioner Mark Johnson

Commissioner Johnson provided an overview of his involvement on the Shoreline Master Plan update Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). He noted that the CAC has been meeting for about a year and that they have had many more meetings than were originally planned. Commissioner Johnson stated that the City has developed an inventory of the shorelines and rated the ecological of the function of the shorelines using a sophisticated model developed by the County. He indicated that one major change would be at residential shorelines for piers, docks and bulkheads so that when people repair existing structures, they would have to make improvements. Commissioner Johnson noted that the other big change would be to require more shorelines to have vegetated setbacks. He added that he was not aware of any discussion related to the City taking on more restorative efforts on public beaches. Commissioner Johnson stated that while some projects have included more restorative efforts, other have not, such as Alki Beach.

Commissioner McDonald asked about docks. Commissioner Johnson replied that the main issue for City is whether or not to add more rules to existing City codes or continue to rely on other agencies to regulations to protect these environments.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bob Corwin asked if People for Puget Sound has been involved in the Shoreline Master Plan update. Commissioner Johnson replied that they do have representatives on the CAC. Mr. Corwin noted that at the group's annual breakfast recently, he was pleased to see that so many people are volunteering to help clean up the regions waters. Commissioner Johnson agreed.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Amato adjourned the meeting at 5:20.