

Levy to Move Seattle Oversight Committee Meeting

[Levy Oversight Committee bylaws – adopted April 2017](#)

[Move Seattle Levy legislation, approved June 29, 2015\)](#)

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 / 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Co-chairs: Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Ron Posthuma

Location: Video Conference

Members present on the phone: Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Ron Posthuma, Inga Manskopf, Joseph Laubach, Samuel Ferrara, Patrick Taylor, Alex Rouse, Kevin Werner, David Seater, Joseph Laubach, Vicky Clarke, Nick Paranjpye, Hester Serebrin, Lisa Bogardus, Councilmember Alex Pederson

Members Absent: Todd Biesold, Ben Noble

Guests: Rachel McCaffrey, Lorelei Williams, Brian Sperry, Kevin Lo, Sam Zimbabwe, Brad Topol, Sue Byers, Ken Canete (all SDOT), Aaron Blumenthal (Council Budget Office), Elliot Helmbrecht (Mayor’s Office), Tracy Record (West Seattle Blog), Merten Paxtyn (Puget Sound Business Journal), Ryan Packer (The Urbanist), Heidi Groover (Seattle Times)

MEETING CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 PM

Agenda item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Rachel B conducted a roll call for committee members, Rachel M introduced City staff, and then guests introduced themselves by stating their name and organization if applicable.

Agenda item #2: Q1 Levy Report Q&A

Rachel M: Lorelei will share some of the [Levy Q1 Report highlights](#) and then we want to focus most of the time on the committee’s questions.

Lorelei W: We had good momentum in Q1 coming off a successful 2019 and then the COVID-19 pandemic impacted project delivery in early March and the West Seattle Bridge closure also occurred in March. We are still working to identify the impacts from COVID-19 on SDOT’s work. In Q2, we expect to be able to provide more context and details on the impacts of COVID-19 to levy projects. Q1 is historically a slower time for delivery due to winter weather. That said, Northgate Ped Bridge started construction this winter, 35th Ave SW Vision Zero Phase 2 was completed, and we completed a significant amount of tree planting.

Rachel B: Looks like we planted half the trees in Q1 and I don’t understand how that works. I thought trees were planted with projects.

Lorelei W: Some trees are installed by crews and some through our capital projects. Also, seasonal weather plays a factor in tree planting.

Sam F: I noticed in the report that Fairview Bridge underspent in Q1 by \$4.3M due to underground obstructions. Do we expect cost over runs due to these obstructions?

Lorelei W: It’s rare that we get out of the ground without some issues like this. Even though we ran into underground obstructions, we have been able to move forward and we don’t think it’s going to affect the budget at this point.

Agenda item #3: Vision Zero Update

Brad T: Presented an [update on the Vision Zero Program](#). While the trend over the last 80 years has been a reduction in serious collisions and fatalities, 2019 was the worst year for serious collisions and fatalities. We have had 8 fatalities so far in 2020. The Vision Zero Program takes a reactive and proactive approach to collision reduction. Trends change over time so we use solutions that work well as broadly as we can across the city. Lower speed limits work well to mitigate mid-block collisions. We will be reducing speed limits to 25mph on all arterial streets and so far, we have installed new speed limit signage on 25% of the arterial network. We estimate 16 months to complete all 355 miles of speed limit signage and we are on track to achieve that goal. Our before and after studies on streets, where we have lowered speed limits, show that average speeds dropped 3% to 15% and there was an 18 to 39% reduction in collisions. We use leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs) to help address collisions in crosswalks. Federal studies show a reduction in collisions of up to 60% after LPIs have been installed, and we are seeing similar results. Our 2020 goal is to install an additional 100 LPIs. We ran a contest for safe driving with a \$10,000 prize. About 4,000 to 5,000 people participated by using an app that monitored their driving habits. New initiatives this year include evaluating walking distances across all arterials and evaluating how distances could be reduced, hardened centerlines at some pilot intersections to facilitate more 90 degree angle turning movements, and distracted driving cameras for data collection only and not enforcement.

Alex R: Asked for an interpretation of the graphs that Brad presented.

Brad T: The graphs show that we have not had any cyclist fatalities so far this year.

Brad T: We are seeing a reduction in total collisions since the governor's COVID-19 Stay at Home Orders went into effect. Vehicle volumes are 50% lower but vehicle speeds are 10% higher.

Inga M: This implies lower accidents are due to lower volumes, correct?

Brad T: Yes, exposure plays a big role. I expect that in addition to vehicle volumes being lower, so are pedestrian volumes.

Alex R: It looks like volumes are down by 50% and collisions are down by more than 50%.

Brad T: That's correct, and the peak accidents are down by 70% for that timeframe. We are starting to see a slight uptick in volumes as people get out a bit more than in the beginning of Stay at Home Order.

Inga M: On 65th Ave NE, did you look at road design changes vs. speed limit changes?

Brad T: Yes, we should probably go back and look at the data on 65th Ave NE. There are some studies that show how design affects collision rates. For example, if you reduce the number of lanes, you should see a reduction in collisions. However, there's little data about speed limit reduction. We continue to track before and after speed and collision changes.

David S: The 2nd Ave and Rainer locations got worse after LPI installations. Can you speculate as to why?

Brad T: We are still looking into that and I would rather not speculate as there are so many variables.

Nick P: Is this data for bikes too?

Brad T: No, it's just for pedestrians. We are a little hesitant to allow bikes to use LPIs. We need to look into it further before we would allow that.

Inga M: Are you going to do the Seattle's Safest Driver Contest again this year?

Brad T: We are still trying to figure out if we can include it in the program.

Rachel B: Why don't you make this app available for anyone to use?

Brad T: I'll have to look into that. I'm not sure if it's still available to download and use.

Nick P: What about privacy concerns?

Brad T: We have to go through the surveillance ordinance process to address privacy policies. There are different ways to implement these cameras. There's technology available that only captures and transmits the number of drivers using phones while driving, and no license plates, or faces would be captured and transmitted in the data.

Agenda item #4: City Budget Office Revenue Update (Aaron Blumenthal)

Aaron B: I want to give you an overview of [Ben Noble's Economic and Revenue presentation to City Council on April 22, 2020](#) and what we are seeing with revenues and some issues that relate to SDOT. We have developed two economic forecast scenarios, a rapid recovery scenario, and a slow recovery scenario. Both scenarios show significant impact to unemployment and lower economic activity through 2024. More recent data suggests that we are closer to the slow recovery scenario, possibly even worse than the slow recovery scenario presented here. Property, parking, real estate, business and occupation, and other taxes make up the general fund revenues. For the rapid recovery scenario, we are expecting a 13% decline in general fund revenues. This forecast for the rapid recovery scenario shows a \$186M shortfall in 2020 and it could be more. This will impact SDOT's budget. On the bright side, one of the few areas we see little impact is property taxes and that's how much of the levy is funded. The slow recovery scenario shows a \$299M reduction in the general fund. We have about \$120M in the rainy day and emergency accounts. We can draw from these accounts but we would likely conserve some for future years. And we have another \$20M in reserves. We need to reduce spending across the board. And we'll be looking at how to leverage the flexibility of levy funds.

Nick P: Should we be planning for the \$185M or \$299M reduction in the 2020 general fund revenues? What is your recommendation?

Aaron B: The city as a whole is already discussing options for how we can deal with a reduction of \$299M. It would be prudent for this committee to look at priorities.

Vicky C: The council has approved interfund loans. The council pay role tax may require an interfund loan with the levy. Can you speak to this?

Aaron B: I'm unaware of any legislation that has passed that authorizes interfund loans against the levy. Councilmembers Sawant and Morales have proposed an interfund loan against many of the fund sources in the city and that has not passed yet. The City's position is that we need to look very carefully at these proposals to understand the impacts.

Agenda item #5: COVID-19, West Seattle Bridge, and Levy Project Delivery

Lorelei W: We are following all the federal and local agency guidelines around COVID-19 and we are continuing construction on our capital projects. We held a two-day work suspension to do a health and safety check. We continue to update those health and safety plans as we go forward. Actions we have taken due to the pandemic include implementing food pick-up zones to facilitate restaurant to-go orders, stay healthy streets, and free parking. Many of our planned deliverables for 2020 and beyond will be impacted due to the City's general fund revenue reductions that Aaron outlined. And we expect to fall short of spending estimates in 2020 due to the impacts that COVID-19 is having on our project delivery.

Rachel B: Can you explain the signal retiming?

Lorelei W: We have been replacing older controllers to align with current traffic conditions and also adjusting timing of the signals so that traffic and pedestrians can move through intersections more efficiently.

Lorelei W: We have a team out at the West Seattle Bridge every day, and we are almost finished installing a monitoring system with an alarm that will alert us at night if conditions worsen. We recently hired a contractor to do work on pier 18 and we are moving forward on both repair and replacement options simultaneously. We recently repaved and changed the intersection of the west end of the low bridge to keep freight, emergency vehicles and transit moving. Our traffic engineers are continuing to evaluate the streets in the area to address bridge closure traffic impacts. And we have developed an emergency response plan if we do get an alarm indicating that the bridge may collapse.

Joe L: Is SDOT looking into expedite high priority elements of the master plan or spot improvements to make bicycling more accessible and safer in the West Seattle area because of the bridge closure?

Sam Z: There's a number of transportation mitigation items we are working on, and making bike connections will be part of that. Even during this period, where there's been a decline in vehicle traffic, we have not seen a decline in bike volumes.

Patrick T: I was biking on the low bridge and noticed a lot of single occupant vehicles on the low bridge and not adhering to the restricted use condition on the bridge.

Sam Z: We often have enforcement from the Seattle Police Department but it's not 24/7 and when there's not police presence we have more violations. Our primary concern is keeping access for emergency response, freight and transit.

Lorelei W: We expect to have reductions in general fund revenue in 2020 as Aaron mentioned. Therefore, we plan to pause some capital work soon, as we continue to prioritize levy work, and better understand revenue impacts. We hope to share this with you soon. However, I'm most interested in your thoughts on levy priorities and would like to hear from you all. Also, we had planned the Levy Portfolio Status update this Fall and now we plan to push that out to Q1 2021 to incorporate the things that come out of this year's budget process and reduced revenues due to COVID-19 impacts.

Agenda item #6: Committee Business

- **Considerations for the levy program moving forward**

Ron P: Given the revenue impacts from COVID-19, I-975, and the recent closure of the West Seattle Bridge, is there some early input we can provide to SDOT on prioritizing levy projects? We went through a reprioritization a few years back. Maybe voter approved work should get a priority. For example, can we look at some dept financing, and are there things that we can postpone or delay?

Alex R: Are there ways that we can set prioritization to focus on work that helps people now? For example, projects in the West Seattle Bridge area, to help mitigate the bridge closure impacts to the community.

Nick P: Do we have SDOT's thoughts on how to prioritize the work? Then we can bring it to the committee and see if the committee supports SDOT's prioritization approach.

Ron P: I think we want to do that over time.

Rachel B: If you can make signal timing easier for pedestrians to get around, why don't we prioritize that work?

David S: As the Pedestrian Board representative, I like that idea. And I would like to see safety and improvement projects for bikes and pedestrians, and sidewalk repair as top priorities.

Vicky C: I think safety should be the number one priority.

Alex R: There's questions about how commute patterns will be changing for the next few years.

Sam F: Are there projects where the levy is only contributing part of the total funding needed? Are the other funds going away on those projects? If those funds are staying, does it make sense to not move the levy funds?

Lorelei W: Projects in active construction are a high priority for us to continue. Another high priority is grant funded projects.

Kevin W: It seems to me that there needs to be agreement on a methodology and process for prioritizing work, then prioritization criteria, and then projects.

Ron P: It would make some sense if there was broad agreement in the committee that bike, and pedestrian safety is a top priority. Do others agree?

Rachel B: Yes

Joe L: Yes, prioritizing bike and pedestrian safety work would also help the city achieve climate goals.

Ron P: Are there projects already in the levy, that will help mitigate the West Seattle Bridge closure, that could be expedited?

Joe L: Yes, that make's sense.

Alex R: I think we should consider the changes in available funding and how prioritization can flexible to address funding issues.

Hester S: I agree with these themes, but it would be helpful to have a systematic approach on how levy prioritization may or may not be changed due to COVID related conditions. Yes, safety is important, but so is transit. Being more systematic will be helpful.

Ron P: We can wait and see what the City comes up with.

Vicky C: There are many unknowns and so flexibility is really important. We should not get wedded to a project list in the next two months, as the situation is likely to continue to change over the coming months, and we don't know what the community needs will be.

Ron P: I agree. We are just trying to provide some broad input in advance of SDOT going through a prioritization effort.

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Inga M: Moved to approve the April 7, 2020 minutes.

Patrick T: Seconded the motion.

Rachel B: Alright, the minutes are approved.

Agenda item #7: Upcoming Agenda Topics, Announcements, and/or New Business

Rachel B: Is there other new business?

Rachel M: Yes, we will be back in June with COVID and West Seattle Bridge related updates. Does the committee have requests for other agenda items?

Ron P: Is there going to be a presentation on the prioritization effort?

Lorelei W: I'm hoping to email a draft of the prioritization approach so you can digest it before the meeting. As we have to pause some projects, it doesn't mean those projects will get cut. The pause gives us time to complete the prioritization process.

Nick P: I agree, let's start with SDOT's draft prioritization criteria.

Rachel B: Does that mean you will come back to the next meeting with priorities?

Lorelei W: At the next meeting we would share our rationale behind a prioritization process so we can discuss the merits and challenges with you.

Nick P: When you send the criteria please put a timeline when you want responses back. And Rachel or Ron can compile a list of responses.

Alex R: I think we'll want to compile and have a discussion as we respond to SDOT. Whether it's the co-chairs or something else, this should probably be facilitated at our June meeting.

Rachel B: Are you offering to facilitate?

Alex R: I could try that.

Nick P: I think we should compile comments on SDOT's draft prioritization criteria and that would be a good starting point for the next meeting.

Rachel B: I'm open to that.

Alex R: I agree with what Nick is saying.

Nick P: Alex and I could compile all committee members comments on SDOT's draft prioritization criteria. Lorelei, when would you send your draft prioritization criteria?

Lorelei: I'm hoping we could send it to the committee within two weeks.

Public Comment:

None

Adjourn: 7:02 PM

Action items

Action items below capture tasks from previous meetings. Completed items will remain on action item tracker for one additional set of meeting minutes to capture "complete" status and will then be removed.

Action item	Meeting	Lead	Status	Deadline
Send committee SDOT's draft levy prioritization criteria	May 5, 2020	SDOT		May 20
Summarize the construction cost of the 2020 TNC tax funded projects	February 4, 2020	SDOT		TBD