

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, October 6, 2020 / 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Co-chairs: Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Ron Posthuma

Location: Video Conference

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

Members Absent: Todd Biesold

Guests: Sam Zimbabwe, Lorelei Williams, Brian Sperry, Matt Gemberling, Tracy Krawczyk, David Conway, Jim Curtain, Kiera Dragich, Joanna Valencia (all SDOT), Toby Thaler (aid to CM Alex Pedersen), Aaron Blumenthal (Mayor's Office), Elliot Helmbrecht (Mayor's Office), Riz Rizwi (Transportation Equity Work Group), Jennifer Lehman (Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board), Heidi Groover (Seattle Times), Qingyang Xie, Alex Atchison, Jen Malley-Crawford, Kevin O'Neill, Jennifer Lehman, Jeff Lundstrom, Joanna Cullen, Shefali Ranganathan (Deputy Mayor)

MEETING CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 PM

Agenda item #1: Welcome and roll call

Rachel B: Conducted a roll call for committee members.

Lorelei W: Introduced SDOT staff and other city representatives.

Agenda item #2: Director and Deputy Mayor remarks

Shefali R: We are dealing with devastating impacts on City revenues, which is affecting the entire city budget. In 2020, the city has been faced with so many significant challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and the West Seattle Bridge closure. We have been here before and we have found ways to be creative in delivery and in filling gaps in the budget.

Sam Z: Despite our budget challenges, there's a lot of work we continue to accomplish and will continue to accomplish in future years. The 4th Avenue Phase 1 protected bike lane is completed and open and Lander Street Overpass is opening tomorrow. Despite these budget challenges we have a lot to celebrate. The Levy assessment process will be really important to determine how best to spend the remaining funding.

Ben N: This is as difficult a challenge as we have faced in terms of revenue challenges and costs. In addition to the reduced tax revenues, the city has higher expenses and is paying for COVID

testing, small business support, and other costs to respond to COVID-19 pandemic. We may get some federal support but we haven't been able to count on that. The general fund revenues are down about \$200M. We anticipate another year in 2021 of lower general fund revenues. Real estate excise tax, school cameras revenues, and commercial parking taxes are all down. And we need at least a \$100M for the West Seattle Bridge repairs. Resources that would normally have gone to the menu of transportation projects have been declining. A new payroll tax has been approved, which should help offset some the impacts to the general fund. Also, the Mayor's budget includes \$100M in investments in communities of color.

Ron P: Did you say \$50M in general funds normally goes to transportation and it's down \$10M?

Ben N: Yes, the Fire Department budget increased by \$5M due to the West Seattle Bridge closure. These are the kind tough decisions we've had to make with the limited resources.

Lorelei W: Shared the agenda for the budget process update and timeline.

Ben N: Provided an [update on the City's revenue forecasts](#) by revenue type and for years 2020 and 2021. The payroll tax is new and will help offset the reduced tax revenues that we are expecting in 2020 and 2021.

Agenda item #3: 2021-22 SDOT proposed budget

Lorelei W and Matt G: [Provided an update on revenue and budget changes for the levy program.](#)

In times like this we need to center ourselves in SDOT's values and the LOC's values, which include equity, preserving SDOT staff capacity so we can deliver as the recovery occurs, safety, climate change, urban village focus, project status, leverage opportunities, working towards consistency in our program prioritization methods, and maintaining funding and flexibility for our larger transportation and mobility focused programs. The levy program has shrunk by \$60.7M (7.5%) for 2021-2024. Levy resources have remained relatively stable. Local funds have declined by \$71.6M, TBD (to be determined) funds have declined by \$124.3M, and leverage (secured grants/partnerships) funds has increased by \$133.5M. All three levy categories have reduced budgets for 2021 - 2024: Safe Routes by \$13.1M (7.1%), Maintenance and Repair by \$32.3M (14.6%), and Congestion Relief by \$15.3M (3.8%). We are pursuing interim financing and are proposing a three-year bond, which will allow some projects to continue instead of delaying those projects.

Agenda item #4: Levy prioritization assessment update

Tracy K: Provided an update on the levy assessment including key assessment findings to date and next steps. We are looking at the paused projects and evaluating them in the context of SDOT's values and the LOC's assessment factors to either validate budget changes or recommend other changes. Levy programs have different purposes and thus may not prioritize work using consistent or similar methods. We would like your feedback on issues like how important is it to continue to fund programs that have met or are on track to exceed targets? And are their levy categories, programs or projects that are more important to retaining or

increasing over others? Also, how important is prioritizing geographic equity vs. improving racial/social equity when making investments?

Agenda item #5: Committee discussion on proposed budget

Rachel M: Ron is going to lead the committee discussion on the proposed budget.

Ron P: We have a little more time on the levy assessment but budget comments we need to get done right away. Matt asked us to comment on the budget shifts between the three levy categories. In general, how does what the city proposal relate to the guidance that the LOC has provided before?

Alex R: Is there a chance school cameras can be turned on during the school year because of school lunch pick-up?

Lorelei W: We are grappling with the definition of "active school use" in the school camera legislation. Our legal staff's interpretation is that short-term use like lunch pick-up does not qualify as active use.

Riz R: What duration will the bonds be issued for? And what source will be used to repay the bonds and what's the interest?

Matt G: Payment would be completed in 3 years. The interest will be paid by levy funds. We estimate \$370K in interest on a principal amount of \$22.7M.

Ron: Is this different than the interfund loan?

Matt G: Yes, this is different.

Vicky C: Tracy, how do you plan to use this input that you are asking for?

Tracy: The LOC's input on these questions will help us either validate the budget decisions that have been made or recommend some changes through supplemental budget changes in 2021 or in the 2022 budget process.

Joanna C - I am wondering why the Madison BRT project is continuing and the Rainier RapidRide project is on hold?

Lorelei W: We are moving forward on all of the Multimodal corridor projects. The Madison BRT project is aligned with Metro and is in the Federal Transit Authority Small Starts grant program. Rainer RapidRide was not funded by Metro during the levy timeframe. We have been making improvements on Rainier and the Route 7 transit and multimodal corridor project is moving forward as well.

Joe L: The city's bridge audit assessment has identified significant and potentially costly needs. Has there been any discussion of identifying a new revenue source (tax or fee) to offset the specific bridge costs?

Lorelei W: Yes, the needs are significant and we are looking at how to get a good handle on asset conditions and have a plan to address the lifecycle of assets – what's a repair, replacement, etc. and looking at revenue opportunities. This is a conversation we're starting within the city on what we need to do to fund these needs.

Sam Z: We also need to have conversations at the state and federal level as well because we don't have that many tools for transportation revenues.

Hester S: When we say geographic equity, don't we really mean geographic equality? (each gets the same amount of \$, vs. each gets what they need to get to certain outcomes to the same end level?) If not, can you define geographic equity?

Tracy K: We don't really use geographic equity in our prioritization. We are trying to determine if we should focus some resources in areas that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19? At the end of the levy, how important is it to show that we've had a decent amount of investment within all areas of the city?

Ron P: I think the LOC needs to say something about the shifts in funding between levy categories. And do we think race and social justice equity should trump geographic equity? We don't have to answer both tonight, but we should get to the first one so we can provide formal comments to council on the budget.

Joe L: I agree with the budget increase in Safe Routes and budget reductions to Congestion Relief and Maintenance and Repair levy categories.

Vicky C: I agree too.

Patrick T: I agree too.

Rachel B: I would like to see more money in these equity focus areas instead of geographic equity. But we have to keep in mind a future levy and getting voter support for it. So, we need to find a balance.

Alex R: I agree. I think that's consistent with the Neighborhood Street Fund process.

Sam Z: Suggested that the levy assessment could result in different amount of budget shifts between levy categories.

Kevin W: We did include equity as a key assessment factor in our letter to SDOT in June.

Rachel B: I'd like to make more straightforward comments on how to address equity. And I'd like to write a new letter to the council about our views about this budget.

Sam F: We can further emphasize the importance of equity in the letter.

Ron P: To summarize, we are talking about preparing a letter to city council in support of shifting of funds to the Safe Routes levy category. We also want to reaffirm the importance of race and social equity in the budget and levy assessment process.

Sam F: We can include in the letter support of the 3-year bond to fund projects too.

David S: How will "paused" projects be paid for if we're spending the funds that were planned for them on other projects? How is this different from cancelling them?

Lorelei W: We view these as pauses as there is opportunity in the active budget process, the levy assessment, and if revenues change in the future, to restore/restart these projects.

Patrick T: I have a question about the two South Seattle bike projects planning work being paused? Why is planning being paused when SDOT is maintaining staff?

Lorelei W: Planning on these projects is being paused because the resources that supported that work is no longer there. Staff resources who would have done that work are being reallocated to other work. Also, we have reduced consultant resources, which has helped us maintain staff.

Vicky C: I echo Patrick's comment about the paused projects. I guess I'm confused how there could be reduced capital projects but same level of staff capacity, and still not the ability to keep doing early planning on these long delayed bike safety connections in South Seattle. The challenge with pausing these early planning projects is that we don't have planning projects in the pipeline to keep implementing the BMP past this year and next.

Alex R: I'm also disheartened to hear about Martin Luther King (MLK) bicycle lane is paused. Seemed like a lot of momentum recently.

Lorelei W: The MLK project from Rainer to Henderson is paused. MLK from Rainier to Judkins St. is continuing and we are hoping to start construction late next year or early the following year.

Sam Z: Regarding why some projects are paused when we are maintaining staff, we are not maintaining all staff. It was our goal to minimize impacts to staff, but there are staff impacted. We pulled back consultant work but budget cuts did cause staff impacts. I don't want the group to walk away and think we didn't have any impacts to staff.

Kevin W: I agree with Rachel that equity can be called out in a new letter. Is SDOT implying that the funds spent to date have been distributed equitably?

Lorelei W: We know where the work has been delivered to date. We have been reviewing how we have addressing equity. We could map discreet projects completed. However, it will be good to know what works for the LOC.

Ron P: I am happy to work on this letter with Sam F. If there are no other comments to put in the letter, I'll turn it back to Rachel.

Agenda item #6: Committee business

Rachel B: Any corrections to the September minutes?

Joe P: I motion to approve the September minutes.

Patrick T: I second the motion.

Rachel B: The minutes are approved.

Alex R: This is my last meeting for now. Jen Malley-Crawford is taking over my place from the Transit Advisory Board.

Rachel B: Inga has offered to help Rachel organize the retreat in November. We talked about having retreats outside of business hours. Any other business to discuss?

Public Comment:

Rachel B: Anyone want to give public comment?

Inga M: As a member of the general public, I want to thank SDOT for completing the Vision Zero NE 65th Street project. The post project study shows that pedestrians feel safer, vehicles are travelling at lower speeds, and reduced collisions and no fatalities since 2018.

David S: At our last meeting, I talked about my frustrations about SDOT's staff putting eco blocks at the East Precinct and not continuing the Keep Moving and Stay Healthy Streets work.

Shefali R: The blocks are there for a safety. There have been multiple attempts at arson. It's a very dense block with neighboring wood structures with senior residents, which is a fire hazard. Our goal is to return to regular conditions as soon as possible.

Sam Z: In regard to the Keep Moving and Stay Healthy Streets, we recently announced the end of street closures at Golden Gardens and Lake Washington Blvd. It was very successful and we saw a lot of people using the street and very little diversion of traffic onto other streets. We're looking at how we can build off of that success to make other long-term changes. We are having ongoing conversations with the communities on what they want in terms of more permanent barriers on streets.

Adjourn: 6:56 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 |
|--|-------------|------|------------------------------|----------|
| Provide Mayor Durkan's letter to Sound Transit re. Madison BRT | September 1 | SDOT | Completed – emailed 9/3/2020 | Sept 10 |
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