

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, September 5, 2023 / 5:00 – 8:00 PM

Co-chairs: Inga Manskopf, Kevin Werner

Location: Video Conference, in-person at City Hall

Members Present:, Inga Manskopf, Sam Ferrara, Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Geri Poor (Freight Board), Jessica Nguyen, Dennis Gathard, Tyler Blackwell, Alex Bejaran Estevez, Clara Cantor, Saroja Reddy (City Budget Office), Councilmember Alex Pedersen (City Council), Kevin Werner, Lisa Bogardus, Natasha Riveron (Pedestrian Board), Art (Transit Board), Christine (Bike Board)

Guests: Ryan Packer (The Urbanist), Katie Olsen (SDOT)

MEETING CALL TO ORDER: 5:00PM

Welcome and roll call

Kevin W.: Conducted roll call for committee members.

Public Comment

Kevin W.: Asked if anyone wanted to give public comment. No public comment.

Welcome and Introductions

Susie P.: Facilitated introductions for everyone present, where each person shared their name, race, pronouns, role outside of this work, favorite mode of transportation, and why this work matters to them. Facilitated identification of notetakers. Introduced her style of facilitations and group norms, including leading with kindness.

What will happen today, establishing a shared understanding of the Levy, LOC, and Ordinance

Kevin: Read the section of the Ordinance that outlines LOC role in the recommendation and explained how that will guide the agenda. Explained that at a point later in the evening, SDOT staff will leave the room briefly.

Susie: Confirmed everyone was clear on the above.

Rachel: Asked to read the piece about alternative revenues again, noting the language about providing a more direct link was unclear.

Dennis/Inga: And how would we know?

Art: I thought that was what the term leverage was for.

Saroja: Explained that this is a property tax levy, but there may be other kinds of funding to package together, to supplement, such as VLF, bonds, etc. that have a nexus to transportation.

Sam: This might come up in a discussion about leverage.

Geri: Impact fees were discussed earlier today.

Dennis: How would we know what they are?

Saroja: You can ask staff.

Clara: Revenue stabilization workgroup came out with a report recently with options for revenue.

Tyler: I am reading this as, if we are using specific funds from specific modes, could those go to transportation vs. Property tax going to transportation.

Dennis: Can Council decide how to use those funds?

Susie: Next we are discussing values that are driving you all in this process.

Values

Susie: What values are driving your decisionmaking in this process?

Dennis: What is the objective of this?

Susie: See where you all align, to guide the work of decisionmaking and what you all recommend.

All: Called out their values, focused on affordability, safety, transparency/accountability and good use of public funds, centering impact on communities/equity, flexibility in design, climate change, trees in Seattle, plan integration, and what LOC role is.

Kevin: Checking our recommendations against these values will be helpful.

Lisa: Equity is a broad term we often use, but I am thinking about equity in part as the impacts of work on the people who live there.

Natasha: Recommend that when we say “equity” we be more specific about what we mean when we say that, i.e. what type of equity we mean.

Clara: It might be helpful to separate the pieces focused on centering certain voices from the overall equity piece.

Tyler: Would it be helpful to speak to process equity, distributional equity, racial equity, etc. And center equity how we approach it.

Susie: Aligned on how we will move forward if there is ambiguity.

Susie: Introduced values shared by the group focused on transparency and accountability.

Rachel: I would separate the two.

Dennis: Spending effectiveness.

Clara: When we spoke about safety, I heard two separate things: Structural safety, vs. Not dying (personal safety, centering needs of vulnerable users).

Clara: Would like to add accessibility to big list.

Natasha: Alignment with other plans seems super important.

Sam: We've talked a lot about federal and state grants, and there are all these other plans that don't come to fruition. A lot of funding sources are outside of SDOT's control.

Dennis: How about coordination.

Tyler: Spoke to effect of receiving other funds on process/restrictions.

Saroja: How do you create space for that flexibility, i.e. emerging needs, in a voter approved package? In levy language, it is sort of like an emerging needs pot.

Inga: Good conversation, but need to move on. We are all in agreement?

All: Yes.

Following conversation, main value groups aligned upon: Equity, Accountability & Transparency, Safety, Spending Effectively, Environment, Affordability, Accessibility, Coordination.

Bucket conversation

Kevin: Introduced four pieces of the LOC task, as well as management and oversight, as well as spending categories of levy.

- Project implementation success
- SDOT's ability to manage and control costs
- Availability of alternative revenue sources
- Underlying need for funding to support levy programs

CM Pedersen: Will we be talking about spending buckets for future?

Inga: Described how she envisioned going one by one through programs. We can also look at three different spending categories.

CM Pedersen: I thought these things, the four items, are supposed to inform how we are going to propose a new Levy and what we should spend on, a way to get from point A to point B.

Rachel: We are developing an outline today.

Inga: If we are done, and it doesn't feel right, we can address that.

Project implementation success

Inga: Overall Levy is meeting most goals, minus some programs.

Clara: A couple of programs had specific reasons, but there is one program by a considerable margin – the bike program. 10-20 miles under goal, which is significant. Make sure we don't just let one program fall to the wayside.

Sam: And it was bridge seismic, too.

Inga: And transit multimodal.

Rachel: Bridge seismic program has been disappointing. There were 16 bridges named as part of the levy. We approved a deep cut of bridges due to limited funding. We really need to address that.

Sam: They looked at some bridges, which cost so much more than expected.

CM Pedersen: Themes of overpromising of 2015 Levy. This is informing what we got done, so we can address what we didn't get done. Let's not overpromise.

Dennis: Demand specificity in the Levy statement. Looks better than it turned out to be.

Geri: One place where it did happen specifically was in freight spot improvements. Ensure flexibility, adaptability.

Inga: Want to highlight successes, such as Safe Routes to School, Lander, Fairview, Northgate.

Geri: Want to note tension with specificity.

Art: Emphasize the seriousness of what Rachel said for those of us who live in West Seattle. Very important to look and not have too much deferred backlog and maintenance needs. The 2022 letter from the LOC was great, and need to be addressed.

Inga: I want to add Vision Zero. We have Vision Zero programs that do good work, but we are seeing the goal not being met. Not sure it falls under programs.

Jessica: Common themes about what made the programs successful?

Inga: Question is, do we have all the info we need to make informed comments?

Rachel: Would like to see a presentation on what money has been spent to date total from the Levy on seismic bridge work.

Dennis: I have asked and they have not answered.

CM Pedersen: Same, we need to know why we didn't achieve those lane miles for bikes.

Kevin: We haven't gotten the answers we've been asking for.

Dennis: Ask them how we can avoid them in the future. The answers I got were what would I do. I think they are doing good stuff on bridges, but I don't know.

Sam: We have gotten great information, but not so much for bridges.

SDOT's ability to manage and control costs

CM Pedersen: Federal money – SDOT would guess on revenues expected from grants; sometimes would receive, sometimes would not.

CM Pedersen: Do we have any concern, in terms of basic costs, about SDOT spending more than we should on projects, or other stuff like delay in time that is creating cost problems.

Kevin: We are an oversight committee are not set up to answer that question.

Dennis: I did ask that.

Sam: Some big projects truly bid out to contractors – some come out over. SDOT has been successful in carrying contingencies in projects.

Dennis: The numbers in some of the documents are 10-20% contingency when they made this estimate. To me that is irrational.

Kevin: Look at the audit.

Tyler: Federal government did an audit of Lander bridge and found mismanagement of funds.

Lisa: The LOC is not in a position to do auditing, and sometimes it seemed like that was what we were being asked to do.

Rachel: That is how are we supposed to know this?

Kevin: I have been on boards where there have been audits we look at.

Geri: Add context from the last 9 years.

Inga: Good point, West Seattle Bridge, pandemic, weather, concrete strike.

Clara: Question for those who have been on LOC longer, during 2018 reset. Part of what we are trying to do here is the auditing and direction of the nitty gritty, and part of it is the values we embody and the outcomes we want. How specific and oversight-y do we want to be? Is there a prioritization process that we can lay out? Or do we want them to always come back to the committee and ask specific questions.

Sam: In June 2020 we wrote a letter on how projects should be prioritized in terms of not being cut.

Christine: Prioritize in terms of values.

Dennis: Do they do value engineering in there?

Clara: Pretty vast difference in what SDOT is putting out on the street; when projects are conceived, there is just a line, but as the project continues, it grows as it goes down the line. SDOT has broad cost estimates at the beginning and then narrows it down at the end. A lot of the looking forward we are doing – none of the projects have any design at all.

Kevin: There is existing flexibility, that was never exercised, and why?

Saroja: Yes we have.

Saroja: SDOT staff capacity has been an issue with the Levy.

Inga: We often bring this up and hear the answer that there is limited staff capacity.

Management and oversight

Inga: One of the issues around this is not getting information that is requested.

Dennis: How can we ensure that an oversight committee can do oversight by getting information?

Inga: We need to clarify the definition.

Clara: We need to define SDOT's responsibility.

Inga: I think we've done some oversight of program implementation, but we have issues with the finances in particular, and there are some programs that it is hard to get information about. The second thing is how much can an oversight committee be asked to do.

CM Pedersen: Shouldn't there be a budget where the LOC can order a deep dive like an audit?

Sam: I think an audit would be a great addition.

Tyler: I'm curious as to what the next steps would be. What is the accountability?

Christine: this presumes that the only way to get info is by doing a deep dive?

Dennis: A lot of the information is public and available.

Kevin: 20 minutes to talk about final items.

Tyler: Concerned about fiscal management if a third of budget comes from Levy. This is citywide. Overreliance on Levy.

Dennis: Would be helpful to have an overall plan of how SDOT is managing infrastructure. That is a central part.

CM Pedersen: Unfortunate that the asset management plan, and BSAMP are not available yet. Yes, there is a need.

Dennis: Thoughts on having bridge funding come from another separate pot.

Rachel: Do we have a specific fund that is just for bridges?

CM Pedersen: Recommend a push to have the draft of the TAMP and BSAMP in order to make their recommendations.

Next steps

LOC assigned roles and responsibilities for writing the recommendation.

CM Pedersen: The Ordinance gives you all the power to tell City leaders what to do with the next Levy.

Inga: We know we need a levy; we need to speak to what it funds and how.

Adjourn: 8:00PM

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
SDOT come to LOC with information about bridges, bicycle safety, asset management, and transportation revenue sources.	Sep. 2023	SDOT	Schedule for sharing information with LOC in future meetings has been set.	Early 2024