

Minutes
SMILE Transportation Committee Meeting
6:00 PM, 9/20/23 at the SMILE Station

In attendance: Grant Huling (Chair), Dan Ryan, Max Schwarz, Judi Davis, Scott Kelly (former Chair), Juliana James, Rudy Owens

This was the first Transportation Committee meeting in over a year, and the first with Chair Grant Huling. Substantial time given to introductions and sharing of areas of concern, in the interest of priority-setting.

Grant H: Lives near Sellwood Park. Has a Masters in City and Regional Planning and works for a private utility. Elected to SMILE Board in spring 2023 and is also Community Safety Committee Chair. Considers self pragmatic; will try to acknowledge and include competing stakeholders on every issue. Wants to allow Committee members to heavily shape agenda and step up as point persons on their issues of concern, with Committee support. Addressed the difference between smaller issues (e.g. painting stripes that match existing standards; no engineering required), vs. longer-range issues that first require engineering and public input. Both worth pursuing.

Max S: Lives near Westmoreland Park.

Scott K: Was previously Transportation Chair from ~2015 to 2020. Is a retired civil engineer. Offering his institutional knowledge.

Dan R: Lives on SE Tacoma St. Interested in the public health dimension of transportation, and in potentially planting seeds for a long term change of ROW usages in Sellwood-Moreland or PBOT design standards.

Juliana J: Attending because an acquaintance from her townhomes was recently seriously injured crossing Tacoma:

Tacoma Pedestrian Injury: At 4:00 PM on a Friday, the elderly woman was on the Mud Bay (SE) corner of Tacoma, crossing to the north on a walk signal. Also travelling north was a white work van. It took a right without noticing the pedestrian, striking her and causing a concussion, broken facial bones, partial amputation of a foot, and other injuries.

Grant H. provided two “Please Slow Down” lawn signs as a small immediate gesture. He noted that PBOT no longer provides free “Slow the Flock Down” signs. *(Update: Funding for additional signs, to distribute first-come-first-served to community members, has been requested of the SMILE board.)*

Scott K. and Grant H. discussed the history of the Sellwood Bridge Traffic Impact Reduction program from PBOT. After the new bridge opened in 2016, PBOT committed to mitigate the effects of bridge traffic on the area. In 2019, speed bumps were installed on several blocks North and South of Tacoma, to discourage cut-through traffic. This was termed “Phase 1” by PBOT at the time and a follow up study ahead of a second phase was promised; a low-level PBOT employee since curtly told Scott K. the initiative was “done.” Grant H. said that, per the Cuban Missile Crisis, it is worth disregarding this inconvenient and contradictory message, and that the Committee will continue to engage PBOT on the assumption that there are future Sellwood Bridge Traffic Impact Reductions owed. Tacoma itself, not just side streets, fall within this scope.

Judi D: Sixteen-year Sellwood resident living near Sellwood Community House. Has gathered 160 signatures for a petition calling for PBOT to make crosswalks and pedestrian travel safer on SE 13th Ave, between SE Tacoma St and SE Bybee St.

13th Ave Petition: Along with Doug Bridge, Judi collected 130 signatures from neighbors and visitors, plus 30 from businesses near SE 13th. She shared the text of the petition (*Attachment A*) and a copy of the signatures. She and Doug B. presented on the issue at a SMILE General Meeting on March 3, 2023, and the SMILE Board voted to endorse the petition (via member Elaine O’Keefe’s signature), with one abstention, at its March 15 meeting. The Transportation Committee was inactive during this time.

The petition suggests adding painted crosswalks, painting a 2nd crosswalk at intersections that only have one, and potentially adding stop signs and enhanced crossing along 13th Ave. Judi D. sees SE Miller St. and SE 13th Ave’s intersection as a target for improvement. Scott K. noted that as a collector street, 13th is not capable of having stop signs installed along this stretch. Grant H. reiterated (from an earlier listserv email) that the Transportation Committee has the principle of not engineering amateur solutions in-house; however, he found the language of the petition text to be clear enough on the principle of concern and not a problem.

Grant H. thanked Judi for her proactivity on this issue and said he supported lending the Transportation Committee’s heft/voice/influence to the cause of the petition. He noted that traffic incident statistics show that the central commercial stretch of 13th Ave does not have the highest incidence of pedestrian collisions in Sellwood-Moreland, but that if the pedestrians and business owners there feel unsafe, that is a problem. Judi D. and Grant H. discussed logistics, and Grant agreed to send an email to her contact Art Pearce, Policy, Planning & Projects Group Director at PBOT, cc’ing Rick Nys of PBOT, Judi D. and Doug B. Attendees of the meeting will review the draft language. Rick N. at PBOT acknowledged the petition in spring 2023, cautioning that resources were limited. He responded somewhat more optimistically in the summer, as PBOT was hiring. Grant H. said he wants to build in-person relationships at PBOT and will seek to do so around this issue.

Rudy O: Arriving at 6:40, Rudy O. introduced himself and stated that his concern was speeding and cut-through traffic on SE Nehelem St. His parked car has been stuck twice and he has videotaped speeding. PBOT has seemed dismissive. Scott K. said an updated traffic speed study, last done in 2016, is always a helpful asset. Grant H. said that since this block had speed bumps installed in 2019, it might be difficult for it to receive additional attention from PBOT, but that it would benefit from the currently hazy, nascent Transportation Committee push for a Sellwood Bridge Traffic Impact Reduction, Phase 2.

14th & Bybee Improvements: Grant H. shared blueprints for intersection improvements provided to him by Derek at DJM Development, the builder of the Westmoreland Town Houses on the NE corner of SE Bybee St. and SE 14th Ave. (Note: This happens to be within the target zone for the 13th Ave petition). This and the nearby 16th and Bybee intersection have been considered pedestrian safety problems by SMILE for years, with SMILE obtaining a PBOT traffic engineering study in 2016. The problem had been a lack of funding. As a condition of its permit, the builders of the Westmoreland Town Houses (completed 2022) are required to make the ROW improvements shared; there have been delays, but they received a “checklist” of to-dos from PBOT on September 19, which has enabled them to finalize scope with their contactor. Grant H. said the Transportation Committee is currently offering its logistical assistance to the developer.

Grant H. shared that Abra McNair at Safe Routes to School, another arm of PBOT, has informed SMILE that funding was secured in early 2023 for a separate set of improvements at the same intersection. Abra has said she is aware of the Town Houses project’s improvements; Grant H. has connected all parties involved on an email thread to ensure scope is being coordinated between the two projects. To date, Abra M. has described the scope of the Safe Routes to School improvements; Grant H. has asked for a sketch. Abra M. will be presenting these improvements for public input at the October 4th SMILE General Meeting.

Draft

Minutes approval to be voted on by attendees of the next SMILE Transportation Committee Meeting, occurring November 15, 2023 at the SMILE Station from 6:00 to 7:00 PM.

Attachment A
SE 13th Ave Petition

To: PBOT - Portland Bureau of Transportation
Date: Jan. 9, 2023
From: Judi Davis, davisja1@comcast.net
Doug Bridge, kristldoug1344@gmail.com

We, the undersigned business owners and residents of Sellwood, are concerned about the traffic and pedestrian safety along SE 13th Avenue. From the intersection of SE 13th Avenue and Tacoma Street to SE 13th Avenue and Bybee Street, there are no stop signs or stop lights. This means that through this crowded business and residential neighborhood cars travel unimpeded for nearly a mile. Along this section of SE 13th Avenue, there are 79 businesses, 30 homes, 9 apartment complexes with businesses on the first floor, and 5 stand alone apartment buildings.

We would like to petition the city to commit to installing a protected crosswalk and other traffic-slowing remediations at the intersection of SE 13th Avenue and SE Miller Street. We are also concerned that other intersections, along SE 13th Avenue, do not have adequate markings indicating the presence of pedestrians crossing the street. Adopting these recommendations would make the crosswalks safer for pedestrians and also would encourage cars to obey the 20 MPH speed limit.