

Minutes
SMILE Transportation Committee Meeting
6:00 PM, 02/20/24 via Zoom

In attendance: Grant Huling (Chair), Grant O’Connell (TriMet) Scott Kelly, Brian Posewitz, Brandon Namm, Jaime Peterson & daughter (Daisy Girl Scout), Meredith Goddard & daughter (Daisy Girl Scout), Dan Ryan, Max Schwarz

Minutes of the 1/17/24 meeting were approved. They are available at:
<https://sellwood.org/transportation-committee-meeting-minutes-2024/>.

TriMet Forward Together Bus Routes Update: TriMet updated its planned bus routes for the next leg of the multi-year Forward Together expansion. Senior Planner Grant O’Connell from TriMet joined to present on the reduction of Route 40 scope from earlier drafts shared and answer questions. The January 2024 revision for Route 40 (formerly known as Route 7 and Route 5) is attached. It originates at the Tacoma MAX Station, travels along Tacoma, over the Sellwood Bridge and into downtown.

Grant O. noted that the earlier version presented to SMILE travelled further to the east to SE 82nd Ave. Reduced available driver labor has been the limiting factor for this round of system growth, but the extension to 82nd would be a priority in future years. Grant O. also noted that stop frequency within Sellwood-Moreland will be reduced from the draft presented in October 2023. The plan had been for stops every 15 minutes between 5:30 AM and 12:30 AM; it is now proposed to stop every 30 minutes.

Grant O. noted that the current plan remains a draft and will be approved at the March 27th meeting of the TriMet Board of the Directors. He said there is always a risk that parts move at the last minute as Forward Together is finalized for the coming fiscal year. Grant Huling said that he would draft a letter for the SMILE Board to approve at its upcoming February 20th meeting. The board did unanimously approve the letter (attached), and it was emailed and mailed to the TriMet Board of Directors. The letter states SMILE’s appreciation for the expansion of service found in the January 2024 draft of Route 40, and its hope that the future elements shared by Grant O’Connell be included in future years.

Daisy Girl Scouts’ Bidwell & 13th Calming Request: The Committee was joined by two Daisy Girl Scouts, along with their mothers, Jaime Peterson and Meredith Goddard. The Girl Scouts live on SE Bidwell Street between 9th and 13th Ave and have noticed that the pedestrian trip to the Sellwood-Moreland Library (SE corner of 13th & Bidwell) does not feel as safe as it could. They outlined the process their Troop used to study the problem once it was identified. They counted traffic volumes and how many of the cars were speeding. Their Troop discussed over ten possible solutions and workshopped them with adults for plausibility.

The Girl Scouts brought two suggestions to the committee: No Parking signs and curb painting should be implemented at the $\frac{3}{4}$ corners of 13th & Bybee that currently lack such markings.

When cars are parked right up to the corner it impedes line-of-sight for both pedestrians and drivers. Secondly, hand-held, orange visibility flags should be installed on either side of the intersection (south side) so that pedestrians can improve their visibility when crossing.

Chair Grant Huling thanked them for their presentation and noted that the process their Troop used is really no different from how adults arrive at good policy ideas. He informed the guests that, thanks to the petition by Judi Davis and Doug Bridge, the PBOT Traffic Investigations Team is planning to come out, observe traffic problems on SE 13th Ave, and implement improvements, which are likely to include curb painting and painting of crosswalks. Grant H. said he would send Rick Nys, the PBOT team member leading this project, the Girl Scout Troop's request (email sent 3/17), which will hopefully ensure that this intersection is among those that have curbs painted and/or signs added.

There was discussion regarding how the Committee could implement cross-walk flags. Grant H. noted that he has spoken with the owner of the Umpqua Bank building that is on the SW corner of the intersection, and offered to speak with him and the library about possibly mounting containers for the handheld flags on or near the buildings. There is also a PGE-owned pole near the Umpqua Bank building.

Meredith G. noted that she had seen mention of pursuing murals in a recent Transportation Committee Agenda and asked about that nascent project. Grant said that due to recent meetings going long it hadn't yet been launched as a project, but that, especially with community members interested in pursuing it, it could be a good project. The precedent of Share-It Square (SE 9th Ave & SE Sherrett Street), led by resident Mark Lakeman was discussed. Grant noted that PBOT has a very accessible process for applying to paint a street, viewable here: <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/permitting/street-painting>. Grant suggested the intersection of SE 14th Ave and SE Glenwood Street, near the Post Office, as one possibility, noting the possibility of including Llewellyn Elementary and nearby business owners (who have expressed a desire for traffic calming at 14th & Bybee) as potential interested stakeholders. The item was tabled for discussion at a future Committee meeting.

Traffic Calming Near SE Umatilla St: Grant Huling provided an update on a topic of discussion at the previous Transportation Committee meeting: Requesting improvements from PBOT on the problem of cut-through traffic affecting streets near Tacoma Street. On February 3rd, Grant H., Brandon Namm (interested Committee member living at 16th & Umatilla), and Judi Davis (Committee member and leader of a separate 13th Ave traffic calming petition) met at Blue Kangaroo and drafted language for a potential petition that would first gather signatures around the neighborhood, then go to PBOT as a part of a request to calm traffic in the area.

The draft language, which had previously been emailed to committee members, was screen shared and discussed.

Per discussion at the January 2024 Committee meeting, the petition framed the issue around one street, Umatilla. It also stated that the solutions designed by PBOT could include traffic diversions or calming. Former Transportation Committee Chair Brian Posewitz stated that he

had joined this meeting to warn the Committee about issues he saw with these elements of the draft language. In his experience as chair, approaches that pit one neighbor against another (i.e. favoring Umatilla over the streets next to it) can prove very divisive. Grant H. said that had been a concern, but that the Committee had leaned towards focusing on Umatilla “and the area surrounding it” in the hope of focusing PBOT’s efforts more effectively. There was some discussion of this point and no opposition to framing the issue, moving forward, more broadly around the shared problem of cut-through traffic from Tacoma. Scott Kelly seconded Brian P’s concern and suggested that the item be brought to PBOT as a request for a “phase 2” of PBOT’s 2019 Tacoma Street Neighborhood Traffic Management Project, viewable here: <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/pbot-projects/construction/tacoma-street-neighborhood-traffic-management-project>

Former Committee Chair Scott K., who at the previous meeting had spoken of the divisions that emerged during the Committee’s previous attempt to implement calming in the Umatilla area, reiterated his concerns on this point. In particular, he saw diversions, i.e. road modifications that would prevent cars from passing through, as a big issue, because they would create winners and losers. If a car doesn’t go down Umatilla, it would have to go down an adjacent street. Scott K. and Brian P. both favored calming, i.e. road modifications that would slow cars but allow them to pass through. Grant H. said that as current Committee Chair he sees a responsibility to all SMILE members and does not want to create winners and losers. He noted that earlier in February, he had a 20 minute call with Jeandre Carbone, Sellwood Middle School principal. He had reached out to her as an important stakeholder as the petition prepared to launch. Jeandre C.’s main concern was that traffic modifications *not* prevent cars from being able to access Sellwood Middle School for pickup and drop off. She noted that the school just completed a study to improve drop-off protocols in collaboration with PBOT. Grant H. said that after hearing this from the Sellwood Middle School principal, as well as the warnings of two previous Transportation Committee chairs and Elaine O’Keefe (SMILE board member and Transportation Committee member for 25+ years) as the previous meeting, he was fine with dropping language around diverters. Brandon Namm said that he would still like to include diverter language and keep all options open, such as PBOT potentially disallowing left turns from 17th onto Tenino, Umatilla, Harney and Sherrett.

Grant H. circled back to Scott K.’s suggestion of simply going to PBOT with a request for a Phase 2. He asked if Committee members were okay with tabling the idea of a petition, keeping it “in our back pocket” as a potential tactic to prove community interest if PBOT fails to act, and there was general support. Grant H. said that a letter to PBOT would be stronger coming from the SMILE Board and not just the Committee. He took notes from several committee members on suggested language to include and said it would likely read as similar to the draft petition, but simpler. He said he would share the language with the Committee membership for feedback before sending it to the SMILE Board. (This draft has not yet been shared with the Committee is on track to be presented to the SMILE Board at its April meeting.)

Draft

Minutes approval to be voted on by attendees of the next SMILE Transportation Committee Meeting, occurring March 20th, via Zoom.

ATTACHMENT
TriMet Forward Together - January 2024 Revision

Proposed Line 40 Bus Route, taken from:
<https://trimet.org/betterbus/servicechanges-fy25proposed.htm>



ATTACHMENT
2/21/24 Letter from SMILE Board to TriMet



SELLWOOD MORELAND IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE
8210 SE 13th AVENUE, PORTLAND, OR 97202
503-234-3570

February 21, 2024

TriMet Board of Directors
4012 SE 17th Ave
Portland, OR 97202

Dear TriMet board members,

The Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League (SMILE) has followed the progression of Forward Together with interest and is grateful for Senior Planner Grant O'Connell's efforts in communicating to our community about the initiative.

The SMILE Board would like to express our support for the inclusion of Route 40 as proposed, which we understand will stop every 30 minutes between 5:30 AM and 12:30 AM, seven days a week. This will be a great boon to our residents. We understand that Route 40's extension Eastward to SE 82nd Ave has been excluded from TriMet's Proposed 2024-25 service changes, but we hope that an extension could be added in a future year. We also hope that a service upgrade to every 15 minutes along SE Milwaukie Ave and SE Bybee Blvd, originally communicated, will see the light of day.

Thank you for your work in improving the region.

Regards,

David Dugan
President, Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League

ATTACHMENT
Petition to Calm Vehicle Traffic on SE Umatilla St.

02/03/24 draft
Post-Blue Kangaroo meeting edit
Not yet distributed

Petition to Calm Vehicle Traffic on SE Umatilla St.

The undersigned Sellwood-Moreland residents are concerned about commuter cut-through traffic on SE Umatilla Street, particularly between 13th and 17th Avenues.

A Neighborhood Greenway and Safe Route to School

SE Umatilla St. is a neighborhood greenway, which PBOT defines as a roadway meant to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists. The area has elevated pedestrian use due to Sellwood Middle School, several apartments, and adjacent businesses. According to PBOT, neighborhood greenways “form the backbone of Safe Routes to School.”¹ Additionally, neighborhood greenways are meant to be “quiet and comfortable places for people to walk and bike due to a number of engineering strategies.”² However, a 2020 PBOT study noted that too many people are using neighborhood greenways on their morning and evening commutes. We the undersigned believe that SE Umatilla St. is not meeting PBOT’s standards of safety and comfort along neighborhood greenways.

Sellwood Bridge Access Management Project

PBOT has recognized that commuter cut-through traffic is a major issue for Sellwood-Moreland. In 2019, the Bureau attempted to mitigate this with Phase 1 of the Sellwood Bridge Access Management Project, installing speed bumps along SE Umatilla St. from SE 6th Ave to 13th Ave as well as on other streets. There has not been a Phase 2.

Our Request

Because commuter traffic through our neighborhood remains a safety and livability problem, we are requesting that PBOT define and initiate a Phase 2 Sellwood Bridge Access Management Project, centered on SE Umatilla St. Many engineered options are available, including diverters or narrowing the road with bicycle protectors. These solutions will be designed by PBOT, with a robust public input process.

Exhibits [not yet created]:

Exhibit A - Petition Signatures (fields: name, address, phone, email)

Exhibit B - Annotated Map (to highlight: Tacoma, Umatilla, Greenways, label key buildings like apartments and school, speed bumps from 2019 PBOT improvements).

Exhibit C – PBOT Traffic Counts

¹PBOT, “What are Neighborhood Greenways?” <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/what-are-neighborhood-greenways>

² Ibid.