

Minutes

SMILE Transportation Committee Meeting 11/20/24, 6:00-7:20 PM via Zoom

In attendance: Grant Huling (Chair), Scott Kelly, Andrew Holtz, Elaine O'Keefe, Brian Posewitz, Max Schwarz

Minutes from the 9/18/24 meeting were approved.

Leadership: Grant updated the Committee on his search for a replacement chair, ahead of his third child being due in April. He noted that he had met with a promising candidate, whose identity he couldn't reveal without consent. He also said this person might not have the bandwidth for the role. Elaine recommended the co-chair model, as it would ensure continuity and be a lighter lift for the new co-chair. Grant agreed that was a good idea and has since proposed that to the person under consideration, and will propose that to other potential Committee (co-) leaders.

SE 22nd Ave PBOT Ticket: Grant gave an update on a PBOT ticket he initiated at the request of Susan Lattimore. In an email to PBOT Project Manager Rick Nys, Grant called out the lack of any stop signs on SE 22nd Ave between SE Bybee Blvd SE Harold St as an issue for residents and also noted the crosswalk at 22nd and Bybee needs repainting. PBOT promptly responded, saying a maintenance request had been put in for the painting. Rick Nys said that, since there are already stop signs on the cross streets to 22nd Ave, and since four-way stop sign intersections are not considered appropriate for 22nd, simply adding stop signs would not be workable. However, PBOT said it would be able to switch some of the cross street stop signs over to 22nd. The Committee discussed this and it was roundly supported, with Elaine and Scott speaking most. Grant had already told PBOT he supported the sign switching plan, and told PBOT the Committee would communicate with potentially concerned neighbors about it. He said he would follow up to let them know the Committee's broad support.

14th & Bybee: Grant gave an update on the intersection improvements presently underway at 14th & Bybee. He noted that the PBOT Safe Routes to School is complete, with the Westmoreland Town Homes developer-led portion having finished the wedge island. The group reviewed the plans for the Town Homes scope, provided by PBOT. Andrew asked whether five plastic bollards that extended up 14th would be coming back. Although they appear to be shown on the plan page available, there was no clear note calling out their presence. Grant said he would write to Abra McNair at PBOT to ask about that detail and ensure it is returning. *[Update: As of these minutes, he has not heard a response.]*

Plaza Discussion: Grant provided an update on the early efforts of a subcommittee/project group led by Ruth Kaser and Vikki DeGaa to create an additional PBOT-authorized public plaza in Sellwood-Moreland, in addition to the one that currently exists next to Gino's on 13th Ave & Spokane St. PBOT is not currently providing permits, and will not until March 2025 at the soonest after City Council approves an updated plaza permit code, but has encouraged the project group to first paint street murals at two desired locations, and temporarily close them down and furnish them with a series of temporary street

closure permits. The two locations being considered are: SE Claybourne St/SE Milwaukie Ave, and SE Tenino St/SE 13th Ave. A robust discussion followed, with the following points being voiced:

- Elaine: The SMILE Station manager needs to be closely consulted. Although the Tenino location may in some ways enhance the SMILE Station as an event space, there are downsides from a long-term commitment to maintain the space. She mentioned issues with building/parking access during events, and the scenario of a paid event occurring at the SMILE Station, going outside to utilize the plaza space, and finding teenagers occupying it. Grant agreed that the SMILE Station manager would certainly be looped in as a next step, but said that these issues may be a dealbreaker for the 13th & Tenino site.
- Scott: There are issues with these locations not being utilized 99% of the time. Would prefer Umatilla St or 19th Ave, since they are Neighborhood Greenways that are already designated to favor bike traffic over vehicular traffic. Andrew seconded this position. Grant screen shared and did a Google Maps street view “tour” of the two streets during the discussion and there was not a particular location along Umatilla or 19th that jumped out to the Committee members as a good candidate location, with most stretches lacking the central, heavily-pedestrian-visited nature of the Gino’s plaza location.
- Brian: Against more projects that shut down streets but, if there is another one, would suggest not putting it so close to an existing diverter (13th/Spokane plaza) because it would further concentrate the diversion effects from existing plaza. Any plaza, especially off of Tacoma, would restart the conversations about putting in diverters from several years ago. A proposed diverter, supported by PBOT, at 15th Ave & Tenino St “blew up,” with very distinct groups of neighbors staking out for and against positions. These neighbors packed a SMILE meeting to discuss (the core issue being that shutting down car traffic on one street disadvantages neighboring streets), with the SMILE Board voting against such a proposal. It was noted that at the time the Board chair lived on Tenino. Elaine and Scott seconded Brian’s warning. No one attending took this concern as categorically ruling out plazas, but simply to indicate that shutting down streets in some locations, aside from any potential traffic engineering issues PBOT might identify, may upset affected neighbors. Grant noted there would be a robust public process before a permanent plaza and that all nearby neighbors would have to agree before a street mural with test temporary shutdowns was attempted at a given location.
- Grant asked if there were any concerns with the Claybourne location. Scott said if the adjacent restaurant and other nearby businesses like it, it could be feasible. Grant and Scott discussed that the restaurant, a replacement to Relish, may not necessarily be as popular as the perennial Gino’s, and that a barrier wall separates its outdoor patio from the plaza location, unlike the open flow from Gino’s out to its adjacent plaza. Grant noted that when Ruth and Vikki spoke with the strip mall businesses to the north of Claybourne, they were enthusiastic, and speculated that the increased foot traffic would benefit them and other shops.
- There was a consensus that it would be more realistic to pursue only one plaza, given the scope of public outreach efforts, materials costs, and painting/volunteer/maintenance efforts required for a single plaza. PBOT floating the idea of two simultaneous murals in an email did not seem sufficient grounds to pursue that track for the next year.

Grant thanked the attendees, which included several former Transportation Committees Chairs and a former SMILE Board President, for their input, and said he would bring it to the members of the plaza

group: Vikki, Ruth, Liz Milner, Zach Duffly and Mark Lakeman. Grant noted that interested parties could join the plaza group if interested.