



## Meeting Information

**Date:** 12/03/2018 (Meeting 005, 4th Quarter Meeting 2018)

**Time:** 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Location:** Seattle Municipal Tower, Rooms 4050/4060 (40<sup>th</sup> Floor)

**Facilitators:** SDOT ADA Program

## General: Committee Intent

The intent of the Pedestrian Access Advisory Committee (PAAC) meetings is to discuss potential accessibility issues or concerns within the Seattle public right-of-way for those living with disabilities. Finding solutions leading to better pedestrian access and prioritization for improvements is an important goal of the Committee. SDOT will strive to prioritize improvements based on Committee recommendations.

## Meeting Minutes

- I. Welcome and Introduction (10:00-10:10 am)
  - *This was the fifth PAAC meeting to date.*
  - *The meeting was partially video-recorded.*
  - *Digital copies of the each of the three presentations given as a part of this meeting are available upon request. Contact Mike Shaw with any requests or questions (Michael.Shaw@Seattle.gov).*
- II. Imagine Greater Downtown Project (Lizzie Moll, Ian Macek, SDOT) (10:10-10:50 am)
  - *Lizzie Moll from the SDOT Policy and Planning Division came to talk about the Imagine Downtown Project. This project is a look at downtown, including the public realm and transportation, over the next 20 years.*
  - *Partners in the Imagine Greater Downtown project include the City of Seattle, Sound Transit, King County, WSDOT, the Port of Seattle, and the Downtown Seattle Association. These groups are working together to create a shared mobility and urban design vision for the heart of Seattle that anticipates future needs in the face of significant growth and change.*
  - *When we are talking about greater downtown, we are talking about 10 of the fastest growing neighborhoods in the city of Seattle. That is Uptown, South Lake Union, Capitol Hill, Pike/Pine, First Hill, Denny Triangle, Belltown, Commercial Core, Chinatown/International District, and Pioneer Square. All those neighborhoods make up greater downtown.*
  - *There are currently about 90,000 residents in the 10 neighborhoods that make up downtown; it is anticipated that there will be 138,000 residents downtown by 2035. It is also expected that the number of jobs in the downtown area will increase from 300,000 now to 320,000 in 2035.*

- *The project aims to better serve all people, including children, intergenerational families, people of color, and others that may not currently feel comfortable or welcome downtown. This may be able to be accomplished by better organizing streets and helping to cultivate a culture of walking and human scale spaces.*
- *The project is currently using an interactive website to collect ideas from the public on ways to improve the downtown area. There have also been pop-up events and open houses to encourage discussions. An advisory group of 35 plus members has also been created to help brainstorm solutions for the downtown area.*
- *Question (unnamed): Could you read the URL of the public common site?*
- *Response (Lizzie Moll): [www.imaginegreaterdowntown.org](http://www.imaginegreaterdowntown.org)*
- *The project is currently working on 11 “big ideas,” which are a result of collaboration of the six agencies involved as well as the advisory group.*
- *The 11 big ideas include: One, a quality transit experience. Two, streets at places. Three, freeway stitch and urban repairs. Four, connect and use the Lake and Sound. Five, welcoming, inclusive, complete neighborhoods. Six, parks, recreation, and nature. Seven, Jackson street hub as a people place. Eight, heart of greater downtown: Westlake Hub. Nine, premium mobility networks. 10, carbon neutral. 11, new mobility to benefit people and climate.*
- *Question (unnamed): Can you talk about number three, the freeway stitch and urban repairs?*
- *Response (Lizzie Moll): Yes, that is one of the projects I want to talk to you about today and get your help with. So, that is looking at I-5 as well as other major arterials in the city and how to better have mobility across to the different neighborhoods. There are some neighborhoods that were split by I-5 being built and how do we make sure that is a comfortable place for people of all different mobilities to get across.*
- *Lizzie asked the audience: how a quality transit experience could be improved for pedestrians? For example, transfers, waiting for transit, and understanding the system. There may also be needs to improve accessibility features for these activities.*
- *Comment (unnamed): “I would say shelter would be great for many. Shelter and some seats. I love how the rapid line has the button you press with a lot of information. I know that's probably not financially feasible to do citywide but that is helpful for some people. Just a pole to find is very difficult for visually impaired people when it is just the sign pole as a bus stop. That is just off the top of my head.”*
- *Comment (Janet, Dept. of Services for the Blind): “The informational kiosk, desk, I don't know what to call it, for the rapid line, I found by chance. So, if there was some way that it could be found easily because I really literally bumped into it, found a button and was curious and pressed it.”*
- *Comment (Anna, Disability Rights Washington): “I had a bus stop be closed the other day and I didn't know that until the bus drove by me. Google Maps wasn't updated. I know if there is a way to update Google Maps so when it is telling you directions, where to actually go for bus stops, if there is changes. This was on Rainier near Graham.”*
- *Comment (David Miller, Lighthouse for the Blind): “It was mentioned the challenge people have in finding the head of the zone for the bus stops in downtown areas in particular. I suggested on several occasions that textural way finding, similar to what*

- you would find in the light rail stations, that indicate the boarding location for the train to use similar materials to indicate where to board the bus or at least to find the head of the zone. I think that would be a useful enhancement.”*
- *Comment (Pat, AARP): “...in terms of walkability and trying to enhance that, if you could have walking maps and approximate time it would take to get places then people would know if it is worth walking especially in our hilly downtown.”*
  - *Comment (Chris Loomis): “There is a lot of public transportation that all comes together in the downtown area particularly around the tunnel. The lighting in those areas specifically for people who have vision issues it is too dark. If something is happening in that area, you know, there is a lot of people walking around and there is people who can get bumped into one another and ends up in a conflict so their really needs to be better lighting, both for deaf-blind and hearing-blind individuals so they have better access to the environment.”*
  - *Lizzie asked the audience about the second big idea, which is “streets as places.” Greater downtown neighborhoods should foster a culture of strolling and street life because it celebrates walking as a free activity and experience. We should be prioritizing areas with poor health outcomes. Creating spaces for people of all abilities to travel and linger safely. Develop spaces and streets that are welcoming for intergenerational groups. How can streets better serve pedestrians and what are accessibility needs for pedestrians as we look to enhance this big idea?*
  - *Comment (Mike Shaw, SDOT): “I work with our Street Use division a lot. Our Street Use division is tasked with granting permits in the right of way and while a lot of us really enjoy sidewalk cafes and the ambiance that brings, I know in my position I get a lot of complaints about sidewalk cafes because of the negative impact with respect to accessibility. I would encourage any of you, if you have any comments to present them to me, we can talk about them now, but I am working with our street use division to make sure that our sidewalk cafes are detectable for people with low or no vision, to make sure we have adequate clear width for all pedestrians including those who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices. It is something we are constantly working on. One of the challenges is we don't have day-to-day enforcement. Unfortunately, sometimes elements in sidewalk cafes migrate or drift out into the sidewalk so we rely on public feedback and information you provide to us, to me, to make sure that those businesses are keeping their features where they are supposed to be.”*
  - *Comment (Mae Lynn): “I want to let you know that I go and I walk around in the downtown area a lot and I notice a lot of restaurants do tend to put up like advertising sandwich boards on the sidewalk and that is a challenging. I wish those were not there. That doesn't leave a lot of space for people. There is a lot of people coming and going on the sidewalk there and people sometimes are in wheelchairs or what have you. It just needs to have enough flow for people to get by those boards.”*
  - *Comment (Chris Loomis): “I concur with what Mae Lynn brought up. The sandwich boards are very difficult and block the sidewalk and there are a number of people who are not able to see and as you walk with your cane, it goes through the middle of the sandwich board and you don't know where you are or which direction to go. I think it would be preferable to make those signs illegal so they could be up higher so people*

could look at a sandwich board above their heads or something but it would not be on the street in a place where it will block people walking.

- *Comment (unnamed): "...rethink the way A-frames are used, maybe put them up higher, or just don't allow them."*
- *Comment (John Romish): "I have experienced a lot of situations with the sandwich or reader boards on the sidewalk and I have in the past knocked them over, and it has been very difficult for people that are blind to be able to make their way down a sidewalk when those reader boards are in the middle of the sidewalk. They should be positioned in a place close to the building where they don't come into the walking space. Closer to the building, maybe."*
- *Question (Dick Barron): "If all these places and areas were designed to be welcoming to the people with different abilities would that cause issues for any other user groups of these spaces?"*
- *Response (Lizzie Moll): (opened question up to the audience)*
- *Comment (Dorene Cornwell): "When I think about visiting downtown, I do think about different times of the day and volumes of pedestrians like at commuter hours, and so I think that is a how to think about it question, but I also think that those volumes of commuters are going to include people with the same mobility issues that you would have at a slower time of day. People that need curb ramps, people who don't want to trip over A-boards or bike sharing bikes, people who don't want to fall into tree wells, people who want to go eat food at a restaurant and not trip over their fancy things outside. I think it is an important question, you know, how many people are present at different times of the day, but I don't think that the accessibility needs are going to change."*
- *Lizzie asked the audience to comment on the last big idea, the freeway stitch and urban repairs. There is a need to develop and implement a displacement mitigation strategy for improvements under and over I-5. We also want to make sure that freeway traffic impacts are reduced; noise, pollution, visual implications to consider that may impact neighborhoods.*
- *Currently, there are physical and geographic barriers to crossing arterials and I-5. How can this be improved?*
- *There has been talk of putting a "lid" or a space over I-5 that is more pedestrian friendly. If these spaces are developed, there is a need to ensure that these new spaces are accessible.*
- *Comment (Steve Lewis): "One possibility to deal with these steep grades is to put in at least one elevator that would take you up maybe 1-2 stories to get you to the level east of the freeway which is significantly higher. That would be a huge deal for people with mobility devices such as wheelchairs."*
- *Comment (Mike Shaw, SDOT): "We had had a committee that met starting, was it two years ago now? Or more? We talked about issues regarding vertical access downtown. While the elevators are important, I still think that moving forward with it, some kind of partnership with King County Metro would be good in trying to convince them and us as a cosponsor to have a shuttle that would help with this vertical access issue that we have getting folks up and down the streets and the city of Seattle where we have a lot of*

people -- a lot of facilities that we need to get to like the library, and the courthouse and all that stuff.”

- *Comment (David Miller): “I love the image you have on the screen because it is a picture of a street and an underpass to a site I have worked with people through. People who work at the Lighthouse who take -- and are looking for exercise opportunities have learned to walk from the lighthouse to the King Street station and King street is the pathway they have taken. The problem with that, and particularly for me, the feeling of discomfort and lack of safety. There is no surveillance, no public activity, there is not much police enforcement. It is hard for me to recommend that people use that route. I would say it is not safe and part of it is possibly because it is largely used for parking and so the public presence there is pretty skimpy and people who tend to loiter there might be considered a risk. More thought need to be put into that for sure and if King Street is going to be a gateway to downtown transit, it really need to be improved in terms of its attractiveness and convenience of use and sense of safety.”*
- *Question (Janet, Dept. of Services for the Blind): “...is there a pathway that a pedestrian could easily identify and be safe to traverse there?”*
- *Response (Lizzie Moll): There are pathways through the parking lot, but the Chinatown/International District is working on ways to use these spaces in other ways beyond parking.*
- *The Imagine Downtown Project began in August; through December they will be refining their big ideas and will continue with community engagement. In January through March, they will be prioritizing those big idea and looking for feedback at an open house in February.*

III. Beacon Hill Station Access & Mobility Study (Chisaki Muraki-Valdovinos, SDOT; Peggy Martinez, Creative Inclusion) (10:50-11:30 am)

- *Chisaki Muraki-Valdovinos from SDOT and Peggy Martinez of Creative Inclusion presented on the Beacon Hill Station Access and Mobility Study. The study focuses on the north Beacon Hill neighborhood (bound by I-90 to the north, I-5 to the west and extends to the south to Spokane, west of Rainier).*
- *The objective of the study is to work with the community to identify transportation issues in the Beacon Hill areas and to improve mobility in general in the neighborhood.*
- *Currently, the topography of the area makes accessibility a challenge. Transit options, including the light rail, do assist in improving mobility in the area.*
- *The public has been engaged to obtain feedback on potential accessibility and mobility improvements that could be made in the area. An online survey was distributed to the community and to people with disabilities with help from the team’s accessibility advisors. Other outreach efforts included meetings and pop-up events in front of the library and light rail station.*
- *The community expressed needs to prioritize walking and transit options as well as safety (in and around transit options) and equity.*
- *People seemed to agree that safety and easily navigable spaces are desirable.*
- *Two accessibility related recommendations resulted from outreach efforts: 1) curb ramps should align with crosswalks; and 2) crosswalks should have high contrast striping (or other high visibility treatments).*

- *Also recommended were accessible pedestrian signals at major arterial intersections. Signal timing should be adjusted to accommodate slow walkers for extended crossing distances, allowing for a longer walking period across the intersection.*
- *Sidewalks should be free of poles, bikes, street furniture, sandwich boards, and other obstructions. Sidewalk cafes should be detectable by cane.*
- *Specific recommendations were also made for improvements at the Beacon Ave S and 15<sup>th</sup> Ave S intersection. There should be improved crossing opportunities for pedestrians, including the all-walk phase. Pedestrians should be able to cross more frequently than the current configuration (signal phasing).*
- *Recommendations were also made for pedestrian improvements between S Lander and S McClellan St (the block in front of the light rail station). SDOT, in response, implemented a half pedestrian signal that allows for a protected phase for people to cross Beacon Ave; this improvement has received generally positive feedback. Other suggested improvements include decluttering the pedestrian space near the light rail elevator, and features (benches, planters, etc.) to help pedestrians use the intended street crossings as planned.*
- *At 16<sup>th</sup> Ave S and Roberto Maestas Festival St, a priority on pedestrian movement has been recommended that could include treatments to shorten pedestrian crossings and slow vehicle speeds.*
- *Comment (David Miller): “Just want to thank you for all the work you did on this project and including us to provide feedback. My personal impressions of the environment you are talking about is a complex, pedestrian environment for people who travel with visual disabilities. Certainly enhancements in lane finding, adding tactile pedestrian crosses with APS at every intersection possible, and doing the design work for those intersections very well. I know Beacon and 15th is a very complex intersection and doing it right will be a challenge so I give you all kinds of encouragement and hope for the future. As I mentioned before, I think the project needs to be very closely aligned with Sound Transit and improvements they need to make on the Beacon Hill station which in my opinion isn't accessible from the surface to the underground tunnel. We hope to see improvements there.”*

IV. *“Seattle Squeeze” / SR-99 Closure (Kadie Bell Sata) (11:30-11:50 am)*

- *Kadie Bell Sata presented on the upcoming, permanent closure of the SR-99 viaduct, and the period of maximum constraint, also known as the “Seattle Squeeze.”*
- *The viaduct will be coming down in January and the downtown area will be experiencing significant changes over the next five years. The downtown street network will be changing drastically and we all need to understand and prepare for the changes in routines.*
- *The viaduct will be permanently closed on January 11. There will be three weeks from the time that the viaduct closes to the time when the tunnel opens. There are currently 80,000 vehicles that use the viaduct every day that will have to move on to surface streets, I-5, the 405 and 520. It will be the largest highway closure the region has ever experienced that the impacts will be significant.*
- *Question (John Romish): “So when you are talking about the viaduct coming down are they going to knock it down? Or implode it?”*

- *Response (Trevor Partap, SDOT): "They are going to be taking it down with machine just like the southern mile of the southern viaduct in 2011. It will come down a block at a time. They will take the top deck down on to the lower deck and take the lower deck down and then the foundation."*
- *In the coming years, several large projects will have significant impacts in the area: Pike/Pine corridor, redevelopment of the central waterfront, the Washington State Convention Center expansion, and the Key Arena renovation.*
- *In efforts to ease congestion and impacts, SDOT and the Mayor's office are looking to monitor/manage our transportation system, are encouraging a reduction of the number of drive-alone trips downtown, investing in transit and expanding access, managing the public right-of-way, and communicating the message to the public.*
- *The tunnel will change the locations where on and off ramps will be provided from SR-99 accessing the downtown area. The Battery St tunnel will be decommissioned and will be filled.*
- *King County Metro presented on some of the impacts and revisions to transit services in the area.*
- *When the viaduct closes, buses will be rerouted to surface streets, including use of surface streets in the SoDo area (W Seattle buses). There are currently 12 bus routes that use the viaduct that will be rerouted to surface streets.*
- *People are encouraged to take the bus to ease congestion.*
- *Water Taxi service, for the 3 weeks between viaduct closure and the opening of the tunnel, will be expanded from one boat to two.*
- *SDOT is partnering w/ WSDOT and other agencies to increase access during this time; the transportation operation center will be operational 24/7. Real time traffic information will be available. Traffic signal adjustments will be made as needed.*
- *On March 23, the downtown Seattle transit tunnel will be closed to bus operations; these seven bus routes impacted will run on surface streets (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues) as well as a new route that will operate on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Aves. Route 41 will move to 3rd Avenue. Route 74 will move to 2nd and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Route 255 moves 5th Ave. And then four other routes that move to 2nd and 4th avenue and those are there route 101, 102, 150 and 550.*
- *In order to keep people aware of where these buses are going, we will be communicating to bus riders at bus stops, on our website, on the buses themselves, and right before the surface changes with street teams, people out at the bus stops explaining the changes to the public.*
- *Comment (TJ): "I just wanted to make you aware also that I don't take a bus that is affected with the viaduct closure but what I noticed and I hope it might get better but when the bus stops, all the people kind of crowd in front of people in wheelchairs trying to get on and by the time everybody gets on, then it's hard for the people in the wheelchair to get on because the driver won't say let this guy get on first or something."*
- *Question (unnamed): "I am wondering if they are going to be trained differently as a permanent thing? I mean this can't just be happening because of the viaduct closure."*
- *Response (King County Metro): Yes, we do train our drivers and that is a message that I will carry back that will that will need to be elevated in the training. Every time a*

*driver -- we change our schedules two times a year -- and at those point drivers are re-educating on the operating rules. I will add we are changing operations permanently on 3rd avenue to allow people to get on through any of the doors of the buses. We are instituting what is called all-door boarding. We will have the card readers at all the stops just like rapid ride. You tap your pass ahead of time and then you get on through all of the doors. That will help some of those people who are coming in and crowding through the front door where you are trying to get off, redirect them to the back doors. That happens beginning in March on buses serving 3rd Avenue.”*

- *Question (Steve Lewis): “It was my understanding that the 255 route and possibly other east side bus lines would be dropping passengers at the university station of the link light rail rather than going downtown. How long will the buses be running on 5th/6th avenue before they start dropping passengers at the light rail?”*
- *Response (King County Metro): “Thank you. Let me address the 255. Well, let me address the concept overall. Earlier, there was a proposal to do exactly as you say; take a number of routes that come to downtown and have them end at Husky stadium and people take the rail in. For the most part, that proposal is off the table at this time. However, route 255 is still being considered for that change. The decision on the 255 will not happen until roughly the end of this year. We are in the very final stages of making that decision from the public input and then metro will issue its recommendation. The true decision is held by the King county counsel in March of next year. To answer your question, for the 255, because the tunnel closes in March and this change, if it goes through, will not occur until September, it will run on this new pathway, 5th and 6th avenue from March until September. If the change goes through in September, it will start serving the Husky stadium and people will transfer to the rail line.”*
- *Question (Chris Loomis): “I just need some clarification. I need clarification about the plans of closing the tunnel and moving things to the surface street. 101 and 105 and others moving to the surface streets. Is that going to happen all at once? Or will there be a process where they will each be moved over and route changed little by little? If it happens at once, there is a lot of confusion and traffic and if you do it one route at a time, then it can delay the impact. What is the plan?”*
- *Response (King County Metro): “The plan is to do it all at one time. March 23<sup>rd</sup> is the date that the tunnel closes to bus operations. That date is certain. It results in that we cannot no longer operate buses through there. They all have to come out at once. We don't want to pull them out bit by bit because we think that will be even more confusing as that goes through its various stages. Best to rip the Band-Aid off all at once.”*
- *Question (Pat, AARP): “I think the all-door boarding idea for the buses is great but why is it not starting in January? Seems like you need it before March.”*
- *Response (King County Metro): “Yes, we do need it as soon as we can get it. We have to install equipment at several of the stops. There are 10 stops along 3rd avenue that do not today have the Orca readers at the stop and without the Orca reader you can't tap your pass ahead of time.”*
- *Question (unnamed): “How about just having a staff person especially on the busy routes because, again, there is the real problem with people in wheelchairs getting on and people not being able to board in the back?”*



- *Response (King County Metro): "Yes, we have done that in the tunnel so far in the past. Had a person validating cards as people are getting on, unfortunately, the limitation there is the equipment. We do not have the equipment available. It is not available at all."*
- *Question (unnamed): "I am not really clear with how closing the bus tunnel works in with the closure of the viaduct and the other tunnel. Can you talk a little bit about that and why the bus tunnel is closing and everything is changing there."*
- *Response (King County Metro): "The bus tunnel is closing because of the convention center -- Washington State Convention center Construction project at the north end beginning in March. That construction project will close off the roadway, the temporary roadway, that metro now uses to get out of the tunnel on the north end. Without being able to get in and out on the north end, the buses have to come out. It has always been planned that the bus tunnel will convert to rail use, however, this construction project accelerates when the buses come out. The benefit to riders, however, is that the trains can operate more efficiently because they are not having to wait in a staggered fashion to enter the tunnel buses and trains. The trains will just enter."*
- *Question (unnamed): "I have a question regarding the availability of the routes on metro's trip planner or in Google Maps. When will that be available for January 11th as well as the March 23rd?"*
- *Response (King County Metro): "The best way to get the information is to sign up for route alerts. Metro has a system where if you ride a route you can sign up for an electronic alert that is delivered to your device whenever there is a change that occurs to that route. Even if it is a small containing or single day change -- change -- it gets the information out. That information is available in accessible formats as well. Not everybody has a computer and has that capability. So metro does its best to provide to information in a static format in lots of other ways at the bus stops, through briefings like this and getting the information out and especially near the service change with staff at the stops helping people navigate."*
- *Question (Donna, First Transit): "My name is Donna and I also work with first transit. We manage the access transportation. So, obviously, fewer people driving downtown will help because in our situation, we can't not provide access to buses. Is there -- has there been any consideration to increase the amount of cars on the light rail? Or increase the sounder schedules? Or add cars to those to accommodate more commuters and maybe add additional times? Some people may not take the sounder because it is just a morning and evening commuter but if they added more frequency during the viaduct closure it might help detract some of the traffic from coming downtown."*
- *Response (King County Metro): "I work with King County Metro and Sound Transit operates the rails and commuter rail system. I am not -- I can speak a little bit to it but keep in mind I am not a Sound Transit staff person. One of the limitations to adding additional rail cars is the availability of the cars themselves. Right now, Sound transit is running all their cars they have available to them. They are starting to get more cars, train cars, and starting to do their final work at their sites to commission them for service, and they will start to add them as soon as they are available but there is not a whole lot of them available to put in all at once. They will add them as they come online."*

*As their cars are available. They are monitoring. We are monitoring how much -- how many passengers there are on our buses and like I said where we have reports of paths, we have the capability of throwing a few more buses in there. Metro system is constrained. There is more demand for metro services than we have buses and operating dollars to provide. We are doing our best to shuffle things as best as we can and where possible insert more service but it is a bigger systemic issue that deals with the great position we are in that people want to take the bus.”*

- *In March, when the 7 buses move from the tunnel to surface streets, there will be other measures taken to maximize transit capacity. For example, the new transit pathway the will run northbound on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues.*
- *Question (unnamed): “Has there been work with the city or whoever manages the lights and lengths of lights?”*
- *Response: “Absolutely. Part of what we described earlier was that five-pronged approach and in that, there is something called maximize the right-of-way and that means do things just like that. Maximize flow by adjusting the signals and in some cases removing parking to get a little space to get a bus lane through a problematic intersection. Those are just a couple examples.”*

V. Next Steps and Priority Topics (11:50-12:00 pm) *(not discussed)*

VI. Adjourn (12:00 pm)

Action Items: N/A