



## City of Tacoma Bicycle and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group

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### MINUTES July 24, 2023 5:30-7:30 PM

- **Call to order and land acknowledgment**

Chair Jenn called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM.

We gratefully honor and acknowledge that we reside on the traditional lands of the Puyallup People. The Puyallup people have lived on this land since the beginning of time. They are still here today. They live, work, raise their children, take care of their community, practice their traditional ways, and speak the Twulshootseed language – just as their ancestors did.

- **Introductions & Approval of Minutes**

Members Teena, Jenn, Ileana, Dana, Thomas, Matt, Julian, Steve, Michael, and Riley were present. Members Mattice, Tyler, and Dana were absent.

It was moved (Member Teena) and second by (Member Thomas) to approve the June 26, 2023, minutes. The July 24, 2023, agenda was approved as presented.

- **Public Comment:**

Larry Leveen gave the group an update from Forever Green Trails regarding active transportation events and Pierce County Trails Day.

- **Business Items:**

- **Ruston Way Water Walk: Pedestrian Safety Zone (Joe Brady)**

Joe Brady of Metro Parks Tacoma presented the proposed Ruston Way Water Walk Pedestrian Safety Zone. Metro Parks has recently received reports of user group conflicts and safety concerns. Metro Parks is introducing a Waterfront Pedestrian Safety Zone Project to tackle this issue. Metro Parks had originally proposed adding speed limits on the sidewalk but, after conversations with the City of Tacoma, have pivoted to an educational approach.

Metro Parks plans to install educational Pedestrian Safety Zone Signs along the Ruston Way Promenade, Ruston Water Walk, Dune Peninsula, Wilson Way Bridge will help encourage safe and courteous use of shared spaces.

Signs will be posted along the sidewalk, allowing community members to provide their feedback on-site by scanning the QR code. The success of this project does not rely on speed limit enforcement, as that would involve law enforcement. Instead, the Pedestrian Safety Zone signs and project aim to increase awareness about pedestrian safety. Metro Parks employs two park attendants who engage with visitors. These attendants also distribute small cards to individuals using the sidewalks.

Member Thomas asked for clarification around speed limits and the consequence of a speeding ticket. Joe shared that Metro Parks aims to raise awareness about safety risks for all sidewalk users, rather than punishing anyone and this project is not adding a speed limit to the trail.

Member Thomas asked if there are any plans in the future to add striping or widen the sidewalk. Joe acknowledged that widening or adding striping to Ruston Way is challenging due to the



waterfront's patterns of rising sea levels and a deteriorating sea wall. Metro Parks and the City of Tacoma are undertaking efforts to address these ongoing issues. Recent permits have been issued for the necessary repairs to the sea wall. Additionally, the heavy traffic on the road and the nearby railway continues to pose challenges. Envision our Waterfront (pre-covid Long-Term Master Plan for along Ruston Way) theme was "A place for every pace." Due to the funding situation at Metro Parks and the City of Tacoma, there is currently not sufficient budget for major capital improvements along the waterfront to widen the trail.

Member Michael asked about the signage designations and purpose of the Pedestrian Safety Zone. Is it just for a specific mode or does it apply to all users? He also asked how feedback and data will be analyzed and adjusted for different users. Will there be a policy decision regarding these issues? Joe acknowledged the tricky decision when multiple users are engaged in multiple modes of transportation and the expected levels of conflict. Metro Parks is a facility manager, and the project is rooted in data. When there's an uptick in reported crashes and general complaints along Ruston Way that's reason for concern.

Member Teena asked where there is a broader sidewalk area; will there be a plan to mark striping along the wider sidewalks? Joe stated that the recreation immunity statute covers Metro Parks in their decision-making. It takes more than paint to designate the use.

Teena added, is there an option for education on the signage, such as "stay to the right or pass on the left?" Joe agreed to take this back to the team.

(Public Comment) Kerri asked, can the signs be tied to Vision Zero? Chair Jenn added to Kerri's point by suggesting that Metro Parks Tacoma collaborate with City of Tacoma Transportation Planner Carrie Wilhelme on sign messages to connect with Tacoma's Vision Zero initiative.

Chair Jenn, asked what data this process is rooted in. What are most complaints based on? Joe shared that one case is a pending lawsuit that may involve Metro Parks and the City of Tacoma. Other complaints come anecdotally from the comment line or the front desk at Metro Parks Tacoma. Chair Jenn also asked about data on collisions involving cars vs. pedestrians crossing Ruston Way or are related to cyclist and pedestrian scenarios when crossing in front of restaurants. Joe answered that there are complaints about the infrastructure around the restaurant zone and crossing on Ruston Way; it's challenging to have a shared-use pathway when cars interact with the path.

Chair Jenn questioned if signs are put up for safety reasons, will there be signage that indicates drivers to use caution for pedestrians? Joe agreed; he was still determining if there was signage at the entrances and exits of the restaurant parking lots and will consider Jenn's suggestion.

Member Julian added if there has been any work with scooter vendors to discuss messaging when users are on scooters along the pathway. Joe mentioned his work with Liz Kaster and Razor Micromobility to determine the allowed scooter speed limit of 8 mph. They built a geofencing boundary around Ruston Way, Dune Peninsula, the Wilson Way Bridge, and portions of Point Defiance—since then, there have been no noted complaints about the rented scooters' speeds and pedestrians feeling threatened by them. The problem is with a lack of control Metro Parks Tacoma has over the private scooters and mobility devices and users going over higher speeds along the sidewalk.

Staff member Liz asked what kind of information will be provided on the website when the QR code is scanned. Joe explained that the plan is for the website to have prompted questions (in terms of a survey), such as

- How do you feel about this?
- Does this help you?



- What is your rating on this?

The webpage has yet to be designed but will give people resources on educational matters like Vision Zero. Joe is happy to work with BPTAG and the City of Tacoma to determine what should be included on the webpage.

### **User Group Separation Project on Outer Loop of 5-mile Drive at Point Defiance (Joe Brady)**

Joe Brady of Metro Parks Tacoma shared that there have been user conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists along the 5 Mile Drive Outer Loop. Joe provided some background information on the 5-mile Drive Outer Loop and explained how the issue of sharing the path safely with multiple transportation modes is similar.

The proposed solution is requiring bicyclists to ride one way (using sharrows to designate direction of travel) and adding educational signage. Joe also stated that Metro Parks would improve hiking trail crosswalks and signage at trail. Chair Jenn asked for more information and requested a timeline for the park signs and pictures of the signs themselves.

Joe shared that the current 10-mph signs will be taken down and replaced with brown signs that support the user guidelines, showing that everyone must yield to pedestrians.

Member Michael inquired from Joe about the next steps. Would there be any interaction with advocacy groups, the public, and groups such as BPTAG? Joe explained that the 10-mph sign was a stopgap response to accidents.

Member Thomas had a question about the shared path. He asked which side of the path bicycles should ride on and whether wild animals would threaten cyclists. Joe responded that cyclists would be required to ride on the left side of the path and that wildlife is primarily located in the nearby woods.

Member Matt suggested adding a striped line to the middle of the shared path, along with proper signage to ensure users follow the rules. Staff member Liz shared that a yellow stripe allowing two-way traffic and supporting trail users to stay to the right was a more standard practice on trails than sharrows, and mentioned that not all people riding bikes are able to ride the entire length of the outer loop, due to age, ability, etc.

Chair Jenn felt that more data was needed to make informed decisions. She suggested conducting counts to see who rides, when, and in which direction. She also shared crash data from the park, indicating that twenty-two crashes have resulted in police reports within the last ten years. Fourteen of those crashes occurred within the park, and eight were near the entrance on Ferry Street. All crashes involved cars, with drivers either under the influence or driving erratically. Jenn expressed that the areas around the Zoo and parking areas were more serious safety concerns, and felt that the Outer Loop was wide enough for a middle-line stripe and two-way bike traffic.

Member Teena expressed concern about safety in the park near the Zoo and Owens Beach. She noted that the issue is not with bike riders but with people on scooters and those with long dog leashes. Teena suggested the possibility of a 15-mph speed sign rather than the current 10-mph signs which seem to imply bikes are the problem and is very slow even for casual riders. Joe shared that the plan was to doing away with the signs altogether to avoid monitoring bike speeds.

Member Thomas inquired about regulations that could legally ban the use of longer leashes. Joe preferred not to introduce additional rules or restrictions that would require monitoring people, but Thomas requested an advisory message on the brown signs as well. In the chat, details on Tacoma's 8-foot leash law were shared.



Chair Jenn mentioned the parking lot and free parking and opportunities to charge for parking to encourage rideshare and encourage people not to be so liberal with the cars. She also mentioned adding designated space for people walking to the Zoo and around SAMI, where there are narrow roadways. Joe shared that Metro Parks just completed the first phase of the Point Defiance Loop Trail. Jenn complimented Metro Parks regarding the speed bumps and the separation areas around Owen Beach and would like to see similar treatments elsewhere.

Transportation Commissioner Joe K shared a comment on the Cushman Trail stripe, reminding users to stay to the right.

Community member Kerri suggested sharing information on collisions to educate the public and potentially change behavior. It was also proposed to conduct surveys or user counts to gather data on park usage and safety.

Member Teena expressed concern about feeling unsafe while walking her dog along the Outer Loop when there weren't many people around, and that having more cyclists along the loop contributes to a greater feeling of safety.

Member Ileana inquired about Metro Parks' safety measures, and Joe explained that while there was a user count survey in 2015, there is currently no systematic process for gathering safety data. Chair Jenn suggested creating more transparency in this area.

### **Safe Routes to School Action Plan Updates (Cailin Henley)**

The Safe Routes to School Action Plan is being updated by Cailin Henley, who serves as the Safe Routes to School Coordinator for the City of Tacoma. Safety improvements have been completed at seven schools, while construction is starting at seven others in 2023. Plans for improvements at four more schools are set to begin between 2024 and 2027. SRTS has organized nine Bike Rodeos, distributed over 850 helmets to kids and families in need, and sponsored Kidical Mass events to continue funding, grants, and construction improvements.

Reevaluating the plan, Cailin learned by surveying at school events that families would like to participate in bike camps over instructional workshops: more sidewalks and safer crossings, traffic gardens, and in-school bicycle lessons. Families also want walking school buses and additional crossing guards and safety enhancements.

The plan will also include an update to the school prioritization, using newer data while continuing the focus on safety and equity.

Cailin posed two discussion questions to the group for related feedback:

- 1. What would you like to see prioritized within the next 5 years?**
- 2. What do you see as BPTAG's role in helping implement the program, how would you like to participate?**

Member Ileana suggested more youth voices for feedback and to represent them in the project presentations. Member Matt would like BPTAG to focus on specific school projects and to evaluate anticipated improvements. Member Jenn noted that more parents are commuting to schools on cargo bikes, so including ways to support cargo bikes and other unique ways of Active Transportation modes.

Cailin shared the last Traffic Garden event at Edison Elementary this upcoming Saturday, and asked BPTAG to share the flyer.

- **Staff Updates:**



- **BPTAG got Mail from Metro Parks Tacoma**

Liz shared a letter BPTAG received from Metro Parks Tacoma's Board President Smith in response to their letter about bike parking in parks.

- **Portland Ave Design Plan (Grant details)**

Liz shared that the City applied for a Puget Sound Regional Council Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant to design Portland Avenue Vision Zero Improvements from E 27<sup>th</sup> St to E 56<sup>th</sup> St. This project would design pedestrian safety and ADA enhancements, protected bicycle facilities/shared use path along/adjacent to the corridor, traffic calming, improved access to transit, and new and improved bicycle and pedestrian crossings. The grant would fund the preliminary engineering phase which includes a traffic study, community engagement, survey, and design. Letters of support were provided by WSDOT, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Eastside Baptist Church, Pierce Transit, and Sound Transit. The Puyallup Tribe will also be critical partners in this project, and city staff discussed this project with Puyallup Tribe staff, however the grant timeline was too short to request a formal letter of support.

- **Report from Transportation Commission**

Jennifer Kammerzell shared Alyssa Torrez presented Home In Tacoma to give an update on Phase 2 and what the data has shown. The group also discussed Pacific Avenue BRT discussion and where the project stands as of now. The board and commission will generate a letter and anticipates a presentation from Pierce Transit in September..

- **BPTAG at other active transportation meetings**

Member Ileana shared her notes from the Metro Parks Tacoma's Cocreate and Recreate event. Metro Parks provided data generated from areas including Central Tacoma. Metro Parks Tacoma highlighted the top priority for facility investments citywide are natural surface hiking and walking trails, dog parks, tree canopy covered in parks, paved biking trails, paved biking, walking, and hiking trails.

- Chair Jenn shared a report with the latest numbers of people who lost their lives on roads in Washington state, 348 people last year and in 2021 the total number was 276, so there has been an increase. The number of fatal crashes during the day is stable but the number of fatal crashes at night has increased.

**Next meeting is scheduled for August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 5:30pm**

- **Adjourn**

Chair Jenn adjourned the meeting at 7:38 PM.



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