



City of Tacoma Transportation Commission

Gerrit Nyland, Co-Chair, City Manager Appointed
Bruce Morris, Co-Chair, District 4
Richard Gardner, At-Large
Erin Anderson, At-Large
Troy Serad, At-Large
Matt Stevens, At-Large
Vacant, District 1
Vacant, District 2
Luis Alonzo, District 3
Vacant, District 5
Vacant, City Manager Appointed

FINAL Minutes

Meeting: Transportation Commission
Time: Wednesday, August 17, 2022 at 5:30 P.M.
Place: Virtual, Zoom

Join by computer, click on the following link:

<https://zoom.us/join> or <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87316891624?pwd=ZEJBMml3VWZSOTd1cjE5ZjNGT0VoUT09>

Join by Phone: (253) 215-8782

Meeting ID: 873 1689 1624

Passcode: 747000

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I. Call to Order

Co-Chair Morris called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

II. Roll Call

There were no absences.

III. Approval of Minutes (July 20, 2022)

CM Anderson moved to approve the July 20, 2022 minutes. CM Serad seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented.

IV. Public Comment on Agenda Topics

No members of the public provided comments.

V. Business Items

Code Enforcement Overview

DeJa Irving, Code Compliance Supervisor in the Neighborhood and Community Services Department, provided an overview of Code Compliance and Enforcement as it relates to transportation. DeJa discussed the most common causes of right of way (ROW) violations, the Nuisance Code, property owner responsibility, complaint tracking and process, complaints for 2022, and examples of code cases. Code Compliance enforces vegetation blocking signs and signals, garbage or vegetation in the ROW, cars blocking sidewalks, sight obstructions, and items in the planting strip. They do not enforce potholes, damaged sidewalks, refuse cans on street, abandoned autos, and pod or storage containers. Co-Chair Nyland asked how the City might categorize tents or encampments blocking the sidewalk. DeJa shared that the Code Compliance team generally enforces the ROW when the property owner might be responsible for the code case. She also shared information about a new program where the City will partner with property owners to assist with abatement.

DeJa explained that Nuisance complaints make up 78% of the cast types. These include debris in the ROW,



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overgrown vegetation, private property nuisances, and obstructions in the ROW. She also shared that in areas of Low and Very Low Opportunity according to the Equity Index, there are various programs to help property owners get in to compliance, such as removal of hazardous trees. The goal is to help people into compliance prior to abating and charging/fining property owners.

DeJa reviewed examples of code cases. Co-Chair Nyland asked if Code Compliance enforces on mailboxes obstructing sidewalks or poses a hazard when there isn't a cane detectable base that addresses the overhang. DeJa shared that she has not enforced on mailbox overhangs, but will check with her inspectors and look to add that to code compliance review. CM Serad asked if the penalties include a lien on the property. DeJa shared that civil penalties are \$250 a month and can result in collections. If the City abates the nuisance, that can result in a lien on the property. Co-Chair Nyland shared his experience when 311 first came out and having numerous cases dropped. DeJa explained that there could be multiple reasons why a case was missed or closed without resolution, including misinformation, time to work with property owners, etc.

DeJa shared that the City is working on a Code Compliance Handbook, reviewing equitable interpretation and enforcement processes, and providing services to help with compliance including Yard assistance and resources for elderly and people with disabilities. CM Gardner asked for clarification on alleys that may not be in the ROW. DeJa explained that staff will use the Dart Map to identify where ROW lines are and who might be the responsible abutting property owner. Co-Chair Nyland asked what percentage of the City's parcels have a code violation. DeJa shared that most nuisance cases are on private property, so the ROW cases are fairly low. Co-Chair Nyland asked if the cases are disproportionately higher in certain areas. DeJa shared that the North End Inspector typically has a higher caseload. Co-Chair Nyland requested a program that would evaluate the scope and need of a defined area to determine if high opportunity areas are resourced better. DeJa agreed to review that request and committed to adding a task to better track the type of complaints. CM Alonzo provided a link to the code compliance response map and supports adding better, detailed categories. CM Alonzo also asked how Code Compliance addresses cars temporarily blocking the sidewalk. DeJa explained that if the nuisance would not remain for more than 10 days, it may not be a code case. In some cases, it may be a TPD or Parking Enforcement responsibility. The difficulty is when the Inspector conducts a site visit and does not see the code case.

a) Streets Initiative Annual Report

Erik Sloan, Pavement Manager in Public Works Department, presented a summary of the 2021 Streets Initiative Report. He provided an overview and background of the voter approved Streets Initiative. Erik presented an overview of overlays, surface treatments, and preventative maintenance. Staffing impacts from the pandemic are still affecting progress, especially as folks are still required to quarantine. He also shared that gravel paving goals have been challenging to meet due to the added cost and complexity to address drainage and short segments.

Erik shared that the City has been awarded \$100 million in grants, whereas the 10-year target was \$90 million. Projects include Taylor Way, E 64th Street Phase 1, S 19th Street signal improvements, and Pipeline Trail Phase 3 and 4. He shared that nearly 2000 curb ramps have been built or improved, over 7 miles of bike infrastructure was built, 45 school crossing beacons were installed, and 5 miles of new or replaced sidewalks were constructed. Erik also reviewed the Streets Initiative Dashboard that the City recognizes has challenges and needs updating. The map is linked to the Capital Projects map. CM Serad asked if the information in the



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Appendix could be color-coded. Erik shared that it can be, and he will work with other staff to assist with the color scheme. CM Serad is interested in the alternative taxing available to the City, the history behind the initiative, and how to better leverage maintenance projects to create a more complete street. CM Gardner acknowledged that the City can provide better information on explaining why certain streets are repaired over others, but that it is difficult to do. Co-Chair Nyland asked that the report include the metrics and trends, and suggested replacing the bar charts with pie charts on the dashboard. He stated that the Commission supports a future initiative and that telling the story and showing the progress is important. CM Anderson asked if gravel alleys were considered for Streets Initiative paving. Erik explained that alleys were not considered; however, the City is looking to gather data on alleys and what the cost may be to pave them in the future.

Co-Chair Nyland moved to approve the report with edits to add metrics and trends. CM Stevens seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion.

VI. Other Business/Updates

- a) Transit Oriented Development Advisory Group (Matt Stevens, Erin Anderson) – CM Stevens shared that TODAG approved a BRT Expansion comment letter that supported Route B. The group also discussed options for the future of TODAG.
- b) Bus Rapid Transit Citizens Committee (Richard Gardner) – CM Gardner shared that BRT will start construction in Spanaway in 2023.
- c) Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group (Erin Anderson) – Jennifer Kammerzell shared that the July meeting included a presentation by Sound Transit Bicyclist Safety Outreach, Vision Zero Action Plan, and a Reflection of Recent Collisions.

VII. Staff Reports

- a) Responses to Commission Inquiries
 - i) Transportation Commission recruitment update – Carrie shared that there will be 3 new Commission Members and that CM Gardner was re-appointed. IPS decided not to fill the District 5 position at this time and is looking to increase the candidate pool diversity
 - ii) Week Without Driving Challenge – September 19-25
- b) Status of Grant Applications and Major Capital Projects
- c) Upcoming Public Meetings and Events
 - i) September 13, City Council: Tideflats Scope of EIS and Alternatives, Study Session and Public Hearing

VIII. Commissioner Comments

CM Gardner shared that Pacific Avenue Corridor Study is on the August 24, 2022 Infrastructure and Planning Sustainability Council Committee.

CM Serad submitted the following written comment: *Tacoma is experiencing a period of growth that challenges this committee on all fronts, down to the granular details of sidewalk repair. However, with nearly \$6-billion in public money recently spent, newly dedicated, or programmed for major transit projects, we have an obligation to get the "big picture" correct, from which all successive investments flow. Frankly, I find our "big picture" transit system to be needlessly problematic, and it is because of misconceptions or misrepresentations on what or where "Tacoma" actually is. It is for this reason that I am very proud of our recent BRT expansion letter, where this Commission emphatically stated that Tacoma is where it has been since 1884, anchored out of the city core.*



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There are those who claim that the core of Tacoma is obsolete, or that it will be supplanted in importance by the Mall, Brewery District, or some other section of the city. They hold this position against all evidence to the contrary, as shown by data from the City, Pierce Transit, and the US Government. By virtually all metrics, the 15-minute walkshed out from 11th and Pacific is the dominant administrative, economic, cultural, residential and transportation core of Pierce County. When including the Tacoma General Hospital area, central Tacoma utterly dwarfs everywhere else in prominence—there is no competition. Indeed, our best data shows that Tacomans and County commuters travel to it in far larger percentages than any other regional destination, including Seattle.

*And yet, based on our long range transit planning, you wouldn't know this. The Stream expansion team is studying ending Route 3 at Tacoma Dome Station, despite the fact that this busline has obtained high ridership while serving Downtown. For Stream 1, the project features a route deviation to the Dome that **adds** travel time after spending \$250-million to reduce it, in addition to erasing the busiest urban section of the busiest bus line in Pierce County. Most egregious of all, nearly \$4-billion dollars is being spent to send Link trains not to the Commerce Street Hub in downtown, which is Transit Planning 101, but instead to the park-and-ride at Tacoma Dome in the industrial margins of the city. It will also do so on the worst possible alignment for bus and rail integration. All of these plans are being executed without conception for how riders will use the system, or how the system will serve our City. To the fundamental issue of where our transit should go, our recent letter should be considered the first pushback against a now pervasive and backwards logic.*

Recent developments appear to stem from the 2016 Sound Transit 3 vote, which had Link trains traveling only to Tacoma Dome Station and no farther. I am aware of no other urban metro line in the world that intentionally stops 1.5 miles away from the urban core it is supposed to serve, to include its rich transit connections. Sound Transit did not offer to us any plans that showed Link service into central Tacoma. And the lackluster plans they offered were defeated in our sub-area, only to be overruled by Seattle-area voters.

The consequence has been our transportation network in disarray, an identity crisis in what it means to serve Tacoma. It has resulted in two distinct transit nodes that serve the same small city, adding absurd complexity to our planning. This has a practical impact to all users of the system, too, as it discourages transit use in a city where it is all too easy to drive. A historical perspective is valuable here: in the years before the city dismantled its streetcar system in 1938, a key complaint against the streetcars was that the system forced transfers onto riders. The public hated it, and the replacement buses then did away with it to great popularity. 100-years and multiple billions of dollars later, all regional trips to the heart of Tacoma will need to transfer, all riders traveling across our city on its busiest transit artery will need to transfer, and riders heading into Downtown from within our own city will need to transfer. This is madness, and our ancestors would be mortified. Link should be joining our system, not upending it.

We can amend projects that are a decade or more away. In light of the West Seattle, International District and Ballard communities seeking to improve their Link plans by way of better alignments, tunnels, bridges, and stations, I want to challenge our Commission to seek improvements here. Tacoma deserves Link plans that properly serve our City. I encourage this Commission to draft a letter to Councilmember Walker and the Sound Transit Board seeking a supplemental EIS for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension to review a Puyallup Avenue alignment that, one, better integrates with the bus system at Tacoma Dome, and two, prepares for an extension to the Commerce Street Hub in the heart of the city.



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The wealth and resiliency of Tacoma will be built upon the success of its urban core, and we should be prioritizing, where appropriate, major investments that are naturally suited to it. This includes a multi-billion dollar metro line that aims to connect regional centers. In the South Sound, there is no bigger center than Downtown Tacoma.

I am happy to present to this group on the value of Downtown, and of the precedent of transit services being rooted in Downtown. I understand that this request challenges recent Tacoma planning orthodoxy. However, I feel strongly that a supplemental EIS to study a Puyallup Avenue alignment and downtown extension is the right step for Tacoma. We have time to right a major wrong, but that window is beginning to close.

IX. Public Comment

No members of the public provided comment.

X. Adjourn

Co-Chair Morris adjourned the meeting at 7:40 PM.



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List of Groups to Attend or Follow

- Neighborhood Councils (Alonzo/Central, Gardner/South End)
- Neighborhood Business Districts
- Hilltop Action Coalition
- Tacoma Dome Business District
- Schuster Parkway/Ruston Way Stakeholder Committee
- WSDOT SR167 Bike/Ped Stakeholder Group (Morris)
- Sound Transit TDLE
- Tideflats Subarea Plan (Skaught)
- Planning Commission
- Parking Technical Advisory Group
- Sustainable Tacoma Commission

2021 Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee Recommendations

- Affordable housing and access
- Bike boulevards – Increase facilities, wayfinding, and use
- Pierce Transit – Support higher frequency and future increases
- Vision Zero – Support development and implementation
- Neighborhood Greenways – Include in TMP and focus on traffic calming elements
- Bike Friendly City – Strive for silver status and prioritize network of protected bike facilities



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