

D.C. Pedestrian Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Nov. 14, 2022, 6:35 p.m.
Remote Public Meeting

Attendees: J.I. Swiderski, David Tumblin, Cheryle Adams, Dalton Howard, Ameen Beale, Heather Foote, Charlotte Lee Jackson. Agency reps: Christine Mayeur (DDOT), Karyn McAlister (DDOT), Rita Abou Samara (OP), Timothy Spriggs (DPW), Warnique West (DPW), Linda Grant (DPW), Celeste Duffie (DPW), Sergeant Thorne (MPD), Dulce Naime (DPR). PAC staff: Uma Gupta.

Start: Foote convened the remote meeting at 6:33 p.m. There were no proposed changes to the agenda.

Introductions: Attendees introduced themselves.

Snow Removal: Timothy Spriggs, Department of Public Works (DPW) Chief, Security & Administration, also serves as Manager for Snow Removal. Spriggs presented an overview of responsibilities, including how DPW heads a team that includes DDOT, District Preparedness System (DC Homeland Security), Department of Government Services (DGS), DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMA) and DC water. Their mission is to clear snow and ice from the street. As Snow Coordinator, Spriggs is responsible for getting all aspects of the team working well. He outlined how pedestrian safety is supported. The Snow Team clears streets and bike lanes, using pet-friendly de-icers on pedestrian bridges, snow, and ice, while the DC government supports homeowners and other residency efforts. Through the DPW Sidewalk Shoveling Exemption Program, homeowners living at home aged 65 and older, and people living with disability may enroll in a program in which Serve DC provides volunteer snow shovelers to clear enrollees' sidewalks. This program offers a 2-year enrollment and requires re-application; 970 applicants were approved last year. DGS maintains over 850 district owned properties. Their responsibilities include snow pre-treatment and the removal of snow and ice from their properties. While all properties are important during a winter storm, it is imperative that emergency service personnel, hypothermia centers, shelters, businesses, schools, and DC OSSE parking lots (for school buses) are cleared first. These comprise the DC DGS priority 1 locations during a snowstorm. Priority 2 locations include senior wellness centers, recreation centers, community centers, and remaining government buildings. Priority 3 locations include pocket and triangle parks, playgrounds, dog parks, and vacant properties. Information can be found on snow.dc.gov. Metro bus stops, a major concern, are cleared by Metro. If a bus stop needs to be cleared and there is not an ample amount of time, residents can call 311. The snow team relies on businesses and residents to clear their sidewalks. For several years, DC BIDS have taken full responsibility for clearing sidewalks in their areas. This year, the Department of Small and Local Businesses (DSLBD) "clean team" is doing the same. Thanks to both groups, sidewalks, bus stops and pedestrian ramps [see note below] are cleared. Since pedestrian safety is important across the District, DC law requires residences and commercial property owners to remove snow and ice around their property within the first eight hours of daylight after a storm

ends. If sidewalks are not cleared 24 hours after the end of a storm, commercial property owners may receive a fine of up to \$150 and residences can be fined \$25.

Swiderski asked about handling of Ward 1 property owners including federal agencies such as the National Park Service and foreign governments with embassies that fail to clear sidewalks and are not concerned about fines. For federal properties, Spriggs invited PAC members to call the DPW snow operations center and, if a next step is needed, contact him directly by phone so he could call his federal contacts. Swiderski offered to provide Spriggs' team with some of those locations, to enable the agency to contact owners proactively. Spriggs welcomed such a list and said he would like to reach out to property owners before a snow event.

Adams asked about respective responsibilities of WMATA and the Snow Team on clearing around bus shelters. West reiterated that it is not DPW but WMATA that is responsible for clearing bus shelters; she added that shelters on sidewalks in front of businesses and homes fall under the same statute that they be cleared by owners within eight hours of a storm. Residents can call 311 and they will be transferred to WMATA/Metro. Grant added that homeowners interested in the shoveling exemption program can call (202) 645-7190 at DPW, whose Solid Waste Education and Enforcement program administers the SWEEP program.

In response to questions from Howard and Beale, West clarified that an owner needs to be either over 65 *or* have a disability. She offered to email Beale about how the disability determination is made and suggested he encourage disabled neighbors to just go ahead and apply for the snow removal exemption program.

Swiderski said he had pulled up the online application and the site indicated that the program was closed and no new applications were being accepted. He asked how people who were not aware of the program can get into it. West said that last week she had talked to the program administrator who indicated that an interested resident could call the number and a determination would be made on how they could assist the homeowner.

Howard asked whether a resident owning a rental property is covered by the SWEEP program (shoveling exemption). Grant noted that the program is for homeowners living in their home. Swiderski asked about programs for renters who would otherwise qualify and may not have a landlord living locally. Grant clarified that DPW considers its service population to be homes that are either single family or no more than three living units. Any building with more than three units is considered a commercial property, and the property owner has responsibility to clear the sidewalk and any fine goes to that owner.

Foote raised snow removal issues from the PAC's February 2021 pedestrian infrastructure letter to agency directors. The longstanding concern behind the letter was that the city was not assigning value – and thus budget and policy priority – to pedestrian infrastructure and, in the case of snow clearing, the priority assigned to clearing snow for vehicles and more recently bicycles. This imbalance is an on-going problem since the PAC has not seen increasing compliance with the responsibilities Spriggs laid out. Foote raised the example of instructions

that may be given to DPW contractors to ensure sidewalk ramps are not blocked during plowing, and the apparent lack of remedy for pedestrians or those using mobility devices to get quick action to clear such sidewalk ramps or ensure access by MetroAccess vans. While residents should continue to call 311 on such snow issues, Spriggs and West said members of the PAC, which they consider a partner to DPW in pedestrian safety efforts, can contact the DPW Snow Command Center (Snow Hub) for action in such cases and for any snow related matters. DPW would send an additional resource to the location.

Spriggs described new training for plow teams to clear pedestrian ramps and the creation of a follow-up investigatory unit. This reflects an increase in foot traffic, he said. West explained that the training module shows plow drivers to push snow in the curb lane past the intersection and not leave a mound at the intersection or on an ADA accessible pedestrian ramp, as has happened in the past. The driver never gets out of the truck in this process. Training is mandatory and annual, from late September through October. Each driver has course and classroom training. DPW now has a training department manager as of this year.

Tumblin asked who issued the mandate for clearing snow by a set time period; Spriggs replied that this came from the Mayor. Adams asked about pre-storm communication with property owners about snow removal, their responsibilities and DPW enforcement when snow is not removed within the stipulated time period. If there is a mechanism for relaying this information to owners, how effective is it? Duffie, Community Relations Specialist for DPW, replied that DPW holds weekly calls with the 11 BIDs and the DSLBDs. The BIDs have some private tax money to support them in shoveling in front of their business, their business corridors and the curb cuts (though not the bus shelters which WMATA handles). They maintain connectivity between the street which DPW handles and the more manual operations which they handle in those corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists. There are 40 government-funded DSLBD “Clean Teams” in the most prioritized major corridors, and they do the same thing, cleaning snow in front of businesses and in curb cuts.

When a snow operation is determined by the Snow Team, whether for brining or full deployment, notices go out to directors, operations managers, the BIDs and the 40 “clean teams.” It generally goes out 72 hours in advance, in part to assist them to safeguard streateries and other infrastructure. This is for businesses on major prioritized corridors within a responsibility of a BID or “Clean Team,” not all businesses. This communication underscores a pre- and post-snow responsibility, facilitates DPW curb-to-curb snow removal and enables pre-snow sidewalk treatments. Duffie described her work with the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) and expressed the hope that DPW could establish a similar relationship with the PAC.

In response to a question about the new follow-up investigatory units, Spriggs said the District is divided into 14 snow removal zones; DDOT has 1 to 9, and DPW has 10 to 14. Each zone has two personnel, one to validate the road plan and the other to ensure ramps, sidewalks and cut-out’s are clear. If PAC were to call in a location, a DPW person would be dispatched to a particular zone, more clearing resources added based on that assessment and an after-action picture taken.

As the discussion continued, it became clear that DPW and the PAC had different understandings of the “pedestrian ramp.” DPW was referring to pedestrian ramps on bridges, roadways and other such infrastructure that are cleared manually by its teams, while PAC members were referring specifically to sidewalk ramps, the ADA accessible ramps at intersections or directly off the sidewalks. Foote noted that clearing of sidewalk ramps adjacent to sidewalks appears to be a gap in the District’s assignment of responsibilities for snow removal, and Spriggs concurred that this was a potential gap. PAC members thanked Spriggs and his colleagues for their presentations and the discussion.

Vision Zero updated website and report: Mayeur, a member of the three-person Vision Zero team, introduced herself. She participates in quarterly Vision Zero meetings convened by the office of the Deputy Mayor. Mayeur presented slides beginning with an overview of the new Vision Zero website. She called attention to the “engineering” page which covers on proven safety treatments or measures, the different methods to protect people. She also noted the “education page” which lists ongoing campaigns and the “get involved” page which provides links to advisory council websites.

Mayeur then provided an overview of the Vision Zero 2022 update. The District works aggressively towards the Vision Zero goal of zero deaths and serious injuries every year. When compared to sister cities and their progress towards their own goals, DC finds itself in the high middle range, and in frequent communication so as to learn from these cities. The slides covered data-driven research on risk factors for crash patterns, the impacts of COVID-19 on crashes, and a new strategy focused on centering equity and embracing a Safe Systems Approach. The Safe Systems approach is broken down into safe streets, safe speeds, safe people, safe vehicles, and post-crash care, each with its own report and data.

In response to questions, Mayeur said that the high crash corridors network are in interactive map format, rather than a list. The 100 intersections is tricky since it is based on three years of data, updated annually. The top 25 intersections – such as Bladensburg Road and Florida and New Yor Avenues – really need capital projects to address safety issues. Concerning the adoption of these principles across the agency, she said she has observed that cities that sign on to Vision Zero often do not grasp the degree of culture change that will be needed. That has to happen from the top, alongside how projects are evaluated and discussed. She is trying to work more with capital project engineers.

Agency Reports: Thorne (MPD) reported that there were no additional updates on fatalities since the last meeting. The Street Smart Campaign will launch on November 17th, and there will be crosswalk enforcement. Thorne encouraged participation. McAlister (DDOT) added that the Smart Street Campaign, held at Eagle Academy, will include testimonials and media presence. The Wheeler Road location was chosen to highlight important safety advances in this high-crash corridor. On December 3rd, there will be a second public meeting for the Bladensburg Road Multimodal Safety and Access study. The purpose is to show recommendations and concept level plans. McAlister concluded with mention of the Downtown BID downtown Pedestrian

Safety and Experience study, described in an email circulated by Swiderski. The study area is Wards 2 and 6 and consultants are looking for three locations where they can do three projects. Swiderski shared that the consulting group responsible for the project would be interested in speaking to the PAC next month if time permits. Abou Samra (OP) added that the study coincides with the kickoff for the Public Realm Plan for Central Washington, covering areas in downtown DC and the Golden Triangle. The development of this plan is the second part of the Streets for People campaign.

Treasurer's report: Adams reported no activity on the account, leaving the balance from October 1st- October 31st at \$6,525. With the hire of the PAC administrative assistant, there is movement in the funds to be expected. Foote raised the importance of onboarding for PAC members and officers.

July and September Minutes: Foote announced that there will be a return to the posting of the minutes in draft form on the website along with meeting recordings.

Discussion and decision on FY23 priority issues / goals: Foote asked if PAC members wanted to postpone this agenda item, given limited time and meeting attendance. Swiderski agreed and suggested that some of the discussion be done through email.

December Meeting: A DDOT speaker is confirmed for December to address PAC comments on the electric vehicle charging cord guidance sent to DDOT last May. There was discussion of whether the meeting length could accommodate the FY23 priority issues/ goals topic and a second speaker.

Adjournment: Foote called the meeting to a close at 8:34 pm.