



# Summary Report 2016

## 1 Introduction

Better Naito is a community-based living workshop that has made three separate appearances in the past year and a half. The project consisted of repurposing the easternmost northbound lane of Naito Parkway in Downtown Portland into a protected two-way multi-purpose pathway. Over 700,000 people from all around the state of Oregon and beyond visit Naito Parkway and the Tom McCall Waterfront Park in the summer months for various festivals and events. As a result, 15,000 more people use the Waterfront Park in the summer than in other times of the year and overcrowding occurs. Better Naito provided the needed capacity for all of the people traveling to and through the area.

Better Block PDX, a local volunteer-run organization, partnered with Portland State University Civil Engineering seniors as part of their Capstone project to design, permit, and implement Better Naito. With the help of many faithful volunteers, the project has been able to provide many users an enjoyable visit to Portland's front yard.



**Figure 1.** Project area for Better Naito. The actual two-way multi-use pathway runs from SW Salmon to NW Davis, the remaining project site includes advanced warning signage and a merging taper to direct cars out of the space.

Better Naito took place along SW and NW Naito Parkway from SW Main Street to NW Davis Street and first appeared in collaboration with the Portland Rose Festival from May 22<sup>nd</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The project came back for a second round in 2015 for the Oregon Brewers Festival from July 21<sup>st</sup> to July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015. In 2016, the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and event organizers brought back Better Naito for three months starting May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. During these months, the Oregon Blues Festival over the Fourth of July weekend extended the project south to SW Clay Street to experience a full parkway path.

The Better Naito pilot project created a safe and comfortable place for people to enjoy the festivals while not overflowing the existing Waterfront Pathway, which is already at capacity on most days. Included in the project was a 15-foot wide pathway for people of all ages and abilities to traverse along Naito Parkway during the various festivals and events in the park, which often limit and congest movement for these users.

## Walking. Waiting. Biking.

# BEFORE



**WAITING**



**WALKING**



**BIKING**



# AFTER

**Waiting:** At peak festival times, there can typically be long lines outside of the event waiting to purchase tickets and enter. Crowds of families and friends gather, and often are forced to mix with people walking or biking through the space. Better Naito provided enough space for people to line up and festival crews will commonly use fences within the lane to help keep a throughway open for those that need it.

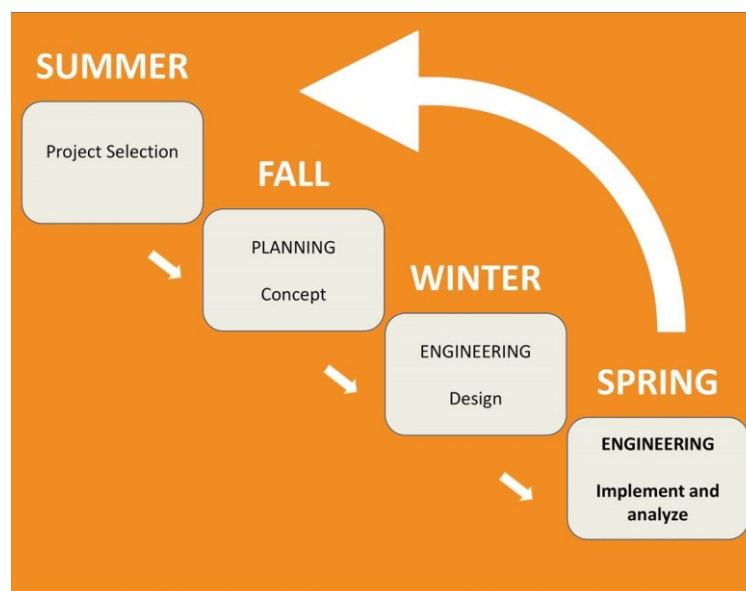
**Walking:** The festivals fences typically extend all the way to the curb and restrict the space available for pedestrians to walk, roll, or stroll. Before Better Naito, people were forced to walk in

the existing 5-foot bike lane on Naito Parkway, including those pushing strollers and in wheelchairs. Better Naito created space for everyone to move easily. The mix and mass of people create an environment that naturally forced people to move slow and with caution.

**Biking:** The existing 5-foot bike lanes on either side of Naito Parkway provide no protection from cars traveling 35 to 40 miles per hour, often exceeding the posted speed limit. The existing Waterfront Park path on the east side of the park is typically congested and full of people enjoying the public space that it is meant to be. Better Naito provides a space for festival goers to get to and from festival entrances while also providing a space for people on bikes to travel without the meandering stop and mingle nature of the Waterfront Park path.

## 2 PSU Institutionalization

Better Naito was the first project to go through what has become a very sustainable and beneficial program for the Portland State University students, Better Block PDX, the City of Portland and the surrounding communities.



At the end of summer, Better Block PDX will brainstorm and vet projects for the upcoming year. By the first week of Fall Term at PSU, each of the potential projects is pitched to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning course within the College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA). Once the planning students have selected the four (on average) projects the class can take on, they work in groups to create reports that cover existing conditions, opportunities and constraints, and early stages of community outreach. These students work closely with Better Block PDX and their community partner to determine the most appropriate scope of work for each project.

Once the planning is completed in the fall, Civil Engineering Capstone students at the Maseeh College of Computer Science and Engineering take on the most technically-heavy projects. Together with both Better Block PDX engineers as well as city engineers, they develop a design and create an approvable traffic control plan. Each project is then implemented in the spring or

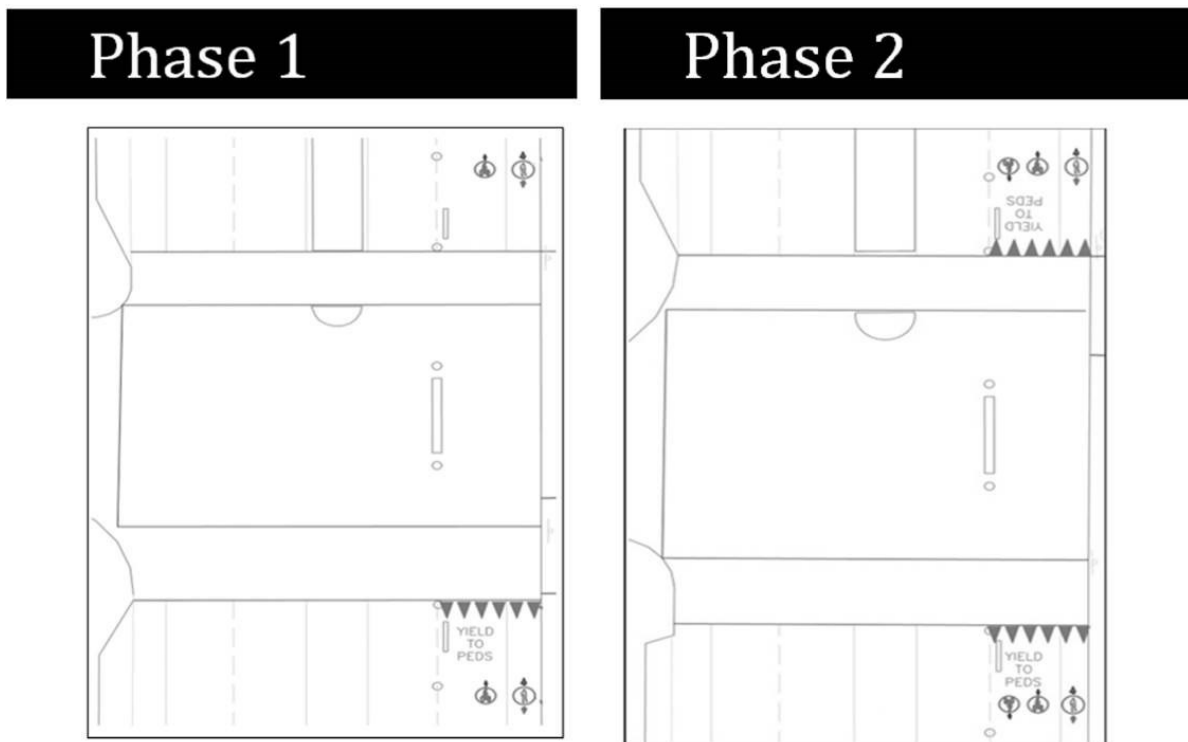
summer (depending on the scope of the project), which often allows students the opportunity to participate in the build-out and help analyze the data that is to be collected. If projects are not executed through the Capstone class, the goal is to have them put on the ground with the help of other community members.

The Better Naito project was the first to unofficially go through this program in 2015. In 2016, the program created the *Better NE Broadway* project in May and the *Oregon Walkways: Connect the Park Blocks on the Green Loop* project in August. In 2017, Better Block PDX is proud to partner with Oregon Walks and the Community Cycling Center to work with various communities outside of Portland's City Center. These projects just kicked off with the planning students at the end of September 2016.

### 3 The Project:

#### Street elements and design

Better Naito repurposed the easternmost northbound travel lane and the existing bike lane into a two-way multi-use pathway. Physical separation was provided with 42" candlestick cones and early iterations of the project also had "planters" to create a safer and more inviting space. Temporary pavement markings in the roadway were installed to delineate space for pedestrians and space for bicyclists.



**Figure 2.** Phase 1 occurred for the first week of the project in 2015, prior to PBOT's installation of bicycle signals in four key locations. These signals face the southbound bicyclists and help inform these users when pedestrians are crossing the intersection to reduce the possibility for conflicts. Better Naito 2016 was entirely Phase 2.

## Phase 1



## Phase 2



*Figure 3. Images portraying on-the-ground conditions during Better Naito 2015*

Bike signals were provided in the southbound direction in four locations to warn bicyclists when pedestrians crossing the pathway are present. Custom signage was created to be as compliant as possible to standard roadway signs while getting the message across to all users in the most clear and efficient manner.

This project gave students, community members, and City staff the ability to test out what a project could look like without the risk or cost associated with a standard planning process. Being able to see the project live and on-the-ground can be a far more powerful public outreach tool than conceptual drawings and technical data is.

### **2016: Summer of Better Naito**

Better Naito returned in 2016 at the request of festival organizers and PBOT partners interested in collecting additional data and recreating a safe space for visitors, while also encouraging placemaking in the public space.

Better Block PDX set-up and brought-down the project while also working with the various festivals to maintain the safety and integrity of the project. Each event in the Waterfront Park between May and August agreed that Better Naito would benefit them and their guests while

providing a safe space for those passing by each day. Festival organizers rented the cones and utilized the design from Better Block PDX to create a self-sustaining summer of Better Naito.

The City of Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) worked with Better Block PDX and the festivals to coordinate the permitting process and help with the project outreach. PBOT also collected travel time data throughout the project and monitored traffic flow, making real-time adjustments to signal timing as required.

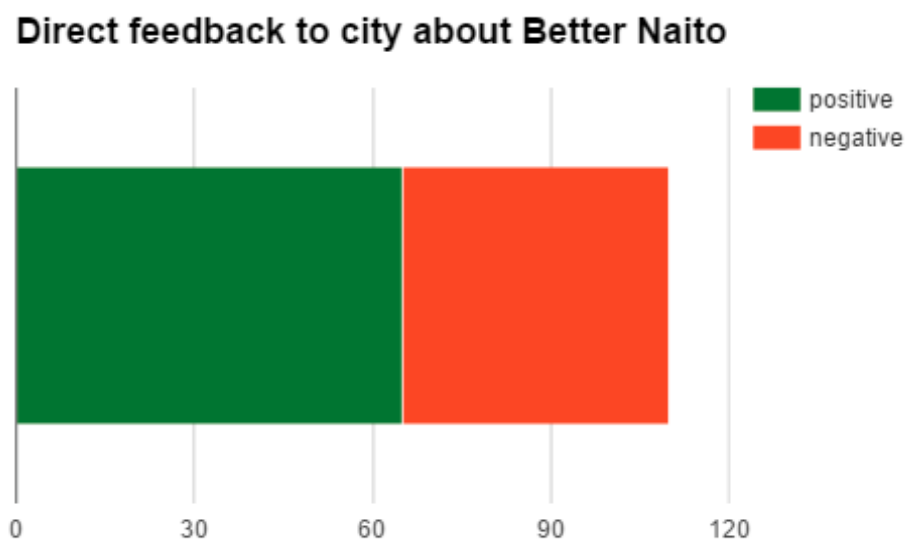
## 4 The Results:

### People's experience

In 2015, the Better Naito project took full advantage of the benefits of social media: there were over 971 tweets about #BetterNaito and many more conversations within Twitter and other platforms that discussed the project. People shared praise, concerns, thoughts, pictures, and excitement. Overall, the feedback was overwhelming positive.

In 2016, the conversation kept going in various places on the internet and elsewhere. Additionally, the official Better Naito email received a large number of notes, from both fans and critics alike. As reported by BikePortland.org<sup>1</sup> on July 29 -- just days before the end of Better Naito 2016 -- a total of 110 people wrote in to the city to share their thoughts.

It is important to note that all but nine of the positive comments came within the last week as many Better Naito users realized the end of the 2016 project season was coming to an end. Additionally, all but nine of the negative comments came prior to the last week, many of which were sent during weeks that festivals were not in place and were primarily from drivers who were traveling through the corridor.



**Figure 4.** Graph courtesy of Michael Andersen, Bike Portland

<sup>1</sup> <http://bikeportland.org/2016/07/29/whos-mad-and-whos-glad-about-better-naito-188645>

Though there were many important points made within these 110 emails, four general messages dominated the correspondence:

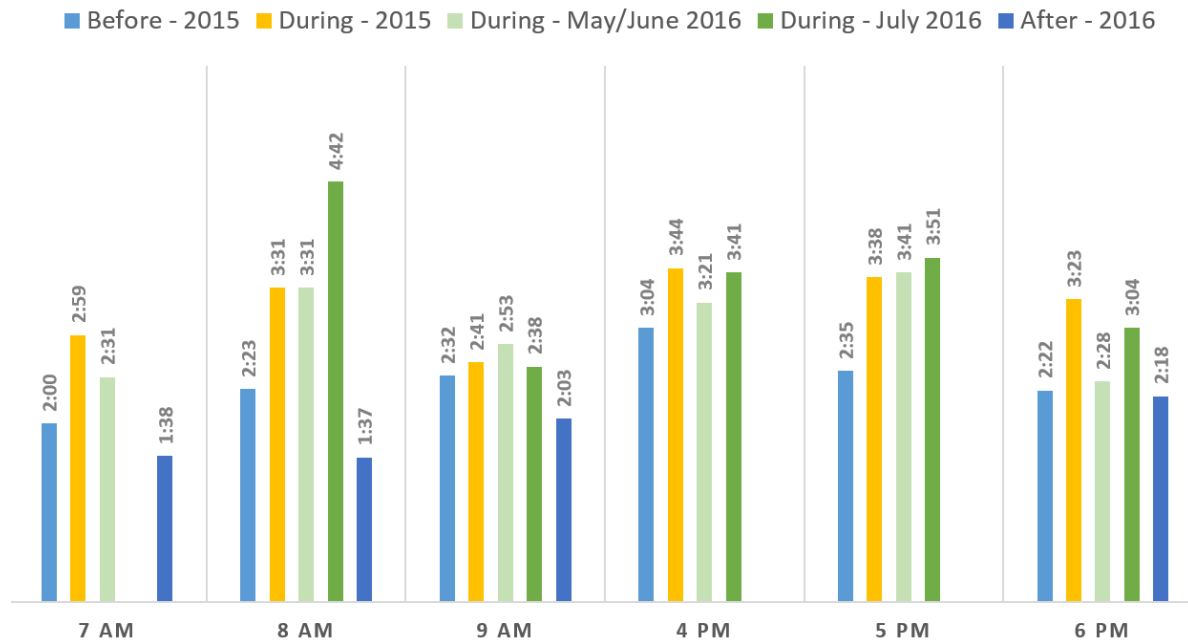
- The space provides a much needed alternative to the existing Waterfront Park path which is already at capacity. Better Naito allows commuters to travel along the corridor without having to weave in and out of the mass of people utilizing the park.
- Better Naito provides a safe and comfortable route that people feel comfortable bringing their kids, friends, and family on.
- Loading zones and intersection crossings cause the largest conflicts and would need to be addressed if any type of permanent installment is approved.
- Many drivers experience delays which they claim are much higher than the reported time increases by Bluetooth sensors and GPS signals.

## Travel Time Data

Travel times were collected before, during, and after all installations of the Better Naito project. The data are collected using bluetooth and GPS signals from cellphones to track movement through the corridor.

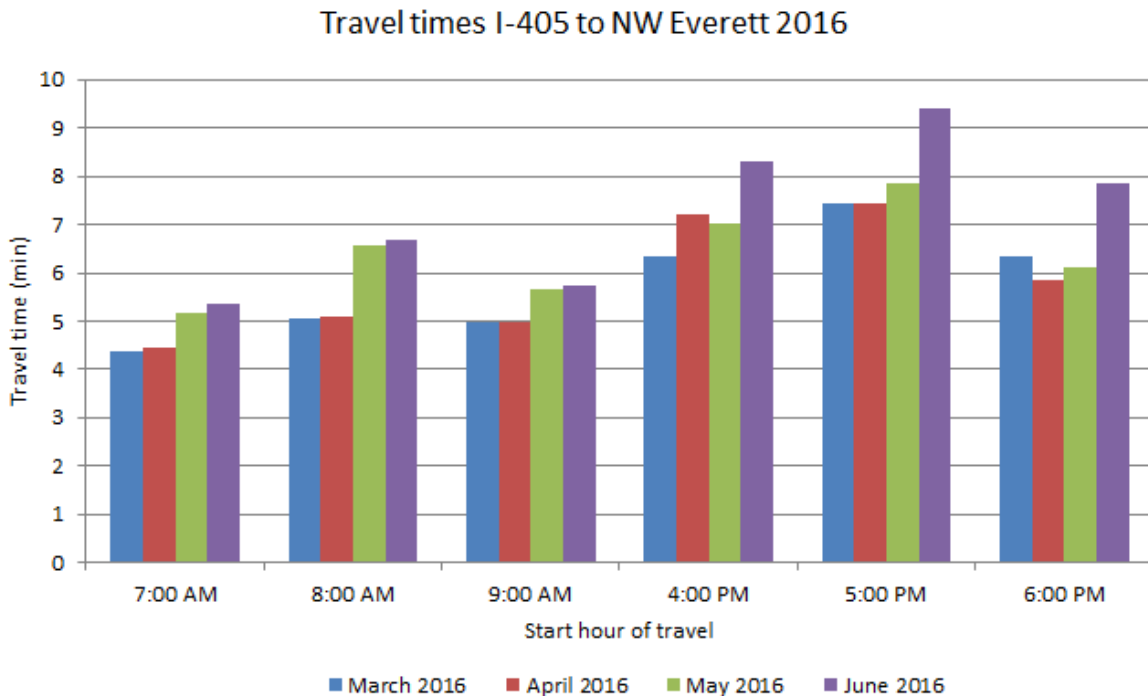
As mentioned above, PBOT has collected data for each of the Better Naito projects. Bluetooth readers were located along SW Naito Parkway at SW Clay Street, SW Salmon Street, and SW Stark Street. The following graph shows the morning and evening peak hours for both 2015 and 2016 Better Naito projects compared to before and after control dates.

TRAVEL TIMES SW CLAY TO STARK 2015-2016



\*\*\*Data not available due to equipment issues

Additionally, the Oregonian<sup>2</sup> acquired a separate set of data from the traffic data firm, Inrix. They provide real time data and have the ability to compile performance reports using the same GPS and bluetooth technology as the City data. A similar graph to the one above is produced for the 2016 project looking at the average travel time from I-405 to NW Everett in the northbound direction for the months of March, April, May, and June.



PBOT data indicated that from SW Clay to SW Stark, there is an increase in travel time of 66 seconds during the morning peak hours and an increase in travel time of 46 seconds during the evening peak hours. The Oregonian/Inrix data indicated that from Interstate 405 to NW Everett, there is an increase in travel time of 63 seconds during the morning peak hours and an increase in travel time of 59 seconds during the evening peak hour.

It is important to note that the segments of data collection are very different: PBOT segments captured only the Better Naito project limits while the Oregonian/Inrix data captured a much longer stretch of roadway. Both include the on-ramp to the Hawthorne Bridge, which is a key pinch-point for all northbound travelers. Having both sets of data show results that coincide with each other indicated that the increases are in fact limited to one to two minutes within the studied area and that this increase in time is not solely due to the Better Naito project. There are many factors impacting traffic prior to vehicles arriving at Better Naito.

Further, in the SW Salmon to SW Stark segment, which eliminates the Hawthorne on-ramp, results show that the increase in travel time is approximately 30 seconds or less throughout the day.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/commuting/index.ssf/2016/07/better\\_naito\\_ends\\_sunday\\_but\\_p.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/commuting/index.ssf/2016/07/better_naito_ends_sunday_but_p.html)



While one to two minutes may seem significant to many, it is important to note that Better Naito is providing more efficient travel to users outside of motor vehicles. For example, during the Rose Festival, the event occupies a majority of the space within the Waterfront Park and there are few points where people can cross the park and access the greater downtown grid from the Waterfront Park path. Better Naito provides a space for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel without being blocked off from the rest of the City and having to backtrack or choose undesirable routes to get where they need to be. It takes the average person approximately 57 seconds to walk the standard 200-foot block in downtown Portland (based on the generally accepted 3.5 feet per second walking speed). A two block detour for pedestrians, not uncommon in the downtown area and typically more than two blocks, causes a larger delay to those users than creating a safe and comfortable pathway along Naito Parkway does to car drivers.

## 5 What's Next?

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### City's options

Due to this project's success and strong public support, PBOT is considering taking ownership of this project in the future and put forward two design options for Better Naito.

Option 1: a seasonal Better Naito that is similar in design to Better Naito 2016, but instead of traffic cones, removable white bollards would be used to delineate bicycle/pedestrian space. These white bollards will be attached to metal anchor cups, which will be permanently installed on the roadway. Seasonal Better Naito will be installed for the summer seasons in the next five years and is estimated to cost a total of \$350,000 (including set-up, take-down, and maintenance).

Option 2: A permanent Better Naito that will convert the current eastside northbound travel lane and bike lane into an elevated, concrete, 2-way cycle track with a new curb line and a separate delineated space for pedestrian where there is currently no sidewalk. Permanent Better Naito will provide much higher quality walking and bicycling facilities on Naito compared to the seasonal version, but the permanent option is estimated to cost a total of \$3.7 million.

PBOT's Better Naito proposal will compete with many other infrastructure and maintenance projects from other bureaus for a surplus of \$8 million in the City's general fund. The low-cost, seasonal Better Naito will continue to enhance the safety and experience of all users of the Waterfront Park and Naito Parkway for the next five years but will not exclude the possibility to install a more permanent option should funding becomes available in the future.

It is important to note that Better Naito improved the safety and comfort of all users even when there was no festival activity in Waterfront Park. A year-around Better Naito will extend the safety benefits of this project beyond the summer season. This improvement will also connect with the new buffered bike lanes on NW Naito just north of the Better Naito project limits. In addition, since the launch of BIKETOWN in July 2016, the Waterfront Park has been the most popular destination of the bike share system's users. A permanent Better Naito will support BIKETOWN by making the waterfront more accessible and elevate Portland's profile as a leader in active transportation in the world.

With this goal in mind, the seasonal Better Naito option will provide a clear timeline for community activists, businesses, and stakeholders to continue to begin discussion and engagement on the future of Naito Parkway. At the same time, PBOT will continue to collect data and public feedback to further improve the design of the permanent version.

## Our request

Better Block PDX supports PBOT's decision to take ownership of Better Naito and a low-cost seasonal option for the next five years. We have successfully experimented Better Naito three times and we want to continue this project that will eventually lead to a safer, more active, and vibrant water front. Therefore, we would like to ask City Council to allocate \$500,000 to implement PBOT's proposed low-cost seasonal Better Naito and direct PBOT to collect data and develop a plan for the implementation of a permanent Naito in five years.

## How you can help

- (1) Write or call City Council. Tell them who you are and why you support a seasonal Better Naito improvement for the next five years.

Here is the contact information for each City Council member:

Mayor Hales: [mayorhales@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:mayorhales@portlandoregon.gov), 503-823-4120;  
Commissioner Fish: [Nick@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Nick@portlandoregon.gov), 503-823-3589;  
Commissioner Fritz: [amanda@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:amanda@portlandoregon.gov), 503-823-3008;  
Commissioner Novick: [novick@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:novick@portlandoregon.gov), 503-823-4682;  
Commissioner Saltzman: [dan@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:dan@portlandoregon.gov), 503-823-4151.

- (2) Provide your feedback and support for Better Naito to PBOT at [naitoparkway@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:naitoparkway@portlandoregon.gov)
- (3) Volunteer with Better Block. Email [volunteer.betterblockpdx@gmail.com](mailto:volunteer.betterblockpdx@gmail.com) or go to <https://betterblockpdx.org/volunteer/> and tell us how you want to help.