

What does it take to get a sleazy bureaucrat fired in Seattle?

Published July 11, 2016



Last March, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) paid Gabe Klein — a Washington, D.C., bureaucrat — nearly \$6,500 in speaking fees for a two-hour transportation event at the Seattle Central Library. A few months later, in November, SDOT hired Klein as a transportation-planning consultant on a \$8,000+ contract.

So, who is Gabe Klein and why should you care that SDOT has been wasting taxpayer dollars on him?

Well, it turns out Klein is a buddy of SDOT Director Scott Kubly, and he is now part of yet another ethics scandal involving Mayor Ed Murray's chosen transportation leader. You see, Klein is Kubly's former boss — and Kubly did not follow the rules and disclose his conflict of interest in paying his old boss on the two occasions in which his agency hired Klein — until two weeks ago. According to [The Seattle Times](#):

Seattle's Ethics Code prohibits an employee like Kubly from performing any official duties when it could appear to a reasonable person that the employee's judgment is impaired due to a personal or business relationship or because of a transaction or activity — unless the employee first discloses the relationship, transaction or activity.

Kubly didn't file [the form disclosing his relationship with Klein](#) until June 28.

Kubly's admission came toward the end of an ethics investigation by the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission into his sleazy dealings with with Pronto — the failed bike-

share company purchased by the city. That investigation concluded that Kubly violated two serious city ethics rules. First, that Kubly participated in a “city matter in which a prior employer has a financial interest.” And, second, that Kubly failed to file a waiver/disclosure form during discussion and planning of purchasing a “service was unpopular and failing

Kubly was fined \$10,000. However, he will only have to pay \$5,000 due to the city’s decision to suspended half of the fine as long he doesn’t commit another material violation of the rules over the next two years. Again, [the Times](#):

In an interview Friday, (Brenneman), a former prosecutor hired by the commission for \$20,000, said she only found out about Kubly’s Klein disclosure on July 5. By then, she and Kubly had signed a settlement agreement for the commission to consider and she was preparing her final report.

Kubly’s Klein disclosure “wasn’t within the parameters” of her investigation, she said, declining to comment on whether it could constitute an additional violation.

SDOT spokesman Norm Mah insists that Kubly’s disclosure about his old boss is unrelated to the investigation into his involvement with Pronto. But, that’s not entirely true.

Kubly’s work relationship with Klein dates back to 2009, when Klein was director of the transportation department in Washington, D.C. — Kubly served as associate director. And, during their tenure, the department contracted with Alta to expand D.C.’s bike-share system.

When Klein became commissioner of Chicago’s transportation department in 2011, he took Kubly along with him as the managing deputy commissioner. Once in Chicago, the pair once again launched a bike-share system and — surprise, surprise — they selected Alta to operate it over other bidders.

As it turns out, the decision to select Alta over other bidders got them into some hot water in Chicago. [The Seattle Times](#):

When the losing bidders protested, it came to light that Klein had failed to disclose contract work he’d done for Alta between leaving D.C. and starting in Chicago.

Klein resigned from his Chicago post in 2013 and Kubly resigned three days later. Klein went on to provide free consulting advice to Alta, while Kubly became Alta’s president. During his time at Alta, Kubly worked on the company’s role in launching Pronto in Seattle.

Mayor Murray hired Kubly as the new transportation chief in 2014 — the same year Pronto launched in Seattle. And, as we all know, once Pronto failed, Kubly proceeded to push for the city to buy Pronto, contract directly with Motivate (Alta's new name as of 2014), and expand the system.

During this time, Kubly was also paying his former boss/bike-share-partner-in-ethics-violations for speaking fees and as a consultant. As with the Pronto scandal, he failed to disclose his prior relationship to Klein.

Adding insult to injury for taxpayers, the ethics investigation ended up costing taxpayers more than Kubly was fined.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is yet another example of liberal corruption in Seattle. We await to see whether or not Kubly gets away with his corruption a second time.