

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Transportation Mitigation Payments

South Lake Union and Northgate

Updated July 27, 2022

This Tip explains the applicable regulations and process for making transportation mitigation payments in South Lake Union and Northgate. This can be done as an alternative to directly providing mitigation required by permit conditions imposed pursuant to SMC 23.52.008 or the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as part of environmental review conducted in the master use permit process.

Payments are based on the cost of transportation improvements identified in a City of Seattle prepared area-wide transportation study. Payments are calculated by general land use categories and amount of floor area or number of dwelling units in a proposed development. The payments will be applied to a comprehensive set of transportation improvements identified in the transportation study, based on a development's impact.

Permit applicants can 1) make use of the City's transportation study for purposes of the transportation analysis often required as part of environmental review, and make the mitigation payment, or 2) prepare their own study of the proposed project's impact and developing mitigation proposals for the department's consideration. In some cases, the department may require additional transportation analysis, such as when aspects of a development proposal have not been adequately considered in the City study. By choosing this option, applicants agree to the transportation improvements on the list. In any event, the department will review each development proposal to make sure the mitigation is appropriately related to the anticipated impacts.

Currently this mitigation payment option is available for development in South Lake Union and Northgate.

Why South Lake Union and Northgate?

These areas are designated as urban centers in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Urban centers will be home to new jobs and housing units, as targeted in the Comprehensive Plan. To prepare for this growth and to fix existing conditions, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) prepared area-wide transportation studies, which include a list of projects for the next 20 years.

The studies coordinate analysis and recommendations identified through applicable neighborhood plans, for known major transportation projects. The studies also include a funding plan. Part of the funding includes contributions from new development in the form of mitigation payments. These contributions are not used to fix existing conditions, but to mitigate impacts of new development.

A list of the transportation improvements to be funded and a mitigation payment schedule for each neighborhood are listed on pages 4-8 of this Tip.

Benefits of Transportation Mitigation

In many cases, participation in this mitigation program will result in a faster permit review process. For example, a development proposal that receives a determination of significance from the department may qualify for a mitigated determination of non-significance, as comprehensive mitigation is essentially built into the proposal by participation in this program. Other benefits of the mitigation program are that it:

- allows systematic, neighborhood-wide improvements rather than piecemeal, project-by-project transportation improvements;
- applies funding to transportation projects instead of traffic studies; and
- increases predictability for development with more expedient environmental review. Fewer projects will likely go through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, particularly in urban centers, where transportation impacts often trigger an EIS.

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Environmental Review

The environmental impacts of development proposals must be assessed per SEPA, RCW Chapter 43.21C, and the City's SEPA ordinance, Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.05. This is required when establishing a new use or changing or expanding an existing use that meets the criteria listed in the City's SEPA ordinance.

Environmental review is part of the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection's (SDCI) master use permit process. Other components may be required. If a project is required to have SEPA review, SDCI analyzes environmental impacts and issues an environmental threshold decision. The following are the three major types of threshold determinations:

- **Determination of Non-Significance (DNS):** No probable significant adverse environmental impacts will result from a proposal. Conditions may be imposed to mitigate adverse impacts.
- **Determination of Significance (DS):** Probable significant adverse impacts may result from a proposal and an EIS is required.
- **Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS):** Changes are made to or mitigation included in a proposal prior to or after a DS that reduces or eliminates probable significant adverse impacts. No EIS is required.

What is transportation mitigation?

SDCI has the authority to deny or reasonably condition any proposal in order to mitigate or prevent adverse environmental impacts. As a result of environmental review, a project may be conditioned when a DNS or MDNS is made or when a permit decision involving an EIS (the result of a DS) is made. Conditioning is based on adopted City policies, plans, rules or regulations.

Mitigation is generally a one-time obligation by new development to provide capital or programmatic improvements to the transportation system, or to pay the City for the cost of facilities or programs that are needed to serve new development.

Development impacts on transportation typically take the form of increased use of transportation systems and programs including roads, transit, bicycle and pedestrian. The increased use of one or more of these modes of travel consumes resources and without improvement may cause them to become less effective and efficient. Other impacts include decreased safety and increased air pollution. Conditioning for transpor-

tation mitigation is guided by the transportation policies in SEPA or rules in SMC 23.52.008. These policies generally require new development to offset some or all of its impacts on transportation.

How were the mitigation payments set?

The mitigation payments are based on a list of transportation improvements identified in the study for each mode of travel. This list of improvements is the basis for calculating the cost of mitigation needed to reduce or eliminate the impacts of growth. A portion of the costs for these improvements is attributable to existing deficiencies and must be funded with resources other than private developer mitigation payments. The portion attributable to a new project should be paid for by that development, as mitigation.

To calculate the payment, the portion of improvements that serve new growth is divided by the number of trips generated by the new development. The term "trips" refers to people coming to or going from a new development, which can vary by the type of use or mix of uses in a new development.

The payment amounts, related to general land use categories, are on pages 6 and 9 of this Tip. Transportation Management Plans (TMPs) may be used in conjunction with mitigation payments and may lead to reductions in the payment amount commensurate with single occupancy vehicle trip reductions. In addition to transportation mitigation payments, applicants may be required to make other improvements such as curbcuts or sidewalk improvements adjacent to their development site.

City Use of Funds Received Through Transportation Mitigation Payments

Funds received through transportation mitigation payments will be earmarked specifically for improvements on the attached list. The funds will be retained in special reserve accounts. Any payment not expended within five years will be refunded with interest, unless the delay is attributable to the developer, in which case it will be refunded without interest.

Area-Wide Transportation Studies

The South Lake Union Study was completed in July 2004 and the Northgate Study in 2006 by SDOT with the help of consultants. Both studies present a package of transportation improvements for the respective area, with broad support from a diverse group of neigh-

borhood, business and community representatives.

The South Lake Union Transportation Study is available at the SDOT's website: www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CitywidePlans/FinalSLU-TransportationStudyJuly04a.pdf

The Northgate Transportation Study is available at SDOT's website: www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CitywidePlans/nctipf-final.pdf

Further Information

For more detailed information on the environmental review process, and transportation mitigation in particular, you may:

1. Contact SDCI's Applicant Services Center, www.seattle.gov/sdci/about-us/who-we-are/applicant-services-center, to discuss your plans with a land use planner. You may need an appointment and a fee may apply.
2. Call SDCI's transportation planner or the land use policy group at 684-8860.

Access to Information

Links to SDCI's Tips and commonly used forms are available on our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci.

SOUTH LAKE UNION TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS BY MODE

Auto Traffic Projects

Two-Way Mercer/Narrow Valley Concept

1. Construct seven-lane two-way on Mercer St. between Fairview and Dexter Ave.
2. Construct two-lane with left turn lanes on Valley St.
3. Add signal at Dexter Ave. and Republican St.

Mercer/Fairview/I-5 Ramps

1. Widen roadway (northbound right-turn) and improve signage on northbound Fairview Ave. approach to I-5 on-ramps.

Thomas East of Aurora

1. Construct three-lane on Thomas St. from Fairview Ave. to 5th Ave. (including left turn lanes).

Two-way Traffic on 9th and Westlake

1. Construct two-way on Westlake Ave. (four to five lanes) and 9th Ave. (three lanes) from Aloha St. to Denny Way.

Eastlake Ave.

1. Add U-turn or center turn lane to allow southbound left-turn from Eastlake Ave. to northbound I-5 express lanes south of Denny Way.
2. Add signal at Eastlake Ave. and Thomas St.
3. Add signal at Eastlake Ave. and Republican St.

Bicycle Projects

Improve Around-the-Lake Bicycle Facilities

1. Include bicycle lanes on Fairview Ave. between Eastlake Ave. and Valley St.
2. Modify intersection for bicycle/pedestrian access on Fairview (near Eastlake).

Bicycle Routes

1. Add sign for Lakeview Ave. across I-5.
2. Add sign for bicycle route on Eastlake Ave. E (E. Garfield St. to Denny Way) for bicycle commuters.
3. Add signs for bicycle routes on commonly-used streets per SDOT Bicycle Guide Map.

Maintain/Improve Dexter as a North/South Bicycle Corridor

1. Add signs for bicycle route on Dexter Ave. bicycle lanes to 2nd Ave., bicycle lanes and proposed bicycle lanes on 4th Ave. (via Blanchard & Bell).

Pedestrian Projects

Cascade Neighborhood Pedestrian Improvements

1. Add up to 16 stop signs at uncontrolled intersections on Thomas St. and Harrison St. between Fairview and Eastlake Ave.
2. Widen sidewalks on Harrison, Minor and Pontius around Cascade Park.

Improve Denny Way Pedestrian Environment and I-5 Crossing

1. Add ten-foot sidewalk to north side and five-foot bicycle lane on south side of Denny Way I-5 crossing.
2. Add curb bulb-outs and countdown signals at five Denny Way intersections.

Transit Projects

Create Transit Emphasis/Transit Priority Street on Fairview Ave. N

1. On Fairview Ave., add northbound and southbound transit signal priority at Denny Way.
2. Add northbound queue jump (a signal that allows buses to go before cars) and southbound transit signal priority on Fairview Ave. at Harrison St.
3. Add transit signal priority on Fairview Ave. northbound and southbound at Mercer St.
4. Add northbound and southbound transit signal priority on Fairview Ave. at Valley St.

Construct Proposed South Lake Union Streetcar and Trolley Route

1. Construct streetcar on Westlake, Valley and Terry from Westlake Center to Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center.
2. Create new route (trolley or other electric) from Uptown to N. Capitol Hill via Mercer or Republican St.

Install Transit Bus Shelters along Bus Routes in Study Area

1. Install nine transit bus shelters and include appropriate lighting at shelters.

SOUTH LAKE UNION MITIGATION PAYMENT TABLE

Use Categories	Payment
Category 1. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offices ■ Restaurants ■ Retail ■ Lodging ■ Medical Offices 	\$1.95 per square foot*
Category 2. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research and development labs 	\$1.40 per square foot*
Category 3. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Warehouse ■ Industrial (manufacturing) 	\$.60 per square foot*
Category 4. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Market-rate residential 	\$930.00 per dwelling unit

*Gross floor area.

For uses not specifically mentioned in the table, the payment amount shall be determined by the Director. The Director's determination shall be based on the most comparable use(s).

NORTHGATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS BY MODE

The following projects are summarized and include the Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan, www.seattle.gov/transportation/nctip.htm, project identifier in parentheses.

Auto Traffic Projects

1. Roosevelt Way NE at NE 125th St.

Upgrade intersection geometry and include signalization. (A-5)

2. Northgate Way/SB I-5 Off Ramp/Corliss Ave. N

Develop an access management plan that includes construction of a median and restriction of mid-block left turns from Meridian Avenue N to the Corliss Ave. N/I-5 off-ramp. Consider where a break in the median may be allowed for access. Investigate the feasibility of providing a business access street south of N Northgate Way. (C-8)

3. SB I-5 Off Ramp/Corliss Ave. N/Northgate Way

Extend westbound left turn lanes on Northgate Way. (C-7)

4. SB I-5 Off Ramp/Corliss Ave. N/N 107th St.

Provide a roundabout at the southbound I-5 on-ramp/Corliss Avenue N/N 107th Street intersection. (C-9)

5. Meridian Ave. N at N 107th St.

Provide a roundabout at the Meridian Ave. N/ N 107th Street intersection. (C-10)

6. Northgate Way - optimize signals

Coordinate all signals and optimize signal operation for peak, non-peak weekdays and weekend days based on vehicle volumes on N/NE Northgate Way. (E-1)

7. NE Northgate Way at 3rd Ave. NE

Provide a new access driveway to the 3rd Avenue NE alignment at NE Northgate Way; with pedestrian crossing and other safety improvements and possible widening of 3rd Ave. NE north of Northgate Way. (E-4, E-5)

8. NE Northgate Way at 5th Ave. NE

Add a second westbound left turn lane on NE Northgate Way at 5th Avenue NE; lane assignment and alignment improvements; enhance pedestrian crossings. (E-6)

9. NE Northgate Way - 5th Ave. NE to Roosevelt Way

Access management plan improvements that include construction of medians and restriction of mid-block left turns. (E-7)

10. NE Northgate Way at 8th Ave. NE

Replace the existing pedestrian signal with a full traffic signal and allow left turns on all approaches at this intersection. (E-8)

11. NE 100th St. at 3rd Ave. NE

Add four-way stop control and, ultimately, install a traffic signal at this intersection. (F-5)

12. 1st Ave. NE at NE 103rd St.

Add a westbound right turn lane and implement the intersection improvement concept prepared by King County Metro and SDOT at this intersection. (F-1)

13. NE 103rd St. at 5th Ave. NE

Allow eastbound left turns from the existing curb lane at the NE 103rd Street / 5th Avenue NE intersection. (F-3)

14. 15th Ave. NE/NE 117th St./Pinehurst Way NE

Install a traffic signal after adopted warrants have been met and modify the intersection geometry at this intersection. (G-3)

15. 5th Ave. NE at Northgate Way

Extend northbound right turn lane on 5th Avenue NE south of NE Northgate Way to NE 106th Street. (I-1)

16. NE 130th St. at I-5 SB On-ramp

Add a westbound left turn pocket at this intersection. (A-2)

17. NE 130th St. at 5th Ave. NE

Add an eastbound left turn pocket at this intersection. (A-3)

18. N 115th St. at Meridian Ave. N

When warrants are met, install a traffic signal. (C-3)

19. NE 92nd St. at 1st Ave. NE

When warrants are met, install a traffic signal; and

replace nearby speed humps with humps meeting current SDOT design and construction standards. (D-2)

20. Northgate Way/1st Ave. NE/I-5 On-ramp

Modify westbound approach – curb lane: right-turn and I-5 on-ramp, 2nd lane: I-5 on-ramp and through, and 3rd lane: through-only. Widen the on-ramp to have two lanes on northbound I-5 on-ramp from N Northgate Way. (E-2)

21. Pinehurst Way NE/NE 115th St/12th Ave. NE

Construct a roundabout at this intersection. (G-2)

Bicycle Projects

22. Meridian Ave. N - N 115th St. to N 122nd St.

Add bike lanes on both sides of Meridian Avenue N. (C-2)

23. Meridian Ave. N - Northgate Way to N 100th St.

Provide bicycle lanes on both sides of Meridian Avenue N. (C-4)

24. College Way - N 100th St. to N 92nd St.

Provide bicycle lanes on both sides of College Way by converting the curb lanes. (C-5)

25. 1st Ave. NE - NE 103rd St. to NE 92nd St.

Provide a bicycle lane on the west side of 1st Avenue (by extending the shoulder by four feet). (F-7)

26. 5th Ave. NE - NE 115th St. to NE 125th St.

Stripe bike lanes on 5th Avenue NE from NE 115th Street to NE 125th Street. (I-2)

27. 1st Ave. NE - N 117th St. to N 130th St.

Add bike lanes or widen shoulders to accommodate bike traffic on 1st Avenue NE. (C-1)

Pedestrian Projects

28. NE 125th St. - 5th Ave. NE to Roosevelt Way

Provide curbs, gutters, and sidewalks on both sides of NE 125th Street. (A-6)

29. Meridian Ave. N - N 115th St. to N 122nd St.

Add sidewalks on both sides of Meridian Avenue N. (C-2)

30. N 107th St. - Meridian Ave. N to Corliss Ave./SB I-5 On Ramp

Provide curbs, gutters and sidewalks on N 107th Street. (C-11)

31. Northgate Way - Corliss Ave. N to 1st Ave. NE

Enhance the pedestrian connection on N Northgate Way between Corliss Avenue N and 1st Ave NE, particularly under I-5. Place the sidewalks behind the I-5 bridge columns. (C-12)

32. NE 92nd St. - 1st Ave. NE to 5th Ave. NE

Provide curbs, gutters, and sidewalks on both sides of NE 92nd Street from 1st Ave. NE to 5th Ave. NE. Provide curb bulbs as appropriate to assist pedestrian crossings. (D-1)

33. 1st Ave. - NE 103rd St. to NE 92nd St.

Reconstruct the existing sidewalk on the east side of 1st Avenue NE from NE 92nd Street to NE 97th Street. Also see bicycle project extending from NE 92nd to 103rd Street. (F-7)

34. 15th Ave. NE - NE 92nd St. to NE 117th St.

Add curbs, gutters, and sidewalks on both sides of 15th Avenue NE. (G-1)

35. Northgate Way - Meridian Ave. N to Ashworth Ave. N

Upgrade N Northgate Way to meet the City's principal arterial roadway design standards. Key improvements needed within this corridor are adding sidewalks along the north edge of North Seattle Park, improving substandard sidewalks, and adding urban design treatments. (C-13)

Transit Projects

36. CTIP Area - Install 3 bus shelters at locations that have 40 or more daily boardings

Add ten bus shelters within the study area at locations with 40 or more daily boardings. King County Metro should provide seven of the shelters in keeping with their standard of providing shelters at locations with 50 or more daily boardings; the City of Seattle should provide funds for the additional three shelters through the Northgate Mitigation Program. (Cost estimate: \$78,000 for three shelters). (J-14)

NORTHGATE MITIGATION PAYMENT TABLE

Use Categories	Payment
Category 1. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offices ■ Restaurants ■ Retail ■ Lodging ■ Medical Offices 	\$1.33 per square foot*
Category 2. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research and development labs 	\$0.96 per square foot*
Category 3. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Warehouse ■ Industrial (manufacturing) 	\$0.42 per square foot*
Category 4. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Market-rate residential 	\$634.00 per dwelling unit

*Gross floor area.

For uses not specifically mentioned in the table, the payment amount shall be determined by the Director. The Director's determination shall be based on the most comparable use(s).