
CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Phase III of the South Lake Union Transportation Study sought broad public participation to provide information about the study and to seek input on the study's recommendations. Public input was sought at three distinct stages: issue identification; review of potential improvements; and development of draft recommendations. Outreach was targeted to both the general public and specific stakeholders, including residents, business owners, property owners, and interest groups affected by transportation in the South Lake Union area, as well as those in the surrounding area who travel through South Lake Union.

Public Involvement Events and Tools

The following is a description of public involvement activities and tools that were used to support development of recommendations for the South Lake Union Transportation Study.

Public Involvement Plan

During the initial stages of Phase III, a public involvement plan was developed to lay out the goals, objectives, and tools to be used to engage the community in the study. The plan proposed a schedule of activities to coincide with technical milestones in order to maximize public input as the process moved forward. A list of targeted stakeholders was also included in the plan, along with a description of tools to engage those stakeholders and to incorporate their feedback. The public involvement strategy helped inform technical work at all stages of the project and was modified to maximize community input at key decision points in the development of draft study recommendations.

Public Open Houses

The public was invited to two open houses during Phase III. The first open house, held in October 2003, sought feedback on the study's goals, objectives, issue areas, and potential solutions. The second open house, held in March 2004, gave the public an opportunity to review and comment on draft study recommendations. The second open house was held in conjunction with the Mercer Corridor Project EIS scoping meeting. At both open houses, members of the public reviewed display boards, asked questions of study team members, and submitted comments.

Two postcards, included in Appendix A, were used to announce the open houses. The postcards were mailed to approximately 1,750 people in the study area, and an announcement was posted on the study web site. E-mails announcing the open houses were sent to stakeholders and announcements were made at community group meetings.

The following summarizes general comments on the Phase III recommendations that were received at the March open house:

- Build the streetcar.
- Make Westlake and Ninth Avenues two-way.
- Increase and improve transit, including added connections to the regional transportation system.

- Narrow Valley Street and make Mercer Street two-way.
- Connect South Lake Union to surrounding neighborhoods and downtown Seattle.
- Make South Lake Union more pedestrian-friendly.

Stakeholder Work Sessions

Because the duration of Phase III of the study was relatively short, SDOT engaged the efforts of a stakeholder group to solicit detailed information on the study, exchange opinions and ideas from diverse perspectives, and to enlist community leaders to share study information with their organizations. At two, three-hour work sessions, stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on issues that should be studied, and then to comment on and rate potential improvement scenarios. Input from both work sessions was used to frame technical analysis, and to inform development of the study's recommendations.

The first stakeholder work session was held in November 2003, and the second in January 2004. Detailed summaries of the two stakeholder work sessions are included in Appendix A.

Stakeholder work session participants included representatives from:

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| • SLUFAN | • Seattle Times |
| • Cascade Neighborhood Council | • Consolidated Works |
| • Uptown Alliance | • PEMCO |
| • Seattle Center | • Center for Wooden Boats |
| • Queen Anne Community Council | • Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center |
| • Eastlake Community Council | • Trident Seafoods |
| • Seattle Parks Foundation | • Kenmore Air |
| • Vulcan, Inc. | • Shurgard Storage |
| • Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Center (BINMIC) | |

Community Group Involvement

The study team met with existing community and business groups to brief them on study progress and to solicit input at key milestones. Team members attended groups' regularly scheduled meetings to give a short presentation and answer questions.

The following community groups were briefed as part of the outreach conducted for the South Lake Union Transportation Study:

- SLUFAN
- Cascade Neighborhood Council
- Queen Anne Community Council Transportation Committee
- Queen Anne Chamber of Commerce
- Uptown Alliance
- Lake Union District Council
- SLUNET
- BINMIC
- North Seattle Industrial Association

At the outset of the public involvement process SLUFAN and the Cascade Neighborhood Council were recognized as playing important roles in the South Lake Union community. SLUFAN is the neighborhood plan stewardship group, and both groups represent a broad coalition of business, residential neighborhood, and property owner interests. A greater effort was made to involve these groups, and the study team presented to each group several times. The success of the South Lake Union Study will be greater due to the active role SLUFAN and the Cascade Neighborhood Council, and their individual members, played in developing Phase III study recommendations. SLUFAN will also be the primary contact with the project team as the study is finalized and published.

Individual Stakeholder Interviews

In order to gain a better understanding about the needs of South Lake Union businesses, the study team conducted targeted business interviews. Individual interviews were conducted throughout the study area with existing businesses, emphasizing those that might be affected by potential recommendations, such as Westlake and Ninth Avenues, and businesses planning to relocate to South Lake Union in the near future.

Business owners, or their representatives, were asked to provide information on the logistics of their business, identify potential issues or unique situations related to transportation, and offer suggestions for improvements. A complete summary of the interviews can be found in Appendix A. The following businesses were interviewed for the study.

- Athletic Supply
- Chefshop.com
- Duke's Chowderhouse
- Jones Soda
- Morningside Academy
- NBBJ
- Northwest Wholesale Florists
- REI
- Seattle Biomedical Research Institute
- Seattle Times
- Shurgard Storage
- Tommy Bahama
- Vulcan, Inc.

Freight Community Outreach

In an effort to acknowledge South Lake Union’s mix of industrial and commercial businesses and the key freight route passing through it connecting I-5 to neighborhoods north and west, the study team sought participation from the freight community both in and around South Lake Union. Representatives from BINMIC (the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Center), and other Interbay businesses were invited to participate in stakeholder work sessions, and a meeting with members of the freight community was held in January 2004. At the meeting, the study team discussed freight issues and possible solutions with representatives from Trident Seafoods and Charlie’s Produce. A complete summary of the freight meeting is included in Appendix A.

Study Web Site

The City developed a web site to provide updated study information to the public. Information, such as the draft study recommendations, study goals and objectives, and open house announcements and materials were available on the Seattle Department of Transportation Web site throughout Phase III of the study.

The Web site URL is: <http://www.cityofseattle.net/transportation/southlakeunion.htm>.

Public Feedback

The technical team used comments and feedback heard throughout the public involvement process to help them develop a recommendation package for Phase III. Public meeting comments were combined with input heard from individual stakeholders and groups. Overall, stakeholders were supportive of the recommendations. Table 3.1 illustrates how public input was incorporated into the Study’s recommended improvement package:

Table 3.1: Public Input to the Recommended Improvement Package

| <i>What We Heard</i> | <i>What We’re Recommending</i> |
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| Increase connections between I-5 and Queen Anne | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn Mercer Street into two-way street, improving westbound route • Add Thomas or Harrison Street crossing of SR 99/Aurora Avenue |
| Improve access to South Lake Union Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Valley Street a narrower, two-lane street • Improve pedestrian crossings of Valley and Mercer Street |
| Connect South Lake Union and downtown Seattle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add streetcar between downtown and South Lake Union • Improve transit bus frequencies and travel times along Fairview Avenue • Add directional signs to downtown bicycle routes • Improve pedestrian crossings on Denny Way |
| Improve and maintain freight mobility in and through South Lake Union | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove weave and turns associated with Fairview and Valley for connection to Interbay and Fremont • Accommodate trucks in the design of a two-way Mercer Street |
| Enhance the pedestrian experience and improve connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian crossings of Mercer, Valley, and Denny, and across SR 99/Aurora Avenue • Add a sidewalk to the north side of the Denny Way bridge crossing I-5 • Provide ample sidewalks along Mercer and Valley • Incorporate and construct the Lake-to-Bay multi-use trail into the roadway system |
| Increase transit options, reliability, and convenience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give transit priority on Fairview Avenue and increase service frequency • Provide new or improved east-west transit service with opportunities provided by 2-Way Mercer • Add regional transit service to South Lake Union • Add streetcar between downtown and South Lake Union |
| Maintain customer parking and existing on-street parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage on-street parking to facilitate short-term customer and visitor parking • Add on-street parking where appropriate |
| Implement programs to reduce auto trips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop program with employers and developers to reduce auto trips to SLU |