

Chapter 1. Executive Summary

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Chapter 1. Executive Summary

The City of Seattle initiated the University Area Transportation Study (UATS) as a pilot area-wide transportation study in January 2001 to guide transportation decision-making for this Urban Center over the next ten years. The study followed several previous planning efforts, including the now 15-year-old University District Transportation Program, the citywide Comprehensive Plan (1994) and Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP, 1998), as well as the University Community Urban Center Plan (1998). As a strategic planning document, this study evaluated all of the not-yet-begun transportation improvements identified in previous planning efforts, as well as new projects and strategies developed during the study process.

The UATS covered the University District, Montlake, University Park and Ravenna neighborhoods, with boundaries at I-5 on the west, 35th Avenue NE on the east, NE 65th Street on the north and the Ship Canal and the Montlake interchange at SR 520 on the south.

The Strategic Planning Office, in collaboration with Seattle Transportation and other City departments, hired Mirai Associates, with several sub-consultants to complete the project.

PROJECT GOALS

The UATS project had two goals:

- To build on existing planning to provide a comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan for the University area, and
- To serve as a blueprint for financing and programming transportation improvements in the University area over the next decade.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

After two public open houses, many meetings with the Project Advisory Committee, Pedestrian-Bicycle Working Group, UATS Advisory Group and community groups, the UATS Draft Report was made available for public review in January 2002. The Draft Final Report, prepared by Mirai Associates for the City of Seattle, contained the following chapters with a wealth of information about transportation and traffic conditions in the University Area.

Chapters 1 and 2: Executive Summary and Introduction.

Chapters 3 and 4: Plans and programs that affect the transportation system in the University area and neighborhoods. Summarizes the Washington State Growth Management Act, Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2020 and Destination 2030, City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Strategic Plan, the University Community Urban Center Neighborhood Plan and previous planning efforts in the U-District. Describes recently completed, current and near future projects such as the NE 50th Street reconstruction, 11th and 12th Avenues resurfacing, Flexcar, the University Area Signal Controller Upgrades, the Ave Project, several parking and transportation demand management programs, and Sound Transit. Describes other transportation programs such as the University of Washington Transportation Management Program.

Chapter 5: Existing transportation conditions. Provides facility routes, usage and accident data for pedestrian, bicycle, transit and roadway facilities in the University area. Two findings are that a great majority of the vehicles on NE 45th Street and NE 50th Street east of I-5 are going to or coming from I-5; the amount of traffic coming to and from Laurelhurst via NE 45th Street is relatively small; and a significant portion of NE 50th Street traffic crosses I-5 to Wallingford.

Chapter 6: Current transportation problems. Describes problem areas and inadequate facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and motor vehicles, based on a review of existing conditions and extensive community discussions. Geographic and topical areas are: Eastlake Avenue/Campus Parkway/NE 40th Street Area, Montlake Boulevard/NE Pacific Street Corridors, Major East/West Access Corridors, Major North/South Access Corridors, Interstate 5 Access, University Village Area Access, Transit/HOV Access, Light Rail Station Areas, Traffic Signal Issues, Transportation Demand Management Programs, and SR 520 and I-5 Ramp Capacity.

Chapter 7: Future conditions, focused on the next ten years. Provides future housing and employment growth estimates for the UATS study area and Puget Sound region for 2010 and 2020. Year 2010 and 2020 daily and peak period traffic volumes as well as intersection and corridor level of services. The major finding is that vehicle volumes will increase more dramatically from 2000 to 2010 than from 2010 to 2020, in part because of a projected significant increase in transit and HOV use.

Chapters 8-12: Transportation Improvement Projects and Strategies, Evaluations, Recommendations, System Performance, Financial Conditions and Mitigation Program.

UATS RECOMMENDATIONS

The UATS project team, consisting of the consultant team and City staff, recommended that a total of 76 projects and programs be implemented within the study area over the next 10 years, as described in Chapter 8. The recommended projects that can be identified at specific locations are shown in Figures 1-1 through 1-8.

Examples of the transportation improvements in Chapter 8 include:

- making bicycle and pedestrian-safety improvements at the north and south end of the University Bridge;
- striping left-turn lane at major arterial intersections on NE 65th Street;
- creating north-south bike corridors on Brooklyn Ave NE and 20th Ave NE;
- constructing curb bulbs and other intersection improvements at Ravenna Blvd NE/NE 55th Street;
- installing sidewalks in the University Village area along 30th Ave NE;
- pursuing parking cash-out programs for employers in the University area;
- implementing Station Area Planning projects associated with Sound Transit; and
- constructing an additional queue lane on I-5 north- and southbound on-ramps at NE 45th Street.

Chapter 9 describes 17 criteria established to evaluate over 80 potential improvements. The criteria relate to Enhancing Mobility; Improving Safety; Reducing Traffic Congestion; Mitigating Environmental Impacts; Implementation Feasibility and Community Support. Projects were ranked as to whether they *strongly supported*, *supported*, were *neutral* or *not applicable*, *did not support*, or *strongly did not support* each of these criteria.

Chapter 10 prioritizes recommendations into three categories:

Early Action – almost all positive benefits and can likely be implemented with existing resources.

High Priority – high positive benefits but will likely require additional analysis and resources to be implemented.

Medium Priority – positive as well as some negative benefits but will require significant additional resources and/or strong support from other transportation agencies such as the WSDOT, King County Metro, Sound Transit and Community Transit.

Low Priority – mixed or minimal positive benefits and are not recommended for further study.

The total cost for the recommended projects in Early Action is about \$465,000. The cost for those projects in the High Priority category ranges from \$11.7 million to \$12.5 million. The total price tag of the Medium Priority projects ranges from \$39.8 million to \$45 million. The total combined cost of Early Action, High Priority and Medium Priority projects ranges from \$51.9 million to \$58 million. (These cost estimates exclude additional staff time; some recommended projects lack cost estimates for various reasons; and all cost estimates are based on 2002 dollars.)

Based on a review of system performance in Chapter 11, more than two-thirds of the recommended improvements will have a positive impact on mobility and safety for all that use the University area transportation system, particularly pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. The balance of the projects will have a positive impact on reducing vehicle traffic congestion.

Over time, the University area will experience population and employment growth that will gradually increase traffic congestion on the arterials. However, much of the congestion will continue to originate from traffic back-ups at freeway on-ramps to Interstate 5 and SR 520. Unless the State and City together address the imbalance between demand and supply for traffic accessing the regional freeway system, there is limited hope of improving traffic congestion on the arterials in the study area.

Transit service is also adversely affected by heavy congestion in the area. There is no simple answer to this issue. Providing HOV lanes on arterials and HOV queue bypasses will provide some relief. In addition, revisions to traffic signals throughout the study area could give priority to transit. Some signal coordination improvements will be realized in 2002 with the installation of new signal controllers at 48 locations in the core of the University District.

UATS FINANCIAL PLANNING

Chapter 12 details current financial conditions for the City of Seattle's transportation programs and projects as well as outlines a pilot program to examine how the City could mitigate transportation issues and problems with new development.

In 1998, Seattle's Transportation Strategic Plan concluded that the City of Seattle has a major transportation funding problem. The search for an adequate source of funding for transportation is a

serious ongoing concern. The City's list of unfunded transportation projects currently includes approximately \$135 million per year in major maintenance, safety, and mobility projects over the next 20 years.

The UATS Financial section reports on the transportation funding sources available to the City and the process for allocating scarce funding and prioritizing projects citywide. The High Priority and Medium Priority projects will be added to Seattle Transportation's list of future projects and programs. The Early Action projects have already been included in the City's CIP or other work plans for 2002-2003.

Given this financial reality for transportation, the City is studying the feasibility of a pilot development mitigation program, whereby the City would collect fees from new development and redevelopment to provide capital improvements to the transportation system. Specific rate schedules would be adopted by ordinance once the issues are adequately addressed in a separate study now underway.

UATS IMPLEMENTATION

With almost 80 recommendations, there are too many improvements to implement all at once. Implementation will involve, in many cases, additional funding and the involvement of multiple agencies over the next ten years. Seattle Transportation is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the City streets, bridges, bicycle routes, walkways and traffic signals. Already, the projects prioritized as Early Action are being incorporated into Seattle Transportation's and other City departments' scheduled work plans for 2002-2003. City staff will work together to ensure that the projects ranked as High and Medium priority are reviewed as funding and other opportunities are available. As WSDOT is responsible for I-5 and SR 520, City staff will work with WSDOT staff on the projects that involve or touch these facilities. As Sound Transit continues with planning for the northern section of the Link Light Rail system north of downtown Seattle, staff will also continue to work with Sound Transit on recommendations listed in this report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Final Report of the University Area Transportation Study is available from the City of Seattle by contacting the following:

- ▶ Strategic Planning Office, Municipal Building 3rd Floor, 600 Fourth Avenue. Call 206-684-8080 for further directions.

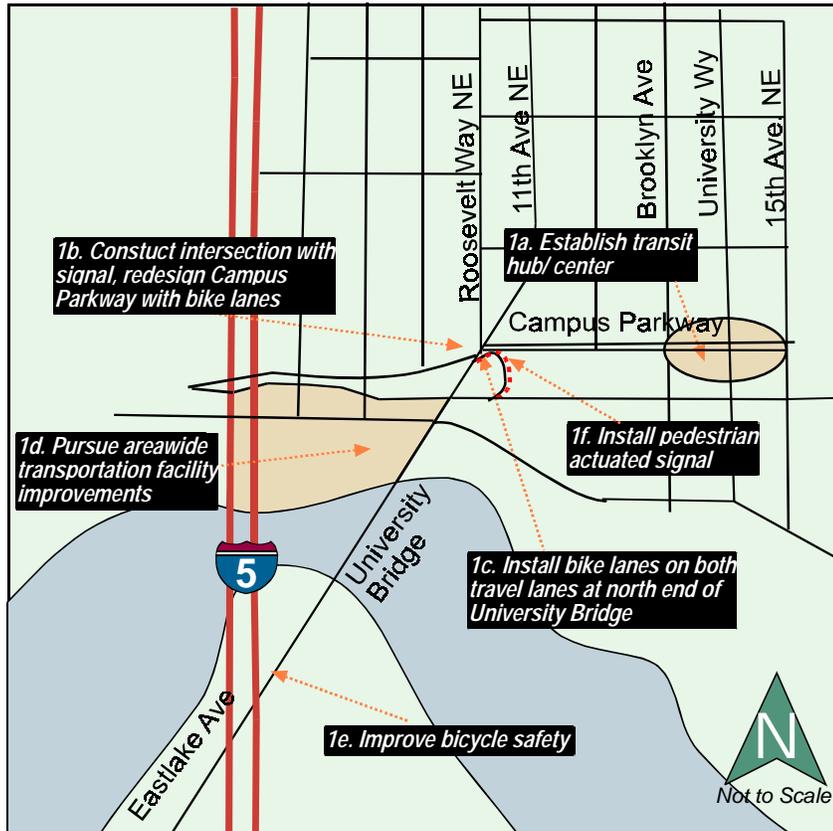
- ▶ City of Seattle's web site at
<http://www.cityofseattle.net/planning/transportation/AreaWideStudies/UATS.htm>

- ▶ University Library at 5009 Roosevelt Way NE, 98105 or 206-684-4063.

- ▶ U-District Neighborhood Service Center at 4534 University Way NE, 98105 or 206-684-7542.

- ▶ For further information or questions about neighborhood transportation and/or corridor planning, please contact Seattle Transportation at 206-684-ROAD.

Figure 1-1. Recommended Projects in the Campus Parkway/ University Bridge Area



The project numbers in Figures 1-1 through 1-8 correspond to those shown in Chapter 10 of the UATS final report.

Figure 1-2. Recommended Projects in the Montlake Area

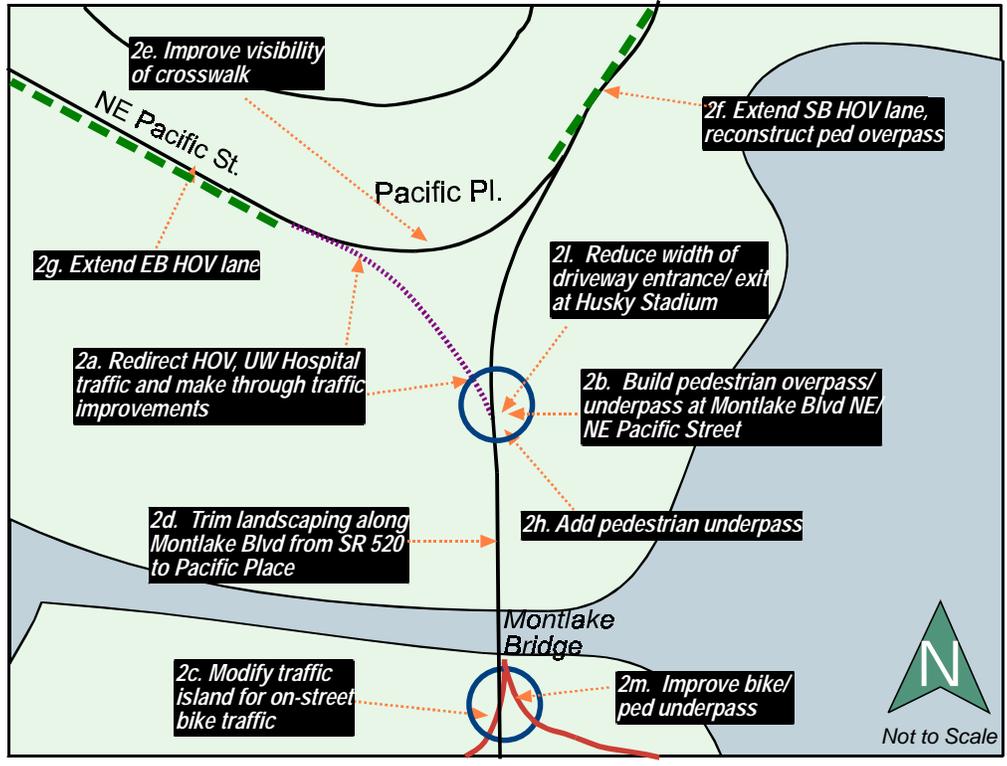


Figure 1-3. Recommended Projects in the North-South and East-West Corridors

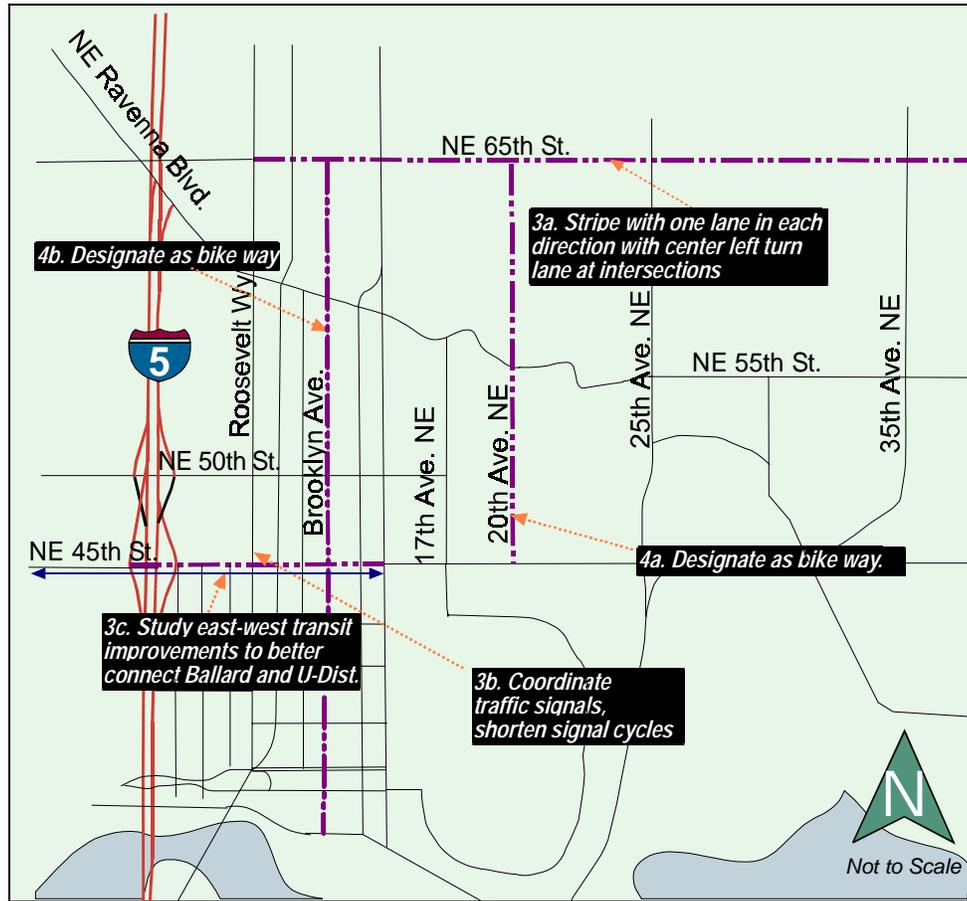


Figure 1-4. Recommended projects in I-5 Right of Way

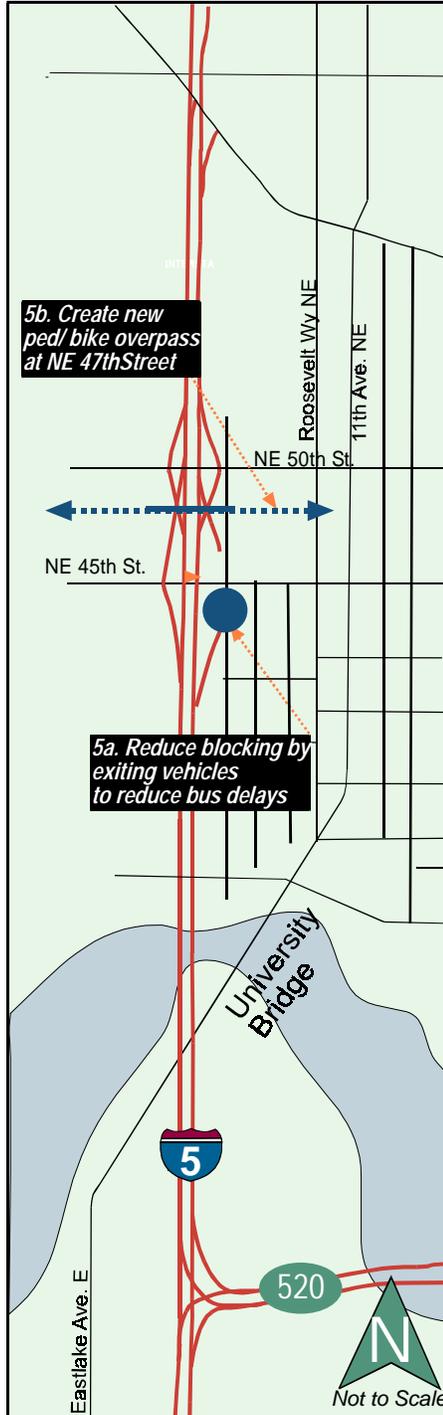


Figure 1-5. Recommended Improvements in the University Village Area

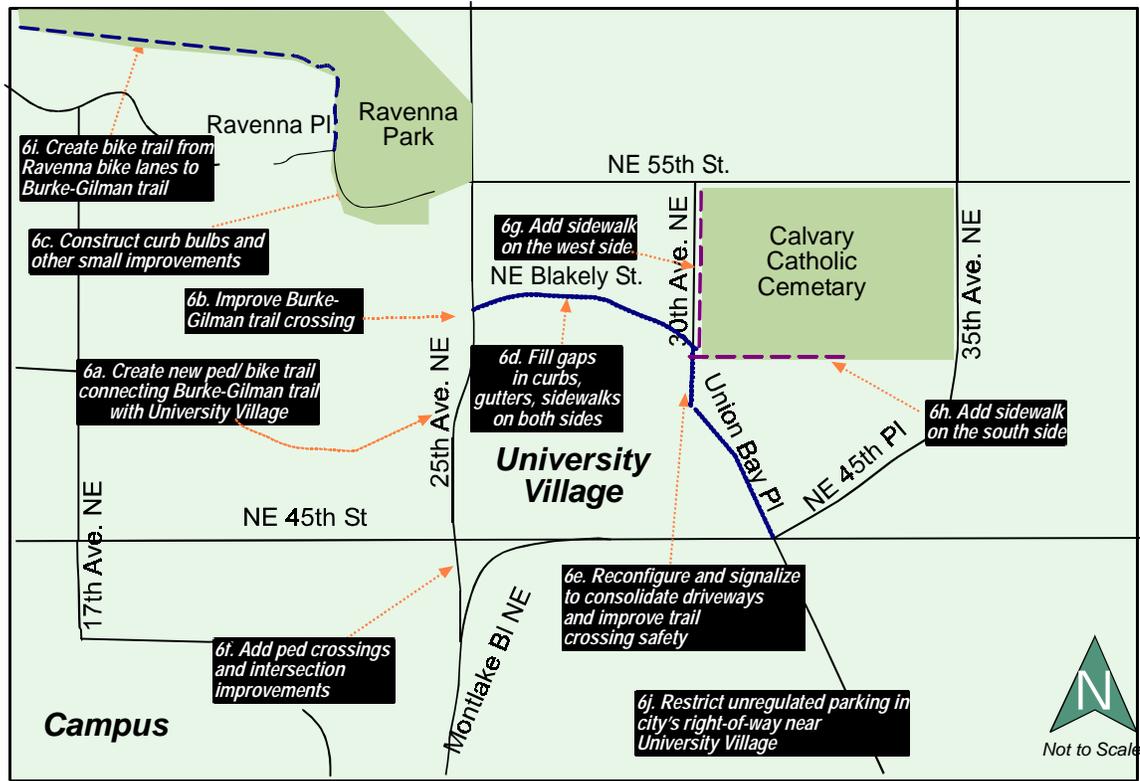


Figure 1-6. Recommended Transit and Small Scale Improvements

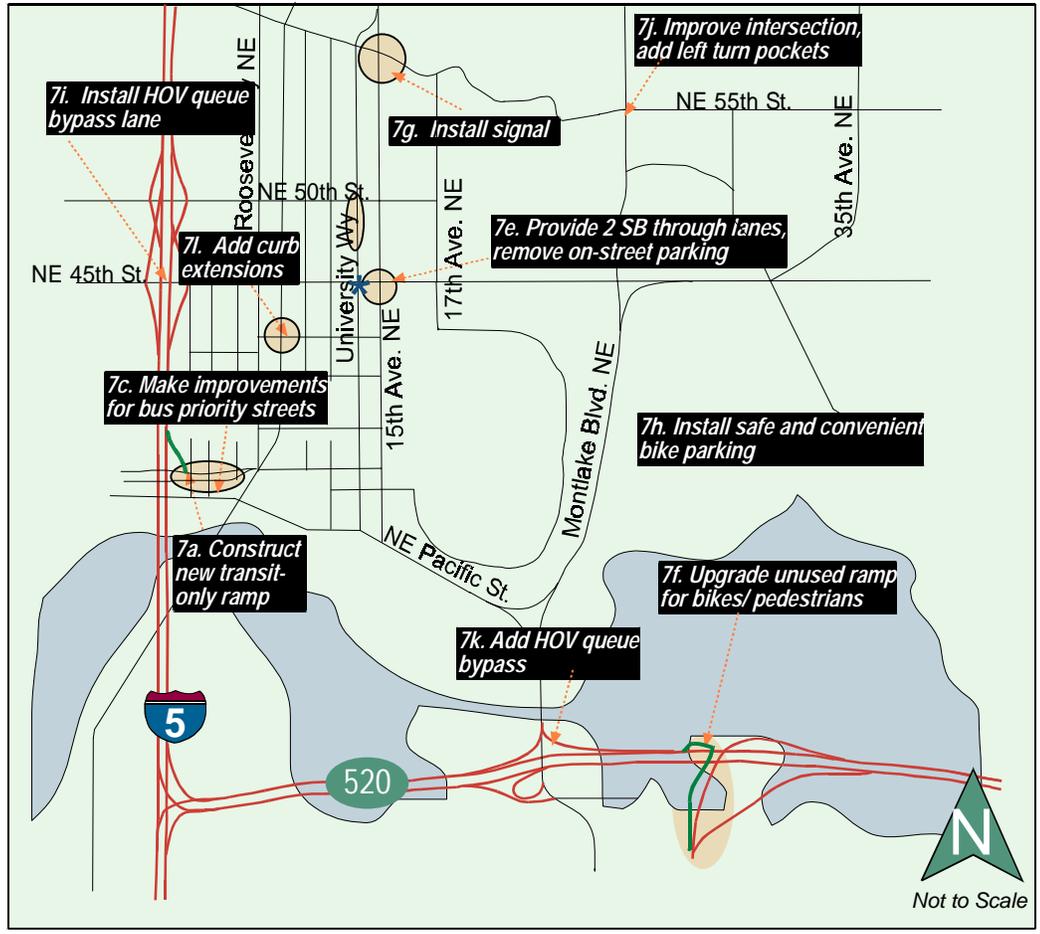


Figure 1-7. Recommended Projects in Light Rail Station Areas

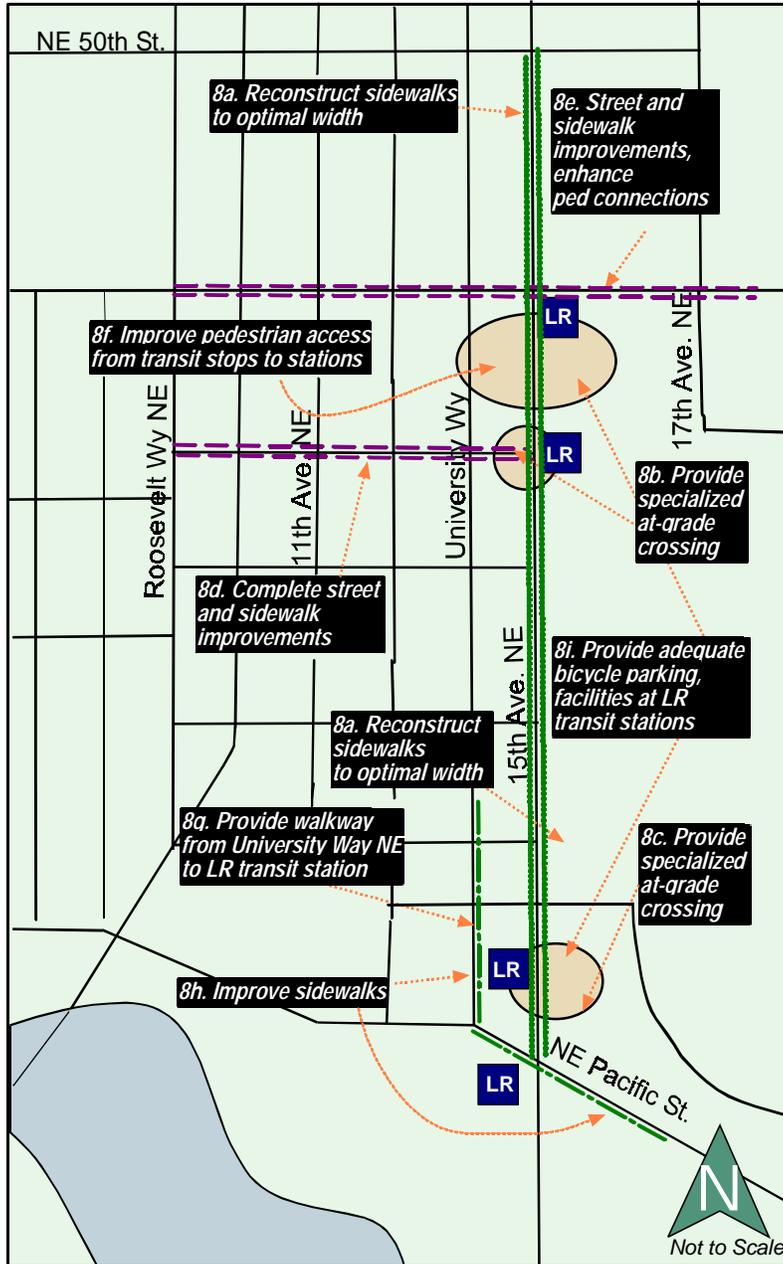
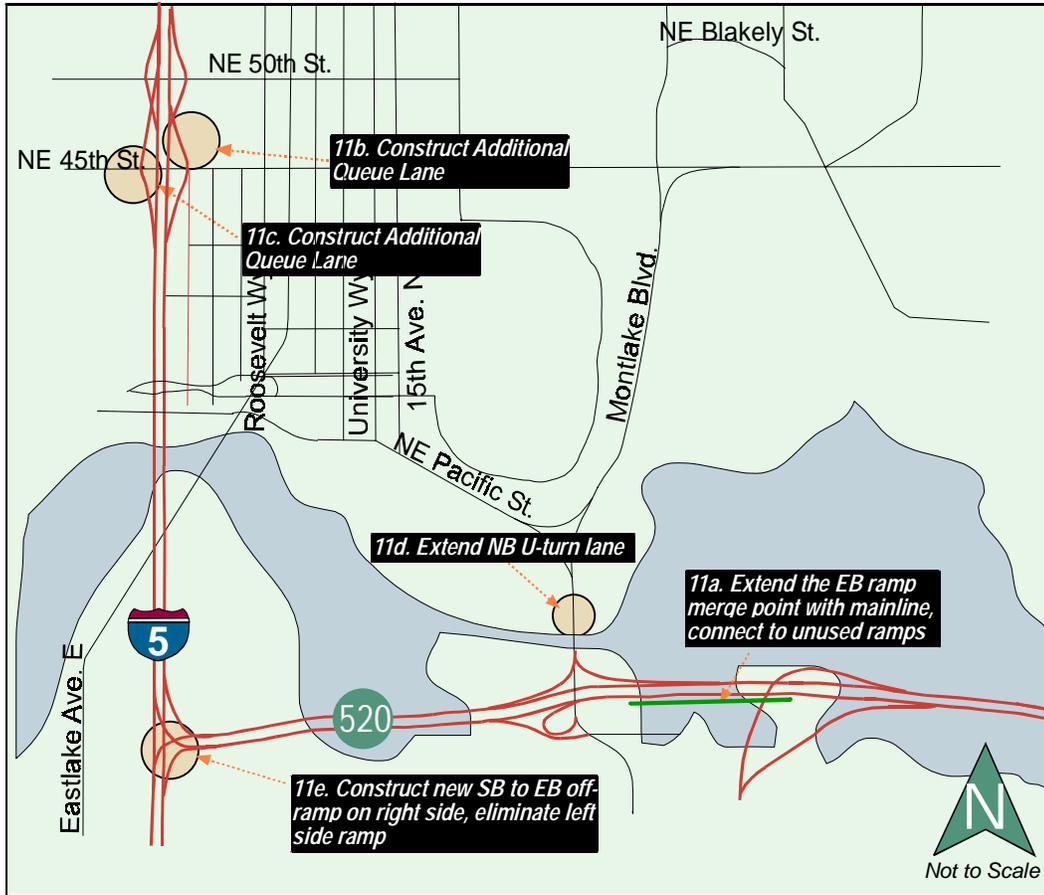


Figure 1-8. Recommended Freeway Ramp Expansion Projects



The projects not shown are:

Group 1 Early Action: 1h, 7m, 9a, 9c, 10a, 10g

Group 2 High Priority: 2i, 2k, 6e, 10b, 10c, 10d, 10e, 10f, 10i, 10j, 10k

Group 3 Medium Priority: 1g, 6k, 9b, 10k

Group 4 Low Priority: 2j, 3-d, 5c, 6l, 7b, 7d, 7i