



## MEMORANDUM

To: Tony Mazzella, Allison Schwartz, SDOT  
From: Thomas Brennan, Briana Lovell, N\N  
Date: November 19, 2013  
Subject: Center City Open House #3: Public Comment Results (DRAFT)

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### Open House Comment Card Summary

On October 29, 2013, SDOT hosted the third of three open houses for the Center City Connector Transit Study. Approximately 100 people attended the event. The purpose of the open house was twofold: 1) to share the results of Tier 2 analysis on Mixed Traffic and Exclusive 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue streetcar options, and 2) to get public input on these options – which option do they prefer and why.

#### Overall Preference – Which alternative did attendees prefer and why

Overall, 40 attendees completed comment cards. Of these, 5 expressed preference for the Mixed Traffic alternative, while 35 expressed preference for the Exclusive alternative.

Many respondents left comments explaining their preference. For those who supported the Exclusive alignment, the factors most commonly mentioned were the faster travel time, greater reliability, better ability to compete with automobile travel, and lower costs. A number of people reported that if the streetcar does not run in exclusive lanes, the slower travel time and reliability impacts will reduce its value enough that it would not be worth building. Support for the Mixed Traffic alignment was largely based on the impact the Exclusive alignment would have on several street trees in Pioneer Square and impacts to other modes and loading zones.

These comments were reflected in the response to question 3, which asked respondents to rank the Evaluation Measures used for the project from 1 to 8, with 1 being the most important and 8 being the least important.

Figure 1 shows the average ranking of each evaluation measure. In general, respondents ranked “Streetcar Travel Time” and “Streetcar Travel Time Reliability” as the most important and “Parking/Loading Impacts” and “Auto Travel Time” as the least important.

The right two columns show average rankings based on overall alignment preference – those who prefer the Mixed Traffic alignment rated “Parking/Loading Impacts” and “Streetcar Ridership” as the most important criteria and “Streetcar Travel Time Reliability” and “Increased Delay to Parallel Corridors” as the least important. Because the majority of people who completed comment cards preferred the Exclusive alignment, the ranking order was the same as the overall average.

**Figure 1 Evaluation Measures Results**

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|         | Evaluation Measures                     | Rank<br>1 to 8 | Prefer<br>Mixed | Prefer<br>Exclusive |
|---------|---|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| ENHANCE | Streetcar Travel Time                   | 1.8            | 3.7             | 1.6                 |
|         | Streetcar Travel Time Reliability       | 2.4            | 5.0             | 2.0                 |
| CONNECT | Streetcar Ridership                     | 3.2            | 3.2             | 3.2                 |
|         | Annual Operating & Maintenance Costs    | 4.6            | 4.4             | 4.6                 |
|         | Total Capital Costs                     | 5.2            | 4.0             | 5.4                 |
|         | Auto Travel Times                       | 5.9            | 3.3             | 6.3                 |
|         | Increase in Delay on Parallel Corridors | 5.7            | 5.2             | 5.8                 |
| THRIVE  | Parking/Loading Impacts                 | 6.6            | 3.0             | 7.1                 |

**Additional Comments – use of historic streetcars, east-west connections, and more**

A number of respondents expressed interested in the historic Benson streetcars. On the other hand, several people expressed concerns about their use. Two respondents noted that they would not like use of the historic cars to negatively impact streetcar travel time, and two suggested that the waterfront project should be tasked with incorporating the Benson cars. There were six comments in favor of using the Benson streetcars, included below:

- “Keep the Benson trains in Seattle even on a seasonal basis”
- “Please use the incredible old streetcars. Genius idea. Educate handicapped and the medical professionals that care for them why they are not handicap accessible. Really - I can see myself sitting on it going downtown.”
- “The historic Benson trolley line should be added to the new seawall/Alaskan Way shoreline promenade in addition to, not instead of the two options presented this evening. It is train traffic, cruise ship traffic, and tour bus traffic which impedes freight and private passage around Alaskan Way, NOT the passage of the historic travel.”
- “Incorporate the Benson trolleys! They are a valued part of our history and dearly missed”

- “If you can make use of the Benson streetcars, know that other cities like NYC, Boston, Chicago, SF, et al. also use older train cars for tour events or rent them for special events.”
- “Do whatever is necessary to preserve and run the historic streetcars. Since the well-used and very useful waterfront option appears to be dead (I used it weekly for several years) this would be the best way to honor councilman Benson's hard work and memory”

Although relatively few respondents commented on the proposed east/west connection along Stewart/Olive, several did express preference for Pike/Pine, primarily due to access to the Westlake Hub and Downtown Transit Tunnel. Two people expressed preference for finding an engineering solution to the tunnel membrane issue so that Pike/Pine could be pursued.

Other comments addressed numerous issues:

- Stops and Stations:
  - o Move stop from Madison/Spring to Madison/Marion to facilitate access to ferries. It would be nice to have a stop near SAM (Seattle Art Museum).
  - o Add safe public toilets at all stops
  - o Make sure stations support 2 cars
  - o Make platforms on 1<sup>st</sup> wide enough for rapid streetcar
  - o Be cognizant of intermodal connections at Occidental (Sounder) and Madison (Ferry)
- Operating scenarios:
  - o Operate a few “end-to-end” trips
  - o 5 minute headways are important and should be maintained after 7 p.m.
  - o Integrate all three lines and charge based on travel distance, not flat rate
- Future extensions:
  - o Consider single-track spur line to Central Link or Safeco Field with one station for events
  - o Design the line with the expectation of extending it north to LQA and south to stadiums by pre-building the track junctions
- Evaluation and Planning Process:
  - o Add public safety to evaluation criteria
  - o Educate public about updated Transit Master Plan and why transit is being prioritized downtown
  - o Consider holding another session and have people work/dialogue in small groups and answer questions. A person of your team would facilitate the process.
  - o Construction impacts will be significant – look at 24 hour closures for construction periods
- Bike Safety

- Not sure if cyclists will be safe on the roads with the streetcar, hope their safety is taken into consideration (2)
- Don't forget bicyclists on Stewart
- Transit Priority:
  - Maintain exclusive lanes and TSP (transit signal priority) for the entire route. Do not allow the line to be compromised segment-by-segment. It is crucial to get this right the first time. Let's learn from our mistakes with the SLU (South Lake Union) and First Hill Streetcars.
  - Like the proposed changes to SLU streetcar, currently box-blocking goes unpunished and causes major delays
- Legibility/Accessibility:
  - Please make sure signage and system legibility (wayfinding) is a priority
  - There should be tactile signage for schedule and audible announcements w/ real time "next car" announcements. Make sure new line has effective ORCA card readers.

Several questions asked respondents about their relationship to downtown and to the project. Question 4 asked respondents to identify whether they are a downtown resident, business owner, property owner, other, employee, student, or none of the above. These results are shown below in Figure 2. Close to half (43%) responded that they are residents, 30% employees, 25% "other", 18% business owner, 15% "none", 10% property owner, and 3% student.

**Figure 2 Respondent relationship to Downtown Seattle**

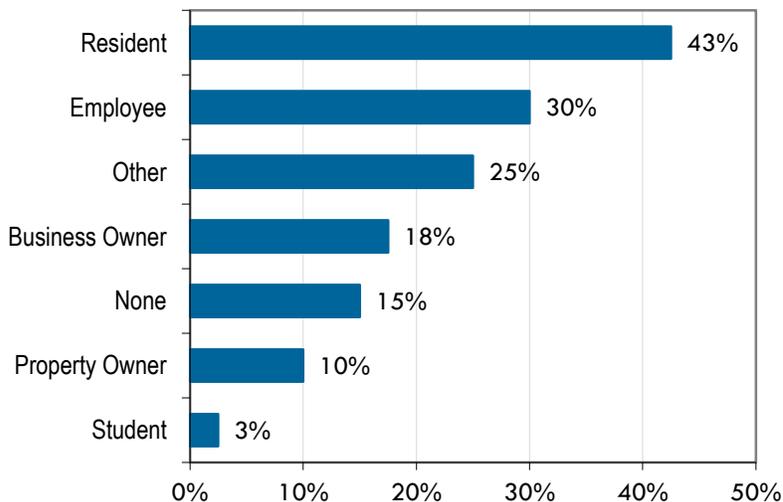


Figure 3 shows that most respondents (70%) reported using transit daily, while 15% use transit weekly, 7% occasionally, 5% monthly, and only 3% never. Respondents who favored the Mixed Traffic alignment were less likely to ride daily; 40% reported using transit daily, compared to 68% of people who preferred the Exclusive alignment.

Figure 3 Respondent frequency of transit use

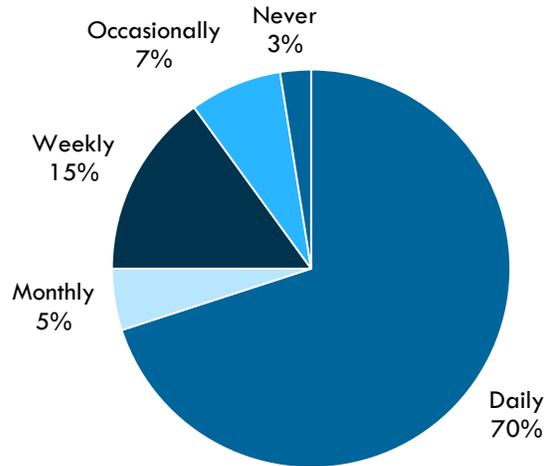
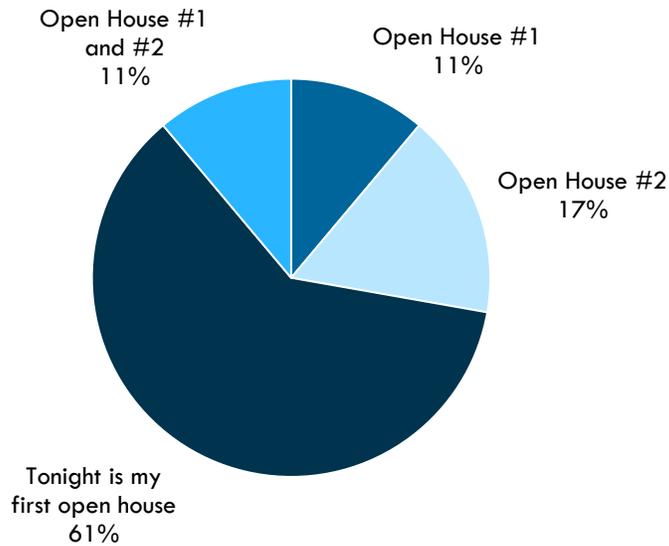


Figure 4 Respondent Open House attendance



Several optional questions asked respondents about their demographic information. A total of 68% of respondents identified as “White”, 5% as “Asian”, and 1% as “Mixed”; 23% declined to answer. When asked to identify as Hispanic or non-Hispanic, 73% identified as non-Hispanic, 3% as Hispanic, and 23% declined to answer. The average age of those who completed a comment card was 47. A majority of respondents (60%) were male; 20% were female, and 20% did not respond. The largest share of respondents (48%) rent their home, while 35% own, 3% selected “other” and 13% did not respond.

Figure 5 shows the zipcode of respondents. A total of 19 zip codes were represented in the results.

Figure 5 Zip Code of Respondents

| Zip Code | Count |
|----------|-------|
| 98103    | 4     |
| 98104    | 4     |
| 98101    | 3     |
| 98102    | 3     |
| 98121    | 3     |
| 98109    | 2     |
| 98112    | 2     |
| 98144    | 2     |
| 48101    | 1     |
| 98002    | 1     |
| 98040    | 1     |
| 98105    | 1     |
| 98115    | 1     |
| 98119    | 1     |
| 98122    | 1     |
| 98133    | 1     |
| 98177    | 1     |
| 98201    | 1     |
| 98199    | 1     |

## FULL TEXT OF COMMENTS

### In support of Mixed Traffic Alignment

- “5-min headways, it’s not worth it for SC to take a whole lane. That space is important for cars, buses, trucks, and others. For those who want exclusivity between IDS and westlake, there’s light rail. An empty trackway with congested traffic next to it is not a prudent use of 1st Avenue”
- “Need for space for the buses and trolleys that are the workhorses for a vast majority of transit users or even drivers. Such major space should not be dedicated to one streetcar. Please leave it on Virginia /Stewart to first.”
- “Please don't design/plan as if we live in a pre-automobile city.”
- “Preserve the exceptional street trees in pioneer square that add so much to the beauty of this historic district.”
- “The preservation of street trees in historic pioneer square neighborhood is of exceptional importance to the character of this unique district.”

## In support of Exclusive Alignment

- Travel time:
  - o “6-12 min of time savings on round trip is huge”; “Prefer dedicated lanes, to assist in avoidance of collisions as well as speed of travel”; “Faster travel times benefit riders and increase ridership”; “Travel time is very important to me, otherwise walking is faster”; “improvement in travel time more than justifies the difficulty of removing parking along 1<sup>st</sup> Ave”; “Keeps transit times reasonable”
- Reliability:
  - o “Biggest issue is reliability”; “Reliability, no matter the urban condition is crucial”; “People need predictability and faster travel times to be enticed out of cars”; “To maintain efficiency and reliability the streetcar should not be subject to typical traffic congestion – this also creates incentive for people to choose public transit over personal vehicles”; “SLU is hurt by being stuck in traffic”;
- Frequency:
  - o “Add cars. Make service frequent and I truly think it will be used more”; “Guaranteed headways are crucial/frequency is crucial”
- Exclusive Lanes/General Comments
  - o “Lower operating costs and speed and reliability of the exclusive alternative make it the clear choice”; “Better travel times ridership, and costs”; “To maintain efficiency and reliability the streetcar should not be subject to typical traffic congestion – this also creates incentive for people to choose public transit over personal vehicles”; “Exclusive is safer, more reliable, and has lower recurring costs”;
- If it isn’t exclusive, it isn’t worth building:
  - o “Exclusive is cheaper, and much faster. If we can’t build exclusive, then it really isn’t worth it”; “If we have to share the lane with cars, it’s not worth the money to build a streetcar instead of a bus”; “If the streetcar isn't exclusive, I think it’s not worth building at all. With its own lane, a streetcar starts to provide genuine value; running in traffic there is no incentive not to drive your own car. I would rather see the money go to buses if we're not going to give the streetcar its own lane.”; “It would be a waste of money to build this if it’s not exclusive - this needs to provide a reliable, fast, convenient, and attractive alternative to driving and even walking!”; “Exclusive lane streetcars would offer more reliable travel times, and fewer car/train collisions. If the streetcar has the potential to get stuck in traffic, I might as well stay in my car.”; “The exclusive option has drastically better travel times & reliability for similar capital cost, with lower operational costs, and reflects the priorities the city is likely to maintain in the future. There is not enough street space to meet demand in downtown Seattle and the streetcar will reduce the need to drive.”; “Efficient streetcars increase ridership, safety”; “All the numbers point to exclusive, why build mixed? Its faster and more worth the money!!”; “For the capital cost of building the city connector, it only makes sense for the streetcar to travel in exclusive lanes. This makes the system more usable for everyone and makes connections more reliable. The SLU streetcar has

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taught us how NOT to do streetcars in Seattle”; “Prefer exclusive ROW because of reliability, consistency, higher ridership, better than walking (often, one can walk faster than the S lake union streetcar because its not in its own ROW.”

- Traffic/Auto Impacts:
  - o “My thought is that vehicle traffic on first under any of the alternatives will be bad. So we might as well have some form of transportation on first that will work. I think the mixed option will result in bad car and bad streetcar traffic”; “Establishes passenger travel as a priority over autos”; “You don't need SOV cars, you can have commercial access only on 1st Ave between 5 am and 8 pm and don't allow SOV cars. It has been done in other cities globally. Time to grow up. The car is not king!”; “Of course to maximize ridership, exclusive streetcar option is highly recommended. May take parking spots, but who really, needs to park on first avenue?”
- Suggestions:
  - o “It would be a lot less confusing to everyone if the 1st Ave was one-way northbound - this would allow for 2 lanes north, SB traffic would use 2nd. Put the streetcar on the west half of first and P NB NB P on the east half”