

Northgate Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan

Final Report

September 2006



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and

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Executive Summary

Transforming Northgate

Northgate's future promises a vital urban center providing new jobs, housing, open spaces, and valued public places surrounded by healthy single-family neighborhoods. A suburban, low-density, auto-oriented landscape will be transformed to a more walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented place where people live, work, shop, play, and go to school.



Realizing this vision requires a simultaneous transformation of both the urban form and transportation choices. The Northgate Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP) is a blueprint to guide public and private transportation investments through 2030. These investments will make

better land use and transportation choices possible, helping to transform the Northgate Urban Center and linking it to healthy surrounding neighborhoods and the region.

Northgate Gets Moving

The City worked closely with Northgate's citizens and developers to create the Northgate CTIP to get Northgate moving again in new and better ways. As new development brings more urban density to the Northgate Urban Center, this CTIP will bring a more balanced transportation system that improves nonmotorized options, begins to reconnect Northgate's neighborhoods, and yet keeps autos, freight, and bus transit moving safely.

- Key CTIP Elements**
- **More sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes**
 - **Safer and better-moving roadways that ensure local access**
 - **Coordination with developers to provide system improvements**
 - **Enhanced access to transit, including the future light rail station**

Chapter 1. Background

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan goals for Northgate; Northgate Open Space and Pedestrian Connections Plan; Northgate Stakeholders Group

Chapter 2. Assumptions

Pipeline developments; system performance measures and benchmarks

Chapter 3. Existing Conditions

Sidewalks, bike facilities, transit service and facilities, traffic levels of service

Chapter 4. Forecasts

Traffic conditions in 2010 and 2030

Chapter 5.**Transportation Improvement Concepts**

Meeting CTIP performance measures

Chapter 6. Evaluation

Evaluation criteria; project scoring; cost estimates

Chapter 7.**Recommendations**

High, mid-level, and long-range priorities; future system performance

Chapter 8. Financing and Implementation Plan

Potential revenue sources; next steps

The recommended projects in the CTIP tackle existing transportation deficiencies and anticipate future needs:

- Pedestrians will be able to cross N/NE Northgate Way and other arterials more easily.
- Pedestrians will have more walking routes available between the Urban Center and surrounding areas, with sidewalks on arterials increasing by 22%.
- Residents will enjoy better walking environments in their neighborhoods (sidewalks and/or paths on school walk routes will increase by 15%).
- Bicyclists will see improved facilities on north-south corridors, including 1st Avenue NE and College Way N.
- Northgate transit riders will gain added service to local destinations and more frequent service to Bitter Lake, Aurora Avenue N, and Greenlake.
- Traffic in the year 2030 will still meet or exceed CTIP's level of service objective (LOS E), even with new development and increased pass-through traffic.

The good news is that progress is already under way. Redevelopment of the vacant lot south of the mall starts this summer with public- and private-sector investments. This development brings major new pedestrian opportunities, public open spaces, a new street, housing, jobs, and retail services.

The Fifth Avenue NE streetscape improvements were completed in late spring 2006. Residents and visitors are enjoying improved safety for pedestrians and cars. New, inviting entrances connect Northgate Mall and the new civic center, with added landscaping and artwork.

Greater Balance, More Choices, Making the Community Whole

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels proposed the Northgate CTIP in 2003 as part of his Action Agenda. The Seattle City Council then added the following guidance for preparing this CTIP:

- Facilitate public and private investment
- Reflect the long-term goals of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (now contained within the Seattle Comprehensive Plan)
- Reduce traffic-related impacts on arterials

- Protect neighborhood streets
- Provide pedestrian improvements and connections, including safety improvements for seniors
- Balance all modes of transportation
- Build upon prior transportation work
- Assist property owners in meeting environmental review requirements

Throughout the development of the plan, the City worked closely with Northgate property owners and the Northgate Stakeholders



Group, a broadly representative body of community and business representatives that advises the City on the development of the CTIP and other important Northgate issues. The Northgate Stakeholders Group reviewed products at key milestones, and a subcommittee met frequently to review and comment on work products in detail. Representatives from the Stakeholders Group solicited public feedback at six Northgate community forums. CTIP's **Chapter 1**

describes this history and the CTIP's policy context in additional detail.

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King County Metro

Northwest Hospital

Simon Properties

Owners of Three or More Acres

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Senior Housing

Licton Springs Community Council

Renters/Condominium Owners

Haller Lake Community Club

Multi-family Housing Developers

Pinehurst Community Council

Businesses Inside the Mall

Victory Heights Community Council

Businesses Outside the Mall

Northgate Chamber of Commerce

Youth

Thornton Creek Alliance

Labor

Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund

At-large (two seats)

North Seattle Community College

CTIP Plan Development

Step 1. Identify CTIP Assumptions

Define success; create performance measures and benchmarks

Step 2. Forecast Future Conditions

Analyze output from 2010 and 2030 transportation models

Step 3. Identify Transportation Improvement Concepts

Describe projects and programs to improve transportation system performance

Step 4. Apply Evaluation Criteria and Prioritize Recommendations

Identify high, mid-level, and long-range priorities

CTIP Step 1. Assumptions and Performance Measures

CTIP builds upon explicit planning, financing, and technical assumptions described in **Chapter 2**.

CTIP defines performance measures and benchmarks to help identify improvement concepts in the following ten geographic and program categories:

- Residential/non-arterial streets
- Transit services, transportation demand management, and parking programs
- Transit Center/light rail station area
- NE 130th/125th Street corridor
- NE 92nd Street corridor
- NE Northgate Way corridor
- West of I-5
- 15th Avenue NE corridor
- Roosevelt Way corridor
- 5th Avenue NE corridor

CTIP uses detailed performance benchmarks that provide clear study objectives for an effective and efficient transportation system:

- Mode share: How can we make it easier for Northgate residents and workers to shift their travel choices away from driving alone?
- Transportation system for pedestrians: Where does Northgate need improved pedestrian connections?
- Transportation system for bicyclists: Where does Northgate need better bicycle facilities?
- Transit system: What additional transit service will benefit Northgate residents and workers?
- Transportation system for vehicles: How to best maintain arterial and intersection traffic flows and safety, and protect neighborhood streets from cut-through traffic?

CTIP Step 2: Forecast Future Conditions

Guided by the City Council's legislative direction and SDOT's Transportation Strategic Plan, the City analyzed existing and future traffic conditions forecast for the years 2010 and 2030.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe these findings in more detail.

CTIP Step 3: Identify Transportation Improvement Concepts

Travel forecasts for the year 2030 showed that without significant new transportation infrastructure investments, there will be a significant increase in heavy congestion at many intersections and on N/NE Northgate Way between Meridian Avenue N and Roosevelt Way NE, as well as slower average travel speeds in most corridors. CTIP used these findings and applied performance measures to help identify prospective project and program recommendations described in **Chapter 5**.

CTIP Step 4: Apply Evaluation Criteria and Prioritize Recommendations

The CTIP systematically evaluated each potential improvement concept using evaluation criteria, and developed weighted scores to rank them in priority order, as described in **Chapter 6**. The evaluation criteria reflect the CTIP performance measures and benchmarks, and are consistent with the following principles:

CTIP Evaluation Criteria (in priority order)

- Safety
- Neighborhood livability
- Pedestrian mobility
- Bicycling mobility
- Transit rider mobility
- Auto driver mobility
- Cost effectiveness and implementation feasibility
- New housing and economic development
- Infrastructure preservation/maintenance
- Environmental sustainability

- Support the policies in the Transportation Element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Strategic Plan.
- Support the Northgate transportation goals and policies included in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.
- Be consistent with the SDOT Capital Improvement Program project prioritization process.

The following recommendations identify the City's high, mid-level, and long-range priorities for transportation investments to create a more livable Northgate. **Chapter 7** provides more detailed

descriptions of the recommended projects.

(Note: Project numbers refer to geographic and/or programmatic improvement categories.)

Recommendation: Implement transportation projects and programs to Move People Safely and Efficiently



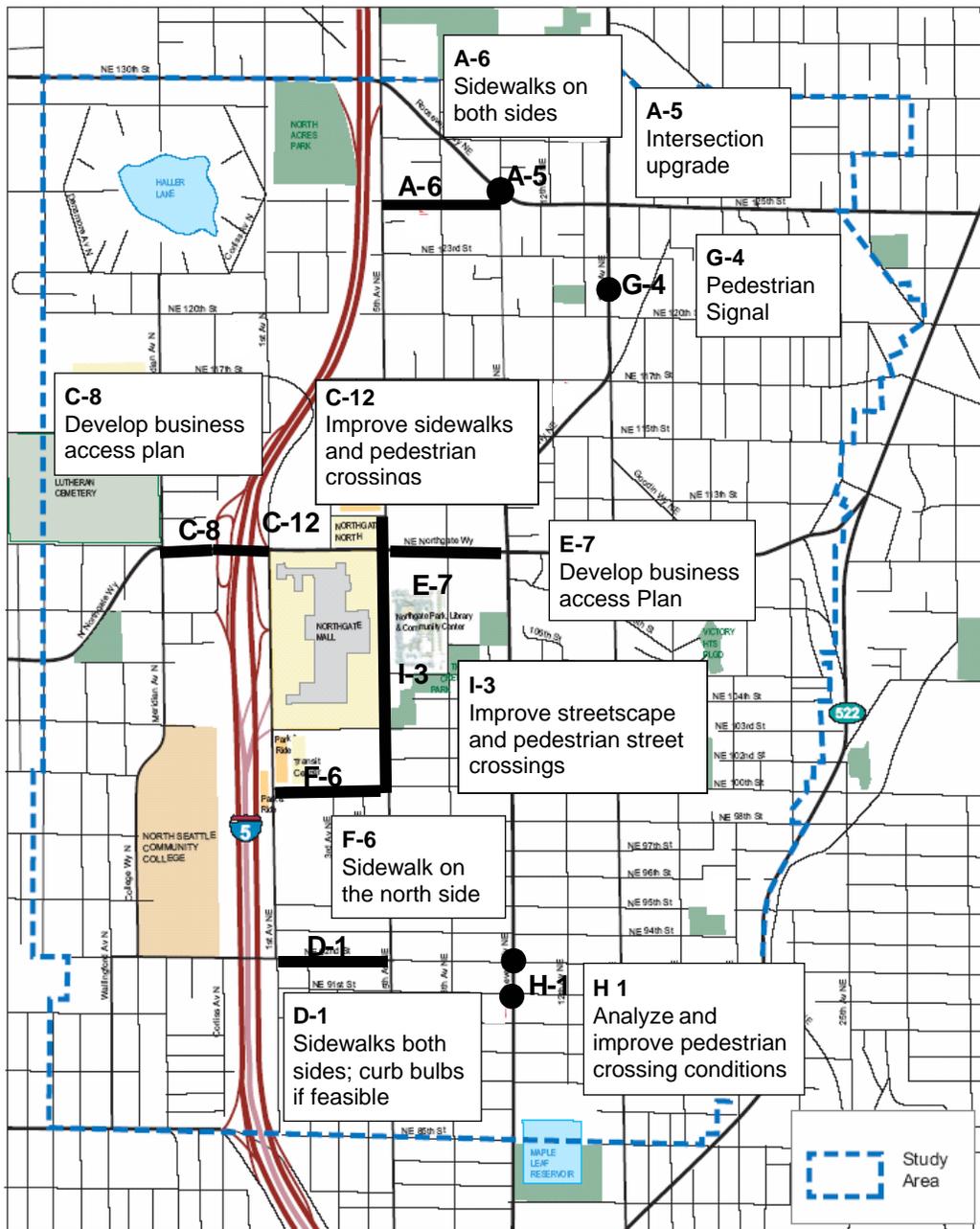
The recommendations supporting the priority to *Move People Safely and Efficiently* will improve pedestrian connections within the Urban Center, between the Urban Center and neighborhoods, and throughout neighborhoods. The high priority projects shown in **Figure ES-1**, plus several of the mid-priority and long-range projects in **Figures ES-5** and **ES-6**, will enable people to walk more safely between the new civic center and Northgate Mall, and within the thriving retail district. There will be more crosswalks, better street design so pedestrians and drivers can see each other, and more comfortable walking conditions. In addition to more sidewalks in the commercial area, there will be 2.5 more miles of sidewalks along school routes.

Recommendation: Implement transportation projects and programs to Reduce Drive-Alone Travel



To encourage Northgate residents to move around their neighborhood by transit, on foot, and via bicycle, these recommendations will fill in the missing links along the existing 1st Avenue NE and College Way N/Meridian Avenue N bicycle lanes. These projects also eliminate pedestrian and bicycle conflicts along existing sidewalks. The parking recommendations will encourage more efficient use of existing parking space and evaluation of parking requirements for new developments. **Figure ES-2** shows the locations of the recommended high priority projects, with the mid-priority and long-range projects shown in **Figures ES-5** and **ES-6**.

Figure ES-1. High Priority Projects to Move People Safely and Efficiently



Notes:

F-6. Project is fully funded.

H-1. Install crossing improvements that meet SDOT guidelines and practices, such as curb bulbs and crosswalk signs and markings.

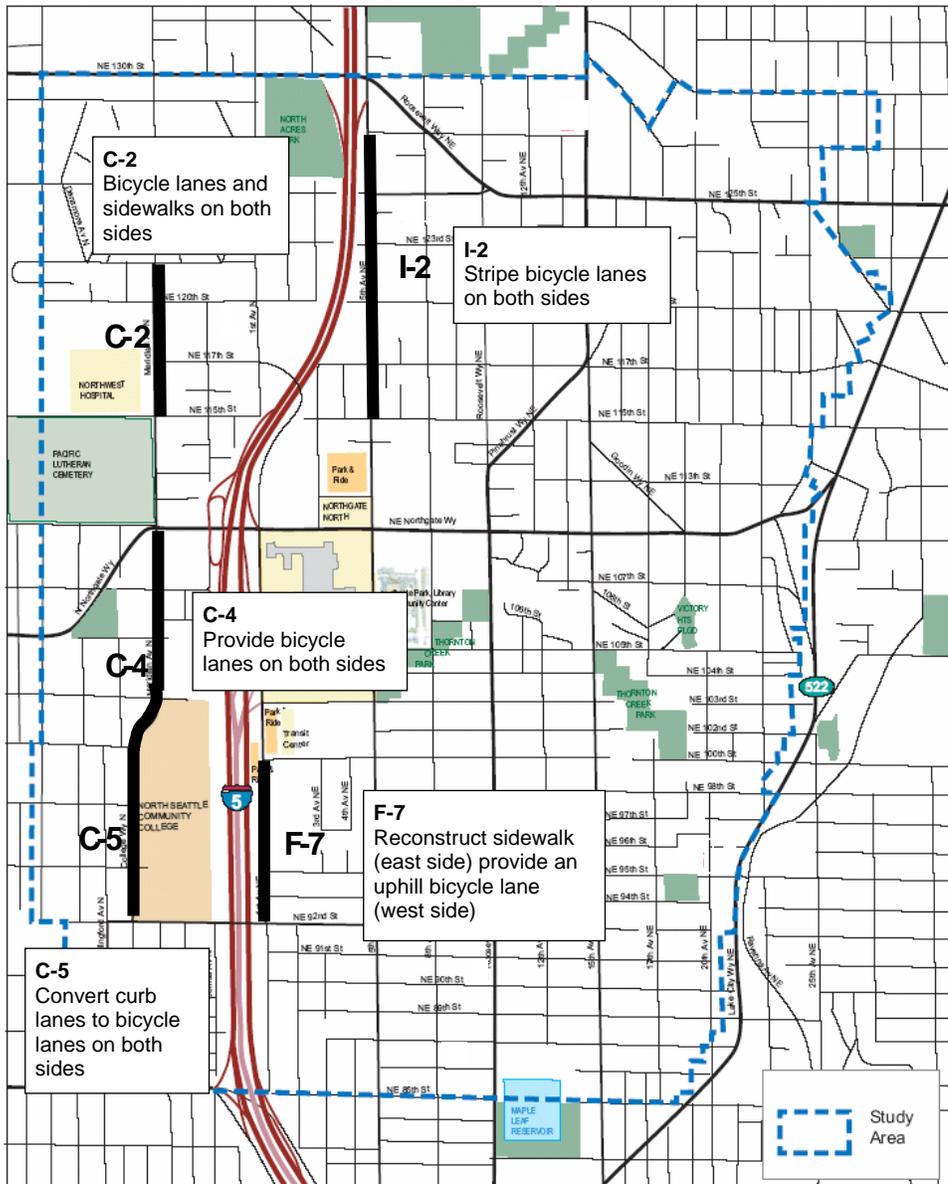
C-8. Business access plan will include construction of a median, restriction of mid-block left turns, and a potential business access street south of N Northgate Way or a break in the median.

E-7. Business access plan will include construction of a median, restriction of mid-block left turns, and U-turns at intersections or a potential break in the median.

C-12. Consistent with Northgate Open Space and Pedestrian Connections Plan.

I-3. Consistent with the 5th Avenue NE Streetscape Design Plan.

Figure ES-2. High Priority Projects to Reduce Drive-Along Travel



Notes:

C-5. Work with King County Metro to maintain and improve transit speed and reliability.

Recommended improvements not shown on the above map:

J-4. Create a “parking brokerage” to promote shared parking space.

J-6. Amend land use code to allow shared parking between retail stores and other uses.

J-7. Reduce minimum parking requirements for commercial uses and possibly for residential uses.

J-8. Make the Northgate Overlay District mode split goals consistent with the Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan goals for Northgate.

J-9. Allow residential uses to meet their parking requirements off site.

J-10. Continue researching parking requirements for parking maximums, discouraging SOV use and improving short-term parking accessibility.

Recommendation: Implement transportation projects and programs to Support New Housing and Economic Development



These recommendations will help city streets and intersections operate efficiently as new development occurs in Northgate. All signalized intersections (with one exception) and all corridors will operate at a Level of Service E (CTIP's performance benchmark) or better. These high priority projects, shown in **Figures ES-3, ES-5, and ES-6**, show the high, mid-range, and long-range projects described in Chapter 7.

Recommendation: Implement transportation projects and programs to Protect Neighborhoods



The high priority projects shown in **Figure ES-4** and the parking concepts described in **Figures ES-5 and ES-6** will add sidewalks, pedestrian crossing improvements, traffic calming measures, and parking management programs to help Northgate residents move safely around their neighborhoods.

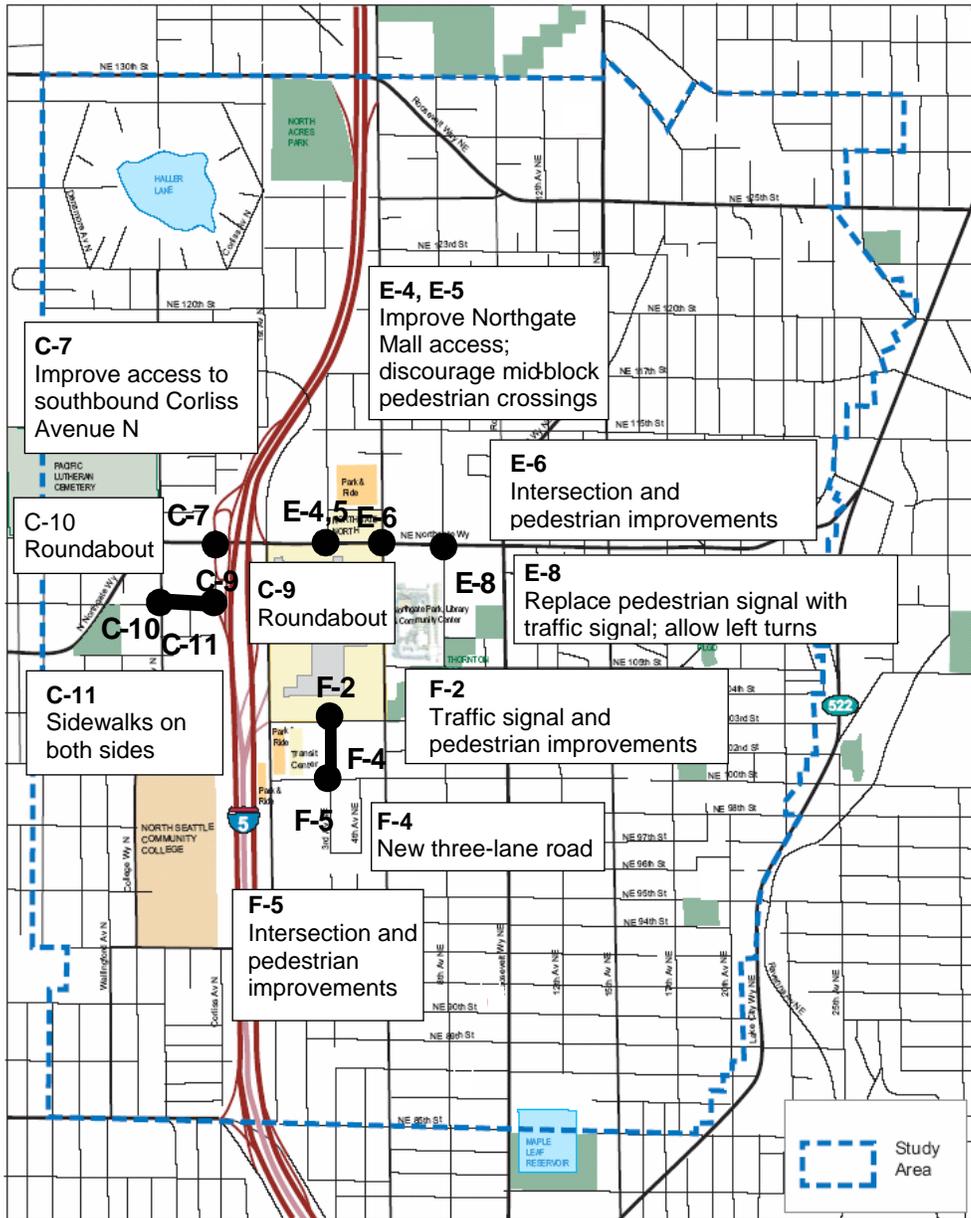
What is the Cross-Freeway Connection?

The Northgate Stakeholders Group expressed its strong support for a pedestrian and bicycle overpass crossing the freeway from North Seattle Community College to the Northgate Transit Center and future Sound Transit North Link Light Rail Station.

The crossing would make it easier for College faculty and students to use bus transit and the future light rail, reducing single-occupant vehicle trips. It would connect neighborhoods west of I-5 to the commercial area and neighborhoods east of I-5, particularly the new Northgate Civic Center and South Lot developments envisioned for Northgate.

The project could cost \$7–10 million and might come about through collaboration between the City of Seattle, King County, WSDOT, Sound Transit, North Seattle Community College, private property owners, neighborhoods, and others.

Figure ES-3. High Priority Projects to Support New Housing and Economic Development



Note: Projects C-9, C-10, C-11, and J-5 work together to form an alternative westbound route to Meridian Avenue.

E-6. Add a second westbound left turn lane; change the southbound curb lane to right turn only.

F-5. When warranted, add four-way stop control and, ultimately, install a traffic signal.

Recommended improvements not shown on the above map:

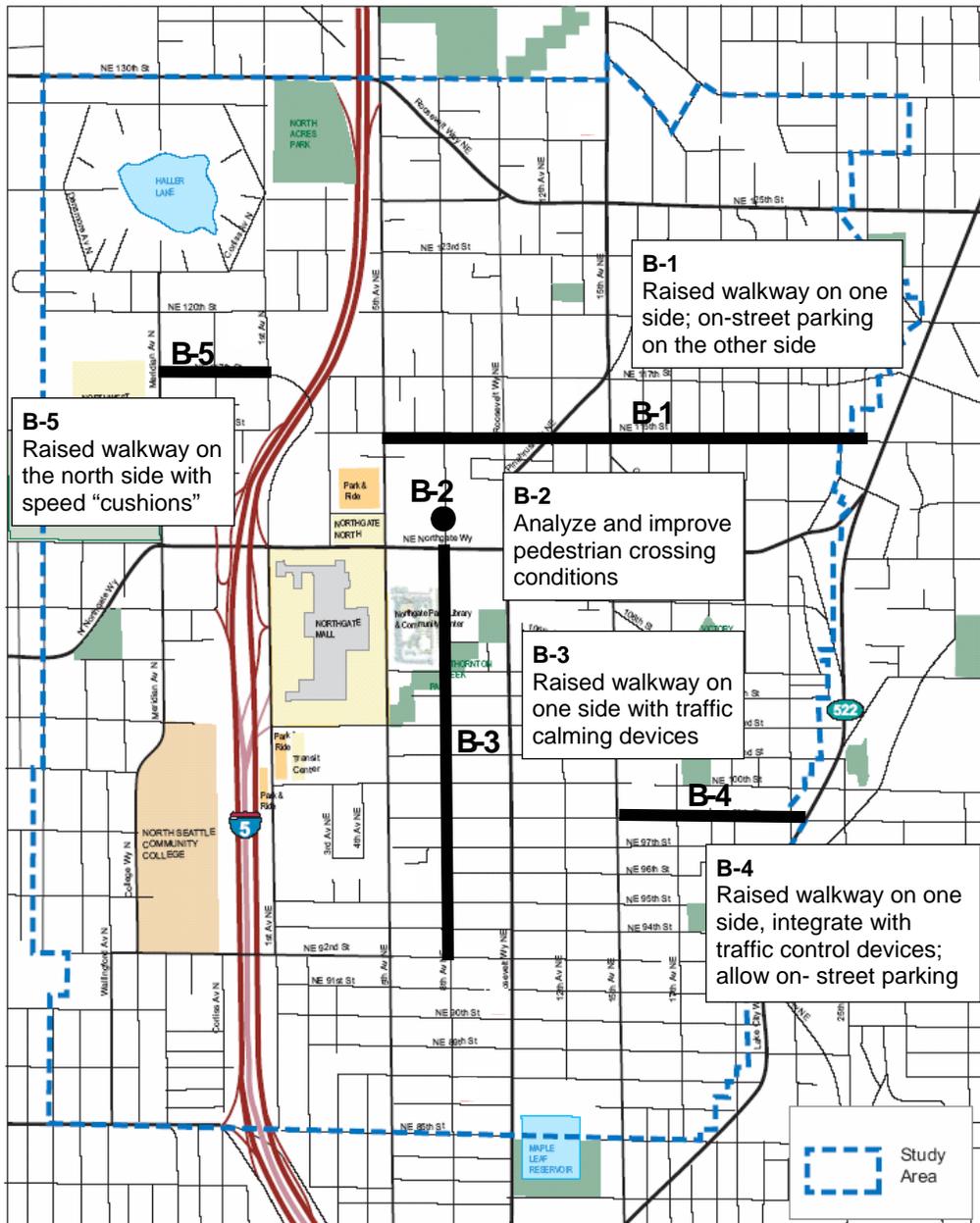
E-1. Coordinate all signals and optimize 24-hour signal operation on N/NE Northgate Way.

E-3. Monitor safety performance of westbound traffic on NE Northgate Way approaching the 1st Avenue intersection to determine if future road channelization improvements become warranted.

J-5. Re-classify Corliss Avenue from NE Northgate Way to N 107th Street and N 107th Street from Corliss Avenue N to Meridian Avenue N from local streets to collector arterials.

J-11. Give on-street parking priority to short-term customer parking within the commercial core.

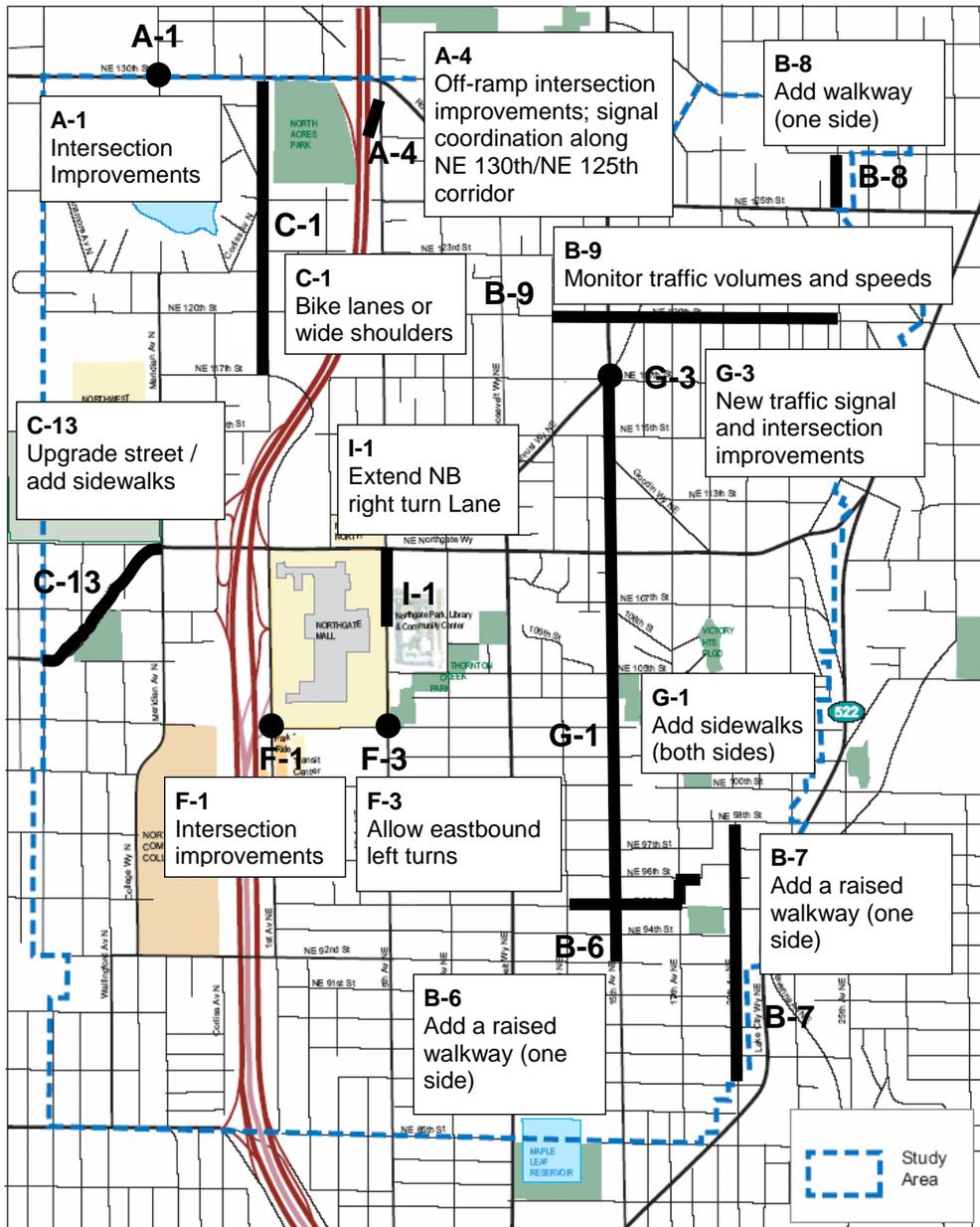
Figure ES-4. High Priority Projects to Protect Neighborhoods



Notes:

B-2. Install crossing improvements that meet SDOT guidelines and practices, such as curb bulbs and related signs and markings

Figure ES-5. Mid-Level Priority Improvements



Recommended Improvements not shown on the above map:

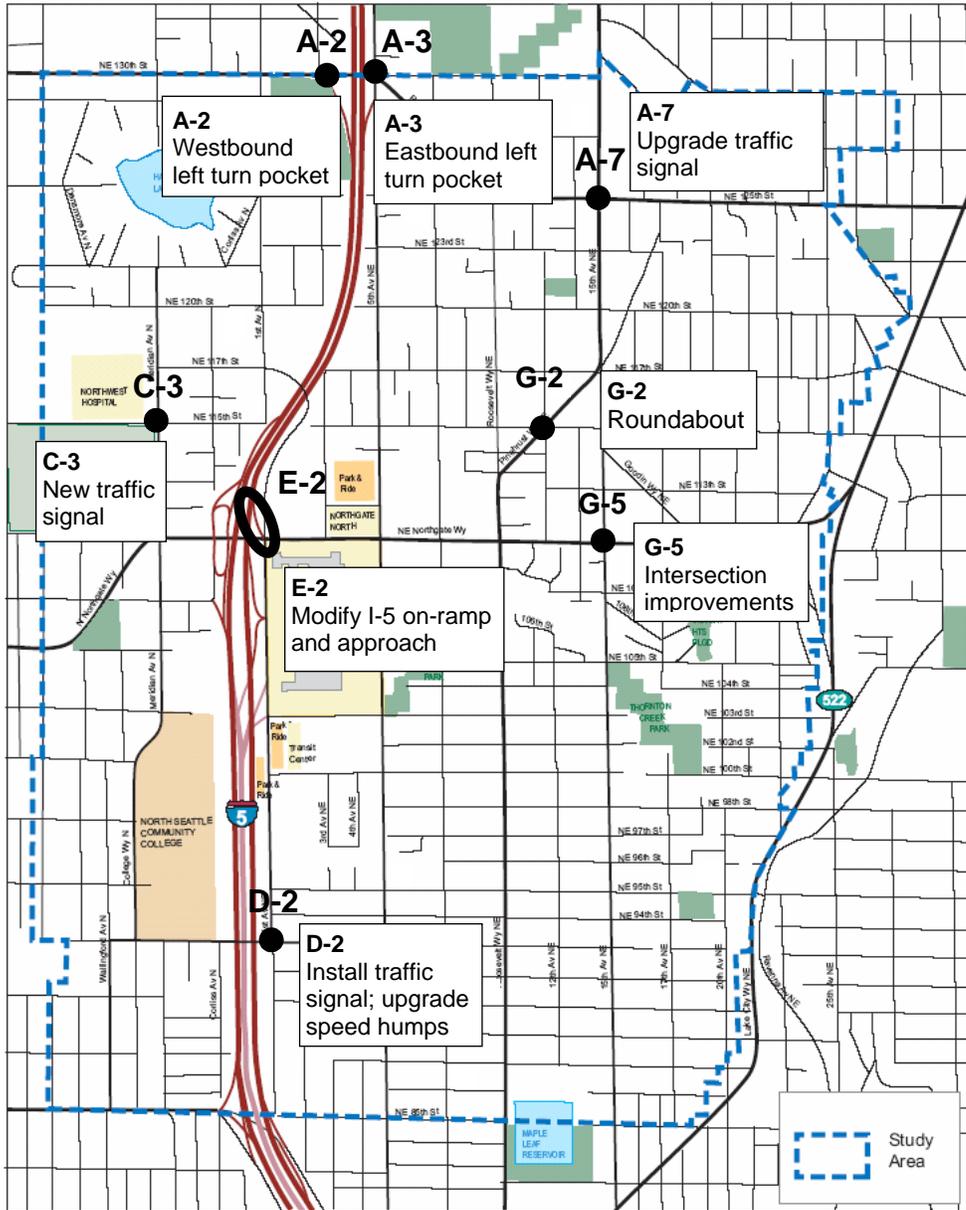
J-2. Provide improved transit service with average of 15-minute frequencies during off-peak hours from Northgate to the University District, consistent with the Seattle Transit Plan.

J-3. Improve transit service with average of 15-minute frequencies during peak periods and 30-minute frequencies during off-peak periods to other Urban Villages, such as Bitter Lake and Aurora–Licton Springs. This service improvement recommendation is consistent with the SDOT Urban Village Transit Network plan, prepared in collaboration with Metro.

J-12. Conduct a neighborhood parking management assessment for Northgate to ensure that the neighborhood’s limited supply of on-street parking adequately serves surrounding land uses in the mid-term (2008–2010).

J-14. Add 10 bus shelters within the study area at locations with 40 or more daily boardings. King County Metro should provide seven of the shelters to meet their standard of providing shelters at locations with 50 or more daily boardings; the City should provide funds for the additional 3 shelters through the Northgate Mitigation Program.

Figure ES-6. Long-Range Priority Improvements



Recommended Improvements not shown on the above map

J-1. Following the extension of light rail to Northgate, provide transit feeder services from nearby neighborhoods to the transit center.

J-13. Work with Sound Transit and stakeholders to study and implement proactive parking management techniques around the station to prevent use of neighborhood streets for park-and-ride purposes, prior to the opening of the light rail station.

Recommendation: Establish a Transportation Mitigation Payment Program

CTIP recommends a Northgate Transportation Mitigation Payment Program as an alternative way for developers to make direct payments to mitigate the transportation impacts of new development. This option has several benefits over the status quo mitigation method: it is more efficient and will produce better mitigation outcomes.



Under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the City assesses the environmental impacts of development proposals to determine what mitigation is required to prevent adverse environmental impacts. Depending on the type and size of a given development project, impacts on the transportation system may typically include increased traffic, causing transportation facilities to become less efficient, decreasing safety, or increasing air pollution.

To mitigate such impacts, the developer is usually required to provide capital or programmatic improvements to the street system, or to pay the City for the cost of facilities or programs that are needed to serve new development.

Transportation Mitigation Payment Program Benefits

- **System-wide transportation improvements**
- **Reduced need for additional traffic studies**
- **Funding applied to all travel modes, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit capital improvements**
- **Faster permit review process and increased efficiency and predictability**

As a result, this status quo SEPA mitigation approach addresses transportation impacts and mitigation on a case-by-case basis. Improvements are limited to roadway capacity and do not include other transportation modes.

A promising alternative is the proposed Northgate Transportation Mitigation Payment Program, which allows developers to make a direct payment in proportion to the estimated level of impacts to the transportation system by new Northgate development projects. This Transportation Mitigation Payment Program would be an alternative way for developers to meet their transportation mitigation obligations.

The payments would be based on a formula using the estimated cost of CTIP projects and the development's proportional transportation impact. The payments would be applied to the CTIP projects, which include all travel modes, not just roadway capacity improvements.

In summary, the proposed Transportation Mitigation Payment Program provides significant benefits over the current system to determine impacts and identify mitigation.

SDOT will integrate CTIP projects into ongoing programs to ensure progress.

- The SDOT Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will evaluate, prioritize, and assemble the funding needed to design and construct the larger CTIP projects, such as Northgate Way improvements.
- Traffic Engineering Programs and Services will analyze and refine the safety and operational improvements described in the CTIP, such as pedestrian crossing improvements and new bicycle lanes.
- Policy and Planning will work with outside agencies on joint projects, including transit service improvements; this division will also evaluate parking demand and support a "parking brokerage" and/or other transportation-related services.
- Neighborhood Plan Implementation staff will help Northgate residents use neighborhood-directed funds for CTIP improvement projects. These may include the 15th Avenue NE or 8th Avenue NE sidewalks.

Next Steps

To make transportation investments in Northgate a reality, CTIP defines a financing and implementation plan. Potential funding is provided within the following four categories: 1) local funds from the City of Seattle tax base, 2) federal and state grants, 3) funding from other government agencies (such as King County or Sound Transit), and 4) investments by private developers to mitigate traffic impacts.

Projects included in the CTIP must be considered alongside other neighborhoods' needs, non-discretionary projects, and interagency projects (such as street improvements to support King County Metro transit service). Through the City's budget process, eligible projects are added to the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which includes capital projects, operational improvements, inter-agency projects, and developer mitigation projects.

CTIP recognizes that the total costs of the recommended improvements exceed available resources, and that new funding alternatives need to be considered. **Table ES-1** below shows the total project costs by priority level. The range of local revenue for Northgate area transportation projects range is estimated at \$12.5 million to \$36.2 million over the next 25 years. The projected cost for CTIP's high priority projects is \$18.8 million. Additional funding may come from federal and state grants, other government funding, and private developers.

Funding for transportation projects is on the upswing:

- The City dedicated an additional \$25 million of local funds to citywide transportation projects in 2006.
- In May 2006, Mayor Greg Nickels proposed a long-term transportation package to generate dedicated funding for maintenance and other projects, helping to sustain improvements already underway in Northgate. The City Council voted in September to put a \$545 million package before voters in November 2006.

- The Regional Transportation Investment District and Sound Transit are working together to prepare a regional transportation package for voter consideration in November 2007. Candidate projects include extending light rail to Northgate and expanding Sound Transit express routes.
- However, the demand for dollars will continue to be high as the City begins to make up for years of unmet needs.
- New private developments will make financial contributions to Northgate transportation projects proportionate to their transportation impacts. Development will be further guided by the City's code requirements for pedestrian improvements and the strong Northgate neighborhood design guidelines.
- Once CTIP's recommendations are fully funded and completed over the next 25 years, Northgate will realize its full potential as a vibrant Urban Center served by an effective transportation system. With continued strong community input, public sector partnerships and private sector investment, the Northgate Urban Center will be a model of civic success.
- SDOT will report annually to the Northgate community on progress made in implementing the CTIP, the status of upcoming projects, and the overall financing picture in transportation. This discussion with stakeholders will also be an opportunity for the community to alert SDOT to emerging issues and challenges.

Table ES-1. Summary of Recommended Transportation Improvement Costs by Priority

CTIP Costs by Priority	
Priority	Cost
High	\$18,826,000
Mid-Level	\$13,719,000
Long-Range	\$8,576,000
Sub-Total	\$41,121,000
Cross-Freeway Connection	\$7,000,000– \$10,000,000
Total	\$48,000,000– \$51,000,000

Note: Costs shown in Table ES-1 are based upon typical unit costs in 2005 drawn from previous SDOT and WSDOT projects. Right-of-way costs are based upon the 2005 King County property assessment database. Construction and engineering costs are assumed to be 15 percent of the project's subtotal cost; pre-construction and design costs are assumed to be 20 percent; and contingency costs are assumed to be 30 percent.