

Overview of Facilities and Programs

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is responsible for maintaining, upgrading, and monitoring the use of the City's system of streets, bridges, retaining walls, seawalls, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and traffic control devices. Seattle's transportation system includes 1,534 lane-miles of arterial streets and 2,412 lane-miles of non-arterial streets. The system also includes 150 bridges, 561 retaining walls, 479 stairways, and 1,000 signalized intersections in the public right-of-way that SDOT is responsible for inspecting and maintaining. In 2008, the Department will pave about 47 asphalt arterial lanes, repair more than 6,600 feet of bridge and stair railings and more than 2,800 lane-feet of bridge decking, maintain or replace more than 13,000 traffic signs, service 975 traffic signals, and raise and lower the City's movable bridges more than 16,770 times.

SDOT's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) outlines the Department's plan for repairing, improving, and adding to this extensive infrastructure. SDOT's CIP is financed from a variety of revenue sources including the City's General and Cumulative Reserve Subfunds, state gas tax revenues, commercial parking tax revenues, employee tax revenues, federal and state grants, and partnerships with private organizations and other public agencies. SDOT's \$154 million capital budget is appropriated as part of its \$255 million operating budget.

Highlights

- ◆ **Transportation Funding Package:** In August 2006, the Seattle City Council approved Bridging the Gap, a funding initiative proposed by the Mayor to repair and improve Seattle's streets, bike trails, sidewalks and bridges. The package includes a commercial parking tax and a business transportation tax to be phased in gradually starting in July 2007. In addition, the City Council approved a property tax levy that was voted on and approved by Seattle citizens in November 2006. The property tax measure is a nine-year levy, with the annual growth rate in levy revenue capped at one percent, plus the value of new construction. SDOT's 2008-2013 Proposed CIP includes over \$300 million in funding from Bridging the Gap revenues and from Limited Tax General Obligation bonds that will be serviced with a portion of the revenues. Bridging the Gap funded work will take place throughout the City during 2008. Highlights of the Bridging the Gap program for 2008 include a plan to repave more than 47 lane miles of arterials, early implementation of the Bicycle Master Plan, construction of more than 13 blocks of new sidewalks, further development of a pedestrian master plan, continued work and construction on the rehabilitation of two bridges and the seismic retrofit of two additional bridges, and construction of multiple neighborhood transportation improvements identified through the Neighborhood Street Fund process in 2007.
- ◆ **Pedestrian Improvements and Safety:** In addition to work supported by the Bridging the Gap Transportation Funding Package, the 2008-2013 Proposed CIP includes substantial investments in pedestrian and safety improvements. The Proposed CIP contains an increase in funding for the Neighborhood Street Fund, adding \$500,000 for small projects and \$1.5 million for large projects. This additional funding allows larger and more numerous pedestrian oriented projects to be constructed in 2008. The CIP also includes funding for installation and operation of 24 new red light cameras, funding for design and initial construction of pedestrian enhancements that will complete the Interurban Trail on Linden Avenue N, and rehabilitation of Post Avenue between Marion and Columbia Streets.

Ordinance 122386 established Seattle's Complete Streets policy, stating guiding principles and practices so that transportation improvements are planned, designed and constructed to encourage walking, bicycling and transit use while promoting safe operations for all users. The Complete Streets policy call for SDOT to incorporate these principles into all new City transportation improvement projects, strategic plans, and other SDOT plans, manuals, rules, regulations and programs. In 2008, the transportation funding sources, with appropriate financial flexibility, will be drawn upon to implement Complete Streets principles.

Transportation

- ◆ **Aurora Transit and Pedestrian Improvements:** SDOT has assembled state and federal grant funds to begin a project to construct pedestrian safety, roadway and transit speed and reliability improvements along Aurora Avenue North from N 110th St. to N 145th St. The design and construction work will be completed in phases as funding allows. The first segment, between N 137th Street and N 145th Street, will be designed in 2008.
- ◆ **Spokane Street Viaduct:** This project builds a new structure that will be parallel and connected to the existing one, which will widen the existing viaduct by about 41 feet. The project also includes design and construction of an eastbound Fourth Ave. off-ramp. The Bridging the Gap funding package will provide \$30 million to this project. Funding has also been earmarked for this project in the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) package on the November 2007 ballot.
- ◆ **South Lander Street Grade Separation:** This project develops a grade separation of the Lander St. roadway and the Burlington Northern mainline railroad tracks between First Ave. S and Fourth Ave. S. This project will receive \$20 million of bond funds from the "Bridging the Gap" funding package. Future RTID revenues will provide the balance of the project's full funding package.
- ◆ **King Street Station Multimodal Terminal:** SDOT anticipates the ownership transfer of the King Street Station from Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) to the City of Seattle, and signed agreements with both WSDOT and Amtrak in 2007. Once the transfer is complete, SDOT will begin structural and seismic-upgrade design. WSDOT will proceed with replacement of the roof.
- ◆ **Greenwood Avenue North:** SDOT received a \$2.2 million state Transportation Improvement Board grant and \$1.4 million federal TEA-21 grant to reconstruct and widen Greenwood Avenue North from N. 105th to N. 112th Streets. The project will provide pedestrian safety, transit speed and reliability, signal, lighting and drainage improvements. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2008.
- ◆ **Mercer Corridor:** This project, which is part of the Bridging the Gap funding package, implements a comprehensive package of transportation improvements in the Mercer Corridor in South Lake Union. Improvements include, but are not limited to a widened two-way Mercer St., improved pedestrian safety and access to Lake Union Park, and enhanced neighborhood circulation for all modes. The project aims to use existing street capacity more efficiently and enhance all modes of travel, including pedestrian mobility. It is a centerpiece for the revitalization of the South Lake Union neighborhood, which is expected to accommodate as many as 20,000 new jobs and 8,000 to 10,000 new households in the next 20 years.
- ◆ **Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement:** Investment in pre-development planning and design activities for the Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement project continues through 2008. Following the March 13, 2007 public vote, the Governor, City of Seattle Mayor, and King County Executive agreed to implement six early safety and mobility projects. In addition, they committed to work together to identify a solution for the Central Waterfront by December 2008. The Proposed CIP includes funding for these efforts, as well as development of an "Urban Mobility Plan" that will analyze and recommend transit service and road improvements to provide better mobility within and access to and through Seattle's Center City.
- ◆ **Arterial Major Maintenance and Other Paving Projects:** SDOT's 2008 Proposed CIP provides a total of \$21.9 million for the Arterial Major Maintenance and Arterial Asphalt and Concrete Programs, including \$20.1 million from the Bridging the Gap funding package. These ongoing programs rehabilitate and resurface asphalt and concrete arterial streets to preserve and extend the life of street surfaces.

Project Selection Process

The City tries to balance three goals in making infrastructure capital investments:

- ◆ Rehabilitation of existing facilities to avoid the higher costs of deferred maintenance;
- ◆ Increase in the capacity of existing facilities to meet growing demand; and
- ◆ Development of new facilities to provide additional services.

SDOT prioritizes its projects to prepare recommendations on those to include in the budget, the CIP, and the grant development process. The process includes four steps.

Step 1: Identification of Transportation Needs

This step is an ongoing process during which projects for future funding are identified. These needs are developed from a number of sources (not listed in any priority order):

- Ongoing operations and maintenance programs
- Backlog of projects
- Projects in current CIP
- Transportation Strategic Plan
- Projects from SDOT planning
- Neighborhood plans and citizen requests
- Coordination with partner agencies

Step 2: Identification of Non-discretionary Programs and Projects

This step identifies non-discretionary programs and projects that must be budgeted for completion. Criteria for these items are as follows (not listed in any priority order):

- Mandated, with serious consequences for failing to meet the mandate (e.g., debt service, judgment and claims payments, Metro “Ride-Free Zone” payment, federal or state law mandates)
- Essential for the Department to function on a daily basis (e.g., accounting, payroll, human resources, facility rental, vehicles and equipment)
- Reimbursable services to other City departments or outside agencies (e.g., street use permitting, repairing utility cuts)
- Restricted funding services (e.g., support for Sound Transit, Monorail, Metro, Alaskan Way Viaduct)
- Services that generate revenue for General Subfund or Transportation operating Fund (e.g., parking)
- Currently in construction (stopping these projects would be more costly than completing them)
- Urgent safety or emergency need (e.g., landslide, sinkhole)

Step 3: Prioritization of Discretionary Projects

The projects remaining after Step 2 are then ranked based on a 100 point scoring system. This prioritization process evaluates each project based on its merits. Following are the criteria applied to this evaluation (not listed in any priority order):

- Safety
- Preservation and maintenance of infrastructure
- Cost effectiveness or cost avoidance
- Mobility improvement
- Economic development
- Comprehensive Plan/Urban Village land use strategy
- Improving the environment

Step 4: Ordering Projects for Implementation

Once projects have been grouped into priority categories, they are evaluated to determine their readiness for funding and implementation. For example, even though a project may be a high priority, other circumstances may determine that the project is not ready for funding and implementation. Four criteria are used to make this determination (not listed in any priority order):

- Funding availability
- Interagency coordination
- Geographic balance
- Constituent balance

SDOT staff evaluate the results of steps 3 and 4 together to identify projects for which funding will be sought through grants, appropriations or other sources. Funded projects are incorporated into the CIP.

Anticipated Operating Expenses Associated with Capital Facilities Projects

In some projects, the Department has identified operations and maintenance costs at zero, or has not calculated a number (N/C). In these cases, the cost impacts of the project are either insignificant or are offset by cost savings realized by other projects. Projects that do identify operations and maintenance costs, such as the Burke Gilman Trail Extension and Lake Union Ship Canal Trail projects have the costs built into the Department's operating budget.