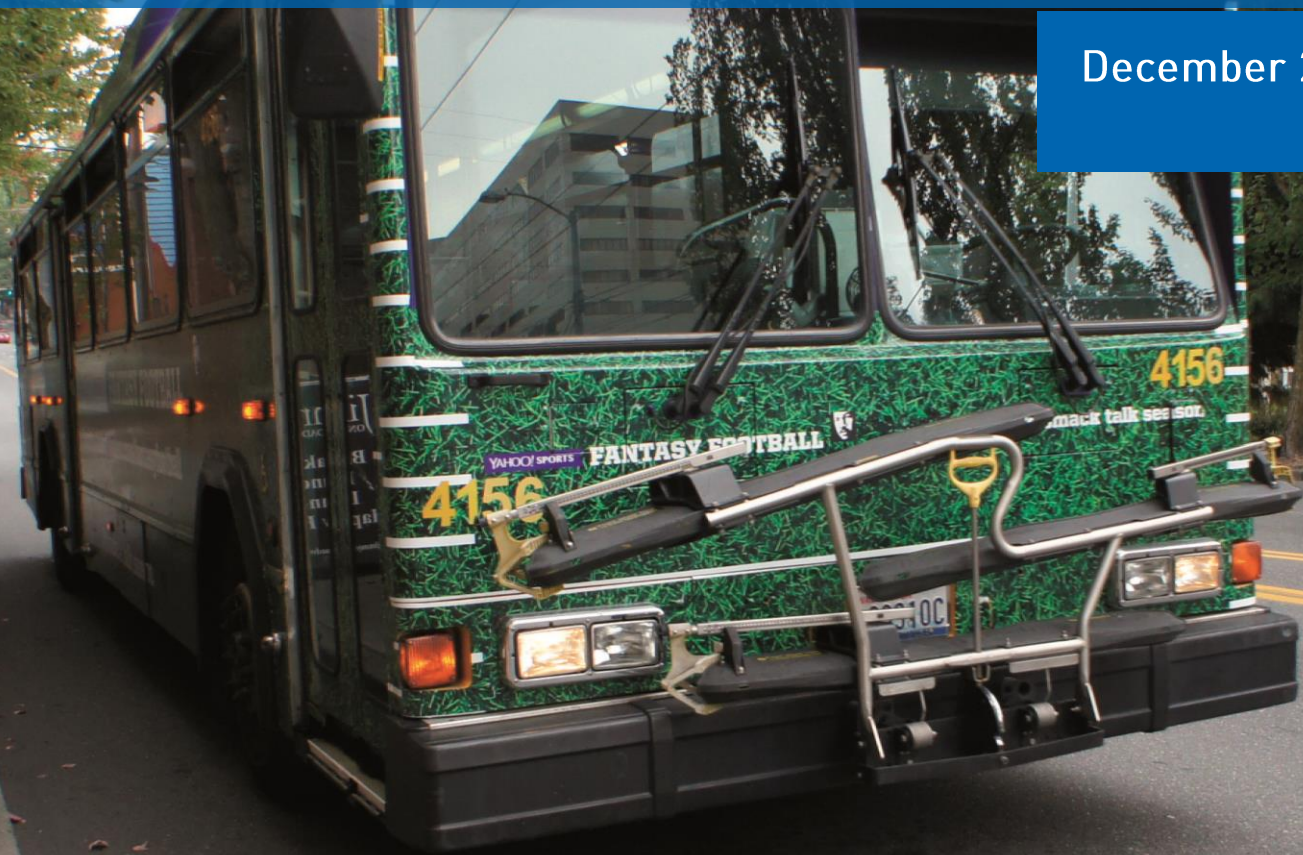


The Seattle Department of Transportation

Madison Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study November Outreach Report

December 2015



 **SDOT**
Seattle Department of Transportation


**NELSON
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1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes comments received from members of the public during the fifth round of outreach for the Madison BRT Study, including comments received at the open house held on November 16, 2015 at the Seattle Public Library from 5 to 7 p.m. Seventy-six comments were submitted at the open house, and additional comments were written on detailed maps of the corridor and on 31 post-it notes. The public also submitted comments by e-mail to SDOT staff during the month of November.

The primary purpose of the open house was to present the draft locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Madison BRT project, show how SDOT had responded to previous community input, and receive additional public comments. A brief presentation was made describing the proposed project at a summary level, and a number of boards and drawings were on display providing additional detail.

Figure 1 November 16 Open House



2 KEY THEMES

Below are the key themes the project team heard. These themes are discussed in more detail in Section 3.

- **General support** – Comments provided overwhelming support and general praise for the project and expressed optimism in how the BRT project would solve existing transit issues along the corridor.
- **Extent of transit-only lanes** – Many attendees commented on the need for transit-only lanes to be extended along a wider portion of the project. People were concerned that operating BRT in mixed traffic or in Business Access & Transit (BAT) lanes would reduce the speed and reliability of the line.
- **Bike and pedestrian concerns** – There was general concern for the safety of people walking and people riding bicycles along the corridor. The most common locations of concern for the commenters were Madison St and John St, Madison and 27th Ave, Union and 24th Ave, and along Union St.
- **Automobile access/capacity** – Comments related to automobile access and capacity were generally supportive of eliminating parking and reducing lane widths. There were some comments that questioned the impact of the BRT project on emergency vehicles and some commenters who opposed the project based on increased travel time and reduced capacity.
- **Terminus** – There was general support for the terminal location at MLK Jr Way. However, some concerns were raised about the impact to residential neighborhoods.
- **Service** – There was overall support for the proposed BRT service hours along the Madison Street corridor. One commenter expressed concern that the Madison BRT project would result in the reduction or elimination of service elsewhere.
- **Timeline/implementation** – One commenter wanted the project’s timeline to be shortened, while another believed the timeline was too quick.
- **Madison Park extension** – The majority of commenters supported an eventual extension to Madison Park. People support the extension because of existing travel patterns, a need for improved service on the east end of the Madison St corridor, and existing crowding on buses to Madison Park.

3 COMMENT FORMS

This section summarizes the written feedback received at the meeting. The SDOT-provided comment form asked attendees to respond to three items:

1. Share your comments on the preferred design concept (LPA).
2. Do you support a potential future extension of service to Madison Park?
3. Share any additional comments.

Comments on Locally Preferred Alternative

Responses received on comment forms are grouped below by theme and topic. The most common concern expressed by respondents was regarding the extent of transit-only lanes, followed by pedestrian and bicycle-related access and safety concerns, and automobile access and capacity along the corridor.

General support

Several individuals expressed general support for the project and said they believed that BRT would solve problems with existing Route 12 service, that the proposed project would maximize the benefits of BRT while also effectively addressing public and stakeholder comments, and that by using Spring Street it would successfully address space constraints downtown. One person indicated that the proposed frequency of every six minutes was worthy of a BRT project.

Transit-only lanes

A significant number of respondents were opposed to operating BRT in mixed traffic or in Business Access & Transit (BAT) lanes. Many commenters opined that SDOT was diluting the quality of BRT service and that it would not be valid to consider the proposed project a “full” BRT project. While some called for transit-only lanes to be extended in specific segments (e.g., east to 23rd Ave), others asked for transit-only lanes to be implemented along the entire length of the corridor from 1st Avenue to MLK Jr. Way.

The configuration of transit lanes in downtown specifically was commented upon by several attendees. They suggested that BAT lanes would not be effective because the volume of vehicles that would use the lanes to turn would severely delay BRT vehicles. Many commenters said they valued fast and reliable transit over free-flowing traffic, and said the City should not sacrifice elements of high-quality BRT to appease motorists.

Others comments related to transit-only lanes were more nuanced. Several called for strict enforcement of BAT lanes to ensure the ongoing reliability and timeliness of buses along Madison. One person asked for performance metrics to be established that would help determine whether mixed traffic lanes should be converted to BAT lanes and whether BAT lanes should be turned into exclusive lanes.

Only one commenter asked for transit-only lanes to be eliminated. According to this person, the streets in the corridor are not wide enough to provide space for both private vehicles and buses, and there are too few buses to warrant a dedicated lane.

Bike and pedestrian concerns

Many comments raised concerns relating to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists along the corridor. Most of these comments related to specific locations. The intersection of Madison St, 24th Ave and John St was a concern for several commenters. Part of a future greenway corridor, many believe this intersection is unsafe and uncomfortable for those crossing on foot. One commenter requested that the proposed stops at this location be moved, because a stopped bus

could prevent a driver making a right turn around the bus from seeing a pedestrian or bicyclist in the crosswalk.

Other intersections where safety concerns were raised included Madison and Union St, Union and 24th Ave, and Madison and 27th Ave. One commenter asked that more consideration be shown for those who are visually impaired and for people who use wheelchairs.

Union St, part of the parallel bicycle facility proposed as part of the project, was also mentioned by several commenters. Some supported protected bike lanes on both sides of Union, and one individual said that too many stop signs for those going downhill are dangerous and may encourage cyclists to use other routes.

Automobile access/capacity

The third most common issue addressed in the comments was automobile access and capacity. Some wanted to reduce auto speeds by reducing lane widths to 9 feet, and to eliminate parking downtown along Madison and Spring Streets. Several commenters brought up issues related to emergency services and people who are making medical-related trips by car. These people were concerned about reduced speed and capacity for these vehicles.

One commenter questioned the methodology of the traffic forecasts, suggesting that they were unrealistic or inaccurate. This person noted that eliminating a lane of traffic that is operating at capacity should dramatically increase travel time, instead of slightly increasing it as SDOT has projected.

A few commenters were opposed to the project on the basis of increased vehicular travel time and reduced traffic capacity. One resident noted that SDOT had not provided information on the impact of BRT on traffic using parallel routes. This individual suggested that the bike lanes on those streets should be eliminated in order to accommodate the increases in vehicles volumes that are expected there.

Terminus

There were several comments related to the proposed terminus at MLK Jr Way. Most were supportive of the terminal location, though a few raised concerns. One person suggested that buses turn around at Olive St and 22nd Ave instead, as this location is less residential, would be easier for bus operations, and is at the boundary of the Capitol Hill neighborhood. Another was concerned that the proposed terminus would effectively convert surrounding neighborhood streets into an informal park-and-ride. This commenter asked SDOT to aggressively enforce parking permit requirements in order to reduce opportunities for people to use the streets to park their vehicles. One resident noted that the area is residential and asked for buses to be turned off when drivers are on layover.

Transferring opportunities

Only two commenters mentioned transfer opportunities. One commenter praised the level of integration BRT service would have with the Center City Streetcar. Another person indicated that they would need to make two transfers to travel from their home near Lake Washington to their work location in South Lake Union.

Station locations

One commenter raised the issue of stop placement. This individual indicated that a stop was needed at 8th Ave due to the significant growth that is occurring in that area, and because the steep slopes nearby would reduce the distance many people would be willing to walk (note: stops are proposed at 8th Ave).

Service

One commenter asked for “round-the-clock” service, and another was concerned that BRT would result in the decrease or elimination of service on other routes that serve First Hill and Capitol Hill. This person asked for BRT to be added to existing service and not replace or change any other routes.

Timeline/Implementation

Two people commented on the project’s timeline. While one person thought the project should be implemented sooner than planned, another was concerned that the timeline was not realistic.

Support for extension to Madison Park

On the issue of extending BRT service to Madison Park, a majority of those who stated an opinion were in support. The most common reasons cited for support were: the future growth in travel demand to and from Madison Park; that the proposed corridor for the first phase is too short to be effective; that transit service to Madison Park has always been lacking; that existing peak-period buses are usually crowded; that the extension would help residents of Madison Park connect to Link for trips to other parts of the region; and that it would increase access to Lake Washington, businesses and summer events.

Some people who expressed support for the extension indicated that their support was conditional. They suggested that their reservations and concerns would first need to be addressed before they could entirely support the extension. Some of these conditions were:

- Center running transit lanes should be extended along the entire corridor;
- Trolley buses should be used along the entire corridor;
- Service should be extended only if demand in Madison Park warrants the service;
- Service should be extended only if surrounding areas are upzoned;
- Service should be extended only if it is less frequent than in other segments of the corridor; and
- Service should be extended only if frequency and reliability can be maintained.

A few commenters did not support the proposal to extend service to Madison Park. One said it would be too expensive, given the ridership. Another said that the funding for the project could be better spent in other parts of the city. Another suggested that shuttle service should be provided in place of the extension.

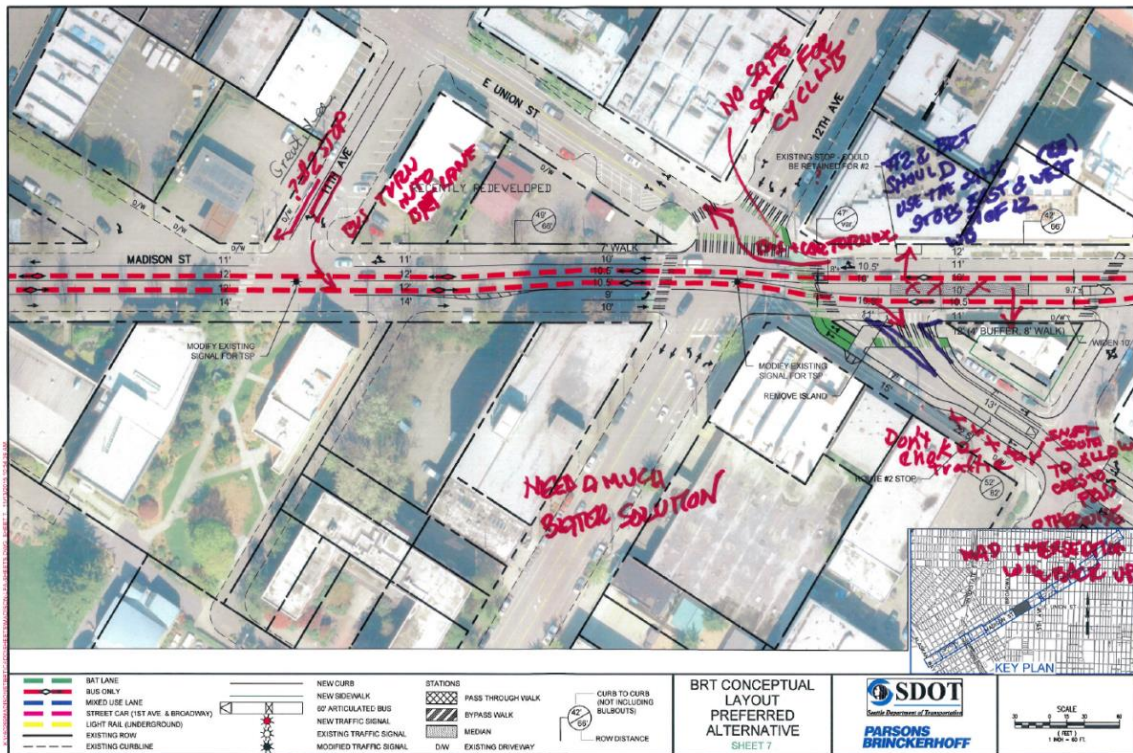
4 MAP COMMENTS

Meeting attendees were able to comment on two maps. The first was a series of 14 detailed pages, showing right-of-way, lane configurations and station locations. The second was a schematic map of the corridor where attendees were encouraged to place comments on post-it notes and place them on the map.

Relatively few comments were received on the detailed map set. Most comments were related to issues of placement and location of stops and connections:

- The parking lane on the north side of Spring east of 6th Ave should be converted to a left-turn lane so that BRT vehicles do not have to wait behind vehicles maneuvering in and out of parking spaces;
- The stop at Boylston Ave should be moved east, to be closer to Broadway;
- Route 2 and BRT should use the same bus stops at Madison and 12th Ave;
- It would not be safe for bicyclists on Madison Stat 12th Ave/Union St,
- Improved pedestrian crossings are needed on 24th Ave at Madison St;
- John St should be restricted to eastbound-only east of Madison St; and
- The westbound stop at 27th Ave should be moved closer to MLK Jr. Way to be closer to businesses.

Figure 2 Comments on Detailed Corridor Map



Many of the comments written on post-it notes echoed the comments received on the comment forms. Commenters expressed support for more center-running dedicated transit lanes and for strict enforcement of BAT lanes in order to prevent drivers from blocking them. They also expressed concern about pedestrian and bicycle safety at Madison St and 24th Ave.

Additionally:

- One commenter expressed that this plan would continue the status quo of placing poles and street furniture in walk zones, making it difficult to walk on sidewalks. The resident suggested pole consolidation and effective placement of street furniture to preserve sidewalk space.
- One commenter suggested that SDOT focus on developing dedicated transit-only lanes downtown, and invest in areas along Madison Str in the future if necessary.
- One commenter requested that the internal configuration of Madison BRT vehicles should allow for more space for standees by reducing the number of seats.

5 E-MAIL COMMENTS

SDOT staff received more than 30 comments from the public by e-mail during the November outreach period. Many comments expressed desire for exclusive center-running lanes along the entire BRT corridor and called for safety improvements at the Madison St/John St/24th Ave intersection.

Transit-only lanes

The primary issue brought up by those who submitted comments by e-mail was dedicated transit lanes. Many suggested that it was unacceptable for SDOT to develop a BRT corridor with only partial transit lanes when the public expressed support for improved transit through the Move Seattle levy. Commenters said that reliable transit was more important to them than on-street parking, and that buses should not be relegated to a status lower than automobiles. Several people predicted that delays will prove commonplace along the corridor because of the lack of transit priority and the high volume of private vehicles that will use the BAT lanes. Some expressed concern that as the first BRT project following the Move Seattle vote, Madison BRT would set an unacceptable precedent that would be repeated in the remaining Move Seattle BRT corridors. One commenter suggested that SDOT simply increase the frequency on Route 12 instead of diluting the BRT brand.

Bike and pedestrian concerns

Many people who submitted comments by e-mail said that the pedestrian and bicycle crossings at the intersection of Madison, John and 24th Ave were not safe, and called on SDOT to address their concerns. One suggestion was to move the stop bar for eastbound Madison St traffic further west.

Union St was the second most commented-upon topic relating to pedestrian and bicycle issues. Some called on SDOT to prioritize safety over convenience for motorists, and to provide separated bike lanes by removing on-street parking.

A few commenters voiced opposition to the protected bicycle lanes, expressing concerns about the congestion and traffic that might be generated as a result. One Madrona resident opined that the proposed changes to Union St would isolate the neighborhood, increase the number of people who park on area streets, make it difficult for emergency services to get through, and cause traffic to use residential streets.

Miscellaneous concerns

Issues raised in the e-mails included:

- Desire for a BRT station at 23rd Ave;
- Requests for all meeting materials to be made available ahead of the meeting;

- The terminus at Madison Park should be implemented in the first phase, in order to connect all business districts together and to avoid issues with placing a terminus in a residential area;
- A request for traffic calming along Madison to be a component of the project;
- SDOT should consider cheaper solutions than BRT, including changes to traffic signal timing, and construction of a gondola;
- Project staff should ignore objections from neighborhoods, and build whatever they think will best serve the community; and
- Support for the proposed stop locations in the First Hill area and for the improvements to the sidewalks that would occur as part of the project.

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