The SDOT Pedestrian Wayfinding Program

Seamless Seattle

Initial research update | Aug 17, 2018

Notes

- Introduction by Tracy Krawczyk, Christina VanValkenburgh and Aditi Kambuj
- SDOT project funding supported by WSDOT Transit Coordination Grant which includes the agency partners

When was the last time you got lost?

Notes

- Ice breaker question

applied_
wayfinding

alta
PLANNING + DESIGN

3 SQUARE BLOCKS

Notes

- The project is to prepare a wayfinding system strategy, design standards and pilot projects in two areas
- Consultant team consists of three companies
  - Applied Wayfinding - prime and designer of Legible London (a reference project for Seattle)
  - Alta Planning + Design - local well-known planning consultant
  - 3 Square Blocks - experienced local engagement practice

Agency stakeholders
Transportation authorities

SDOT
Contract

Community interests
Businesses, Residents, etc.

Applied Wayfinding
Prime Consultant

Research, Strategy, Accessibility, Graphic design, Standards development

Alta Planning + Design
Subconsultant

Research, Local analysis, Product design, Pilot planning

3 Square Blocks
Subconsultant

Engagement & communications

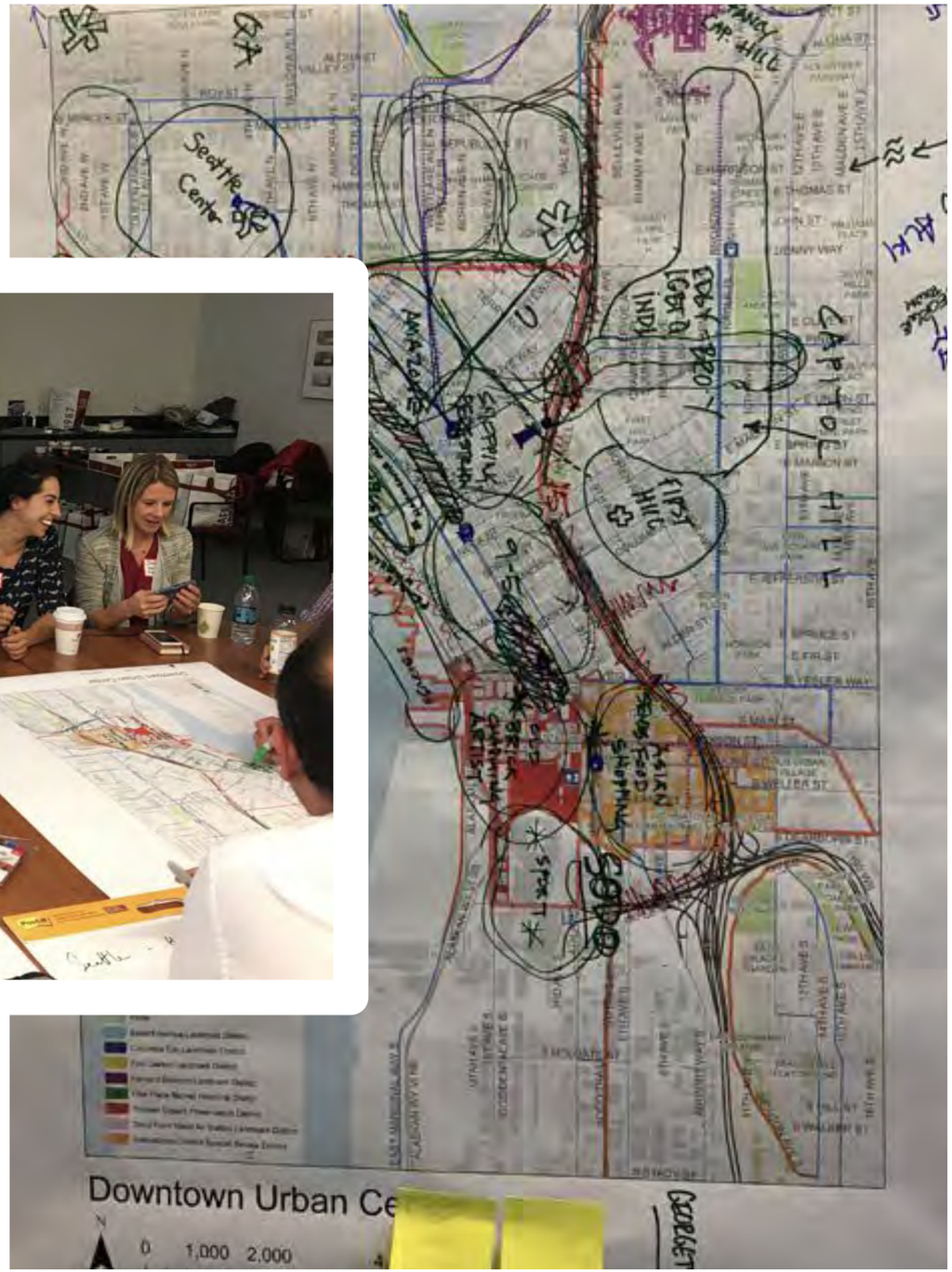
Chudgar Engineering Co.
Subconsultant

Engineering drawings

Notes

- Team arrangement focuses on expertise in wayfinding project systems with local support on design and consultation

Scoping study



“

I am provided with the information I need, when I need it, to inspire me to explore Seattle and to help me choose the best way to travel in the city.

”

Notes

- The funded project was informed by a scoping study undertaken a year ago
- The scoping study exercise helped identify a vision and principles, as well as some of the main opportunities

Scoping

Notes

- The consultant team has been in the city for a week at the start of their research phase
- The week provided an opportunity to undertake discussions with SDOT staff and key contacts to define the parameters for the project, as well as fieldwork to observe and understand the legibility and navigational challenges in the city

Opportunity and challenges

What could a wayfinding system for Seattle achieve?

Notes

- The SDOT meetings have centred on three themes
- Systems includes Smart City policies, digital and asset management systems
- Operations includes sign shop capacity and the manager of the existing city (red) wayfinding kiosks and fingerposts
- Policy included a wide range of planning interests from new mobility to community development

Systems

- Digital as a supporting tool
- Avoid costly, on-street digital kiosks
- Build on the Open Portal

Operations

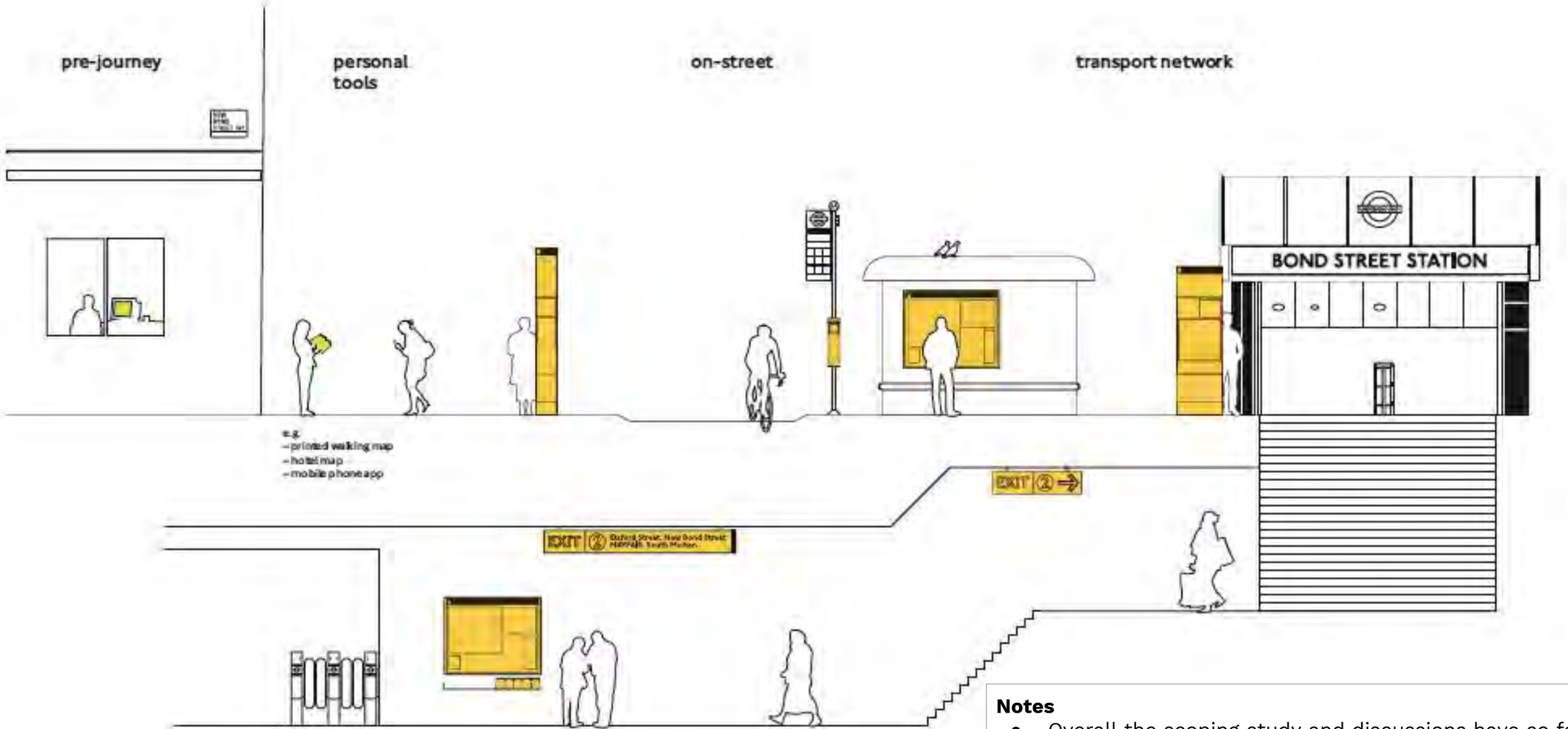
- Think about cost & ability to maintain
- Respond to strong local identities
- Allow some fun

Policy

- Walkability: 35% share by 2040
- Flexibility: growth and change
- Support other goals: e.g. social equity

A seamless travel experience for all

Overarching goal of mixed mobility

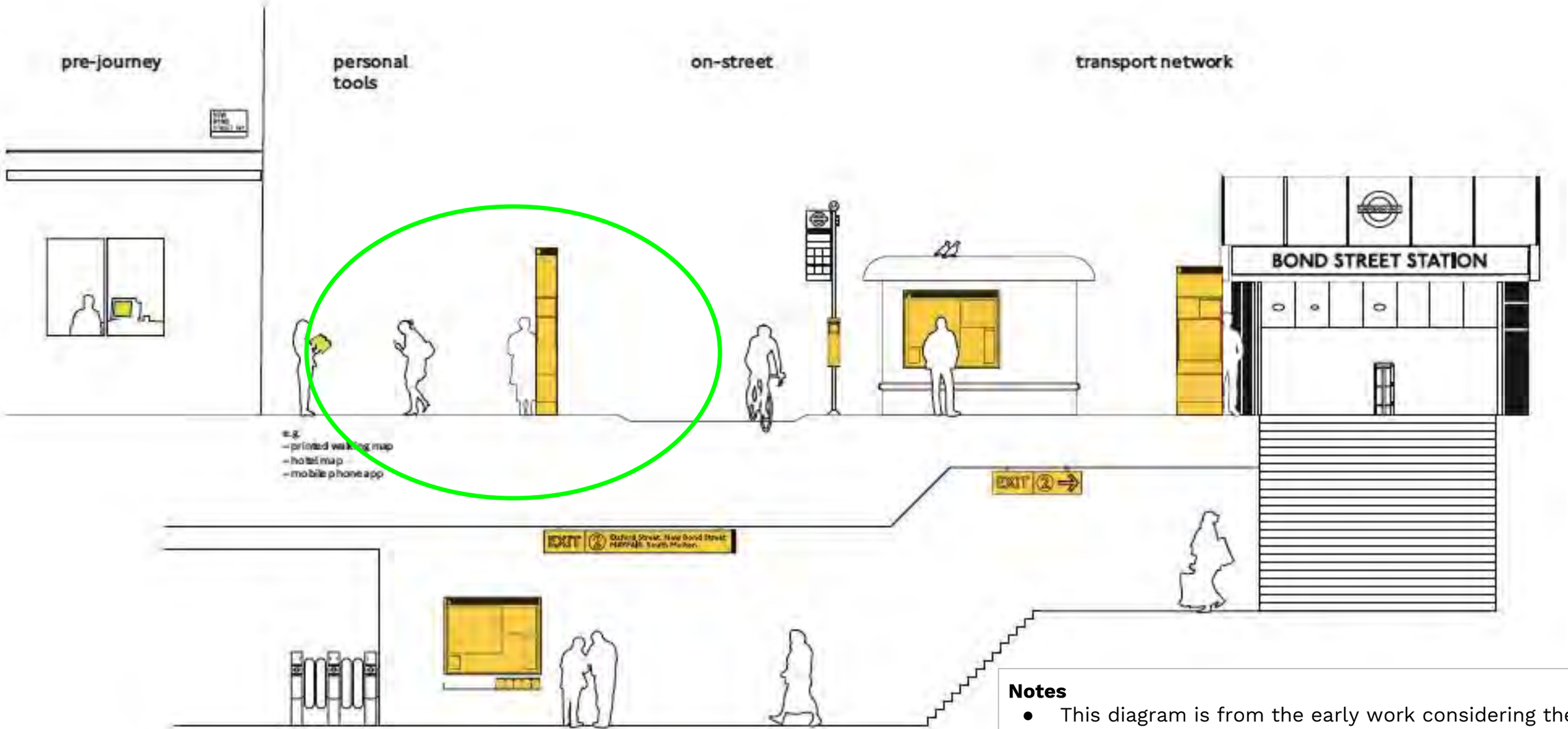


Notes

- Overall the scoping study and discussions have so far supported the idea that the ideal customer experience under a future where mobility is more varied and less auto-dependent, requires a more seamless information environment
- Digital and physical information (will) play different roles in this.

Wayfinding in the public realm

Encouraging walking and supporting discovery

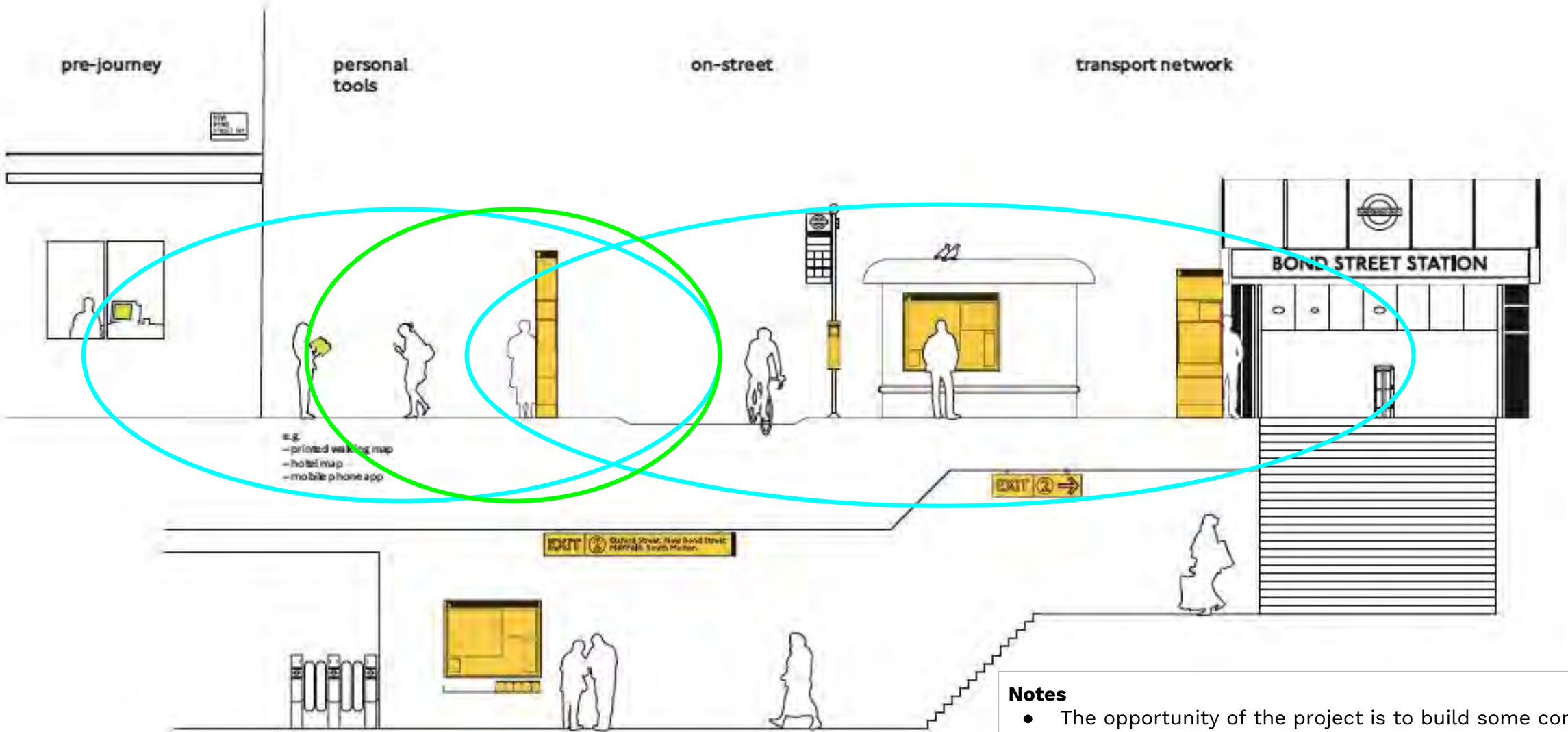


Notes

- This diagram is from the early work considering the purpose and potential of Legible London
- The focus of the SDOT remit is information in the public realm - street signage, personal information
- The pilots will aim to increase walking and the confidence to explore on foot

Wayfinding to connect

Adding resiliency and increasing options



Notes

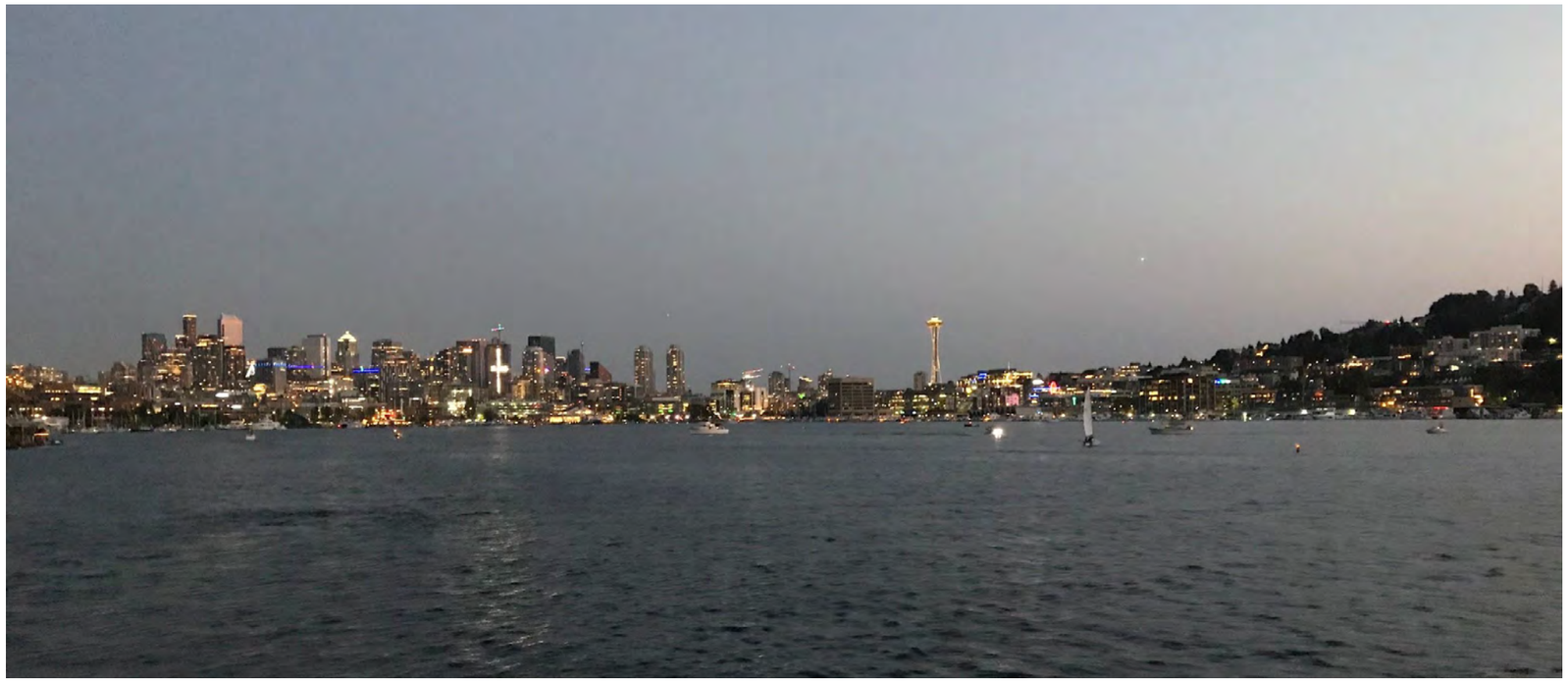
- The opportunity of the project is to build some connections between the public realm and other transportation services in the walking environment
- These opportunities start to develop the idea of a seamless information system coordinating the separate interests of agencies with SDOT

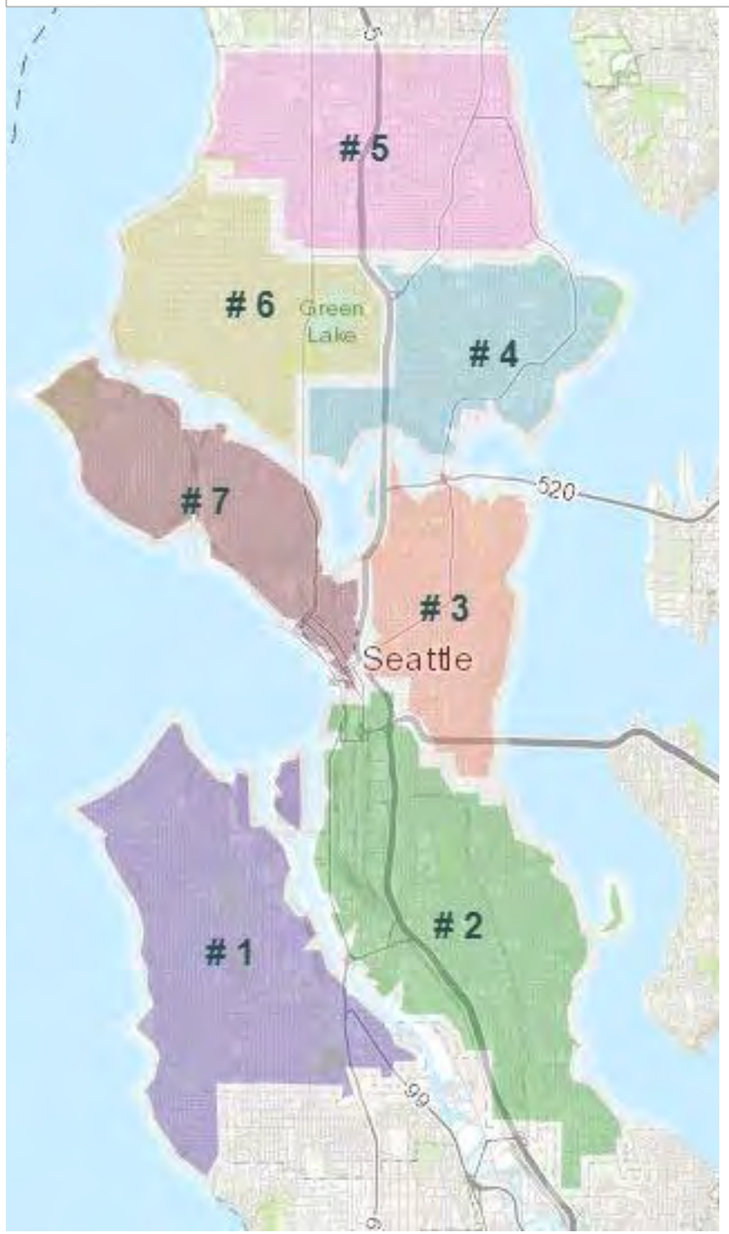
Observations

Local knowledge

Notes

- The consultant team is made up of both local residents and first-time visitors to Seattle
- The team from Alta briefed the first-time visitors from Applied prior to them arriving to the city
- Used district organization to recommend neighborhoods in each of these areas to visit
- Seattle is a city of neighborhoods each with distinct characters and experiences





First impressions

Seattle is walkable and well connected.

Notes

- The team from Applied Wayfinding, most of which had never visited Seattle before, spent a few days exploring the city
- Our first impression is that Seattle provides all the infrastructure needed to get around easily
- The pain points occur when there are gaps in the information that explains the infrastructure

Distance covered during first week of exploration

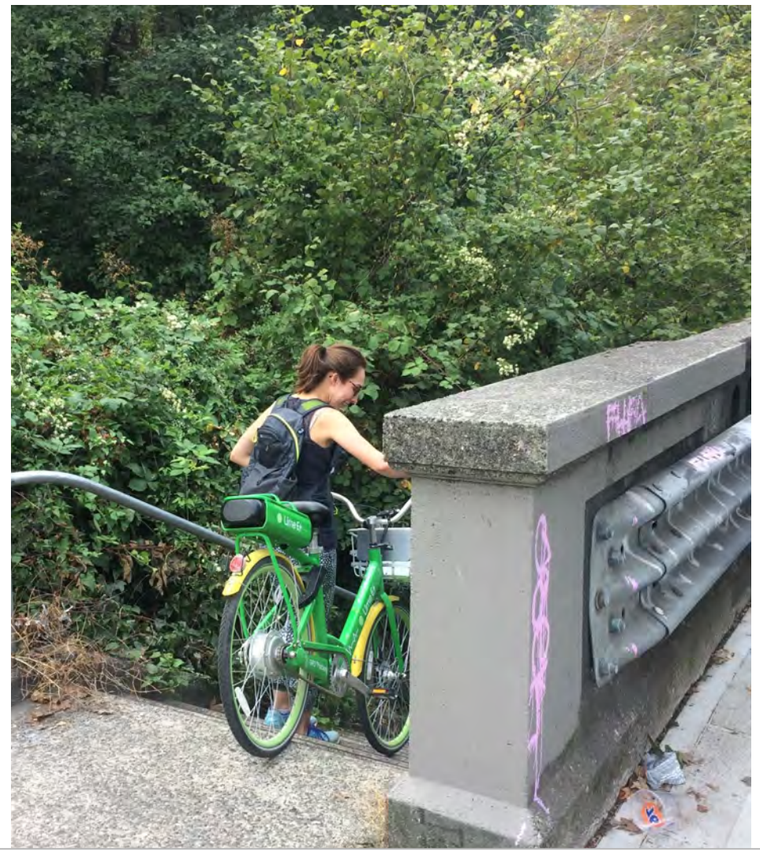
Transit

Walking

Cycling

First time user perspective

“We can just cross this avenue to get to Lake Union.”

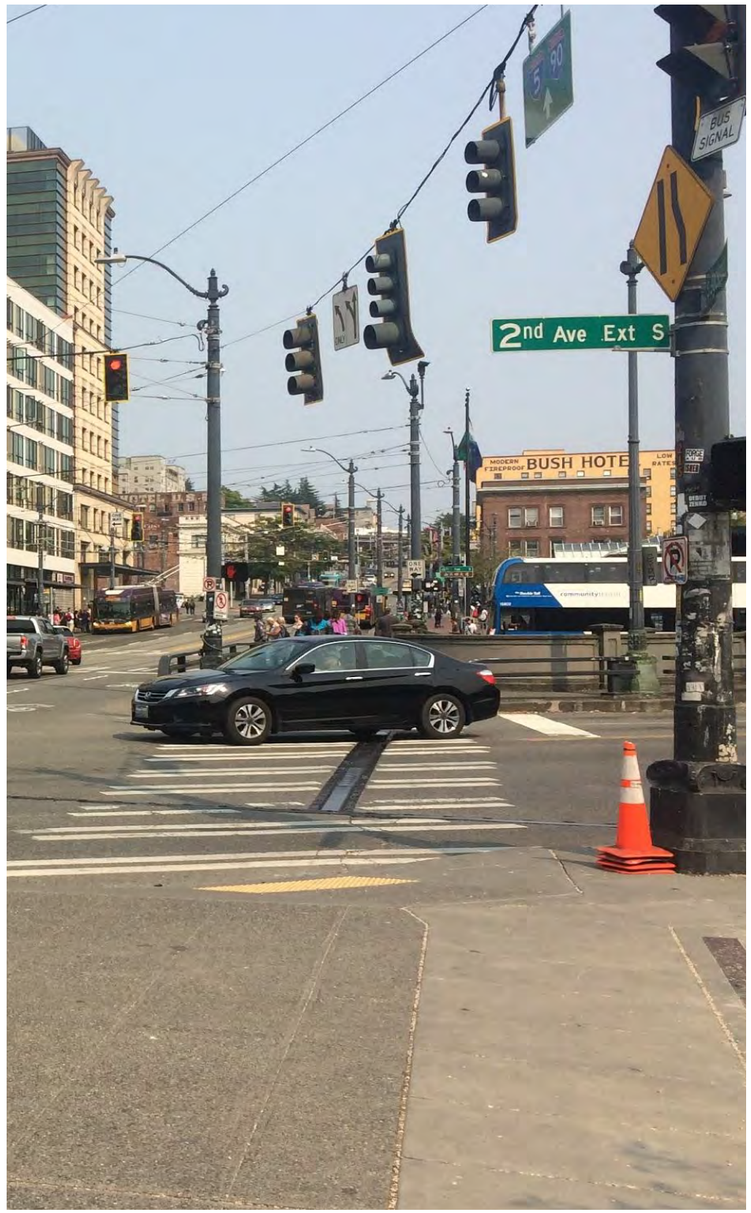


Notes

- There is sometimes a disconnect between the expectation of a place and the real environment.
- For example, heading out on a bike trip from downtown to Fremont, we were told that Highway 99 was a barrier that was difficult to cross.
- However, the fact that the Highway is also called Aurora Avenue in-situ confused us and meant we had to take our bikes down a pedestrian underpass to get to the bike trail on the other side.

First time user perspective

“The avenues run North–South and are numbered sequentially.”



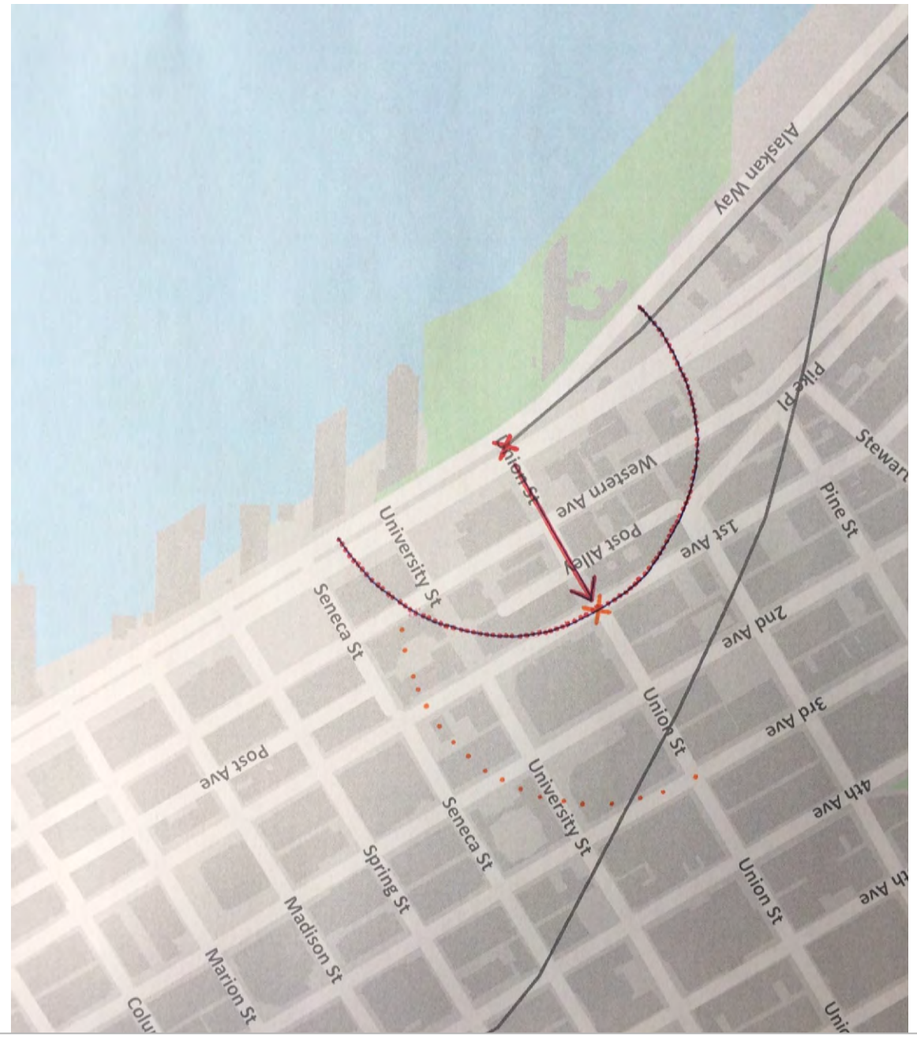
Notes

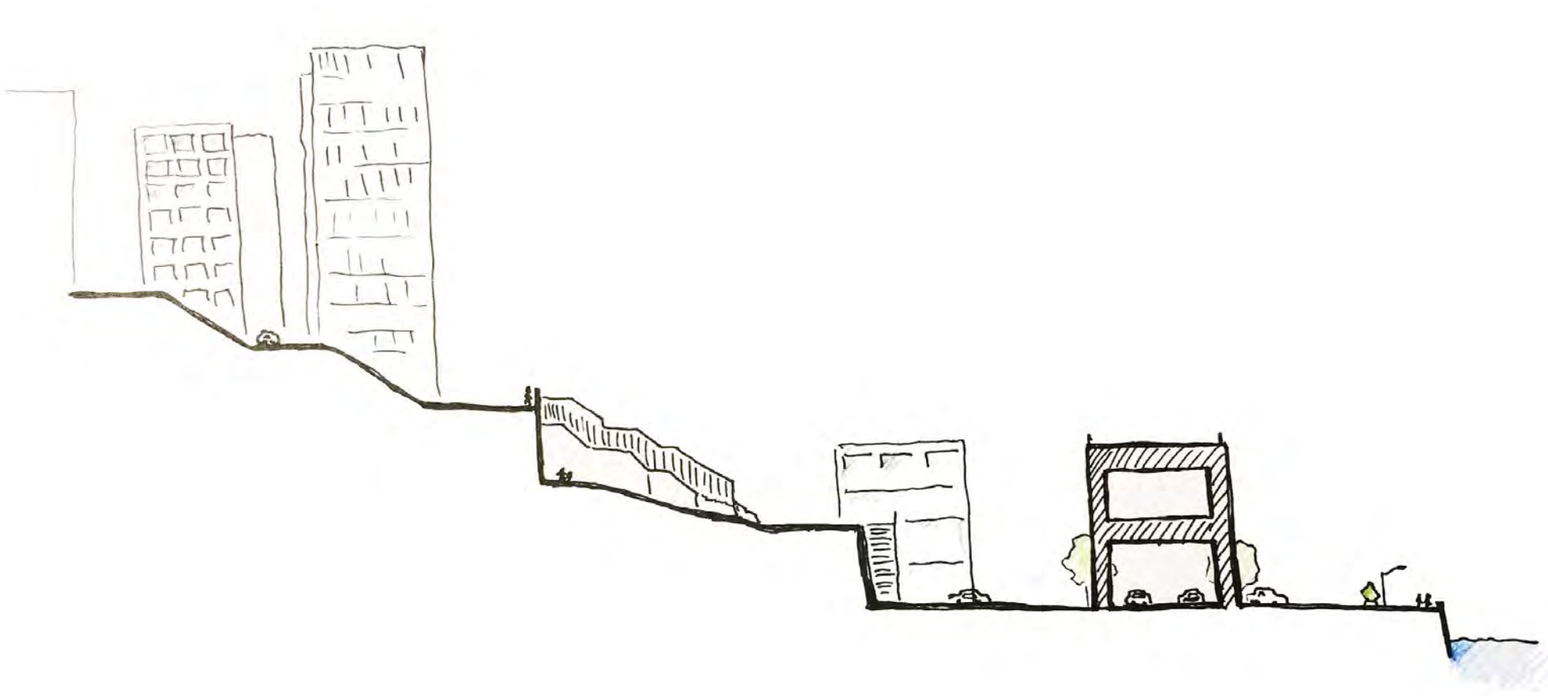
- The street grid is helpful in structuring the city but cannot be relied on as it breaks in certain places. For example, 2nd Avenue splits into 2nd Avenue South and 2nd Avenue Extension South just south of Yesler Way.

Describe the real Seattle

Expectation vs Reality

“500 feet will take me 2 mins to walk.”





2 min	2 min	2 min	2 min	2 min	2 min

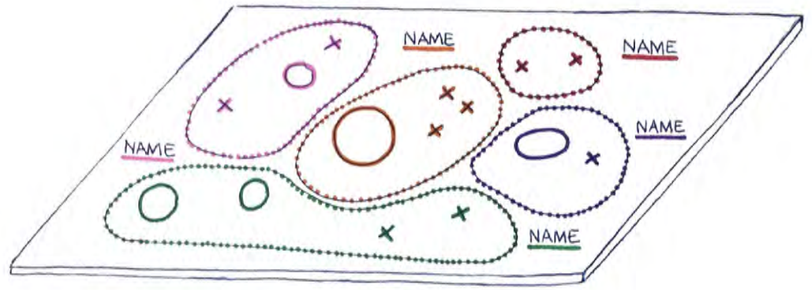
Notes

- The dramatic level differences in Seattle mean that measuring a distance on the map does not always give you a realistic expectation of the effort and time it will take you to walk it.

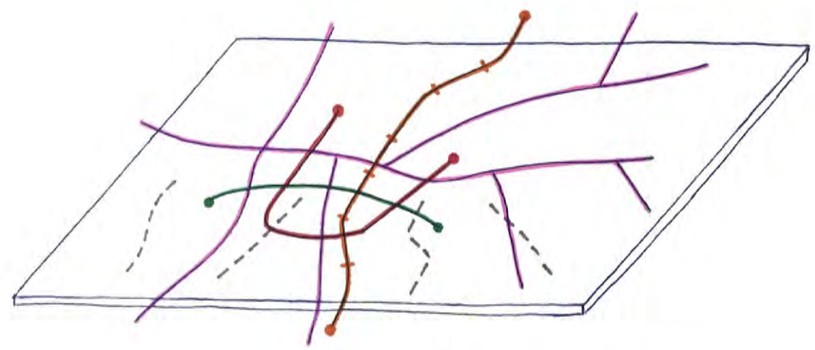
Objectives

What does a wayfinding system for Seattle need to do?

Name places consistently



Explain the system



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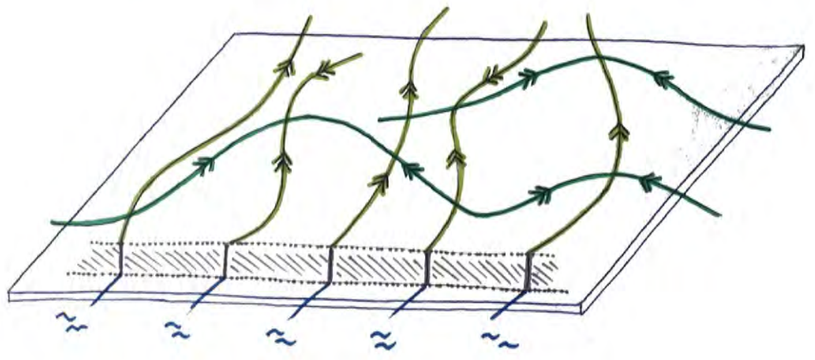
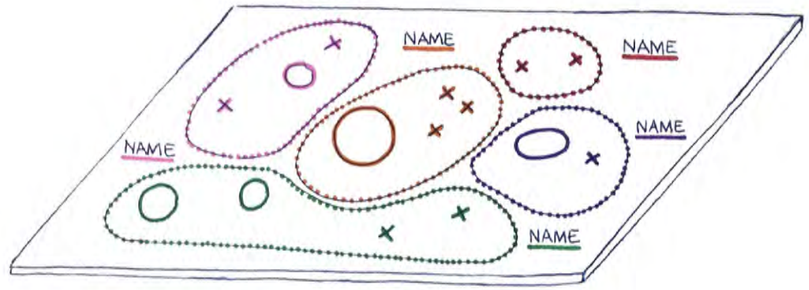


Outcomes

What can a wayfinding system for Seattle achieve?

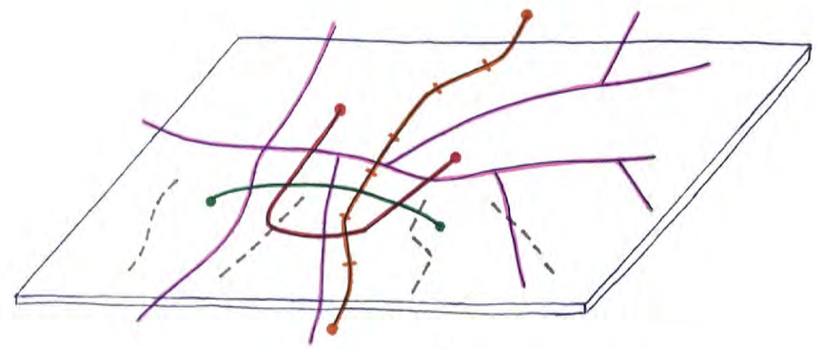
Name places consistently

Helps people build mental maps
Helps people communicate
Provides a common language
Supports and encourages placemaking



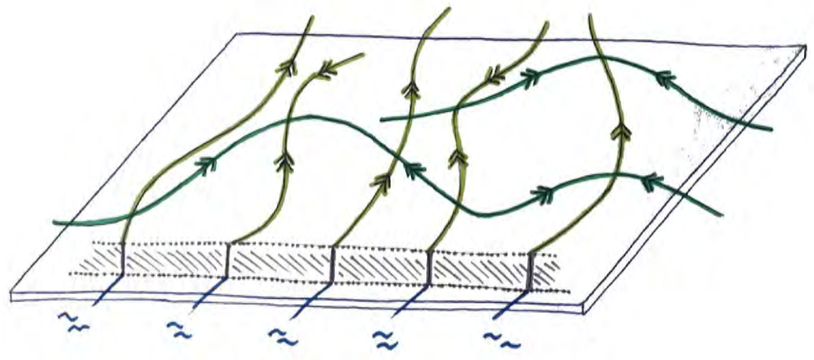
Explain the system

Gives users confidence to make multi-modal journeys
Supports interchanges and accessible routes
Gives the user the right information at the right time



Describe the real Seattle

Gives the user confidence to explore
Limits unpleasant surprises
Builds trust in the system



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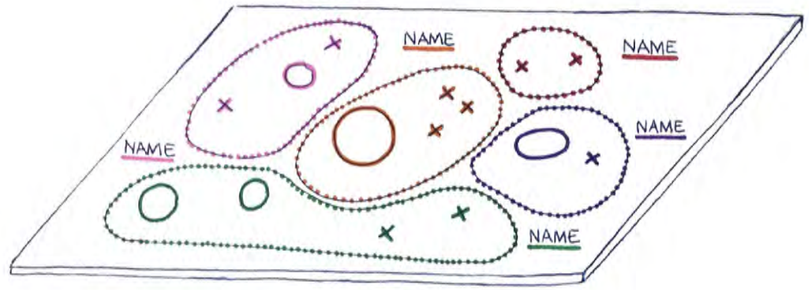

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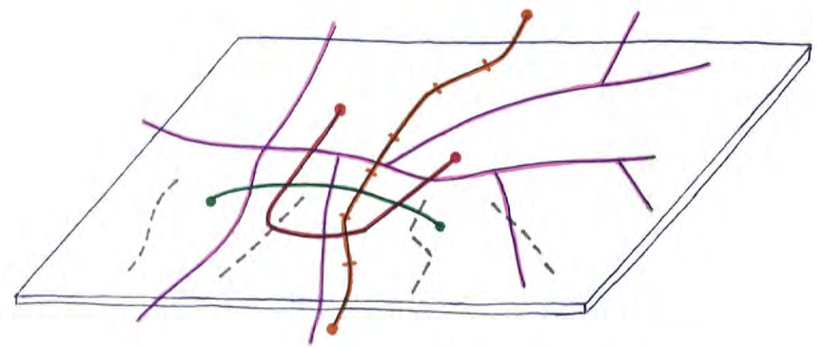


Describe the real Seattle

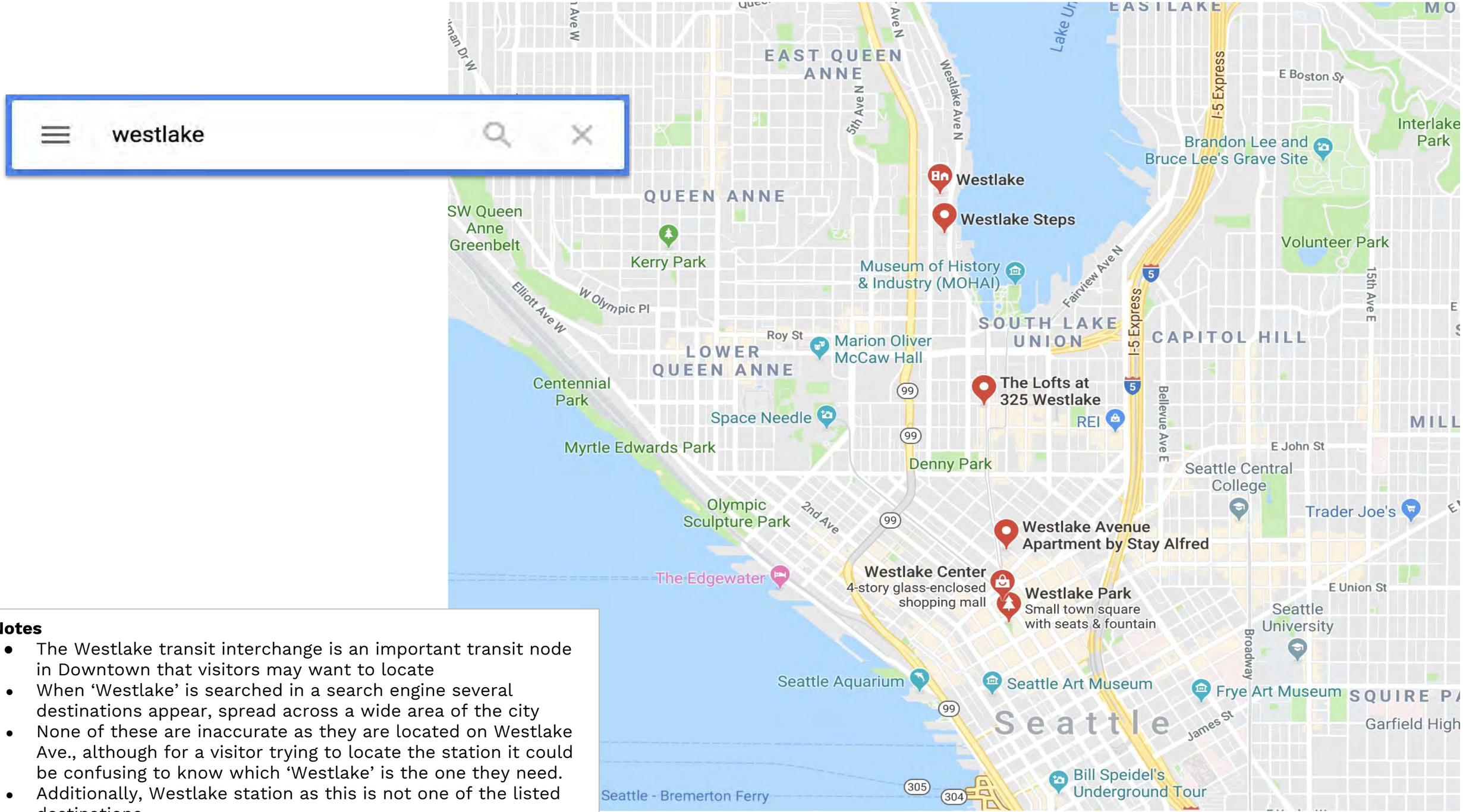
Gives the user confidence to explore
Limits unpleasant surprises
Builds trust in the system

Notes

- The following pages focus on observations relating to naming, and transit and infrastructure systems.

Name places consistently

Place names

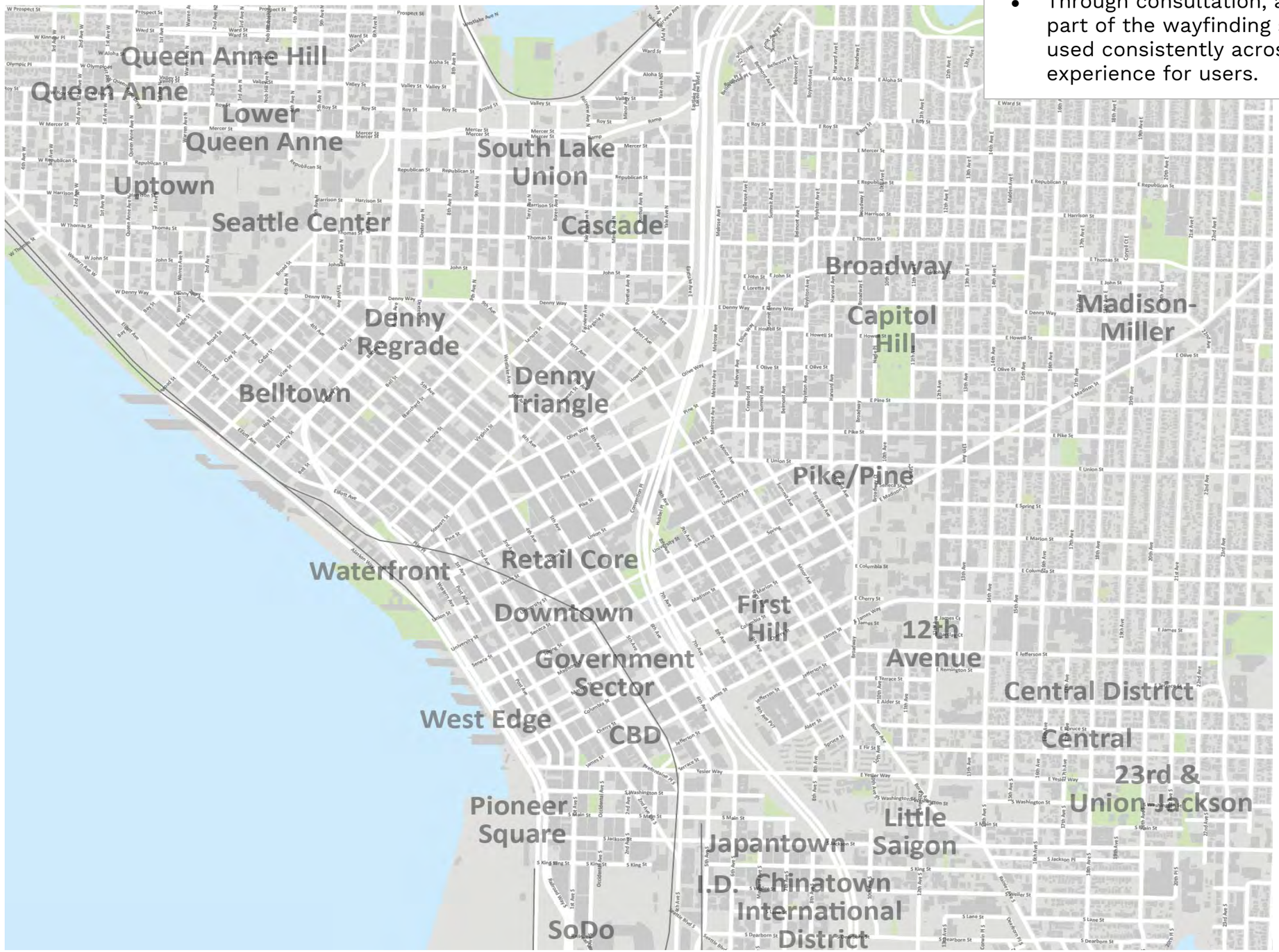


Notes

- The Westlake transit interchange is an important transit node in Downtown that visitors may want to locate
- When ‘Westlake’ is searched in a search engine several destinations appear, spread across a wide area of the city
- None of these are inaccurate as they are located on Westlake Ave., although for a visitor trying to locate the station it could be confusing to know which ‘Westlake’ is the one they need.
- Additionally, Westlake station as this is not one of the listed destinations.

Name places consistently

Neighborhood names



Notes

- A review of online, on-street and print material highlighted the wide variety of names used on maps and signage. Some names are historic, others are new and yet to be widely used.
- Through consultation, a naming hierarchy will be established as part of the wayfinding strategy, this will allow names to be used consistently across platforms to provide a seamless experience for users.

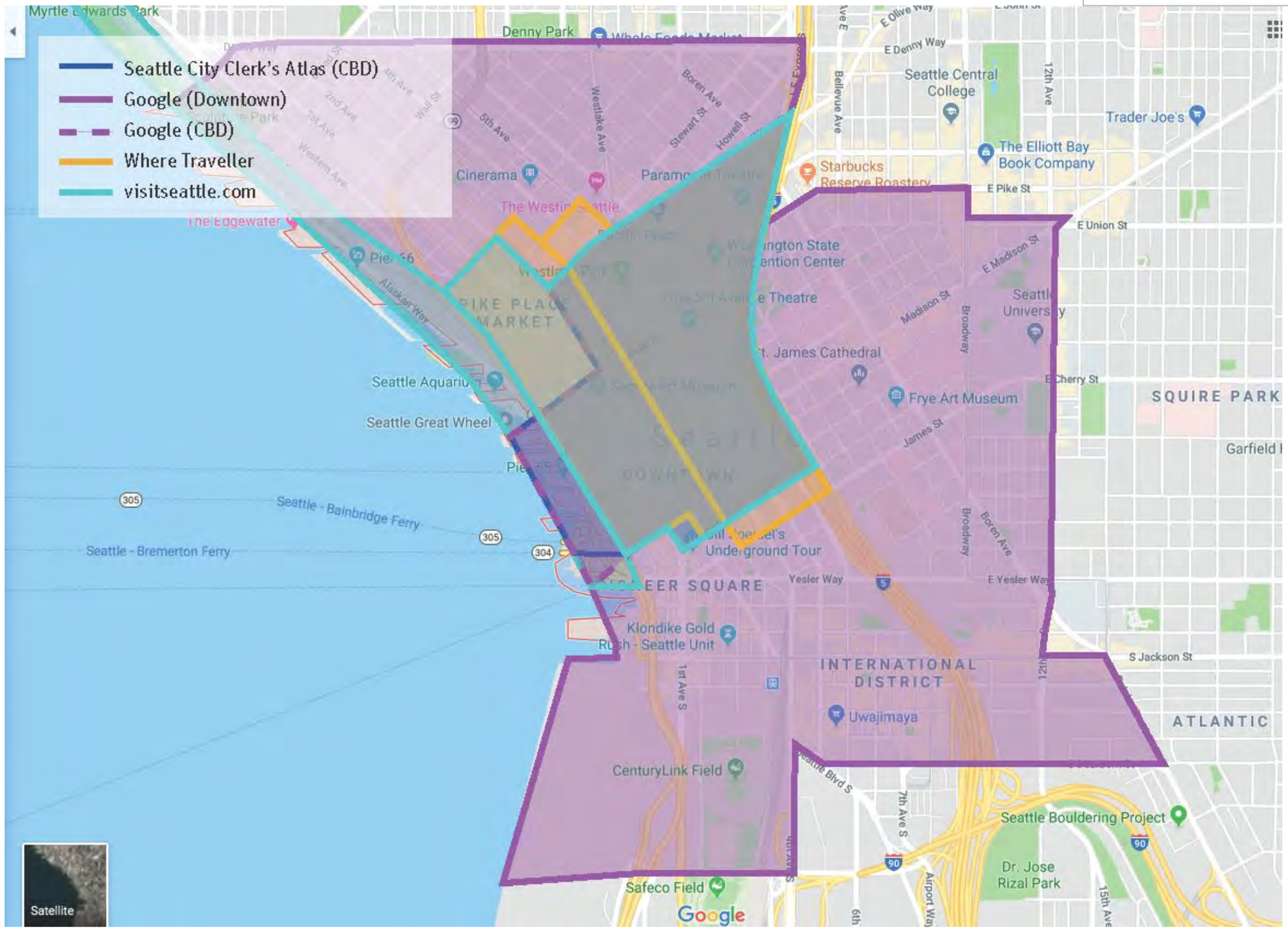
Name places consistently

Neighborhood boundaries

Downtown/Commercial Core

Notes

- Seattle is a city of neighborhoods, the boundaries of which are often blurred.
- Neighborhood boundaries vary considerably depending on the source and exact name searched for.
- The objective of the strategy is not to define hard boundaries to these neighborhoods but to define an approximate area, with less variability than shown here, to allow neighborhoods to be signed to and consistently named.



Name places consistently

Neighborhood boundaries

Denny Triangle

Notes

- The neighborhood of Denny Triangle is well defined at some edges and less so at others.
- The area of this neighborhood will likely vary for different people, some may even consider that Denny Triangle is not a distinct neighborhood but part of Belltown.
- The wayfinding strategy will identify character areas of the city and neighborhoods that may be beneficial to name to improve legibility and people's understanding of the city.

Explain the system

Transit connections

Streetcar

Amtrak

Sounder

Link Light Rail

Frequent Bus

ST Express Bus

RapidRide

Notes

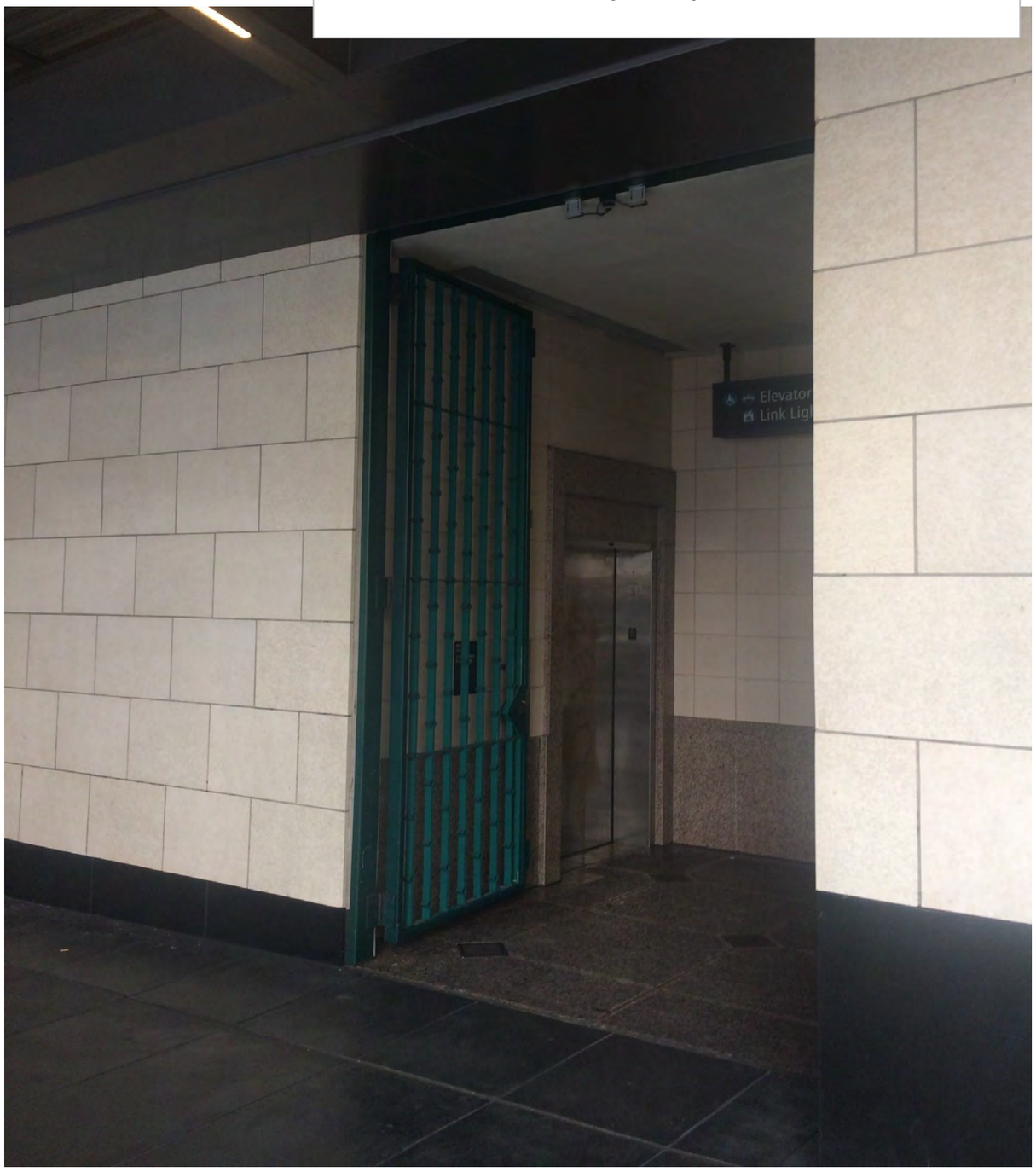
- The connection between transit modes is often considered a pain point in users' journeys.
- The Jackson/4th intersection is well served by transit modes and is a good example of the complexity that users face when changing modes. There are multiple modes, run by different operators with different stop names and names that can be confusing. E.g. 'Union Station' is not on 'Union Station Square' and is no longer an operational station.

Explain the system

Hidden accessible transit entrances

Notes

- Hidden entrances to transit stations make station entrances difficult to find and can add stress to a users' journey.

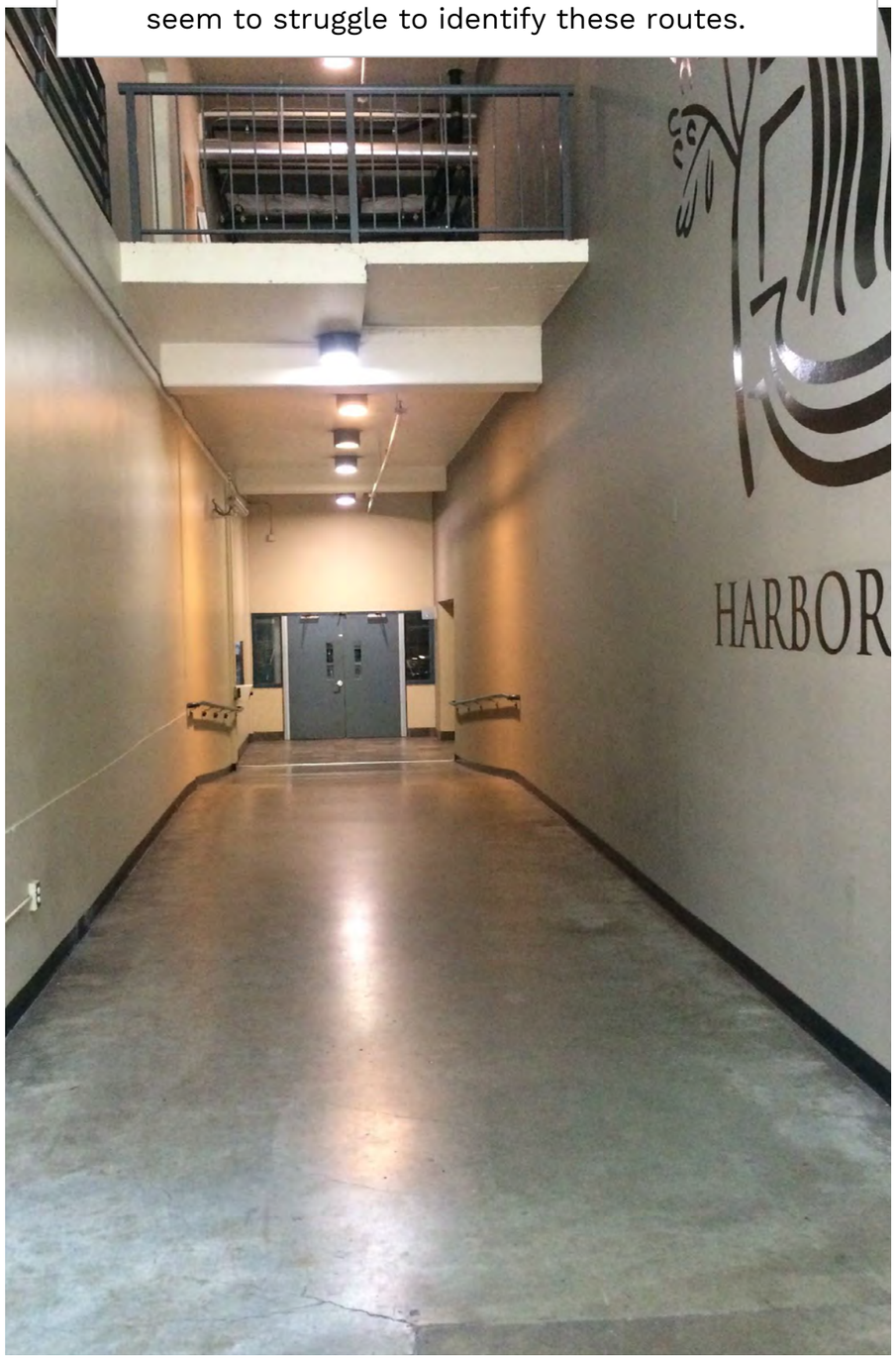


Explain the system

Hidden accessible routes

Notes

- Accessible routes through buildings allow visitors to avoid steep hills in Downtown.
- These routes are often hidden and even locals seem to struggle to identify these routes.

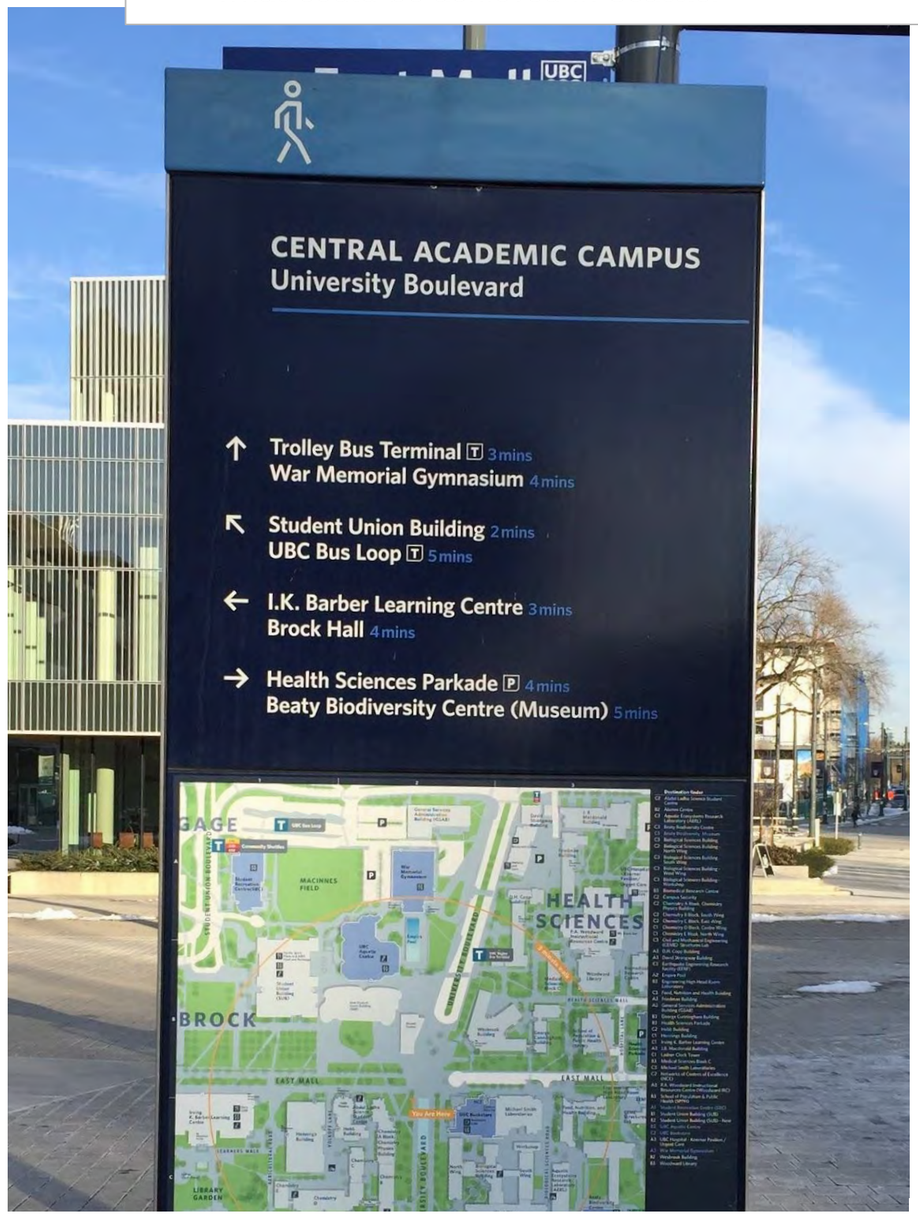


Opportunity: building seamlessness

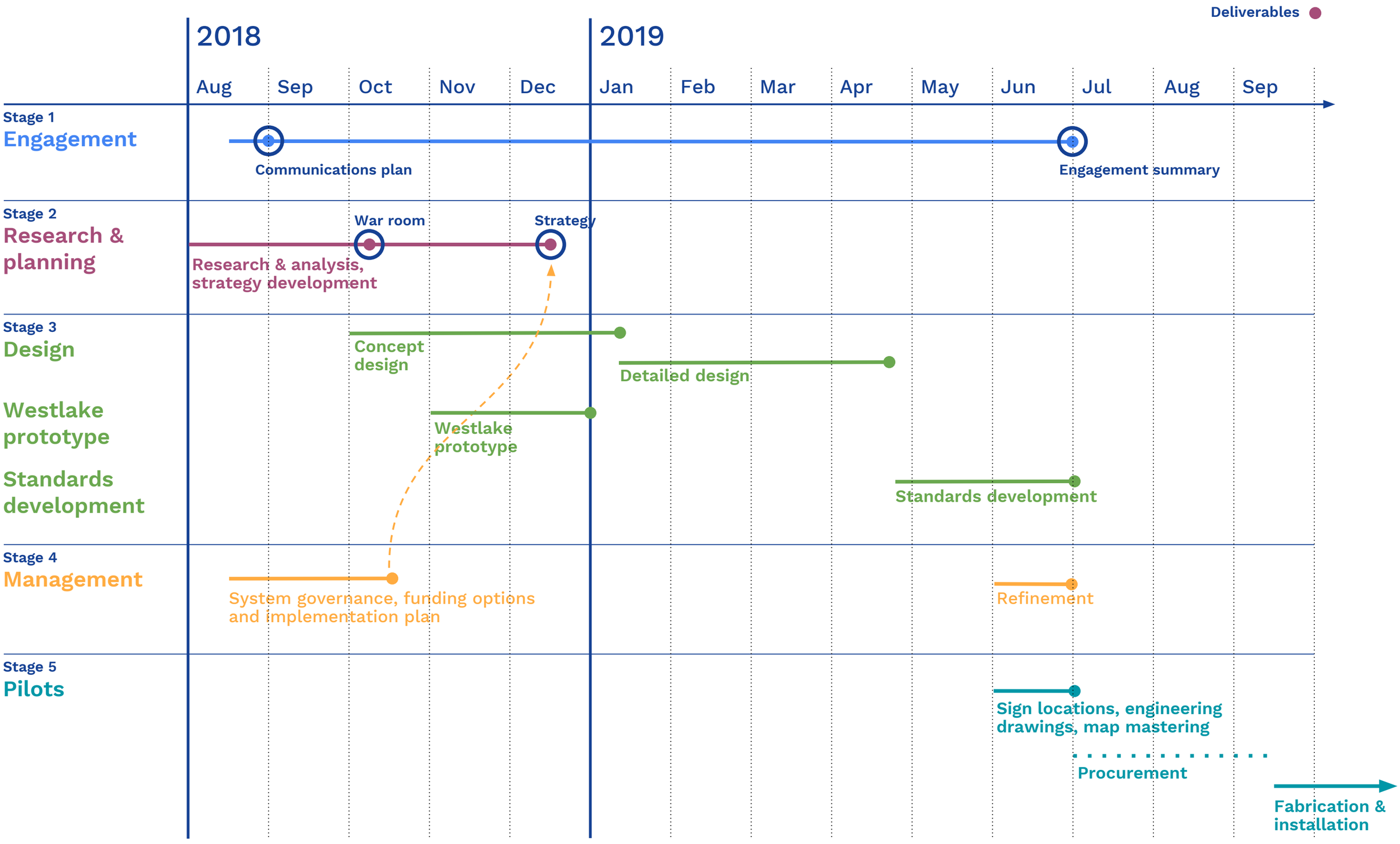
Metro Vancouver, BC

Notes

- Vancouver's wayfinding system seamlessly links transit modes, on-street maps and the UBC campus, using a consistent graphic language and names.
- This provides a consistent, predictable experience for visitors and is an example of what could be achieved in Seattle.



Workplan


Deliverables
2018
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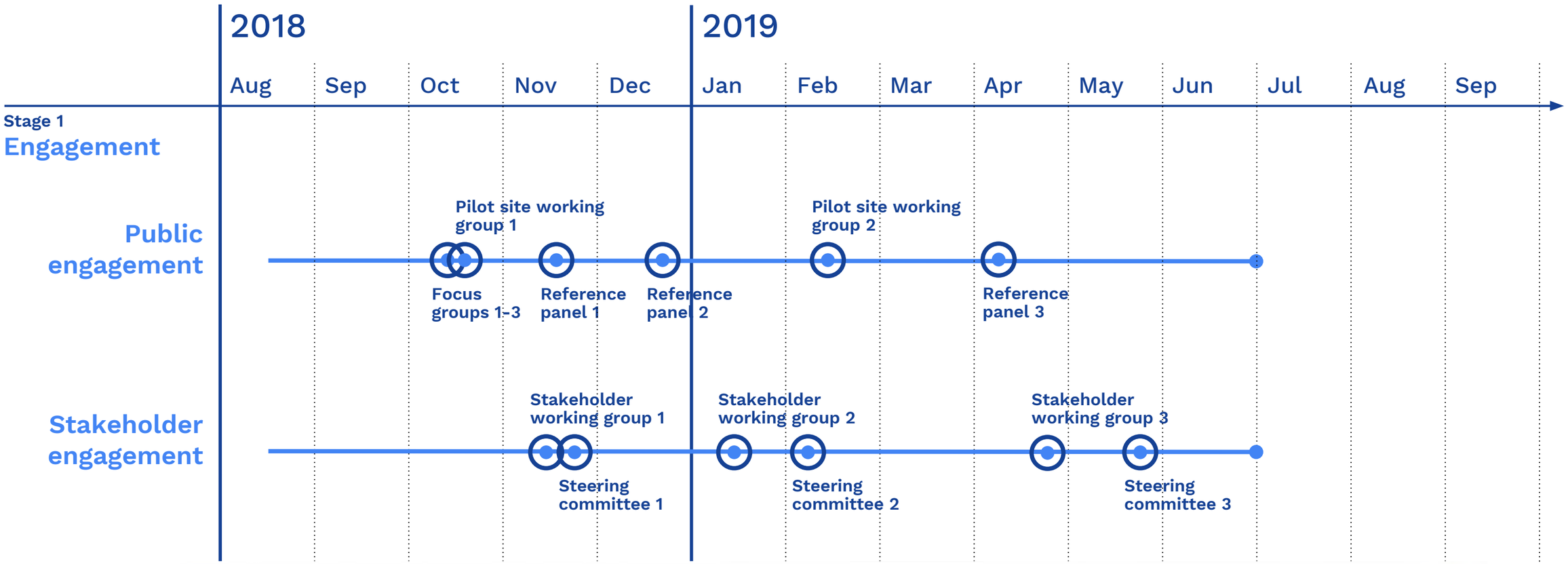
Jul
Aug
Sep
Stage 1
Engagement
Communications plan
Engagement summary
Stage 2
Research & planning
War room
Strategy
Research & analysis, strategy development
Stage 3
Design
Concept design
Detailed design
Westlake prototype
Westlake prototype
Standards development
Standards development
Stage 4
Management
System governance, funding options and implementation plan
Refinement
Stage 5
Pilots
Sign locations, engineering drawings, map mastering
Procurement
Fabrication & installation

Workplan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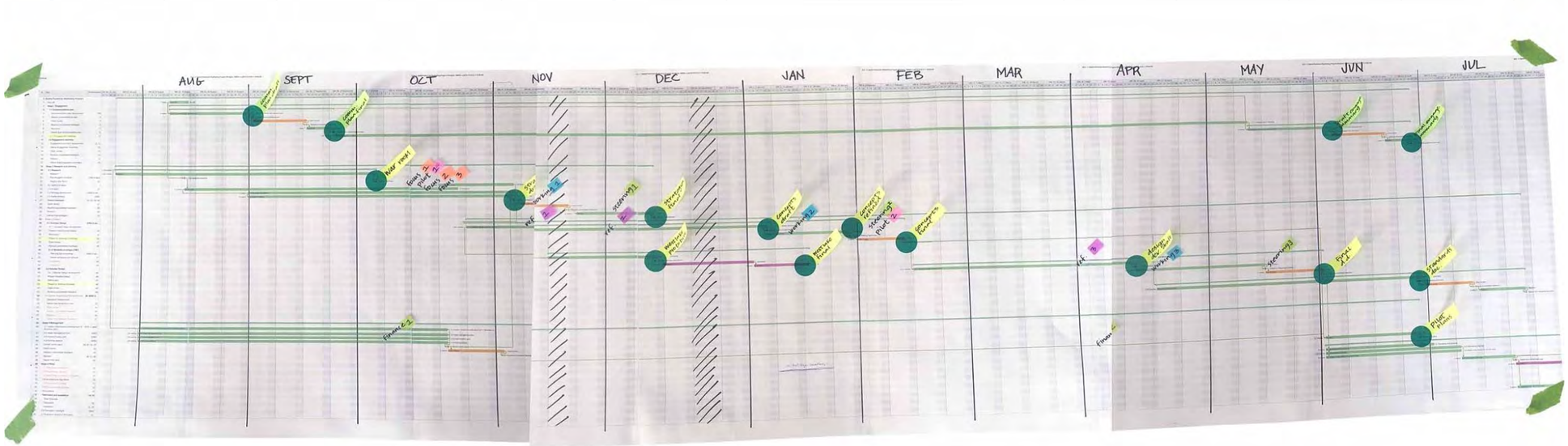
Stage 1
Engagement
Public engagement
Pilot site working group 1
Pilot site working group 2
Focus groups 1-3
Reference panel 1
Reference panel 2
Reference panel 3
Stakeholder engagement
Stakeholder working group 1
Stakeholder working group 2
Stakeholder working group 3
Steering committee 1
Steering committee 2
Steering committee 3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The SDOT Pedestrian Wayfinding Program

Thank you