

## Meeting Summary

### Attendees

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Name	Affiliation
Ron Brown	Seattle Times
John Coney	Queen Anne Community Council
Karen Daubert	Seattle Parks Foundation
Timothy Durkan	Seattle Office of Policy & Management
Phil Fujii	Vulcan/SLUFAN
Kurt Gahnberg	Vulcan
Gary Pennock	Seattle Times
Matthew Richter	ConWorks
Christopher Tucker	Shurgard Storage
Larry Woodbury	PEMCO

### Agenda

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- I. Introductions and Agenda Review
- II. Public Input — What We've Heard So Far
- III. General Analysis Overview
- IV. Potential Improvement Scenarios and Initial Evaluation
- V. Small Group Session
- VI. Next Steps and Adjourn

### I. Introductions and Agenda Review

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*Eric Tweit, SDOT*

Eric Tweit, SDOT, provided a brief introduction to the South Lake Union Transportation Study and asked group members to introduce themselves.

Eric pointed out key elements of Mayor Nickels' Action Agenda for South Lake Union and showed a map of planned development in the area. Eric reminded the group that the vision for the study is to plan for transportation infrastructure to support new development in South Lake Union. The study is adhering to the following goals and objectives:

1. Improve mobility and access for all modes.
2. Improve regional access to and through South Lake Union.
3. Promote economic vitality, neighborhood livability, sustainable development, and quality of life.
4. Improve safety for all transportation modes.

5. Work towards implementing Comprehensive Plan goals and other city policies and plans.

## **II. Public Input – What We've Heard So Far**

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*Eric Tweit, SDOT*

Eric Tweit reviewed the types of outreach the study team has conducted including:

- Stakeholder Work Session 1
- Freight community meeting
- Community group briefings
- Business interviews

Eric explained that businesses interviewed for the study are primarily concentrated around Westlake Ave N and 9<sup>th</sup> Ave N, as the team has been looking for feedback on the City's proposal to alter those streets to accommodate 2-way traffic. The study team plans to interview more businesses in South Lake Union, particularly along Mercer and Valley Streets.

The following points summarize input to the South Lake Union Transportation Study received from business owners, community group members, freight users, and other stakeholders:

- Increase connections between I-5 and Queen Anne; the neighborhood and Lake Union; and South Lake Union and Downtown
- Improve/maintain freight mobility through South Lake Union
- Improve the pedestrian experience and enhance pedestrian connections
- Increase transit options, reliability and ease of use
- Customer parking is a priority for businesses
- Programs to reduce auto trips are essential

### **Questions/Comments**

- Will all business interviews be complete before April 2004, or will some be conducted after the final recommendations have been released?

## **III. Analysis Overview**

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*Chris Wellander, Parsons Brinckerhoff*

Chris Wellander, Parsons Brinckerhoff, gave a brief overview of technical analysis conducted since the first stakeholder works session. He outlined the steps that the technical team went through to arrive at three potential improvement scenarios and described the screening criteria that were used to narrow down the team's initial list improvements. The process included:

1. Identifying study area problems and issues
2. Developing potential improvements
3. Conducting initial screening of potential improvements
4. Assessing operational performance

## 5. Creating three scenarios for preliminary evaluation

Chris described key findings for studies conducted for the following improvement areas:

- Valley Street Heavy Vehicle Study
- Two-way Westlake Avenue N and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue N
- Two-way Mercer Street/Narrow Valley Street
- Roy Street Undercrossing
- South Lake Union Streetcar
- Transit Priority Treatments on Fairview Ave N

Results of the Valley Street Heavy Vehicle Study and the study of two-way operations on Westlake Avenue N and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue N were provided in greater depth. Chris pointed out that the Valley Street study was conducted in response to stakeholder concerns about impacts on truck traffic traveling around Lake Union.

### **Questions/Comments**

- Is the Valley Street Study inclusive of all trucks, or just truck traffic during construction?
- If Valley Street is narrowed, how will it accommodate traffic from new development at Fred Hutchinson? Future traffic increases will greatly impact the area around Fred Hutchinson and Shurgard Storage.
- Is there a plan to add a signal at Valley Street and Terry Avenue? This will further slow traffic, especially in a narrow Valley scenario.
- Look at the amount of time traffic waits at the light at Fairview and Valley. In a narrow Valley scenario, how will the light at Valley and Fairview be timed? What percentage of the time will be for east/west and north/south traffic?

## **IV. Potential Improvement Scenarios and Initial Evaluation**

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*Chris Wellander, Parsons Brinckerhoff*

Chris Wellander described the three potential improvement scenarios the team is proposing for recommendation in the South Lake Union Transportation Study: Baseline, Roy Undercrossing, and Two-way Mercer Street/Narrow Valley Street. In addition, all three scenarios will require programs and facilities that reduce single-occupant auto trips. Potential companion strategies include:

- Implementing innovative TDM and improved transit service that can make South Lake Union's drive-alone mode share as low as downtown Seattle's.
- Designing parking strategies to encourage employees to use cars only when necessary, saving space for customer and client parking.
- Allowing (and encouraging) developers to build fewer parking spaces to reduce drive-alone commuting over time, coupled with added transit service and facilities.

Chris walked the group through maps of each scenario and explained their trade-offs based on how well they meet the study's objectives.

### **Baseline Trade-offs**

- Least expensive option
- Addresses some mobility concerns by adding an overcrossing at Thomas Street and making transit and pedestrian improvements
- Does not improve the Mercer corridor
- Provides limited improvement to the area around South Lake Union Park
- Provides minimal overall improvement to safety and mobility, livability and economic vitality, and regional access
- Rates low in supporting City plans and policies

### **Questions/Comments**

- Thomas Street goes from three lanes to two at Fairview Avenue, is this because of the green street designation?
- This scenario shows the Lake-to-Bay Trail crossing at Thomas Street. South Lake Union Park is being designed to connect to the trail at Aloha Street
- This scenario cuts out the Lake-to-Bay Trail north of Seattle Center, which is an essential component of the trail and a key part of the urban design of the area.
- Bike traffic is not permitted to cut through Seattle Center, so it is crucial to accommodate a bike route north of Seattle Center. This is important for the Uptown neighborhood.
- Is Terry Avenue N going to be a pedestrian, non-motorized corridor? There will continue to be truck traffic on this street, regardless of the designation.

### **Roy Street Undercrossing Trade-offs**

- Provides the same benefits as the Baseline, with some significant additions
- Building the Roy Street undercrossing and realigning the Fairview/Valley intersection improves the westbound route
- Provides limited improvement to non-motorized travel in the Mercer corridor
- Valley Street is still a barrier to accessing South Lake Union Park
- Provides limited overall improvement to safety and mobility, livability and economic vitality, and regional access
- Requires more significant right of way impacts, compared to the Baseline scenario

### **Questions/Comments**

- Why is there an overcrossing at Thomas Street and an undercrossing at Roy Street instead of the other way around?
- What impact would the Thomas Street overcrossing have on properties within one block on either side? It seems like there would be an elevated ramp in front of all these properties.

### **Two-way Mercer/Narrow Valley Trade-offs**

- Provides the same benefits of the Baseline, with some significant additions
- Two-way Mercer Street improves the westbound route
- Improves non-motorized travel in the Mercer corridor
- Integrates Valley Street into the South Lake Union Park environment
- Significant overall improvement to safety and mobility, livability and economic vitality, regional access
- Better supports alternate modes of travel

- More significant right of way impacts and higher costs as compared to the Baseline and Roy Undercrossing scenarios

### **Questions/Comments**

- Would Westlake Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue N and Valley be two-ways?
- Why are more significant pedestrian crossings at Mercer and Valley Streets included in this scenario and not the others?
- What were the results of analysis on traffic coming from downtown, going north, on Westlake or 9<sup>th</sup> in a two-way scenario? What will travel times be like on Westlake and 9th with the streetcar?
- In Portland, the streetcar seems to operate like a bus. It travels in traffic, but is not there all the time so does not significantly impact traffic flow.
- The best part of these scenarios is that they do not include an at-grade crossing of SR 99/Aurora Avenue. Has that alternative gone away entirely? The trade-offs for the Uptown/Queen Anne neighborhood of less access versus a slower Aurora are not worth it.
- PEMCO and REI have large employee populations that are not currently served by transit service on Eastlake Avenue E. There would be support for additional transit service on Thomas Street to Eastlake Avenue E.
- How long were the headways used in the streetcar analysis?
- How would this scenario work with an east/west streetcar line? Where would it cross Aurora?
- What will happen to property that is made available by the vacation of Broad Street?
- How would this scenario change if nothing happens on the Alaskan Way Viaduct Project? Does this scenario depend on one AWV alternative?

To compare the three scenarios and as a first step toward recommending a preferred improvement package, the technical team evaluation and rated each scenario based on how effective it is in meeting the goals of the study. Chris showed the team's first attempt at a rating matrix, and explained how the team arrived at each ranking.

### **Technical Team Initial Improvement Ratings:**

Goal	Baseline	Roy Undercrossing	Two-Way Mercer
Improve Mobility and Access for All Modes within and between SLU, Surrounding Neighborhoods, and Downtown Seattle			
Improve Safety for All Transportation Modes			
Improve Regional Access To and Through South Lake Union			
Promote Economic Vitality, Neighborhood Livability, Sustainable Development and Quality of Life.			
Work Towards Implementing Comprehensive Plan Goals and Other City Policies and Plans			
Implementation Feasibility (not a formal goal)			

## V. Small Group Session

*Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues*

Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues, described the small group activity, explaining that the team would like feedback on the three potential improvement scenarios, particularly on how stakeholders would evaluate each scenario and whether they agree with the technical team’s initial comparison. The group counted off randomly and divided into two groups. Each group discussed and provided feedback on the three scenarios and assigned a rating to each scenario according to how effective it was in meeting each study objective.

### Small Group Discussion, Comments, and Questions

The following comments and questions were raised during the small group discussion. Each comment is marked with a + or – to signify whether it is in support of or against a specific element of the scenario.

#### General Comments

- Increase regional transit to South Lake Union instead of just moving existing bus routes around.
- What is the difference in cost between the three scenarios?
- Oppose the streetcar because of the costs to current property owners and businesses.
- Improve pedestrian-scale lighting in South Lake Union.
- Will the type of vehicle make a difference in Eastlake’s concern about the streetcar?
- Transit to Capitol Hill
  - Using Lakeview
    - (-) Using Lakeview would require trolley buses that would block traffic going up hill and require additional infrastructure. Recommend no stops on the hill.
    - Possible negative reaction from the neighborhood around Lakeview.
    - (+) Using Lakeview would serve north Capitol Hill, which is currently underserved
    - Looping the #8 does not serve the neighborhood, and is not an acceptable alternative.
    - (+) Possibility of linking South Lake Union Park to Volunteer Park
  - Using Denny Avenue
    - (+) Will improve current transit route.
    - (+) Possible tie-in with east/west streetcar.

### **Baseline Scenario**

- (+) Keeps Valley Street as it is now. Add improvements, but keep 2 lanes in each direction with a two-way Mercer Street.
- It is possible to keep Valley Street “as is” and still improve access to South Lake Union Park.
- (-) Does not include good pedestrian access across Mercer and Valley to South Lake Union Park.
- (+) Prefer crossing at Thomas Street because it is closer to the future monorail stop on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue N.
- (-) Accommodation of the Lake-to-Bay Trail.
- Consider all-way stops on Thomas Street or Harrison Street in Cascade. These intersections need a more consistent approach, as they are currently a mix of yields and stop signs.
- (-) Impact of additional traffic on Thomas Street on local truck access.
- Consider a possible overpass to South Lake Union Park at Terry Avenue N.

### **Roy Street Undercrossing Scenario**

- (-) The Fairview/Valley intersection realignment isolates the Shurgard Storage building behind a traffic island.
- (-) Need for an integrated signal system, as there are questions about the adequacy of the existing signal system for this scenario.
- (-) Amount of time needed to build the Roy Undercrossing and resulting impacts to traffic on Aurora.
- Does the Fairview/Valley intersection realignment provide significant improvement?
  - (-) Still requires weaving.
  - Add signage for traffic from I-5 to help people get in the right lane.
- Consider a possible overpass to South Lake Union Park at Terry Avenue N.

### **Two-way Mercer/Narrow Valley**

- How much time is added to eastbound travel time from Queen Anne to I-5 under this scenario?
- Why are there no signals between Mercer and Denny on north/south streets?
- (+) Support the two-way Mercer proposal.
- Would the Mercer widening take right of way from the north or south block?
- How will this scenario impact parking on Thomas Street?
- (+) Trucks like established routes.
- (+) Queen Anne neighborhood likes the widened Mercer Street scenario over a Roy undercrossing.
- (+) Big improvement for traffic coming from I-5.
- (+) This is the best scenario for South Lake Union Park.
- Add transit service on Thomas Street to Eastlake.
- Lake-to-Bay Trail should be added on the north side of Seattle Center.

### **Small Group Evaluation**

Each group assigned a rating to each scenario based on how well it met the study goals. The groups used the following scale to assign ratings:

#### **Key to Rating Symbols**

- Highly effective in supporting goal
- ◐ Effective in supporting goal
- ◑ Some effectiveness in supporting goal
- ◒ No effectiveness in supporting goal
- Does not support goal, may have negative impacts

The following matrices show the general ratings that stakeholders assigned to each scenario.

## Stakeholder Group 2 Ratings Across Scenarios

Goal	Baseline	Roy Undercrossing	Two-Way Mercer
Improve Mobility and Access for All Modes within and between SLU, Surrounding Neighborhoods, and Downtown Seattle			
Improve Safety for All Transportation Modes			
Improve Regional Access To and Through South Lake Union			
Promote Economic Vitality, Neighborhood Livability, Sustainable Development and Quality of Life.			
Work Towards Implementing Comprehensive Plan Goals and Other City Policies and Plans			
Implementation Feasibility (not a formal goal)			

## Stakeholder Group 1 Ratings Across Scenarios

Goal	Baseline	Roy Undercrossing	Two-Way Mercer
Improve Mobility and Access for All Modes within and between SLU, Surrounding Neighborhoods, and Downtown Seattle			
Improve Safety for All Transportation Modes*			
Improve Regional Access To and Through South Lake Union			
Promote Economic Vitality, Neighborhood Livability, Sustainable Development and Quality of Life.			
Work Towards Implementing Comprehensive Plan Goals and Other City Policies and Plans			
Implementation Feasibility (not a formal goal)			

\* One group member assigned a full circle to the Baseline Scenario for this goal, with the rationale that no change was safer.

## **VI. Next Steps**

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A public open house will be held on March 18, 2004 to present the team's proposed recommendations and to get feedback from the public prior to release of a draft. Final South Lake Union Transportation Study recommendations will be released in late spring 2004.