

Seattle Department of Transportation

Madison Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

DESIGN PROGRESS OUTREACH SUMMARY

December 2016



Introduction

The Madison St corridor in Seattle is busy, dense, and still growing. To improve travel along the corridor, Madison Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will provide frequent, reliable, and safe bus service along the Madison St corridor between First Ave in downtown Seattle and Martin Luther King Jr Way in Madison Valley.

In 2015, community input was essential to the route design, resulting in several major alignment adjustments. In spring through fall 2016, the project invited additional community feedback on design updates.

Notifications and opportunities for comment included:

- Project briefings to stakeholder groups
- Email notifications to the program’s distribution list announcing upcoming open houses, with translated text in Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Somali, French, and Hindi
- A corridor-wide mailing, including translated text, announcing the open houses
- 12 web and print ads in local media outlets, 7 of which were translated and placed in ethnic media outlets directing users to translated webpages
- Door-to-door outreach to businesses on or near Madison St to reach owners and employees whose schedules might prevent them from attending the open houses
- Open houses in 3 different neighborhoods along the corridor, with two opportunities for evening attendance and one mid-day. An online open house was also available.

The 3 open houses were held at Seattle University (August 3), Town Hall (daytime on August 4) and at Meredith Mathews YMCA (August 9). We ran an online open house from August 2 – 16 that provided people who could not attend the open houses a chance to view the same information and provide comment. We had interpreters at the open houses for Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Somali and Hindi-speaking attendees, and we offered translated materials both in-person and online.

We received over 350 comments on the design updates via comment cards, emails, online comments, and at our open houses. Broad support for the project has been expressed in both the comments received and during our briefings and door-to-door outreach; comments explicitly supporting the project’s aims far outnumbered those opposing the project.



What follows is a high-level summary of the feedback we heard, grouped into topics and themes:

- Bus rapid transit stations and service
- Bus features
- Transit integration and changes to King County Metro service
- Bicycle infrastructure
- Pedestrian infrastructure and access
- Lane configuration and congestion
- Parking and hospital access
- Construction

Public Feedback on Design Update – Topics and Themes

TOPIC: BUS RAPID TRANSIT STATIONS AND SERVICE

We received 71 comments that discussed BRT service. Many looked forward to BRT service, especially its expected reliability and speed. Fifty-six comments discussed BRT station features and locations. The feedback submitted formally and gathered during door-to-door outreach indicated support for the BRT station features, including weather protection.

- **Theme: Madison Street BRT should extend farther into Madison Park.**
 - Project team response: The project was originally slated to end at 23rd Ave, but public feedback in the 10% design phase encouraged extension to Martin Luther King Jr Way, which was added to this design update phase. Current project funding does not allow for a further extension of the line at this time, but should the demand and funding be available in the future, the line could be extended further east.
- **Theme: Madison Street BRT should run until at least 3 AM to help people getting off work.**
 - Project team response: Operating at such hours would depend on demand and projected use. On existing RapidRide lines, King County Metro currently provides 1 to 2 trips between 1:30 AM and 4:30 AM.
- **Theme: Weather protection, safety, and seating are important factors in station design.**
 - Project team response: Each station will have at least 1 canopy, and each canopy will have seats. Buses will arrive every 6 minutes during most of the day, reducing the need for much seating. If the need for additional seating arises, those changes can be made after the start of service. The idea of “blue light” emergency phones at stations has been forwarded to the Department of Neighborhoods for consideration in future neighborhood planning.

TOPIC: BUS FEATURES

The comments we received about the buses were largely positive feedback regarding the proposed interior bicycle storage. The all-door boarding and interior bicycle storage are design elements that will decrease loading time and improve route speed and reliability.

- **Theme: Interior bike racks are a good idea.**
 - Project team response: Interior bike racks are one of the design elements that will decrease the time it takes to load and unload passengers, increasing route speed and reliability. We are working with King County Metro to further assess the feasibility of this proposed design feature.
- **Theme: Will buses with left-side doors increase the project cost?**
 - Project team response: Buses with doors on both sides allow for the flexibility of center-island stations to serve buses going in both directions, reducing construction costs, while accommodating traditional right-hand stations where appropriate. They also allow the BRT alignment to be straighter, avoiding right-of-way impacts at some intersections.

TOPIC: TRANSIT INTEGRATION AND CHANGES TO KING COUNTY METRO SERVICE

We received 35 comments regarding King County Metro service, many referencing Madison St and 23rd Ave specifically, a key transit connection for transit-dependent communities living or working in east Seattle. Community members were concerned BRT stations were placed far away from the bus routes they use, and would not facilitate easy transfers.

We also heard many questions about how Madison Street BRT would affect existing King County Metro bus service.

- **Theme: It is important to have quick, easy, and close-by transfers to other transit services downtown, including Washington State Ferries.**
 - Project team response: Madison Street BRT is designed to connect into our existing and future system. A station is planned on 1st Ave, a block away from the Marion St Terminal walkway. The University St downtown transit tunnel station will be approximately 1 block from the proposed BRT station on 3rd Ave. The project is looking at other specific station locations to see if distances to nearby transit connections can be shortened.
- **Theme: Move a station closer to 23rd Ave for improved transit connections**
 - Project team response: To accommodate left-turn lanes on Madison St, the eastbound and westbound BRT stations had to be located 1 block east and west of 23rd Ave (at 22nd and 24th avenues). There is not enough existing right-of-way to have sidewalks, travel lanes, left-turn lanes, and BRT stations at that intersection, and the substantial volume of traffic turning left warrants left-turn lanes. Having stations 1 block east and west also allows for a downhill or level walk to a connection.
- **Theme: How will Madison Street BRT affect existing King County Metro services?**
 - Project team response: King County Metro continues to analyze service options along the corridor. About a year before Madison Street BRT service begins, King County Metro will ask the community for input on any proposals for route revisions along the corridor. Transit service to Madison Park will be maintained.

TOPIC: BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Bicycle access on the corridor was a common topic, with members of the bicycle community actively participating in the feedback process. We received more than 60 comments that referenced bicycle

infrastructure along the corridor, most of which expressed the desire for more infrastructure than is included in the design updates. Many participants expressed concern for how bike facilities were presented, and how facilities may have changed since the planning and early design phase.

- **Theme: Madison St or an adjacent street needs better bike infrastructure**
 - Project team response: The project team is reevaluating the design of 2 Madison St intersections, 12th Ave and 24th Ave, based on concerns we heard about safety and accessibility for people bicycling or walking through these intersections. This winter the project team will discuss their findings with bicycle experts, then share updated designs for public comment at open houses planned for March 2017. SDOT's Bicycle Program is advancing the design of parallel bike facilities in the corridor, and more information will be available in spring 2017.

- **Theme: Extend a bike lane on Spring St east of 4th Ave.**
 - Project team response: Madison Street BRT plans follow the 2016 Seattle Bicycle Master Plan which identifies the protected bike lane extending from 1st Ave to 4th Ave to connect to the 4th Ave bike lane. The roadway lanes and parking lanes are already at or below standard widths, and there is not enough right-of-way to extend the protected bike lane further east on Spring St between 4th Ave and 5th Ave. Additional evaluation is being conducted this winter to see if there are opportunities for additional accommodations.

- **Theme: Concerns about safety for people bicycling, intersection design elements, and intersection flow at 2 key intersections: 12th Ave / Union St / Madison St, and 24th Ave and Madison St.**
 - Project team response: The project received many questions and suggestions about how to improve these intersections, and the project team is reevaluating both intersections for improvements to serve the needs of all users. The project will have more information to share about these intersections in winter 2017.

TOPIC: PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS

SDOT received 80 comments regarding pedestrian infrastructure and access, both from individuals and from organizations. Senior living centers emphasized the importance of locating stations near their residencies for ease of mobility. Most comments advocated for additional crosswalks, especially to the center-running bus stations. Many participants used the roll plot provided at the in-person open houses to point out where crosswalks could be added.

- **Theme: Improve or add crosswalks at various intersections, including 12th Ave and 24th Ave, and near station locations**
 - Project team response: The project will continue to look at pedestrian crossings during the next design phase. Some of the locations for suggested crosswalks would adversely impact BRT travel times (such as 10th Ave and Madison St). The intersection of 12th Ave / Union St / Madison St, and the intersection of 24th Ave and Madison St, are being reevaluated to address the needs of all users, including consideration of crosswalk location and crossing time.

- **Theme: Improve sidewalks at various locations to improve pedestrian access to and from stations**
 - Project team response: The project is planning to undertake substantial sidewalk repair and restoration work – including approximately 3.5 miles of sidewalk improvements and over 100 sidewalk ramp improvements for better accessibility. This work will include evaluating curb bulbs and sidewalk widening at various locations as appropriate. We will work closely with property owners before construction to design a construction phasing plan, and during construction to keep owners updated and minimize the impact of this work.

TOPIC: LANE CONFIGURATION AND CONGESTION

We received 71 comments about the use and expansion of bus-only lanes. Of those, 55 favored bus-only lanes, including extending them further into the Central Area and Madison Valley. A smaller number (8) expressed concern that bus-only lanes would increase congestion for drivers.

We received more than 110 comments concerning traffic, many of which expressed dismay with the existing heavy traffic in the corridor. Commenters were divided on whether the project would improve mobility or worsen traffic conditions. We also heard specific concern about Spring St between 4th Ave and 6th Ave, and traffic entering I-5.

- **Theme: Increase bus-only lanes and provide more physical separation or enforcement of bus-only lanes**
 - Project team response: The bus-only lanes will be marked with red paint and signs will emphasize the lane is only for buses. Additional options to indicate separation will continue to be evaluated. For the few drivers who choose to ignore the lane separation, the Seattle Police Department will enforce the restriction. Regarding expanding the bus-only lanes east of 23rd Ave, current traffic analysis indicates buses running in public traffic lanes would maintain good travel times in this stretch of the corridor. However, the city will evaluate if changes need to be made to maintain adequate bus travel times after BRT service has started.
- **Theme: Removing general-purpose lanes will increase congestion**
 - Project team response: This fall the project completed a draft traffic analysis examining the project's impact on travel times and diversion. The draft analysis, based on the 30% design, confirmed Madison Street BRT will improve transit reliability and travel times in both directions along Madison St. By increasing transit's speed and capacity, the project will allow Madison Street BRT to carry a higher number of people per hour compared to cars.

Once the project opens in 2019, people riding the bus are expected to travel the corridor 5.2 and 7.3 minutes faster (eastbound and westbound, respectively) than they would if the project were not built. People driving are expected to travel the corridor 5.6 and 2.9 minutes slower (eastbound and westbound, respectively). The draft traffic analysis also finds some traffic will divert to other streets, and identifies several key intersections SDOT could improve through various treatments. More information will be posted this winter on the project website, www.seattle.gov/transportation/MadisonBRT.htm.

- **Theme: Let cars use bus-only lanes during off-peak times**
 - Project team response: Madison St has strong, all-day demand for transit in both directions, making bus-only lanes important for ensuring frequent and reliable transit service through a congested corridor. Allowing cars to use the bus-only lanes during off-peak times will encourage drivers to drive in those lanes during peak times as well, increasing bus travel times during non-peak time periods. During off-peak hours, the public traffic lane should provide the appropriate capacity.
- **Theme: Spring St approaching I-5 needs better management to reduce congestion**
 - Project team response: The design includes a right-turn vehicle lane heading to the I-5 ramp and an adjacent bus-only lane. Combined with transit signal priority, this lane configuration reduces weaving and will help keep both BRT and vehicle traffic moving more quickly.

TOPIC: PARKING AND HOSPITAL ACCESS

We received more than 40 comments concerning parking. Comments were divided between those who support removing parking for bus use and those who wanted to retain street parking. Those who supported bus-only lanes generally advocated for further removal of parking. Many business owners and Madison Valley residents favored keeping street parking in place, and expressed concern about load zones and losing access to buildings. In small group meetings with downtown stakeholders we heard questions about garage and truck loading access. We also received questions about how roadway changes would affect hospital access, especially for emergency vehicles.

- **Theme: How will the project affect parking spots and loading zones?**
 - Project team response: Curb space management will continue to be part of the design process and discussion, and some parking will be removed. The project team will reach out to business owners along the corridor regarding parking, loading and other potential impacts, and mitigation for removed parking spots.
- **Theme: How will garage access and truck loading areas be preserved?**
 - Project team response: Changes to the roadway as part of Madison Street BRT will not restrict current access to garages. Curb space management, which includes commercial vehicle load zones, will continue to be discussed during the design process, with more information available in winter 2017.
- **Theme: How will emergency vehicles' access to hospitals be preserved?**
 - Project team response: Emergency vehicles will be allowed to drive around the new transit island at Terry Ave and Madison St. Signal improvements will allow emergency vehicles heading to Virginia Mason to preempt signals on Spring St. Other routes that emergency vehicles currently use, such as the eastbound route from downtown to Swedish Hospitals, will be maintained.

TOPIC: CONSTRUCTION

Business owners and operators contacted through briefings and door-to-door outreach expressed concern about construction impacts, especially the duration of construction directly in front of their

doors. We did not receive many questions about construction during the in-person open houses or via the online open house.

- **Theme: How will construction affect access to my business or building?**
 - Project team response: The project team is already thinking about construction phasing, and has begun reaching out to business and property owners along the corridor to begin developing a construction phasing plan, informed by a pre-construction survey with businesses along the alignment to understand operations and needs, and discuss potential construction impacts. The project team is also working closely with the Office of Economic Development to identify small business assistance opportunities.
- **Theme: How will construction and the BRT line effect on-street parking?**
 - Project team response: The project team is performing a detailed parking analysis to inform the next phase of design. This analysis will determine the best use of available on-street parking, including commercial loading and unloading needs. We anticipate some on-street parking will be removed permanently to build and operate Madison Street BRT.

What Comes Next

We are reexamining the 2 Madison St intersections (12th and 24th avenues) for ways to improve the intersection for all users. We will return to the transit, bicycling and pedestrian communities with the results of that reexamination this winter, and we will have a full updated design to share with the public in March 2017. We will also be reaching out to business owners regarding parking, loading, and other curb space management impacts.

Concurrently with this work, we are reaching out to business owners and property owners along the corridor to begin work on a construction phasing plan. As an early step, we are conducting a pre-construction survey this fall to better understand business and property operational needs. We are also moving forward with the environmental review process.

King County Metro will be conducting their own outreach regarding service along the Madison St corridor. Beginning in 2018, Metro will engage the community in a robust discussion of potential changes to other local routes that are impacted by Madison Street BRT's implementation. The exact structure and timing of that discussion has not been established. The timeframe for that discussion is consistent with past Metro service revisions that accompany the implementation of major new transit services, such as previous RapidRide lines or the implementation of Link light rail services. That discussion will explore potential changes to the routing of existing Metro routes, new routes that may be established, the frequency and span of service on all affected routes, and the associated capital investments that might be needed to support the revised service structure.

Next steps about the project will be shared on the SDOT project website (<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/MadisonBRT.htm>) where you can also sign up for the project mailing list. Questions about the open houses or the comments we heard can be sent to the project inbox at MadisonBRT@seattle.gov or by calling Emily Reardon, Public Information Officer, at 206-615-1485.