Seattle Transit Plan

To Get Seattle Moving

Executive Summary - Final

Summer 2005

(Adopted September 2005, Resolution 30799)

SDOT

Seattle Department of Transportation

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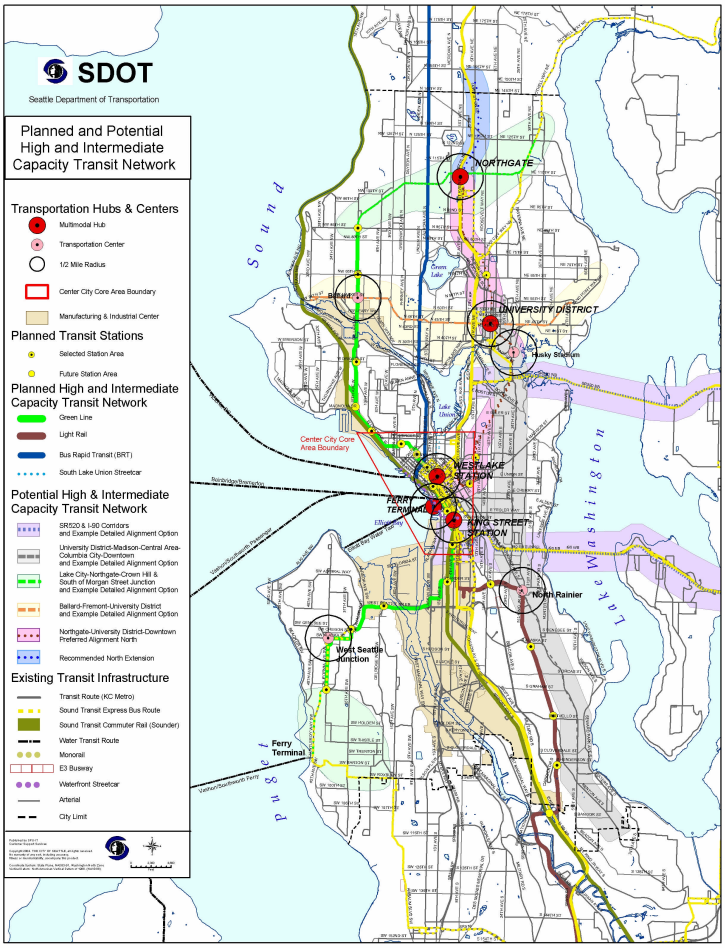
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City needs a plan for developing a transit system that supports as well as leads the development of Seattle's urban villages, as set forth by the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Clearly, Seattle will need good transit service to provide people a real mobility choice. It is hoped that this Seattle Transit Plan will provide good direction on how Seattle can achieve the transit system it needs to grow gracefully.

The Vision

In fall 2003, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) held meetings internally, and externally with stakeholders, to draft a vision of Seattle's future transit network. The vision, as shown below, focused on showing Seattle's regional high and intermediate capacity transit corridors as well as key transit passenger facilities, e.g. multimodal hubs and transportation centers. Along with the Seattle urban village strategy, it provided the direction needed to develop the Seattle Transit Plan.



Plan Objectives

The purposes of the Seattle Transit Plan are:

- To get Seattle moving again and support economic growth. Seattle needs a transit plan that clearly shows how the Seattle urban village strategy will be supported. It will support updates of other City plans: Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Strategic Plan, neighborhood plans.
- To enable the City to be more proactive on the future of transit in Seattle. We want to know how various transit services and programs work together in an integrated transit network. The plan timeframe is 2005 to 2030.
- To help the City work better with our partner transit agencies by identifying Seattle's key transit corridors and needs. Each of these agencies do transit planning for Seattle, e.g. King County's Six-Year Transit Development Plan, Sound Transit's Phase 2 planning.
- To link City transit strategies to specific connections or corridors, i.e. making City policies and SDOT strategies operational.
- To estimate transit service funding needs by more clearly identifying the City transit priorities and corridor needs.

Key Plan Elements

The plan recommends Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) strategies for making transit a "real choice". Many of them are related to the plan's six main elements:

1. Seattle Connections – The Urban Village Transit Network
2. Major Transfer Points -- Multimodal Hubs & Transportation Centers
3. Criteria for Evaluating Technologies
4. Transit Classifications
5. Transit Quality of Service Measures & Transit Priority Treatment Toolbox
6. Estimate of Service Funding Needs to Build the UVTN and Priorities for Transit Service Investment

1. Seattle Connections – The Urban Village Transit Network

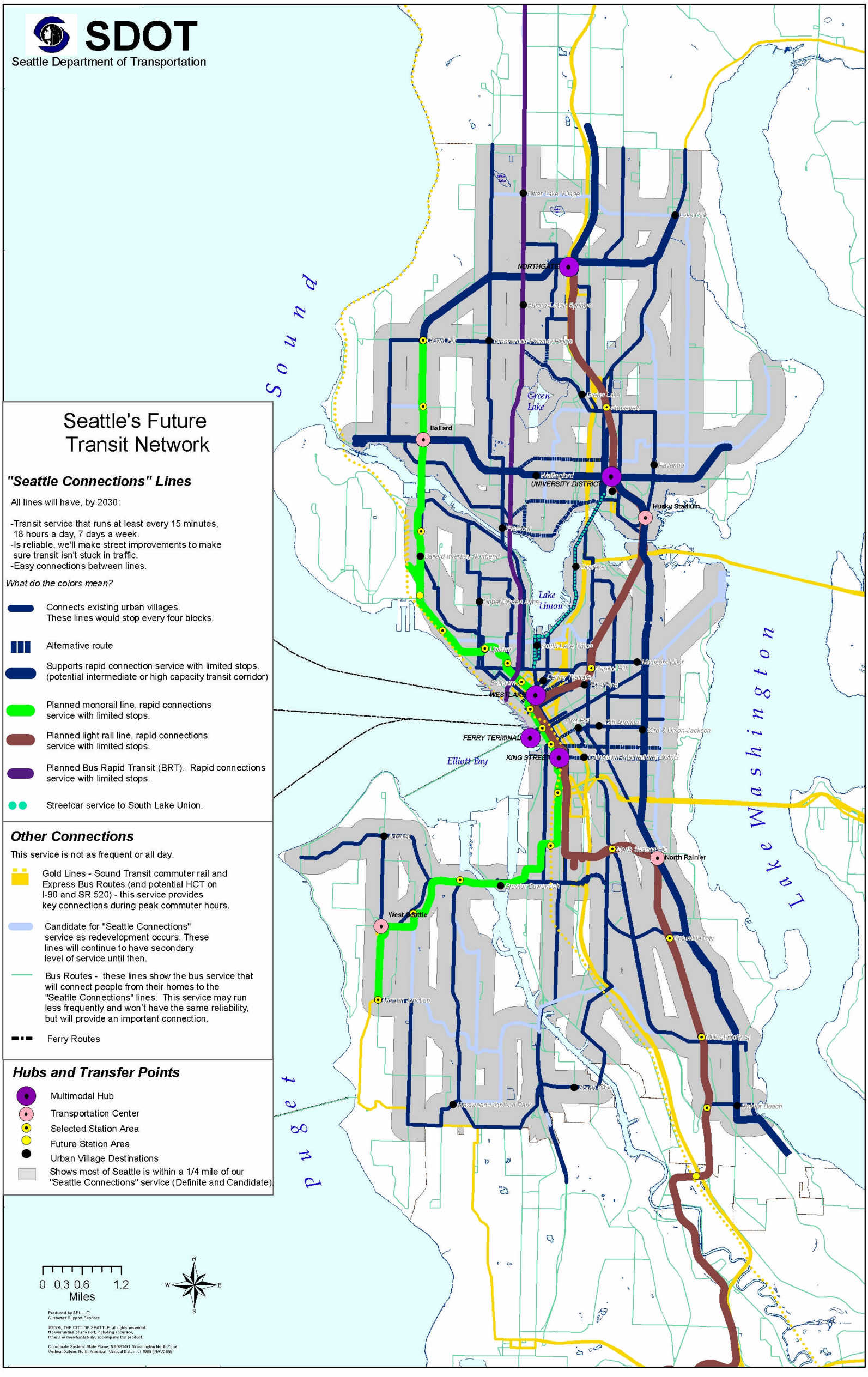
To support the Seattle urban village strategy, SDOT has developed an Urban Village Transit Network (UVTN) or "Seattle Connections" as shown in the next map. It represents the backbone of the Seattle transit network, carrying the majority of the Seattle transit system's riders.

Seattle Connections has the following characteristics:

- Connects Seattle's urban villages
- Provides 15 minute or better service frequency, 18 hours a day, 7 days a week, in both directions
- Fast and reliable
- Focused on performance rather than technology; it includes regional high capacity, intermediate capacity and local transit
- Easy connections between lines
- Has a sense of permanence to support transit oriented development and promote economic growth
- Performance monitoring using quality of service measures for service frequency, span of service, transit travel speed, passenger loadings and reliability.

The UVTN will allow Seattle to become a more livable city where we do not need a car for mobility.

In addition to the UVTN, there is the Secondary Transit Network or "STN". This network consists of service that is not part of the UVTN. Its primary function is to provide Seattle service coverage and serve specialized markets like commuter express service. Over time it will become a smaller share of the City's overall system.


SDOT
Seattle Department of Transportation
Seattle's Future
Transit Network
"Seattle Connections" Lines
All lines will have, by 2030:
-Transit service that runs at least every 15 minutes, 18 hours a day, 7 days a week.
-Is reliable, we'll make street improvements to make sure transit isn't stuck in traffic.
-Easy connections between lines.
What do the colors mean?
Connects existing urban villages. These lines would stop every four blocks.
Alternative route
Supports rapid connection service with limited stops. (potential intermediate or high capacity transit corridor)
Planned monorail line, rapid connections service with limited stops.
Planned light rail line, rapid connections service with limited stops.
Planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Rapid connections service with limited stops.
Streetcar service to South Lake Union.
Other Connections
This service is not as frequent or all day.
Gold Lines - Sound Transit commuter rail and Express Bus Routes (and potential HCT on I-90 and SR 520) - this service provides key connections during peak commuter hours.
Candidate for "Seattle Connections" service as redevelopment occurs. These lines will continue to have secondary level of service until then.
Bus Routes - these lines show the bus service that will connect people from their homes to the "Seattle Connections" lines. This service may run less frequently and won't have the same reliability, but will provide an important connection.
Ferry Routes
Hubs and Transfer Points
Multimodal Hub
Transportation Center
Selected Station Area
Future Station Area
Urban Village Destinations
Shows most of Seattle is within a 1/4 mile of our "Seattle Connections" service (Definite and Candidate).
0 0.3 0.6 1.2
Miles
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Coordinate System: State Plane, NAD83-91, Washington North Zone
Vertical Datum: North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88)
Puget Sound
Lake Washington
Elliott Bay
Lake Union
Green Lake
Bitter Lake Village
Lake City
NORTHGATE
Aurora-Licton Springs
Crown Hill
Greenwood-Phinney Ridge
Ballard
Roosevelt
Ravenna
Wallingford
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT
Husky Stadium
Fremont
Eastlake
Ballard-Interbay-Northend
Upper Queen Anne
Uptown
South Lake Union
Capitol Hill
Madison-Miller
Belltown
Denny Triangle
Stadium
WEST LAKE
First Hill
12th Avenue
23rd & Union-Jackson
FERRY TERMINAL
KING STREET
Chinatown-International District
Alaska
North Beacon Hill
North Rainier
Greater Duwamish
West Seattle
Columbia City
Morgan Junction
MLK at Holly St
Seward Park
Westwood-Highland Park
Rainier Beach

2. Major Transfer Points – Multimodal Hubs and Transportation Centers

The plan identifies the city's "Multimodal Hubs" and "Transportation Centers" as well as other key transfer points.

The difference between a Multimodal Hub and a Transportation Center is the intensity of transportation activity and land use associated with each facility. The Multimodal Hubs are located in urban centers where multiple modes intersect. The Transportation Centers are mostly located in hub urban villages; they are also locations with mobility options.

As the City, we can work to make these places great public spaces that provide seamless connections between modes.

3. Criteria for Evaluating Technologies

All feasible technologies need to be considered for the UVTN corridors. The plan identifies the types of criteria the City would like planners to consider when developing proposals for the UVTN. The criteria are based on:

- Findings from recent Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) analysis of high capacity transit corridors
- Evaluation measures used in the City's Intermediate Capacity Transit (ICT) study. It began by evaluating 47 routes drawn from neighborhood plans, previous studies, public suggestions and input from the Elevated Transportation Company, King County and Sound Transit.

4. Revisions to the Transit Classification Map

The plan updates the City's Transit Classification map and characteristics of the different classifications. Some of the changes are:

- Update the Transit Way classification and add two Transit Way corridors to the classification map
- Show bus turnarounds on the classification map
- Increase maximum volume limits by 5 vehicles per peak hour to better match the Minor and Major Transit classifications to current bus volumes
- Add performance measures consistent with UVTN implementation.

5. Establishes Transit Quality of Service (QOS) Measures and Transit Priority Treatment Toolbox

By establishing transit quality of service (QOS) measures for transit in Seattle and using a transit toolbox, the City can save transit service hours and increase ridership. The plan identifies five QOS measures for monitoring UVTN corridors performance: 1) service frequency, 2) span of service, 3) travel speed, 4) reliability, and 5) passenger loadings. It also describes the different tools that can be used to get transit moving faster and/or more reliably, i.e. make City policies operational.

SDOT will begin the performance monitoring process on a portion of the UVTN beginning with the frequency, span of service, and transit travel speed measures. SDOT's objective is to keep transit speeds in UVTN corridors above 30% of the posted speed limit consistent with existing resources.

SDOT is working with Metro and other transit agencies to provide good service frequency and span of service in the UVTN corridors.

6. Provides Estimates of Service Funding Needed to Build the UVTN by 2030 and Prioritizes Transit Service Investments

Finally, the plan has service cost estimates for what it will take to make Seattle's transit vision a reality.

An important step the City can take to help reduce transit costs is to work with transit agencies on moving transit through congestion to make it quicker and more reliable. The plan estimates that if transit service currently using UVTN corridors operated at the policy speed threshold of 30% of posted arterial speed limit, Seattle could save 121,084 service hours annually or $11.5 million a year. Additionally, the annual cost of achieving the minimum service frequency and span of service for the entire UVTN (this is the 2030 goal) would drop from $73 million to $57 million if Seattle can achieve and maintain this minimum speed threshold.

An understanding of the Seattle's transit service needs makes it easier for the City to prioritize transit service resources as they become available and to make strategic investments. The plan's service investment strategy places an emphasis on completing the UVTN, provides criteria for making specific transit route investments, and describes how transit connections should be improved over time as more resources become available.

The plan should provide Seattle's citizens and the City's partner transit agencies, which are responsible for building and maintaining Seattle's transit network, a clearer context and vision of the City's transit priorities.

Next Steps

The plan will be finalized with adoption of the City's updated Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP), which is scheduled to occur during the second quarter of 2005. As we receive public feedback from this process we will review and revise our strategies to be consistent with the TSP strategies.

SDOT is working with King County Metro to begin implementation of a select number of UVTN corridors. This activity will begin with monitoring of transit service frequency, span of service, and transit travel speed plus identification of available resources that can be used to improve or maintain UVTN performance in these corridors.

The Seattle Transit Plan will be updated periodically to support major updates of the TSP and of our partner transit agencies' plans, e.g. King County's Six-Year Transit Development Plan.