

APPENDIX J: BICYCLE AND TRANSIT INTEGRATION IN SEATTLE

KC/METRO has earned a reputation as being one of the most bicycle-friendly transit agencies in America, owing to their early development and subsequent refinement of the Bike & Ride program. KC/METRO has been a pioneer in the specific development of “Sportworks” transit vehicle bicycle carrier rack, and their decision to comprehensively equip their entire fleet of coaches has resulted in significant bus usage by bicyclists. For example, approximately 10,000 bicycles were loaded on KC/METRO buses per week throughout the region in August 2002.

In addition, KC/METRO has worked to improve the quantity and quality of bicycle parking at transit facilities throughout Seattle and King County, including funding (with the PSRC and The City of Seattle) development of BikeStation Seattle. This bicycle parking facility was the first staffed bicycle parking facility in Washington.

In 1996, residents of King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties voted to fund the Sound Transit high-capacity regional bus and rail transit services. The Sound Transit system includes commuter rail service to King Street Station in Seattle from Tacoma in the south and from Everett to the north, and regional express bus service linking activity centers throughout the region. The centerpiece of the system is the Link Light Rail System which is scheduled to open in 2009 and will serve a corridor from the University District to Sea-Tac Airport via the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel.

In 1999, Sound Transit adopted general policies guiding development of service supporting bicycle access to regional transit service. Based on a concept of TOTAL Access (see CALL-OUT BOX), the policies are intended to ensure that the unique characteristics of bicycling and long-haul high-capacity transit are utilized in an efficient manner that accommodates an increasing number of trips accessed by bike.

CALL-OUT BOX:

Sound Transit TOTAL Access Policy

“Sound Transit is committed to encouraging and providing bicycle access and has adopted a policy of total access for cyclists—on transit vehicles and at stations.”

--Sound Transit website

T: To the transit system

O: On the vehicles

T: Through and across barriers created by the system

A: At the stations

L: Low-cost, effective and efficient

Both Sounder Commuter Rail and the Regional Express bus service have bicycle access systems and policies that are familiar around the United States. In the case of Link, there is significant interest in the manner in which the new system will accommodate bicyclists both on transit vehicles and at stations. Concerns have been expressed by the public and by local jurisdictions that station designs in particular do not provide either adequate space for bicycle parking or enough potential capacity at start-up to serve what is expected to be significant bicycle access volumes. This is particularly true for the stations north of the King Street Station.

In 2000, the Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a study to determine the feasibility of creating larger, staffed bicycle parking facilities known as Bikestations at key locations on the Sound Transit and KC/METRO transit networks. A key component of the study was development of a demand-assessment methodology that could predict potential bicycle parking demand at transit-related facilities. The study envisions development of high capacity Bikestations at several specific locations, including:

- King Street Station / Pioneer Square (currently open)
- Montlake Flyer Station - SR 520
- University of Washington
- Tacoma Dome Station
- Everett Station
- Overlake Park & Ride (programmed)
- Downtown Bellevue Transit Center (programmed)
- International District Transit Station

The study did not assess (with the exception of the International District facility) Link Stations. At the time, necessary information on projected volumes of users, on-vehicle carrying characteristics, and station design were unavailable. Recent approval of an extension of the initial Link segments to the University of Washington will bring LRT to an area of Seattle with the highest levels of both bike use and bike/transit access. In addition, a station is proposed near the Burke-Gilman Trail and the existing Montlake Flyer Stop - both centerpieces of bicycle commuting in the City of Seattle.

Recent voter approval of King County's Transit Now bond issue promises to increase bus service in a number of specific corridors, including development of Bus Rapid transit service with new vehicles and increased service frequency. This increase in transit capacity will bring more Bike & Ride space to key corridors such as SR 520, and reduce waiting times at locations where Bike & Ride capacity deficiencies occur, most notably at Montlake Station on SR 520.

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