



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

West Mercer Place - February 8, 2011

Q. Why is SDOT considering changes to West Mercer Place?

A. With the proposed bored tunnel to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct, more traffic is expected to use Mercer Street to access the tunnel from Interbay and Magnolia. Residents and businesses in these neighborhoods asked SDOT to consider improvements to West Mercer Place and/or the intersection of Elliott Avenue West and West Mercer Place to reduce delays. SDOT agreed to evaluate alternatives to identify costs, risks, impacts and benefits.

Q. What kinds of changes is SDOT evaluating on West Mercer Place?

A. As part of the Mercer West Project, we are looking at the feasibility of several changes to West Mercer Place in the future. We may do a few of these or we may do none of them. Possible changes include:

- Complete the sidewalk on the south side of the street; and/or*
- Add an uphill bike lane; and/or*
- Add storage space to the left turn lanes at the intersection of W Mercer Pl and Elliott Ave W; and/or*
- Extend the current merge lane part way up the hill; and/or*
- Add an uphill traffic lane the entire length of West Mercer Place.*

We have not made any decisions or recommendations regarding West Mercer Place at this time. We expect to complete our analysis and present our initial results in March, 2011.

Q. When will SDOT's evaluation be complete?

A. We expect to complete the analysis by the end of February. We will present the results to community members and other stakeholders later in March.



Q. Why were there surveyors in front of my house/building?!?!?

A. The surveyors are collecting information so that we can analyze the feasibility of these alternatives with precise data and not just estimates.

Q. What do the painted lines on the ground mean?

A. Those are marks that tell the surveyor where the existing underground utilities are located. These marks are temporary and will eventually fade away. This information is needed for the feasibility study we are doing.

Q. Isn't the City just adding capacity to West Mercer Place to make up for lost capacity on Nickerson Street?

A. No. The purpose of the Nickerson Street improvements is to improve pedestrian safety. Initial data indicate that volumes have decreased only slightly on Nickerson, and traffic speeds have been reduced to a level closer to the speed limit. SDOT will continue to monitor the effects of changes on Nickerson Street through the rest of the year. In addition, while Mercer may be an alternative route for some who use Nickerson, these two arterial streets serve different markets.

Q. Don't you know about how bad the soils are under W. Mercer Place?

A. We do have reasonable information on the soils in this area from past projects and investigations. Field tests are expensive and intrusive to the nearby residents and businesses, and we will only complete detailed analyses if the City decides to move forward with additional design and analysis of one of the alternatives under consideration.

We are also reviewing these alternatives from several other perspectives, including:

- Computer simulations of 2015 and 2030 traffic conditions*
- Geometric design (drawing layouts of the design alternatives) and impacts to parking and access along West Mercer Place*

We will use this information to evaluate the feasibility of all of the different alternatives. If a decision is made to move forward with designing an alternative, we will present that information to the public and involve them in the design process. At this time, we do not have money to construct any of the alternatives.

Q. Don't you know about the trestle that used to be along the side of W. Mercer Place?

A. Yes, we know about it. The City's Municipal Archive has a very good photo of it from 1921: <http://goo.gl/QCovB>

If it is decided that a West Mercer Place design alternative should move forward we will definitely investigate this further. We are assuming in our cost estimates that the trestle is still there.

Q. Are you taking away all of the parking on W. Mercer Street (between 5th Avenue W. and Queen Anne Avenue N.)?

A. No. There are no plans to remove all of the parking. Some parking may be removed near Queen Anne Ave. N. and 1st Ave. N. to allow for left turn pockets. We are also considering an option that would allow the parking near these left-turn pockets to remain in the middle of the day and evenings and would have "No Parking" signs during the AM and PM commutes.

Q. Are you taking away all of the parking on W. Mercer Place (between Elliott Avenue W and 5th Avenue W.)?

A. Under one of the alternatives that is under investigation (adding an uphill traffic lane the entire length of West Mercer Place), much of the on-street parking in the public right-of way on West Mercer Place (between Elliott Avenue W and 5th Avenue W) would be removed. There will not be any changes to the existing parking on private property.

Q. Why haven't I heard about any of this before?

A. We will be setting up public meetings to share the data from our feasibility study as soon as it is complete. At this time, we anticipate that to be mid-March.

We have done the following public outreach on the Mercer West project as a whole:

- Approximately 35,000 postcards were mailed within the Queen Anne, Magnolia, Interbay, South Lake Union, Cascade, Eastlake, and Denny Triangle neighborhoods announcing September 21, 2010 Open House.*
- Print and online advertisements were placed in the Queen Anne News & Magnolia News noting the project Open House. Also, an Open House press release was distributed to local media outlets and the same information information was sent to a listserv, over 30 local blogs and forums, and via Twitter and Facebook.*

- *Presentations were made to approximately 30 community and business meetings between July and December 2010.*
- *Presentations have been made to eight community and business organizations thus far in 2011.*
- *Project information is available online*
(www.seattle.gov/transportation/merceroest.htm) and posted to the SDOT Blog:
 - <http://sdotblog.seattle.gov/2010/09/23/keep-that-input-coming/>
 - <http://sdotblog.seattle.gov/2010/09/16/tuesday-night-learn-about-the-other-merceroest/>

In all of our presentations (and on our web site), we have included a section that refers to the feasibility analysis that is being done on West Mercer Place.

Q. Why would you try to widen a residential road this much?

A. The entire Mercer corridor, from Elliott Ave. W to I-5 is classified as a “Principal Arterial”. It is one of three east-west principal arterial streets between downtown Seattle and the Lake Washington Ship Canal. A principal arterial is defined in the City’s Comprehensive Plan as:

Principal Arterials: Roadways that are intended to serve as the primary routes for moving traffic through the city connecting urban centers and urban villages to one another, or to the regional transportation network.

The alternatives that are being reviewed are not out of character for a principal arterial.