

### **III. Comments and Responses to Comments Received on the Draft Northgate Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP) and Draft EIS**

The Final EIS provides responses to all substantive comments received on the Draft EIS. Two comment letters were received from individual citizens and organizations; responses to these comments are provided below. A Community Forum and EIS Meeting was held on June 8, 2006 to receive written or oral comments on the Draft EIS and Draft CTIP. No comments were provided by attendees of this meeting.

After considering the written comments, and conducting additional outreach, SDOT revised the CTIP to incorporate the following changes:

- Addition of four new projects related to residential/non-arterial streets, designed to enhance safety in neighborhoods (sidewalks and traffic calming); and
- Coordination with King County Metro (and providing a portion of the financing) to install additional bus shelters.

The addition of these projects would not have any significant adverse impacts to the environment and did not require revision of the Draft EIS analysis.

Each comment letter is reproduced below, with each substantive comment given a separate number. A response to each numbered comment is provided following the letter.

**Letter No. 1 - Joan E. Miller (p.1)**

**Letter No. 1 - Joan E. Miller (p.2)**

**Letter No. 1 - Joan E. Miller (p.3)**

## **Responses to Letter No. 1**

### **Comment No.1**

The draft CTIP includes four high priority sidewalk and/or traffic calming projects of significant scope on local residential streets and seven pedestrian improvement projects on arterials streets that are primarily residential in nature. The final CTIP will include an additional four pedestrian improvement projects that benefit residential streets.

Implementation of these projects and other pedestrian improvements recommended in the CTIP are expected to promote walking and reduce drive-alone travel. The improvements would also protect the residents of these streets by providing a place to walk separated from vehicle traffic and slowing the speeds of cut-through traffic.

The implementation of CTIP will allow all intersections within the study area except one (N Northgate Way/Meridian Avenue N) to operate at a Level of Service (LOS) “E” or better. LOS “E” is the performance benchmark established in CTIP. CTIP considers LOS “E” adequate for intersections within a highly urbanized area such as Northgate where much of the CTIP emphasis has been placed on improving non-motorized transportation.

*[Note: CTIP technical analysis indicated that the intersection of NE 92<sup>nd</sup> Street and College Way would operate at an LOS “F” in 2010. However, field observations suggest better performance now and into the future. Therefore, further analysis is warranted before a definitive LOS could be forecast].*

CTIP will strengthen the parking management system by better matching the demand and supply of parking through implementation of a parking brokerage system. On-street parking controls will ensure adequate turn-over on streets adjacent to businesses and discourage parking spill-over into residential neighborhoods.

CTIP’s recommended transportation improvements will also support growth in housing and jobs, which will benefit the city and region as a whole.

### **Comment #2**

In addition to the identified CTIP projects that are designed to benefit pedestrians, bike riders and transit (see Draft EIS Table 3a), most of the projects that benefit autos will also benefit pedestrians, sometimes quite substantially. For example, the three roundabouts that are recommended in CTIP will make it safer and more comfortable for pedestrians to cross busy intersections. The redesign of the intersection of Northgate Way/3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue N, which serves as the main mall entrance, will include new marked crosswalks across Northgate Way.

The CTIP is intended to provide a balanced program of improvements that will benefit all components of Northgate’s transportation system. Differences in costs alone are not believed to be an accurate reflection of CTIP priorities.

### **Comment No.3**

The difference in traffic volumes between the 800 and 1,000 block of NE 97<sup>th</sup> Street may be attributed to traffic diversion to and from Roosevelt Avenue. Regardless, conditions on NE 97<sup>th</sup>

do not currently warrant intervention given the CTIP performance measures for non-arterial (local) streets. However, the SDOT traffic calming program may implement educational, enforcement or engineering measures to address cut-through or speeding traffic since that program uses slightly different criteria than CTIP. Residents of NE 97<sup>th</sup> can bring their concerns to the SDOT traffic calming program now or at any time in the future.

#### **Comment No.4**

CTIP evaluated the non-arterial streets identified in earlier Northgate planning documents such as the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, the 2005 Pedestrian and Open Space Connections Plan, and those streets that the public suggested had problems.

The CTIP performance measure and benchmark (revised) employed a weighed scoring system that prioritized traffic volumes and speeds as primary criteria.

School walk route and bicycle route designations were derived from school walk route maps developed by the Seattle School District in conjunction with SDOT, and the SDOT bicycle map.

Streets designated in the CTIP as “pedestrian routes” were taken from the Northgate Pedestrian and Open Space Plan (2005).

#### **Comment No.5**

Many Seattle non-arterial streets -- including many within the CTIP study area -- lack sidewalks. In making its’ recommendations CTIP attempted to select projects that were needed and feasible. Unfortunately, most agencies providing grant funding for improvements will not support the construction of sidewalks on local streets. In addition, developer contributions to sidewalk projects can be collected only for those off-site projects for which new development creates a measurable and significant impact.. In Northgate most new growth is planned to take place within the urban center, which is also the focus of sidewalk improvements.

The final CTIP will correct any errors in its inventory of existing conditions such as the presence of sidewalks.

Please see the response to Comment 4 above regarding school walk route designations.

#### **Comment No. 6**

CTIP recommends that the voluntary transportation mitigation payment program, currently in use in South Lake Union, be adapted and applied to Northgate. The City is working on this approach and expects to have a program up and running by the end of 2006 or early 2007.

Under such a program, developer contributions may be expected to be approximately 27% of the cost of the CTIP improvement projects (not including the cross-freeway bridge). Two important advantages of the new program are that: (1) the City could apply the developer contributions to any project within the study area; and (2.) unlike a mandatory impact fee program which restricts improvements to roadway capacity enhancements only, voluntary payment program funds could be applied to new pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.

Regardless of whether or not a developer chooses to participate in this program, the City will use its State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) authority to require that a developer mitigate significant traffic impacts. However, before assigning mitigation, the City must demonstrate a connection between traffic growth and its impacts.

**Letter No. 2 - Maple Leaf Community Council (p.1)**

**Letter No. 2 - Maple Leaf Community Council (p.2)**

**Letter No. 2 - Maple Leaf Community Council (p.3)**

**Letter No. 2 - Maple Leaf Community Council (p.4)**

**Letter No. 2 - Maple Leaf Community Council (p.5)**

## **Responses to Letter No. 2**

### **Comment No.1**

The CTIP attempts to balance the needs of all transportation modes in Northgate. One of the four CTIP goals is to protect neighborhood (local) streets from the impacts of excessive traffic volumes and speeds. The final CTIP contains eight project recommendations for local street improvements including sidewalks and traffic calming measures.

### **Comment No.2**

The draft CTIP developed a weighted scoring system for the evaluation of traffic conditions on non-arterial streets. The scoring system ranked traffic volumes and speeds, crash history, pedestrian facilities, whether the street was part of an authorized school walk route or identified in the 2005 Pedestrian and Open Space Connections Plan, and street design features. This scoring system was endorsed by the Northgate Stakeholder Group in an Advice Memo (September 9, 2005). When the scoring system was applied, four non-arterial streets appeared to warrant improvements such as sidewalks and traffic calming. Each of these projects scored 60 or above which, at the time, was believed to be an appropriate benchmark. for Projects of this type have severe funding constraints and are often of questionable feasibility.

At the suggestion of the Maple Leaf Community Council, the Northgate Stakeholder Group included in its Advice Memo of June 8, 2006 a recommendation that the CTIP scoring system described above be modified to more heavily weigh traffic speeds and volumes.

Following the issuing of the draft CTIP, the SDOT and consultant team project managers met with the President of the Maple Leaf Community Council to discuss adjusting the draft scoring system. A new scoring system (with a benchmark of 45) has now been developed. Applying it to Northgate resulted in identification of four additional project recommendations for non-arterial street improvements. These four projects have been included in the final CTIP.

### **Comment No. 3**

Your comment notes correctly that the Seattle Comprehensive Plan forecasts significant growth over the next 20 years in the City's designated Urban Centers, including Northgate. Previous environmental documents (e.g., City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan EIS, 1994) identify increased traffic and congestion as consequences of this forecast growth, which the City is obligated to accommodate by the Growth Management Act. The goal of the CTIP is to identify transportation system improvements that will help manage this growth.

CTIP utilized the Seattle Traffic Demand Model to forecast future traffic volumes on arterial streets. The Model does not include within its street network non-arterial streets and, therefore, cannot be utilized to forecast future traffic volumes on local streets.

CTIP evaluated existing conditions on 24 non-arterial streets which were selected based upon prior studies or identified in past plans or public input. Project recommendations emerged from

this analysis. The criteria and procedures used to identify and prioritize recommended improvements are described in the CTIP report.

While forecasting future traffic volumes is beyond the technical capacities of the Seattle Model, SDOT is prepared at any time to address residents' concerns. At such time, SDOT may conduct volume and speed studies which can be compared with CTIP baseline studies to help identify developing trends.

#### **Comment No.4**

The CTIP confirms and the Draft EIS acknowledges that arterial traffic congestion will continue to increase through much of the study area. This is a result both of growth in Northgate and of regional growth and pass-through vehicle trips. Local funds, government grants and developer mitigation payments are expected to be the primary CTIP funding sources. For example, developer contributions are anticipated to pay for about 27% of the cost of CTIP projects (*excluding* the cross freeway connection). As discussed in the CTIP report, the proportion of future funds considered possible for Northgate was based on historical patterns and use of various ratios; it was an estimate, not a proposal. In general, techniques for funding transportation improvements is limited by state law. Within the City, allocation of transportation funds to any individual neighborhood is a result of legislative action and is subject to fluctuation.

The City intends to use the CTIP to help prioritize and schedule improvements in Northgate for funding and construction. In this manner, the CTIP will provide an important tool that will help coordinate infrastructure with future growth. The City will also continue to mitigate significant traffic impacts of new development either by using SEPA-based review and mitigation, or through the voluntary participation of developers in the transportation mitigation payment program (see Response #6 to Comment Letter #1)

#### **Comment No. 5**

As a result of public input and discussion, the CTIP ranking system for non-arterial streets has been modified to more heavily weigh the factors of traffic volumes and speeds and to help identify additional streets needing attention. As a result of this readjustment, three additional sidewalk and one additional traffic calming project were identified for inclusion in the final CTIP.

#### **Comment No.6**

The "adjusted" CTIP ranking system for non-arterial street performance includes projects on streets with traffic volumes between 600 – 2000 vehicles per day.

The *Seattle Comprehensive Transportation Program Street Classification Guidelines* indicates that traffic volumes for Residential Access Streets would not be expected to exceed 1,500 vehicles per day, which is within the range indicated above. All except one of the CTIP projects on local streets address traffic volumes below the 1,500 threshold.

#### **Comment No. 7**

The final CTIP recommends that the full traffic signal at Northgate Way/8<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE not be installed *until* the second left turn lane is built at Northgate Way/5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. By implementing these projects simultaneously, traffic will be less likely to avoid 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue by

using 8<sup>th</sup>, and trips leaving the Wallace site will have the opportunity to reach 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue via a left turn onto Northgate Way.

**Comment No. 8**

The final CTIP recommends new sidewalks on non-arterial streets with traffic speeds between 28 MPH (in the 85<sup>th</sup> %) and an 85<sup>th</sup> speed of 33 MPH.

**Comment No. 9**

Both the draft and final CTIP recommend crossing improvements through the Roosevelt Avenue business district with particular attention to the new transitional housing development for sight and hearing impaired and abused women at NE 88<sup>th</sup>/Roosevelt.

**Comment No. 10**

SDOT and DPD work closely together on the urban design elements of Northgate transportation projects. Seattle's land use code, particularly the Northgate Overlay District chapter, establishes specific development standards for design improvements in the public rights-of-way on key arterial streets in the CTIP study area. The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Guidelines, other design oriented documents and the Seattle Design Commission also provides strong design guidance. As noted in the response to Comment No. 4 above, the City intends to use the CTIP to help identify, prioritize and fund recommended improvements.

**Comment No.11**

The revised CTIP includes eight project recommendations for non-arterial street improvements. In addition, residents of any local street can approach SDOT to address perceived traffic problems regardless of whether their particular street has been identified in the CTIP.