

OVERVIEW

The first open house for the Center City Connector Transit Study was held from 5:30 – 7:30 PM on February 6, 2013, at Seattle City Hall. A total of 101 people signed in to the meeting. All meeting participants who signed in received a handout that described the project and provided opportunity for comment on five major project topic areas: project purpose, project need, project goals and objectives, potential street alignments, and modes. The comment card also included a full page for any additional comments. Additionally, participants could comment by leaving post-it notes on the display boards for each of these subject areas. In total, there were 75 comments placed directly on the project boards and 30 completed comment cards. The following sections provide an overview of the comments by topic area, including examples of representative comments. Many of these findings echo comments made during the stakeholder interview process.

OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY FINDINGS

Project Purpose

1. The vast majority of comments were supportive of the project purpose and the stated goals. In particular, participants responded positively to the emphasis on legibility and transparency. A key concern was lack of continuity for travelers if a bus mode was selected.
 - a. Legibility is an issue in the current system, particularly for visitors. Comments were very supportive of improving coordination and connections between streetcar, bus, and Link light rail.
 - *“Yes, downtown needs a coordinated circulation system, not just whatever regular buses happen to overlap.”*
 - b. Several comments questioned how continuity of travel could be provided if a transfer or change of mode is required (from streetcar to bus or bus to streetcar)
 - *“We need to invest in a transit system (streetcar) that is connected, not segmented.”*
2. In addition to the project purposes described, a number of comments suggested including a reference to service quality measures such as speed, reliability, and frequency in the project purpose.
 - *“The project purpose is mostly complete, however seeing priority and dedicated ROW mentioned would be helpful. Don’t let the connector become bottlenecked in downtown traffic!”*
 - *“Should include the goal of making the connection between the two streetcars significantly faster than existing bus service.”*
3. There seemed to be some questions about the project purpose in terms of the specific trips needs it should meet in the short-term (short trips *to* and *through* downtown) and the long-term (as a piece of another priority corridor recommended in the TMP such as Ballard-Downtown). Additionally the definition of “center city neighborhoods” may be unclear.
4. Two comments took issue with the project purpose, primarily on the grounds that they preferred a lower-cost bus alternatives and on concern about a new service reducing bus service hours.

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Project Need

1. There was strong agreement that this project is needed to improve downtown circulation and connections to existing service for reasons including:
 - a. Alleviate congestion and accommodate future growth
 - b. Current surface transit options downtown are slow and hard to navigate
 - c. Reduced transit options for low-income passengers and tourists due to end of Ride Free Zone
 - d. Need to connect First Hill Streetcar (FHS) and South Lake Union (SLU) Streetcar to improve usefulness
 - e. Poor pedestrian routes through downtown
 - f. Reduce GHG emissions and provide a competitive alternative to SOV trips
 - g. Improve downtown connectivity between downtown neighborhoods and destinations, such as South Lake Union to the Downtown Core, Pioneer Square, Lower Queen Anne/the Seattle Center, and SODO/Stadiums

Several comments identified needs that are not necessary met by this project, including insufficient E/W connections downtown and connections between other (non-Center City) Seattle neighborhoods

Project Goals & Objectives

1. Most comments were supportive of the proposed project goals, with some specific suggestions or additions:
 - a. Goal 1 is important; consider mentioning East-West connections in this goal
 - b. Goal 5 is key to ridership; include wayfinding, payment, and other aspects of customer experience in the project
 - c. Add an equity goal (2 comments)
 - d. Add a goal to address service characteristics (frequency, speed, reliability) and ridership
 - i. Consider cost per rider

Modes

1. A strong majority of comments favored streetcars (27) over bus or trolleybus (6). Another set of comments (6) suggested that the level of transit priority was of equal or greater importance than mode. The comments on this topic are summarized in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 Summary of Mode Comments

Mode	Number of Comments	Comments
Streetcar	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smoother/more comfortable ride ▪ Less likely to get stuck in traffic ▪ Easier boarding ▪ More fun/better liked ▪ Greater capacity ▪ Project purpose best or only achieved by maintaining same mode ▪ Better driver of growth ▪ More reliable ▪ Already have a lot of buses downtown
Bus	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don't use rails when they aren't needed ▪ Electric power or CNG ▪ No tracks to hinder bicycles and wheelchairs
Priority more important than mode	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated ROW, queue jumps, signal priority are essential
Monorail	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We already own one, why not extend it
Gondola	1	

Other comments

2. Other themes and topics mentioned included the following:
 - a. Address cycling routes through downtown and integrate bicycling with the project. Center-running could be better for bikes
 - b. Consider off-board payment and ORCA compatibility
 - c. Implement priority treatments as early as possible, much more difficult to do later
 - d. Lack of clarity as to how this project fits in with other TMP corridor studies – Ballard to Downtown, Madison, Eastlake
 - e. Incorporate universal design concepts into the project, including tactile station maps and audible/Braille frequency information
 - f. Improve connections between DSTT and streetcar

Potential Street Alignments

Open house participants were invited to draw potential street alignment options on maps and place dots (two per person were suggested) next to alignments previously identified in the Seattle Transit Master Plan (TMP) or alignments identified by open house participants. Participants also provided written comments on the maps, boards, or comment cards. Results of the map/dot prioritization exercise and comments on the alignment alternatives are summarized in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

1. In the dot prioritization exercise:
 - a. There were 59 dots placed in support of studying a 1st Avenue alignment, either to Queen Anne or connecting to the SLU Streetcar at Westlake. Participants were somewhat mixed on which should be the priority. Eight additional dots were placed in favor of a potential SODO/Stadium extension,
 - b. By comparison, 21 dots were placed in support of studying a 4th/5th alignment.
 - c. Twelve dots were placed in favor of further study of a Waterfront Streetcar and it was noted that coordination with the Central Waterfront project is important.
 - d. Eight dots were placed in favor of a 3rd Avenue alignment.
2. Written comments on alignment alternatives primarily focused on the difference between a 1st Avenue alignment (B1, B2, or C) and a 4th/5th Couplet (A), with most comments (20) favoring 1st Avenue compared to only 3 in favor of 4th/5th.
3. Additional comments about possible alignments included a preference to avoid couplets if possible, as they are more confusing for users, and questions about whether the final alignment will connect to a streetcar line to Ballard, UW, or West Seattle. Some noted that their preferred alignment was dependent on the question of future connections, and one comment expressed hope that the line would not be incorporated as part of a Ballard-Downtown line. Participants also identified a variety of potential cross-town connections.

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Figure 2 Summary of Street Alignment Comments and “Dot” Prioritization – Primary Alignments

Street Alignment	# Dots	# Comments	Comments
1st Ave Alignments (Seattle TMP)			
1 st Ave (General)	59 (total of C, B1, B2)	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoids a couplet ▪ Too much congestion on 4th/5th, which feed I-5 ▪ Strong all-day and weekend demand compared to 4th/5th, which is mostly commuter-oriented ▪ Easier to repurpose for transit use than 4th/5th ▪ More destinations along route ▪ Connects more neighborhoods together ▪ Other streets are currently better served by transit while 1st is poorly served ▪ Opportunity to connect to stadiums ▪ Late night demand not met by existing bus service
Jackson to Queen Anne via 1 st Ave (C)	28	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connection to Seattle Center ▪ Connection to Lower Queen Anne ▪ Connection to Ballard ▪ Make Queen Anne/Seattle Center first priority, make SLU connection second priority (or vice-versa)
Jackson to Westlake via 1 st Ave and Virginia/Stewart (B1)	17	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use B1 southbound, B2 northbound (Virginia)
Jackson to Westlake via 1 st Ave and Pike/Pine (B2)	14	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides connection to SLU line
4th/5th Ave Alignment (Seattle TMP)			
Jackson to Westlake via 4 th /5 th Ave (A)	21	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct connection between SLU and FHS ▪ Allows locally-oriented “duplicate” of “express” service ▪ Consider 1st Ave as part of waterfront or other projects ▪ 1st Ave requires improvements to E/W connections as it is further from downtown core
Other Primary Potential Street Alignments Identified by Open House Participants			
Waterfront (Sculpture Park to Pioneer square via Elliot or Western, Alaskan Way to Jackson or Alaskan Way through Occidental Park and on to stadiums)	12	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alignment already exists ▪ Allows more room for bicycle facilities on downtown streets
3rd Ave (Seattle Center to Pioneer Square/Waterfront, with extension of SLU streetcar to 3 rd)	6	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make 3rd Ave transit-only ▪ Think of Market Street in San Francisco
3rd Ave (Westlake to FHS via Virginia, 3 rd Ave, Jackson, Broadway)	2		

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Figure 3 Alignment Comments and “Dot Prioritization” - Other Variations or Extensions

Description	# Dots	# Comments	Comments
1st Ave			
Extend B or C alignments to SODO/Stadiums	8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Starbucks HQ ▪ New stadium
Broadway to Jackson to 1 st to Denny or Westlake (branch at Virginia)	1		
Extend via Jackson to 23 rd & Yesler	2		
Cross-Town Connections			
Westlake via Mercer and Roy, 5th Ave N, Harrison	1		
1st Ave W to Westlake via W Thomas and Harrison	1		
Westlake to Cap Hill via Pine, Bellevue, Olive, Broadway	1		
Westlake to Broadway via Denny	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connect north ends of both lines; Link and frequent service in CBD
SLU to First Hill via Boren	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪

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Figure 4 Map-based Alignments Input from Open House Participants

