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City of Seattle Department of Transportation

# TRANSIT MASTER PLAN

## Priority Strategies

April 2012

**WALK.**  
**BIKE.**  
**RIDE.**

 **SDOT**  
Seattle Department of Transportation



Image from Flickr user Joshua Putnam

The Seattle Transit Master Plan (TMP) recommends strategies, projects, and policies that will make Seattle a more affordable, cleaner, vital, equitable, and enjoyable place to live and do business. Among the many recommendations made in the TMP, the six major initiatives that arise as near-term priorities are outlined in this section.



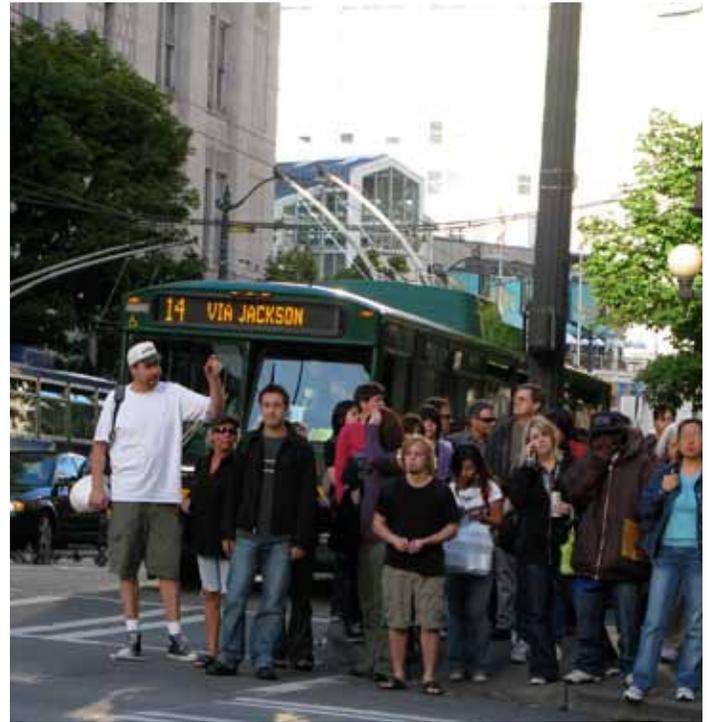
The City of Seattle plays an important role in building capital improvements that allow buses to provide fast and reliable service, as well as provide safe access to transit stops and stations.

Image from SDOT

## 1. Continue Implementation of Priority Bus Corridors

The Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT) Transit Program builds capital projects and implements programs to improve transit speed and reliability in Seattle's busiest bus corridors. SDOT projects also help make transit stops and stations easier and safer to access. The TMP recommends 16 bus corridors throughout the city that merit speed, reliability, and transit stop upgrades. However, funding for this important work may be diminished with the expiration of the Bridging the Gap levy in 2015. To ensure continued implementation of transit priority projects, the City should:

- **Renew and increase funding** so more priority bus corridor projects can be implemented more quickly.
- **Continue strong partnerships with Metro** to enhance speed and reliability where service investments are greatest and most passengers benefit.
- **Engage partnerships with neighboring cities** to ensure that transit quality improvements continue outside city limits.



Redesigning the 3rd Avenue Transit Mall would make this key downtown corridor more efficient for buses and a more comfortable, attractive place to walk and wait for the bus.

Image from Flickr user Oran Viriyincy

## 2. Develop Center City Transit to Support Downtown Growth and Vitality

In the next 20 years, Center City jobs and population are expected to increase by 60 percent. Meanwhile, there is no room to widen streets or increase capacity for automobiles. Accommodating growth in the Center City will require space-efficient, sustainable modes of transportation, particularly transit, walking, and cycling, to provide needed access and mobility. Priority TMP projects that will help support a growing economy and residential population include:

- **Connect the existing South Lake Union and First Hill streetcar lines** to create a highly visible and effective Center City circulation system. The City has received a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant to further study the best alignment for the "Center City Connector."
- **Engage businesses and community members to redesign the Third Avenue Transit Mall**, making it a safer, cleaner, more functional, and engaging civic space.
- **Use a "transit first" approach** that prioritizes throughput for transit, bicycles, and pedestrians on downtown streets where space is limited.
- **Create strong bicycle and pedestrian connections** between the Central Waterfront and key transit stops and stations on First Avenue, Third Avenue, and the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel.



Creating a transit station at or near Colman Dock would help ferry passengers make easy transit connections to destinations in the Center City and elsewhere in Seattle.

Image from Nelson\Nygaard

### 3. Plan, Fund, and Build Priority High Capacity Transit Projects

The Transit Master Plan identifies five corridors where investment in higher capacity modes of transit—such as rapid streetcar, bus rapid transit, or light rail—are needed to support population and job growth while maintaining the quality and character of local neighborhoods. In addition to the Center City Connector, two corridors through downtown that have immediate potential and deserve further study and investment are:

- **Capitol Hill – Downtown – Waterfront, via Madison Street**
  - **Partner with King County Metro** to further evaluate operational and design alternatives to improve service quality and reliability on this busy route.
  - **Create a Central Waterfront transit station** that provides an easy transit transfer to bus and rail transit for Washington State Ferry and West Seattle Water Taxi passengers.
- **Ballard – Fremont – South Lake Union – Downtown**
  - **Partner with Sound Transit** to further evaluate mode, alignment, and design alternatives. This corridor is identified in Sound Transit's Long Range Plan as a potential future high capacity transit corridor.
  - **Develop a coordinated transit-land use strategy** that allows for compact and vibrant growth in this corridor while maximizing the value of this future investment.



Dexter Avenue is a major corridor for bicycle access to the Center City and an important transit corridor.

Image from SDOT

### 4. Enhance Walk-Bike-Ride Access where Needs are Greatest

Many of Seattle's low-income residents, seniors, and other vulnerable populations live in neighborhoods distant from the urban core; many of these areas were annexed by the City and had not been originally constructed with full sidewalks. Improving sidewalks, adding bicycle facilities, and providing safe crossing treatments near bus stops can help more Seattleites use transit with a sense of safety and security. The TMP recommends that the City:

- **Increase coordination between the Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Master Plans**, including development of a "Mobility Corridor" approach that focuses on developing integrated mobility solutions in the city's most traveled corridors.
- **Ensure the Capital Improvement Plan recognizes transit access as a priority** pedestrian and bicycle project need. Updates of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans offer good opportunities to incorporate connectivity to transit stops and hubs as a criterion for prioritizing projects.
- **Develop Transit Community land use policies** that incorporate best practices for developing compact neighborhoods that promote walking, biking, and transit for more types of trips.



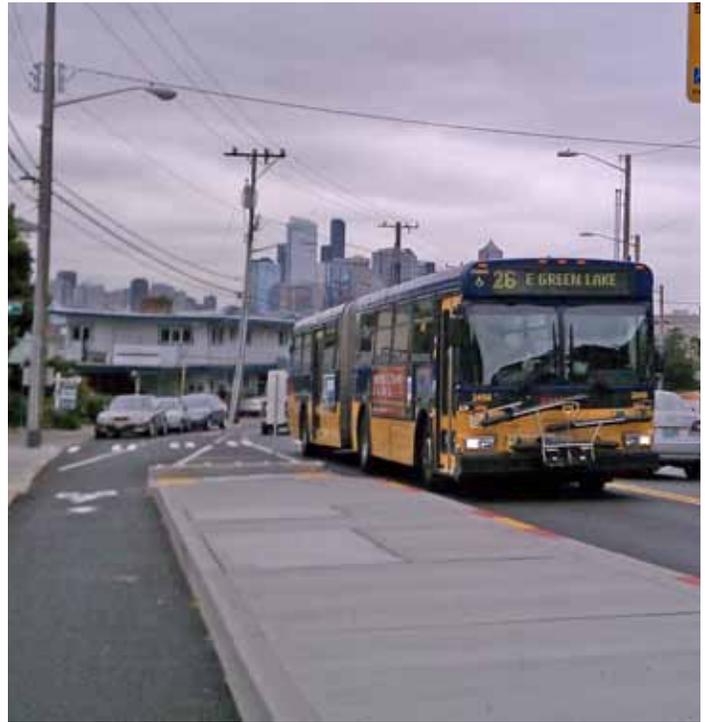
The TMP recommends that Seattle partner with transit providers to create a comprehensive system of maps and signs that provide consistent transit, pedestrian, and bicycle navigation.

Image from Flickr user Oran Viriyincy

## 5. Improve Transit Information and System Usability

Transit service offerings for Seattle residents are improving and changing every year. New light rail, bus rapid transit, and streetcar lines are being added to complement or replace historic bus services. These improvements mean more choices and more trips that involve multiple modes and/or service providers. To ensure that transit system legibility is keeping pace with new transit offerings, the City should:

- **Lead the development of an inter-agency design working group** to develop transit wayfinding and transit facility design standards.
- **Use high-quality, tactile transit station design** as the nucleus of great Transit Communities.
- **Work with Metro and Sound Transit to open source data**, allowing private innovators to create new applications and tools that enhance user information.
- **Expand efforts to provide electronic schedule information at bus stops.**



Local funding from Bridging the Gap has been used to enhance transit stops and bike/pedestrian facilities along key transit corridors, such as this boarding island and bike lane treatment along Dexter Avenue (prior to completion of the bus shelter).

Image from Nelson\Nygaard

## 6. Pursue Funding to Enhance Transit Service and Facilities

Transit agencies nationwide, including Sound Transit and King County Metro, are struggling to overcome declining tax revenues and uncertain state and federal funding support. In addition to organizing land uses to make transit more efficient, Seattle needs to grow funding to provide the level of service and capital investment required to support growth and provide high quality service that attracts people away from private auto use. To secure funding, the City should:

- **Renew and seek new local funding sources** to implement TMP capital and service priorities.
- **Work with partners to lobby for new transit funding mechanisms** such as tax increment financing, dedication of tolling revenues, and other locally- or regionally-based transit funding sources.
- **Create partnerships and leverage private investment** to help fund priority capital investments.
- **Continue to aggressively seek federal and state grants**, in coordination with other transit agencies, to maintain, improve, and expand Seattle's transit service and facilities.

## SERVING SEATTLE'S UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

The TMP is a framework for a transportation system where mobility and access is provided equally and affordably to all residents. A central theme of the plan is that access to high-quality transportation is a basic right. All people, regardless of income or ability, need transportation services that include good mobility, equal access to opportunities, and affordable cost. People should not need to own a car to access services, jobs, and recreation. Even stakeholders

with a primary interest in development of high-quality, high-frequency corridor transit service also noted the important social and human service aspects of transit that is delivered by providing good fixed-route coverage and paratransit service. Social equity considerations were fundamental in understanding Seattle's transit needs and developing TMP recommendations.



Image from SDOT



