

Westlake Cycle Track Public Open House and Public Comment Summary 11/14/2014

Overview

On Oct. 22, 2014, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) hosted the third public open house for the Westlake Cycle Track project. The meeting was held from 5:30 to 8 PM at Fremont Studios in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood. Approximately 430 people signed in at the event. A total of 307 individual written comments were submitted either at the open house or online in a public comment period from Oct. 22 to Oct. 31, 2014.

At the event, attendees were able to:

- View a series of display boards featuring information on project goals, unique needs of the project area, the cycle track alignment, and parking management techniques
- Study roll plots of the cycle track alignment
- View slideshows of the Westlake corridor and its current usages
- Meet one-on-one with members of the project Design Advisory Committee (DAC) and project staff
- Watch a project overview presentation
- Participate in a moderated question and answer session with answers provided by a panel of project staff

Blank comment forms were distributed throughout the event space along with boxes to collect completed comment forms. Four laptops were set up for attendees to enter comments. The display boards, fact sheet, and comment form were also made available on the project website for those unable to attend in person.

Meeting goals

- Share the updated cycle track alignment with the public
- Explain the evolution of the cycle track alignment and how it incorporates community feedback
- Allow the community to provide feedback on:
 - Cycle track alignment
 - Parking management opportunities
 - Preferences based on travel mode
- Educate attendees on the "rules of the road"
- Learn about the next steps in the project

Key findings

- The majority of commenters identified as bicyclists (70%) and pedestrians (57%)
- Safety was a primary concern. Many commenters felt the cycle track alignment would improve safety by increasing predictability in the corridor, separating modes of travel and keeping bike

riders away from traffic. Some were concerned that the cycle track would not improve safety unless safe bike riding behavior was enforced.

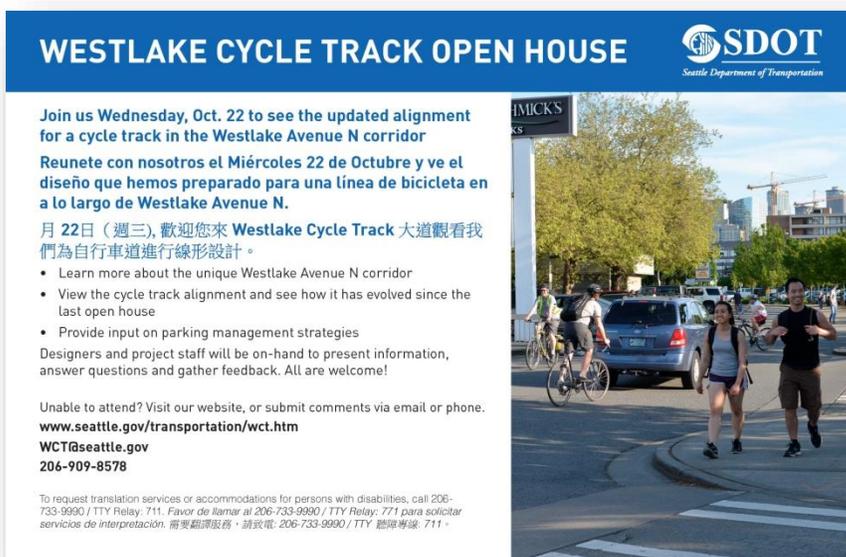
- Many people were concerned about the safety of pedestrians crossing the cycle track and called for well-marked pedestrian crossings
- Some commenters liked that the cycle track alignment preserves the majority of existing parking spaces while providing a safe and attractive cycle track. However, many remained concerned that any reduction in parking spaces could harm businesses and residents.
- Some who stated opposition to the cycle track suggested moving the alignment to the west side of Westlake Avenue N or directing all bicycle traffic to Dexter Avenue N
- The most popular parking management techniques were:
 - Consider revisions to residential parking zone permit eligibility (57%)
 - Extend time limits and paid parking throughout the corridor (56%)
 - Employee commute reduction programs (50%)

Continue reading for more information on these topics.

Meeting notifications

SDOT used the following tools to publicize the open house:

- Postcards delivered to approximately 45,000 residents and businesses in the project area and general vicinity
- Email announcement to 916-person listserv
- Announcement on project website, SDOT Facebook and SDOT Twitter accounts
- Spanish ads aired on Spanish-language radio
- Press release
- Announcements at Design Advisory Committee meetings



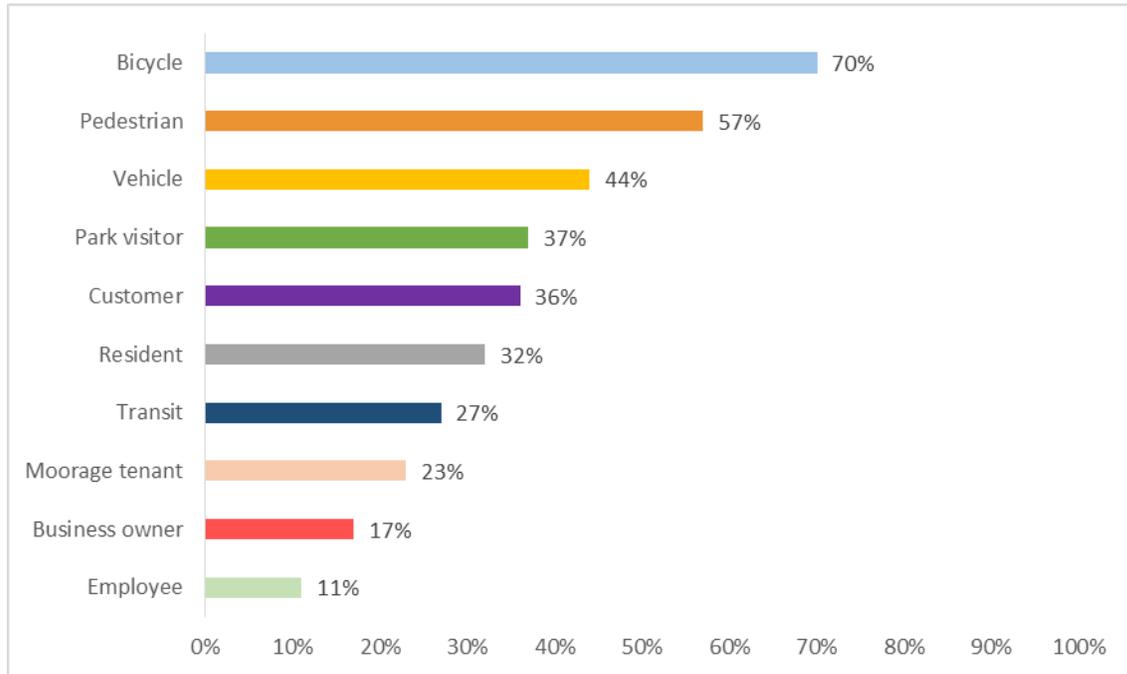
Postcard mailed to residents and businesses announcing the open house

Meeting attendee demographics

Relationship to the Westlake Avenue N corridor

The comment form asked people to self-identify in what role they use the Westlake Avenue N corridor. Commenters were asked to check all that applied and thus percentages add to greater than 100%.

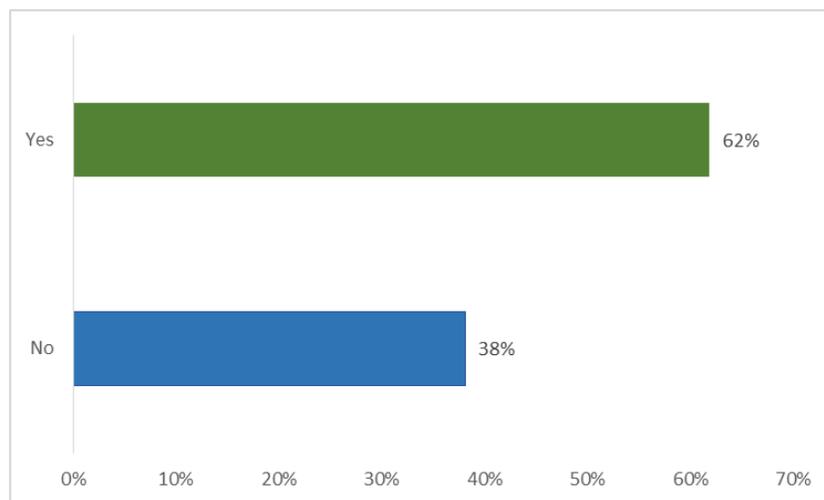
Answered by: 297 (97%)



Attended a previous Westlake Cycle Track outreach event

The comment form asked people if they had attended a previous Westlake Cycle Track outreach event, such as a Design Advisory Committee meeting or previous open house.

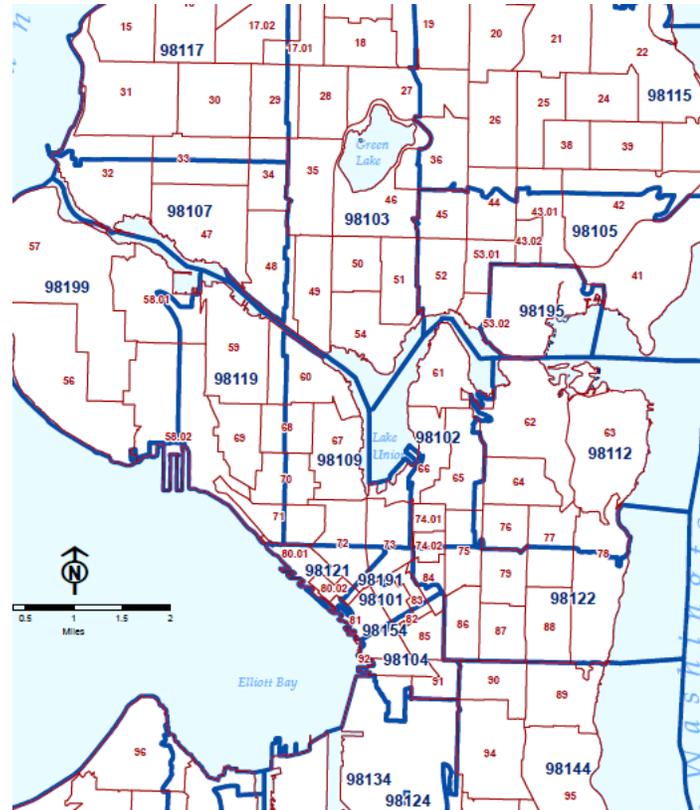
Answered by: 286 (93%)



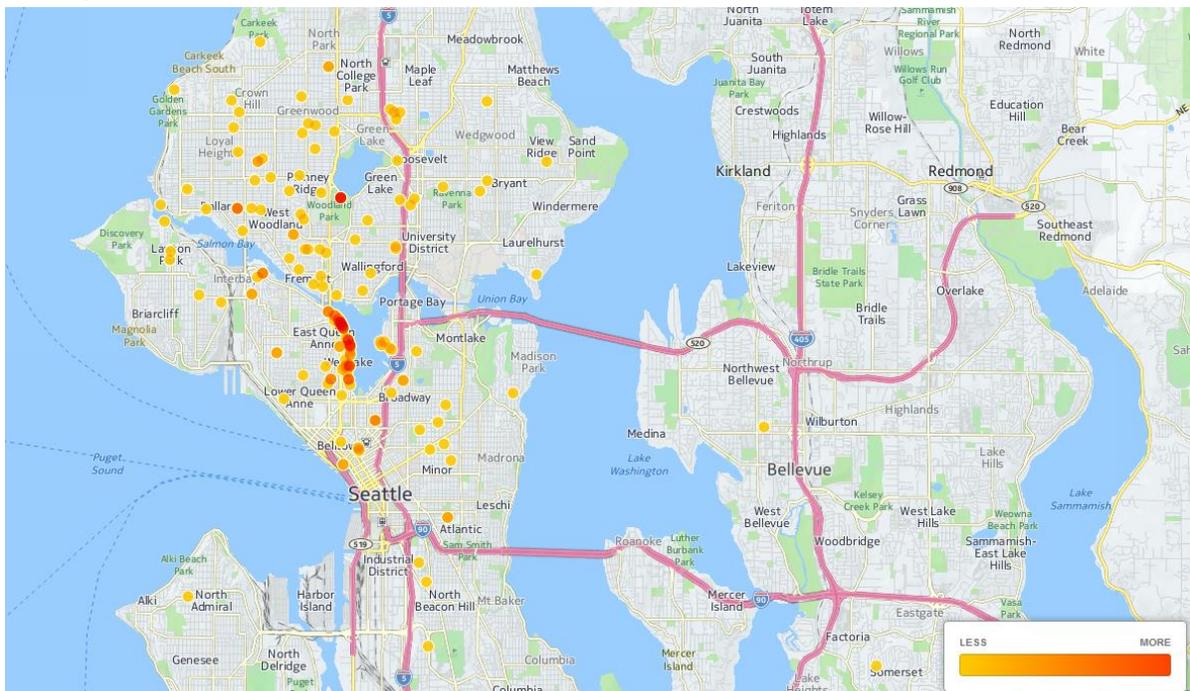
Zip Code

A total of 415 open house attendees provided their zip code, displayed below (zip codes shared by fewer than 10 attendees shown in “other”).

Zip Code	Quantity	% of attendees (providing zip code)
98109	117	28%
98103	82	20%
98107	42	10%
98117	28	7%
98115	26	6%
98105	20	5%
98102	17	4%
98119	16	4%
98199	10	2%
98112	10	2%
Other	47	11%



Heat map of attendee addresses



Comment summary

Comment process

The public was able to provide feedback about the project in the following ways:

- Written comment forms at the open house
- Online comment form available on the project website from Oct. 22 to Oct. 31, 2014

Data analysis

Project staff transcribed all written comments and tabulated all quantitative answers. Project staff read each open-ended answer and categorized by theme. Key themes are described below.

Cycle track alignment feedback – Key themes

The comment form asked people to provide their thoughts on the cycle track alignment, including what they liked and what they would want to change.

Safety

Safety was one of the most frequently discussed topics within the open house comments, and was raised by all types of users of the corridor. Many respondents described the current conditions of the Westlake corridor as unsafe because of the lack of predictability as bicycle, pedestrian and vehicle modes mix.

Many commenters, whether they were people who walk, bike or ride, saw the cycle track alignment as a promising safety improvement for the corridor. People looked forward to commuting by bike or enjoying the area with their family once the facility is built.

Representative comments:

"I ride this route each day and at present it is very unsafe (cars pulling out suddenly). I'm surprised there aren't more accidents."

"Love the idea of a designated spot for bikes...Right now it so confusing, chaotic and unsafe."

"In my neighborhood (2460-2470 Westlake), cars will not have to cross the cycle track. This seems safer than putting the track down the middle or on the west side of the parking lot."

Bicyclist behavior

Many expressing opposition to the project questioned the cycle track's ability to improve safety and predictability, often citing bicyclist behavior as the cause of unsafe conditions in the corridor. Many called for additional measures to manage and enforce safe bike riding behavior.

Representative comments:

“Cyclists currently using the Westlake corridor speed through with total disregard to either pedestrians or vehicles they are supposed to be sharing the road with. This project will cause injuries to pedestrians.”

“Without requiring riders to use caution and only ride in limited areas, they are entitled to continue risky behavior.”

“Managing [bicyclist] speeds through this corridor would provide much better safety for all including the cyclists themselves.”

Pedestrians

Respondents frequently referenced the safety of people who walk as an important consideration in the cycle track alignment. Many bicyclists encouraged some sort of distinct separation between the cycle track and sidewalk, such as grade level or a physical barrier. Many respondents, particularly those stating opposition to the project, were concerned about pedestrians’ safety as they cross the cycle track.

Representative comments:

“Install formal pedestrian crossings (i.e., yellow paint at all locations) at access gates to moorage slips, entrances to floating homes, & to businesses along this corridor. Install signs/enforce speed limits for cyclists.”

“Forcing all pedestrians to have to cross the bike path to access businesses and marinas is not a safe option. Even as it is now, we have had many near misses in front of Marina Mart.”

“I am concerned by the few marked pedestrian crossings. People will walk out of businesses and want to go to their cars. There need to be marked crossings, the kind that mean pedestrians have the right of way, for each building at minimum.”

“There should be a clear demarcation between cycling and pedestrian areas.”

“Would be nice if cycle track were a little more separated from sidewalk - either lower the bike track or put in bollards.”

Parking

Many commenters discussed parking. Most of these comments expressed concern that any reduction in parking spaces as a result of the cycle track would hurt businesses, residents, marinas and their moorage tenants. A number of commenters noted that the unique nature of the working waterfront is dependent on cars and cannot use alternatives such as public transit or bicycles. Many commenters also called for parking management techniques to reduce the number of “park and riders” in the corridor and prioritize parking for residents, businesses and moorage tenants.

Representative comments:

“There are 1200+ boats on the waterfront here. To use a boat, the boater needs to be able to provision his boat and that must be done by car or truck. That car or truck needs to be parked while the boater is gone for multiple days.”

“I understand trying to be fair to cyclists but to diminish NECESSARY parking is not being fair to the people who work here or shop for boats here. Taking a bus is not even an option for me. Parking in Fremont or Queen Anne is not an option for me as walking from there wouldn't get me to my job on time here to open my office.”

Some commenters commended the cycle track alignment for preserving a majority of existing parking spaces. Some encouraged SDOT to prioritize bicycle facilities above parking preservation.

Representative comments:

“I think the east side alignment makes the most sense. It minimizes parking space losses while keeping a usable bike trail.”

“This plan will massively drain riders down from Dexter and see huge ridership growth. We need to plan for it - even if it means reducing parking.”

Moorage tenants and boating use

In addition to general pedestrian safety, commenters were specifically concerned about the safety of pedestrians crossing the cycle track to access moorage slips on the east side. A common response was a request to install formal pedestrian crossings using yellow paint at all locations where there are access gates to moorage slips.

Representative comments:

“As I read about the ... proposal I am struck at its failure to protect the pedestrian traffic to offices and moorage for both private and business needs.”

“Please install formal pedestrian crossings with yellow paint at all locations where there are access gates to moorage slips, entrances to floating homes, and entrances to businesses along this corridor.”

Commenters also frequently cited concern over parking for moorage tenants. Many people felt that moorage tenants should have special parking passes, similar to Residential Parking Zone permits (RPZs) due to a concern that a reduction in parking and loading would have detrimental effects to moorage tenants and marinas.

Representative comments:

“Create a Marine Tenant Parking Zone (MTPZ) which would be similar to a Residential Parking Zone. This would allow the City to apply the effective marina parking management practices

currently found in Shilshole Marina (operated by the Port of Seattle), and Elliott Bay Marina. These Seattle 2 marinas support a similar size moorage tenant population as is found along Westlake Ave."

Business effects

Some commenters expressed concern that the cycle track would have negative effects on area businesses, both because of potential reductions in available parking for customers and marina users, and because of difficulty crossing the cycle track for deliveries and marina usages.

Representative comments:

"My husband and I own and established Waterline Boats, a business dependent on our Westlake Avenue North location...we have boat washers, mechanics, electricians, designers etc. all coming to work on our boats. It can be quite difficult finding parking near our office with our existing situation. And please keep in mind that they have tools, materials, machinery, equipment that all needs to be hauled to the docks and doing this all safely from a distance through the parking lot and while crossing a bike track where the bicyclist does not have speed or stop restrictions is concerning."

"...The track has poor sight lines in front of the stairs on the south side of the China Harbor building where little kids run up the stairs and toward cars in the parking lot, creating pedestrian bicycle conflicts. The lack of loading zones for area marine based businesses is also concerning. The overall attitude of 'well retail sales could be helped' completely ignores the unique marine commercial nature of many of the businesses in this area and results in poor planning & communication with the neighborhood."

Many people also voiced concern that the cycle track disproportionately prioritizes the needs of bike riders over the needs of businesses.

Representative comments:

"Very few cycles will use the track as compared to the number of people using cars for business. Cycle riders will seldom if ever stop and shop or buy."

"I feel that the cycle track is for the benefit of a few cycle riders at the expense of many. If the cycle riders used the parking lots as casual riders (10 MPH or less) there is no need for a cycle track. If enacted as planned all business operations will be compromised."

However, some comments suggested that the cycle track may actually increase business and economic vitality in the Westlake Corridor.

Representative comment:

"It's unfortunate that this lakefront isn't better utilized for bike and ped traffic. It could be a gem of the city and bring so much vitality to Westlake and SLU. The businesses there now are so uninviting because they're dominated by cars and surrounded by cement."

Connections

A number of commenters, especially bike riders, raised questions and concerns about how the cycle track would connect to the bicycle network on the north and south ends. People were especially concerned about the connection to the north end. Some who were opposed to the project felt that without designated bicycle facilities directly connecting to the cycle track, any bicycle facility in the Westlake Avenue N corridor was a poor idea.

Representative comments:

"Please include blocks 2800 and 2900 of Westlake in the project. Everything you do or don't do in the project will affect us. The new alignment drawings show 2 exit points from the project, one along this corridor linking to the canal trail, Interbay, west Ballard, Magnolia, and downtown. This area is already used regularly by bikes and the project will increase those numbers. The area is unlighted, potholed, narrow, lacks sidewalks, intermingles all transport modes together. ... Consider using the 2800 and 2900 blocks of Westlake as a location or mitigating the loss of landscaping and trees in the project area."

"I hope the connections at the north and south ends are intuitive and perhaps curbed so that cyclists are most likely to use the track. As a cyclist I want this to be used and work."

"Can't wait for this. I'm a little worried about the transitions at the ends -- getting bicycles on and off at the south end. Seems like bicycle traffic streams will be crossing on south bound going left into SLU and northbound going right to get into the track."

"Why do this project NOW? When the track will dump all cyclists at north end and south end onto Westlake and existing pedestrian paths. Why not delay this until we know how to connect with downtown and points north and west?"

Design ideas

A number of commenters provided design suggestions in response to the alignment. The most common suggestion was that the cycle track be moved to the west side of Westlake Avenue N in order to reduce conflicts with pedestrians and remove cyclists from the parking area. Others called for all cyclists to be directed to existing bicycle facilities on Dexter Avenue N, or to create separate northbound and southbound bicycle routes utilizing Westlake Ave N and Dexter Avenue N.

Representative comments:

"If SAFETY were really the overriding goal for SDOT it would work to encourage more cyclists to use the existing bike lanes on Dexter which is a much less complex setting and thus safer, but it refuses to do so. That could be accomplished by redesigning Dexter to resolve any safety issues"

cyclists feel currently exist and by making the Westlake corridor less attractive to cyclists by things such as implementing speed controls.”

“[A] West sidewalk single cycle track single lane option should be adopted. The East sidewalk alignment is not safe because it requires pedestrians to pass through the high speed cyclist path. There is room for a cycle track, but not one that is 10 feet with a 2 foot buffer + an 8 foot sidewalk. A possibility is to split the track- a single lane southbound on the west sidewalk of Westlake Ave N and a single northbound lane where the current alignment is.”

Other modifications to the cycle track alignment were provided including: a wider cycle track; a narrower cycle track to preserve more parking; not splitting the cycle track at Driveway #12; using tactile measures to accentuate crossings and differentiate the cycle track from the sidewalk; ensuring parked cars and vegetation do not obstruct sight lines at crossings; adding additional lighting; and preserving or expanding landscaping, where possible.

Representative comments:

“Too narrow: one way = 7' two way = 15'.”

“Concrete/tile on crosswalks so that texture is evident by feel. Rock, not plastic caps – they’re really slippery. Need tactile dividers to differentiate sidewalk + track so you know you’re crossing from lot to sidewalk.”

“Split in north alignment by Driveway #12 seems odd- make sure you can see through vegetation.”

“I am a cyclist and support bike lights where necessary along the corridor.”

Finally, bike riders, corridor residents and business owners commented that designing the cycle track for bike riders going 10 MPH was unrealistic considering the area is heavily used by bicycle commuters.

Representative comments:

“I am concerned like others about the design speed set at 10 mph. To be a viable commute corridor, which it does need to remain, it needs to be higher. I have seen it suggested elsewhere that 15 mph would be sufficient, and I agree with that. The Burke-Gilman speed limit is at 15 mph, so I think establishing this one to come as close as possible to that would be a good idea.”

“The design is not intended to accommodate through cyclists cruising at 20mph and above and should not attempt to do so... My point is that by itself, the cycle track is a fine idea. But it should be understood that it is not intended to accommodate through cyclists. Either cyclists must slow down, or the safety of pedestrians must be abandoned.”

"I know this is an all ages / all abilities effort but the hard core bikers are the ones promoting it. They want an area where they can go fast and not worry about being hit by a vehicle. For SDOT to expect the users will hold to a 10 MPH speed limit is very naive."

Improvement and compromise

Some commenters viewed the alignment as an improvement from previous concepts, and saw it as a reasonable compromise for improving the safety of all types of users.

Representative comments:

"I think this is a great plan that compromises both cyclists and drivers' needs."

"I believe this is the most equitable solution to balance Westlake business needs and cyclist/pedestrian safety."

"Very good. Will dramatically improve safety. Thank you! I'm glad that compromise was found that should please most. Great work. Can't wait to use it to get to my office on Westlake in SLU."

Public involvement process

A majority of comments expressed a positive response to the public involvement process. People felt that despite the complicated nature of the project, everyone's interests were taken into account.

Representative comments:

"LOVE that the city listened to our concerns about the first two ideas and tried another option."

"I recognize that this is an emotional issues for many people and I appreciate and admire the effort to make this planning process open and inclusive."

"Although no plan would be perfect given the complexities in this corridor, the present plan seems well thought out. The planners have certainly listened to business owners and residents of the area, and have preserved most of the parking."

Some comments also expressed the sentiment that the public involvement process did not consider the business and resident interests of Westlake corridor, and instead prioritized the interests of people who ride bikes.

Representative comments:

"The cycle track affects the businesses and BOATERS and the cyclists are really the only real voice. SDOT wants a bike track - so they are seriously ignoring the people it affects."

"Unfortunately, it appears that 'we the people' of this wonderful marine dependent neighborhood have had no say whether or not a dedicated cycle track disrupts our neighborhood."

Loading

Some respondents discussed the importance of loading zones, either siting specific locations for loading zones or commenting generally that loading zones are necessary for businesses and moorage tenants. Some suggested restricting loading zones to commercial use. Some bicyclists encouraged clearly marking loading zones and limiting where deliveries can occur across the cycle track. A few commenters discouraged loading zones if they would result in a loss of parking.

Representative comments:

"At Western Yacht Harbor, 2412 Westlake Ave N we need to keep our loading zone (existing already). Having a loading zone is essential to our ability to operate. Equipment, thousands of pounds of ballast."

"I live at 2460 so if there was a zone near us and I couldn't find parking I'd unload before going to find a spot."

"Every building needs a load zone. And load zones need to be restricted to commercial load zone permitted vehicles. Room for 2 30-35 foot trucks at each load zone (minimum) (don't forget the turning radius for vehicles pulling away from curb)."

"I think the key feature is to make sure load zones are safely marked."

"Please do your best to limit areas where loading deliveries might occur in the bike lanes. Trucks parking in the lanes is a common problem throughout the city."

"Trucks that need to unload should use orange cones in parking areas."

Pedestrian connections

The comment form asked for specific locations where pedestrian crossings are preferred. Responses included the following landmarks:

Where would you like to see pedestrian crossings in the corridor?

Answered by: 146 (48%)

South Driveways 1-5	Central Driveways 5-9	North Driveways 9-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argosy • Starbucks/AGC • Kenmore Air • Sightseeing boats • Lake Union Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China Harbor • Safe n’ Sound swimming • Lake Union Crew • Seattle Scuba • Bus stops • Marina entrances including Marina Mart, Westlake Landing and Julie’s Landing • Kayak rentals • Electric Boat Co. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Union Crew • Conduit Coffee • Pacific Coast Yacht Service located at Western Yacht Harbor • Moorage slips and floating homes

Loading zones

The comment form asked respondents to list areas where they would use a loading zone within the corridor. Responses included the following landmarks:

Where would you use a loading zone within the Westlake corridor?

Answered by: 88 (29%)

South Driveways 1-5	Central Driveways 5-9	North Driveways 9-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenmore Air • Lake Union Park • Near dragon boating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China Harbor • Northwest Outdoor Center • Seattle Scuba • Near the railroad garden • Julie's Landing • Lake Union Building • By marina entrances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McGraw street • In front of Lake Union Crew • Just south of Driveway 14 • Pacific Coast Yacht Service located at Western Yacht Harbor

Parking management priorities

The comment form asked people to rank a list of parking priorities from 1 to 6, where 1=most important and 6=least important. *Answered by: 233 (76%)*

Overall, “reduce park and riders” received the highest proportion of people ranking it most important. “Preserve the most parking” received the most polarized response, with nearly 50% of commenters considering it the least important priority, but 25% considering it the most important.

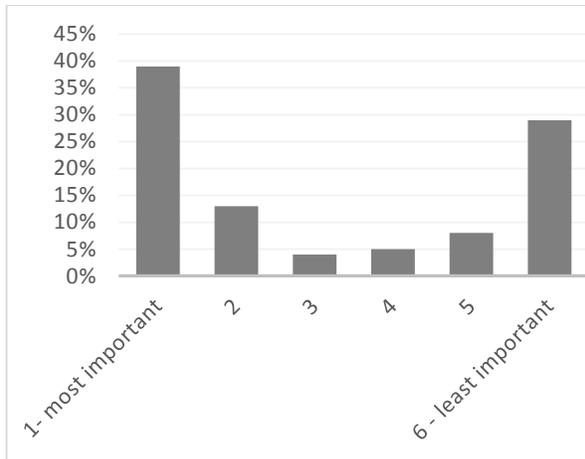
Below are rankings from commenters who identified as residents, employees, business owners, or moorage tenants, as they are the users most likely to park in the parking area on a regular basis.

Please rank your parking priorities for the Westlake corridor

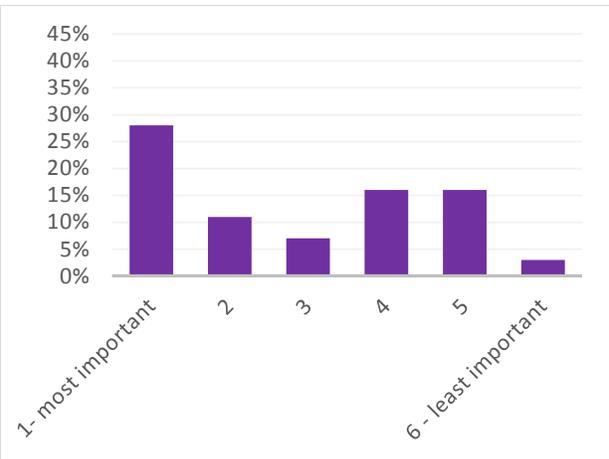
(Responses from those identifying as residents, employees, business owners or moorage tenants)

Answered by: 134 (85% of the residents, employees, business owners and moorage tenants who completed the survey)

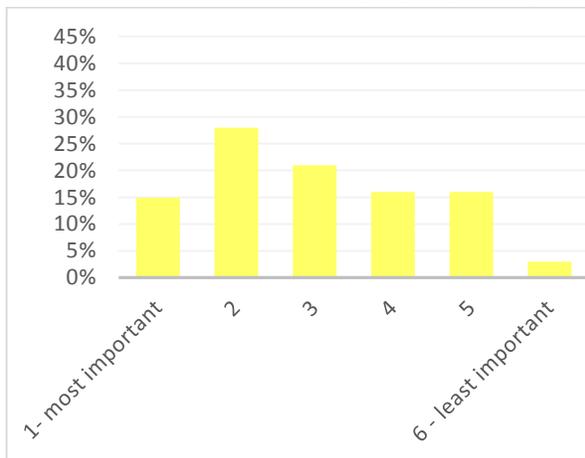
Preserve the most parking



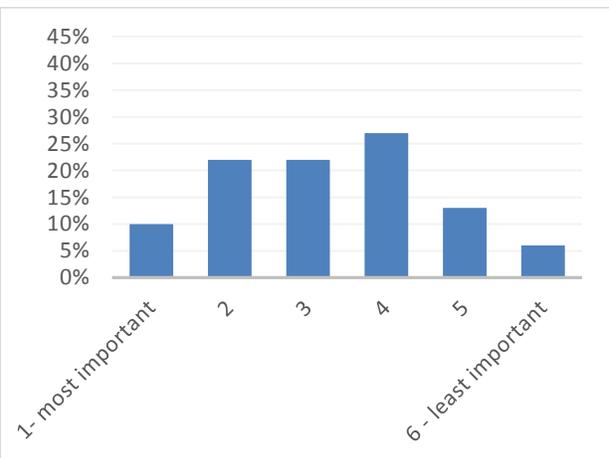
Reduce “park and riders”



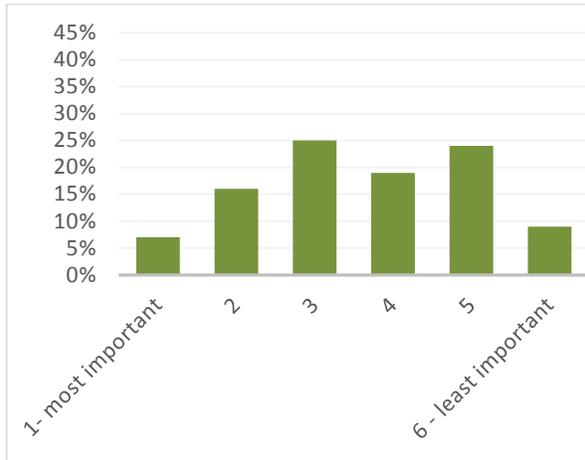
Accommodate resident and employee parking



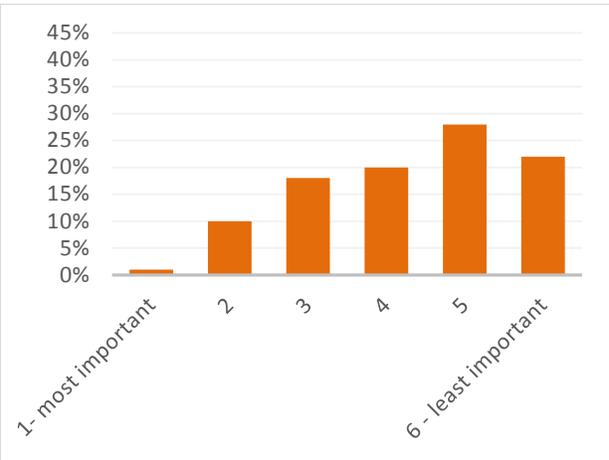
Ensure customer and visitor access



Accommodate parking for moorage tenants



Accommodate loading

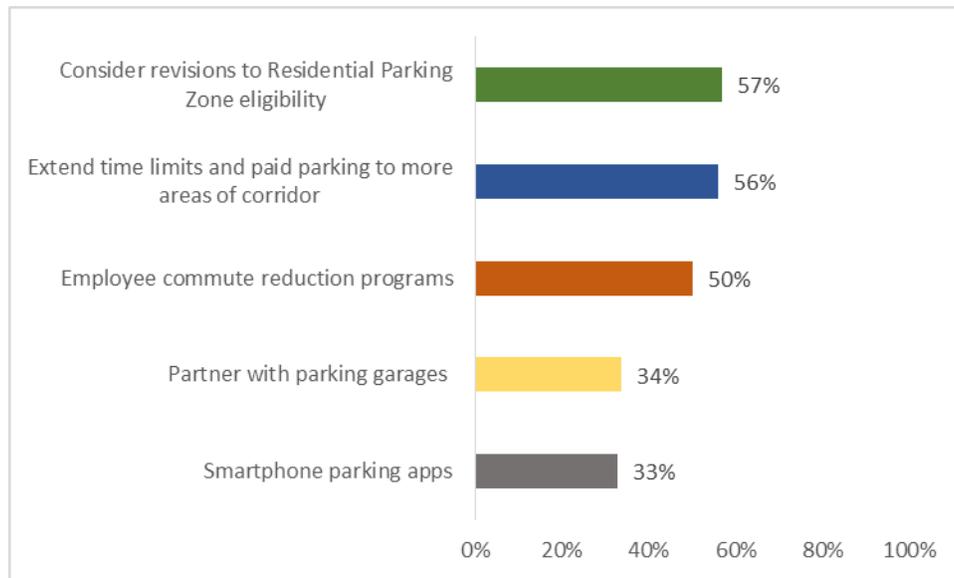


Parking management techniques

The comment form listed a series of parking management tools and asked commenters to check any they wished to see implemented in the corridor.

Which of the following parking management tools would you like to see implemented in the corridor (check all that apply)?

Answered by: 231 (75%)



Some commenters provided additional suggestions for parking management tools, including:

- Maintain free parking
- Exclude residents to the west of Westlake Ave. N from eligibility for residential parking zone permits for the Westlake Ave. N parking area
- Create a Marine Tenant Parking Zone (MTPZ) permit for moorage tenants
- Provide parking permits for businesses and employees

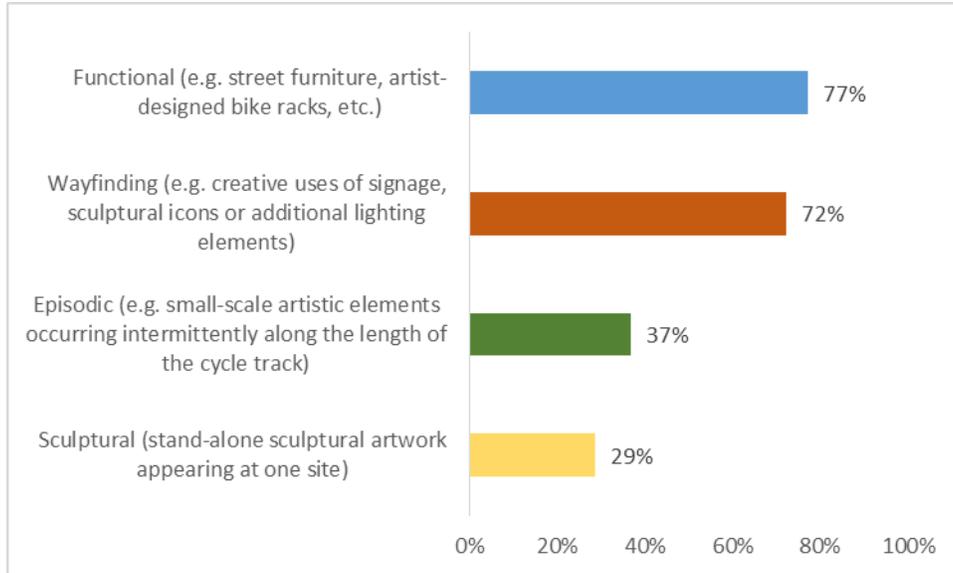
- Improve public transit in the area

Public art

The comment form asked people what type of public art they would prefer for the corridor. Commenters could check as many responses as applied.

What type of public art would you prefer for the corridor (choose all that apply)?

Answered by: 184 (60%)



Appendix

Audience question summary

At the open house, the project team presented on the project and accepted questions from the audience. These questions are summarized, below.

Parking

- Has any consideration been given to time limits on parking on the west side of the parking area?
- What kinds of revisions are being considered for residential parking zone permits? Will you add businesses?
- In the past, I feel like SDOT has told us they're going to incorporate measures to manage parking, but these promises haven't been delivered on. What's going to be different this time with signage and delivering on promises?
- Who will be paying for parking once parking management changes are implemented and there is a reduction in parking spots in the area due to the cycle track?
- Has thought been given to freeing up more parking capacity through alternative transportation (shuttle, transit, biking, etc.)?
- Loading zones haven't been allotted yet under the new cycle track alignment. How can you calculate lost parking without that info?

Pedestrian elements

- What are you doing to make it safer for pedestrians to cross the cycle track?
- When a pedestrian is using a crosswalk across the cycle track, who has the right of way?
- Have there been any pedestrian counts along the corridor?
- What will prevent bikes from riding on the sidewalk?
- Can you reduce the sidewalk width to 6 feet?

Behavior and safety of drivers and bike riders

- Once the cycle track is built, are there any plans to reduce speed of cars as they enter the parking area?
- What's being done to mitigate bike speed on cycle track?
- How will you keep cyclists from riding in the parking area?
- How is SDOT educating motorists about the rules of roads and bikes?
- With higher volume, is there possibility to make it illegal for cyclists to ride on the sidewalk?
- How can you be confident that proper cyclist behavior will be enforced?
- Sounds like you'll manage traffic in drive aisle with bumps and stop signs, but cyclists get to go straight through. Why are there no traffic calming devices on the cycle track?
- How do we know pedestrians won't be in the cycle track or vehicles parking/loading across it?
- Given the difficulty of controlling cyclists' speed now, why do you think you'll be able to do it once the cycle track is built?

- Why were some City laws regarding bike behavior taken off the City bike map? Please publicize these laws.

Connections to the bicycle network

- How will the cycle track connect to streets and the bike network on the south end?
- How will north end of the cycle track link to the Fremont Bridge?
- Why put a cycle track in now when there's a need for bicycle facilities to the north and south of this area?

Business effects

- What's the benefit to Seattle of building a world class cycle track between South Lake Union and Fremont?
- Is there confidence that cycle track will bring more workers into the City?
- What is SDOT doing with this project to benefit the small businesses within the corridor?
- Will additional bike traffic benefit businesses more than the loss of parking in the area will hurt them?
- Will bicyclists really visit and use the businesses along the corridor?
- How will bikes frequent businesses once the cycle track is built if cyclists aren't frequenting these businesses now?

Design elements

- The alignment shows stop signs at driveways; which way will the signs face?
- When trucks are parking adjacent to the cycle track, what will prevent truck beds from overhanging onto the cycle track?
- Will there be bike racks added in the corridor with this project?

Location and alignment

- Where has the space to construct the cycle track come from?
- Why is a water dependent waterway being considered for bike trail?
- Why should the cycle track be on east side of the Westlake corridor rather than the west side?
- Why isn't SDOT building an elevated cycle track?
- How has the City justified a cycle track on Westlake when we've already invested in a bike lane on Dexter?