

Open House Summary

Introduction

Approximately 100 people attended an open house on March 18, 2004 at the South Lake Union Naval Reserve to learn more about and comment on draft recommendations for the South Lake Union Transportation Study. The open house was held in conjunction with the Mercer Corridor Project, which is beginning scoping for an environmental impact statement. The open house was advertised in the following ways:

- Over 1,713 postcards were mailed to the project mailing list.
- A notice of the joint Mercer Corridor Project/South Lake Union Transportation Study meeting was included in the Mercer Corridor Project newsletter that was mailed to the South Lake Union Transportation Study mailing list and carrier routes within the South Lake Union and Cascade neighborhoods.
- A notice was posted on the South Lake Union Transportation Study project Web site (<http://www.cityofseattle.net/transportation/southlakeunion.htm>).
- Open house information was posted on SLUFAN's Web site (<http://www.slufan.org>).
- An e-mail invitation was sent to approximately 36 key stakeholders who had provided input throughout the development of study recommendations.

Attendees had the opportunity to view boards showing draft study recommendations, speak with project team members, and comment on the recommendations and what they thought should be included in the final South Lake Union Transportation Study report. A handout detailing the draft recommendations and addressing frequently asked questions was available. Attendees were encouraged to access the project website for more detailed information, including a color map of the recommendations. Comment forms were also available, and could be filled in at the meeting or mailed in at a later date.

Comment Summary

Twenty-seven comment forms were submitted at the open house, and several online comment forms were received through the project website. In addition, feedback heard by project team members during the open house is included in the comment summary. All comments are included verbatim at the end of this summary.

In addition to asking for contact information, comment forms asked for feedback on two questions:

1. What do you think of the recommended improvements?
2. Is there anything missing from the recommended improvement package?

The following summarizes general comments that were received on the draft recommended improvement package:

- Build the streetcar.
- Make Westlake and Ninth Avenues two-way.
- Increase and improve transit, including added connections to the regional transportation system.
- Narrow Valley Street and make Mercer Street two-ways.
- Connect South Lake Union to surrounding neighborhoods and downtown Seattle.
- Include facilities to make South Lake Union more pedestrian-friendly.

Specific recommendations or suggestions received at the open house and online include:

- Add a connection across SR 99 at Harrison Street, perhaps instead of the Thomas Street overcrossing.
- Improve pedestrian facilities in the Cascade neighborhood.
- Add sidewalks at Eastlake Avenue E and Aloha Street near Fred Hutchinson.
- East/west bus routes should travel on Harrison instead of Republican.
- Look at the steepness of the grade on the proposed Thomas Street overcrossing; it may not be suitable for trolley buses.
- Add bicycle lanes on Westlake Avenue N.
- Consider transportation via water to South Lake Union Park.
- Lower Aurora Avenue and reconnect the east/west street grid.

Open House Comment Forms

Verbatim responses to each question on the comment form are included below.

What do you think of the recommended improvements?

- I strongly support the streetcar. It is a great economic development tool, as in Portland and Tacoma, also will connect South Lake Union to Westlake transportation hub. I strongly support the Mercer/Valley and Thomas crossing of Aurora as a reasonable stabilization of this regional corridor that allows for a great new community on Valley Street.
- I like most of the recommendations – need to do something to make the south end of Lake Union feel more friendly and connected. The streetcar is a good concept – it should be expanded to Capitol Hill and Seattle Center and link to the monorail system. More connections!
- It needs to be walkable from south of Mercer to the waterfront to really make this area work.
- Full steam ahead!
- Very extensive. Looks like this will really improve getting around. I am not sure I see the benefit of crossing Aurora, but maybe I did not see those boards.
- This will dramatically improve the traffic and pedestrian flow in the area. I really like the idea of the streetcar as a handy, pedestrian-friendly alternative to buses.
- Travel times for 2030 look better. Recommend using Harrison rather than Thomas as east/west vehicular arterial across Aurora for better garage connection at Seattle

Center Memorial Stadium future parking garage. Harrison and Fifth intersection is better for reducing pedestrian/vehicle conflicts than Thomas and Fifth, where monorail riders will cross Fifth.

- The woonerf on Terry Avenue is great. The streetcar is great. Downtown residents need it to get to the new South Lake Union Park – our only city/waterfront park.
- Narrowing Valley is a great idea. I like the two-way Westlake. It is much better to create a neighborhood.
- The South Lake Union streetcar is not a cost-effective transit investment. No service subsidy is available and inadequate capital is available given the stillborn state of RTID legislation. Instead, improve Metro Route 70, which would achieve the project's objectives better at a lower cost. Frequent service could be provided on both Fairview and Dexter Avenues oriented to Third Avenue in the central business district. The recommended plan would split service between three close north/south corridors. Also, the proposed streetcar does not propose a good transfer connection with the bus tunnel, while Route 70 does have good connections.
- Please do not provide bike lanes on Fairview Avenue. They would conflict with a more frequent Route 70, which should stop in-lane. Instead, provide bike lanes on Westlake Avenue N.
- Convert Westlake and Ninth Avenues to two-way streets.
- I am very supportive of the proposed improvements, especially the addition of the streetcar connecting Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center to Westlake Center. This would connect all businesses now relocating to South Lake Union. The streetcar velocity and proposed location will enhance the “pedestrian vitality” as well as provide great mobility and interconnectedness between downtown and businesses.
- The planned improvements are a great step to solving the traffic jams on Mercer Avenue and provide much needed access to the South Lake Union neighborhood. The area is underserved by public transportation and the addition of a streetcar line would be well received by the employees of local businesses.
- I especially like: improving pedestrian access and making Valley Street narrower, constructing the Lake-to-Bay multi-use trail, and adding regional transit service to South Lake Union.
- Overall the plan sets the stage for local businesses to collaborate together, which creates new guidelines for other members of the community to follow in step with and promote unity citywide.
- I am excited to see a comprehensive plan to solve the Mercer Mess with this much momentum. I think the streetcar will be a well-used mode of transportation between the hub at Westlake and the large employment area at South Lake Union. Please keep bicycles in mind in all planning.
- The recommendations are fantastic! It is about time we cleaned up our traffic messes and started being proactive regarding ways to get around. Let's get this moving.
- The streetcar makes tremendous sense and is an important component of the transportation system.
- The Mercer and Valley changes are great. Let's connect downtown, bury SR 99, and re-connect to Seattle Center. I wish it were the Seattle Commons, but this is a great vision for our city and citizens.

- It is important to note that all key recommended improvements work together to improve traffic/pedestrian/transit access both in South Lake Union and the city's other neighborhoods (i.e. Queen Anne, Fremont, Eastlake, Denny Triangle, Seattle Center, etc). Two-way Mercer and reducing Valley right of way plus the streetcar are the two key elements that need to be implemented. Thomas/Harrison green streets and connecting the street grid across Aurora are important elements to improving the overall circulation system.
- Looks great – it meets the needs of many people including residents, employees and visitors.
- Each metamorphosis gets better. If South Lake Union meshes with the viaduct project, it will be great.
- Wonderful – just build it!
- I am really supportive of the Mercer Corridor Improvement Project (with two-way traffic and a large median). It will address a long-standing regional traffic problem. With less traffic on Valley Street it will create pedestrian friendly access to South Lake Union Park and Lake Union. I am also supportive of the proposed streetcar. It will fill a much-needed public transportation link from the central business district to South Lake Union and possibly UW. From the studies I have seen, it appears to be a sound investment of taxpayer's dollars.
- I think the recommended improvements are well thought out and help Seattle build for the future. The streetcar is a real benefit and an important element in the overall success of this recommendation.
- Recommend loop routes for buses and streetcar with very short headways. Most successful modes do not have strict schedules and long wait times. Is there much advantage of running the streetcar up Fairview versus a loop at South Lake Union Park as the north terminus?
- I am very supportive of the infrastructure improvements being recommended for the South Lake Union area, especially the streetcar, two-way Mercer Street and a smaller Valley. I think these improvements will benefit our entire region by making our city more livable, more appealing and less congested. I work downtown at 7th and Olive and would love to be able to hop on the streetcar to get to the new South Lake Union Park. I also travel quite a bit on Mercer and Valley and think improvements to those roads are critical to increase safety and mobility.
- I can hardly wait to see the transportation options instituted. It is imperative that we all work together to get the streetcar approved and the Mercer Corridor improved. I am a big user of these streets and look forward to the entire package moving forward.
- This seems expensive, and I see no major improvement for \$.25 billion.

Is there anything missing from the recommended improvement package?

- No, the package looks great. We need to pull together to get the funding from federal and state sources, the RTID, and other identified sources. Keep up the good work!
- Would like to request crosswalks at Eastlake and Aloha, or some other pedestrian review of this intersection. There are approximately 900 new Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center employees and many take the bus at this location.
- Need a connection across SR 99 at Harrison Street.

- Do not think the east/west bus line should go on Republican. It would be better on Harrison from Seattle Center to Eastlake.
- Need to make the streets in Cascade more pedestrian friendly. Allow different paving materials and landscaping options than are the SDOT standard. Let's make Cascade a great neighborhood by breaking the mold. Allow curb bulbs and mid-block pedestrian connectors.
- I think the two-way Mercer should have a center garden lane to further beautify the roadway. We have too few in this city! This could be a great attraction, as well as a pedestrian-friendly feature.
- What happened to the Thomas and Harrison pedestrian connection to Capitol Hill? Can Denny Avenue ever be widened for better sidewalks and still carry the necessary traffic? The 18% grade on the Thomas Street bridge over Aurora precludes trolley connection to Seattle Center.
- Please add bikes and three-lane profile to Westlake Avenue N. from Dexter Avenue N. Revise Dexter to four-lane profile with bus bulbs. Bike lanes on Westlake would have a topographical advantage over hilly Dexter. Dexter and Fairview Avenues should have transit priority. Convert Westlake and Ninth to two-way streets.
- No, the package is very comprehensive. Can we get started now?
- Transportation to South Lake Union Park via the water (i.e. ferries, water taxis, kayaks, etc).
- When any major transportation project is undertaken, many things are missing like flood control measures, drainage solutions, lighting complications, traffic control and sidetracks causing delays in progress through bureaucratic red tape.
- Look at improvements to Mercer Street pedestrian route; especially the path a pedestrian will travel from the Cascade neighborhood to the lake via Terry Avenue.
- Bicycles must be better integrated. Current designs include bicycle lanes along the driver's side of parked cars. This is dangerous, uncomfortable, and not a viable solution. Create promenades for pedestrians and bicycles with higher priority over vehicles.
- The viaduct tie-in with Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Avenues becoming through streets is extremely important to help the current traffic congestion. We need to fund these projects and move forward. Look at Boston – the Big Dig is almost over!

Online Comment Forms

The following comments were submitted through the study website between March 18 and March 22, 2004:

- It is necessary to look at South Lake Union in the overall context of a transportation system that includes various elements working together to create choices that benefit the entire City – including the Streetcar and the Monorail connecting to the Bus Tunnel and King Street Station, Sound Transit, reconnection of the street grid across Aurora and fixing the Mercer Mess, all with an eye toward giving people ways to get around without a car. The Streetcar is an affordable and cost effective means of creating mobility and acting as a business

development tool to create value in an under-utilized part of the City that has an opportunity to be a great neighborhood.

- Seattle remains behind the times in providing the transportation infrastructure to complement Seattle's wonderful lifestyle. It's not like South Lake Union is an urban blight with no natural amenities – South Lake Union has a beautiful lake, bar-none access to downtown and I-5, and is near affluent, desirable neighborhoods. Why wouldn't the city take advantage of this? Bring South Lake Union into the 21st century. Portland is so successful because it provides residents with mass transportation, bike/pedestrian access and green space. Improving South Lake Union will not only improve the direct area, but I believe it will improve property values on the east side of Queen Anne and lower Queen Anne (Aurora being on-grade prohibits desirability) and since SLU is the gateway to the city (the most direct way to Seattle Center), it will improve Seattle's image and will eliminate a lot of frustration for visitors to the Seattle Center, EMP and Key Arena. There are just so many benefits. I say yes to the Valley/Mercer corridor, the Streetcar, improving bike/pedestrian paths and lowering Aurora. Seattle will regret it if it does not invest.
- Given the certain growth in South Lake Union and surrounding neighborhoods over the next 15-20 years, it is essential now to study, design and execute multi-modal transportation solutions that will support walking, bicycling, riding buses, streetcars, trains and ferries, as well as driving cars and trucks. This is a rare time in our history to create a network of transportation options that are all interconnected and which will have tremendous potential to relieve congestion for years to come. I am specifically in favor of a streetcar, which will interconnect South Lake Union with other neighborhoods. The Portland Streetcar has been very successful at interconnecting neighborhoods at the fine grain scale that a monorail cannot. They are about to expand their system; we need to start building ours. Given the potential community value received relative to its cost, a Seattle streetcar is clearly one of the most cost effective transportation options. I think the creation of a 2-way Mercer tree-lined boulevard, and the downsizing of Valley to a pedestrian friendly neighborhood street that will support much greater connection of the South Lake Union neighborhood to its waterfront is the right solution. It will be the urban equivalent of taking down the viaduct so that it no longer separates downtown Seattle from Elliott Bay. South Lake Union has been separated from its neighbors for too long. Reconnecting the street grid at Mercer, Thomas and Harrison will right a wrong in terms of re-establishing pedestrian and bicycle friendly connections to Seattle Center and Queen Anne. Consideration should also be given to providing a pedestrian bridge connection from South Lake Union across I-5 to Capitol Hill.
- It is important to support the proposed transportation strategies identified collectively (Mercer/Valley, streetcar, bike and pedestrian improvements, reconnecting the street grid across Aurora) because they all work together in addressing the current and future job and residential growth in South Lake Union and Denny Triangle.
- The streetcar is a critical and needed public transportation option that provides consistent and reliable public transit serving South Lake Union, Denny Triangle

and the Westlake Station "transit hub." The connection promotes access to regional buses, light rail and the monorail.

- The proposed streetcar will reduce local reliance on cars and is proven to be an economic development tool (the Portland Streetcar generated over \$1 billion of private capital investment along the alignment).
- The South Lake Union transportation projects improve mobility and access for pedestrians, transit, bicycles and vehicles both in SLU and the surrounding neighborhoods of Queen Anne, Seattle Center, Eastlake, Denny Triangle and Downtown.
- A widened 2-way Mercer and reduced Valley will improve neighborhood livability and mobility (east/west transit access on Mercer connecting neighborhoods, improved pedestrian and bicycle access, plus access to South Lake Union Park.)
- Re-connecting the east/west street-grid over Aurora at Thomas and Harrison streets provides improved traffic circulation options plus enhanced pedestrian/bike routes between South Lake Union, Seattle Center and Queen Anne.
- Safety is improved for all transportation modes because of improved roadway routes and intersections and better separation and accommodation of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.
- The Transportation Study and Recommendations support Comprehensive Plan Goals and the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan because it advances transportation solutions that support forecasted employment and residential growth.
- I speak on behalf of Evergreen Restaurant Group, which owns and operates all Outback Steakhouse locations throughout the Northwest, along with all the Bonefish Grill locations, when I say we support the South Lake Union Streetcar Campaign and plans to rehabilitate the South Lake Union area.
- The streetcar is a critical link in the transportation solutions for this under-serviced area. This is a cost-effective solution that will make an immediate difference in the South Lake Union/Cascade neighborhood.