

## Meeting Summary– DRAFT

### Attendees

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Name	Affiliation
Dave Buchan	Seattle Center
Nate Cole-Daum	Uptown Alliance
John Coney	Queen Anne Community Council
Shelly DaRonche	Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
Karen Daubert	Seattle Parks Foundation
Phil Fujii	Vulcan/SLUFAN
Kurt Gahnberg	Vulcan
Ed Geiger	SLUFAN
Bob Grossman	SLUFAN
Ron Hildebrandt	Trident Seafoods
Joy Huber	Eastlake Community Council
John Kane	BINMIC
Andrew Otterness	Kenmore Air
Christopher Tucker	Shurgard Storage
Dick Wagner	Center for Wooden Boats/SLUFAN
Candi Wilvang	Cascade Neighborhood Council
Larry Woodbury	PEMCO

### Agenda

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- I. Introductions and Agenda Review
- II. The South Lake Union Transportation Study
- III. Public Input — What We’ve Heard So Far
- IV. Existing Issues and Potential Ideas
- V. Small Group Session
- VI. Next Steps and Adjourn

#### **I. Introductions and Agenda Review**

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*Thérèse Casper, SDOT*

Thérèse Casper, SDOT project manager, welcomed the work session participants and provided an introduction to the South Lake Union Transportation Study. She emphasized that South Lake Union is changing, and new development, both planned and anticipated, will attract more people and more trips to the neighborhood. Developing transportation

strategies to support the development of the South Lake Union Urban Village will be key as the area grows.

## **II. The South Lake Union Transportation Study**

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*Thérèse Casper, SDOT*

Thérèse explained that the South Lake Union Transportation Study is looking at the area bordered by I-5, Seattle Center, Lake Union, and Denny Way. Thérèse walked the group through the following study goals and objectives:

1. Improve mobility and access for all modes.
2. Improve regional access to and through South Lake Union.
3. Promote economic vitality, neighborhood livability, sustainable development, and quality of life.
4. Improve safety for all transportation modes.
5. Work towards implementing Comprehensive Plan goals and other city policies and plans.

Thérèse described the transportation study's relationship to other city plans and studies including the Blue Ring Plan, the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, the Transportation Strategic Plan, and the City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. She said that the study will also coordinate with, and inform, the Alaskan Way Viaduct Project, the Mercer Corridor Project, and the Streetcar Project. Thérèse explained that the South Lake Union Transportation Study will include recommendations for both big and small projects. A mix of funding options is possible including a developer mitigation program.

### **Questions/Comments**

- What is the Blue Ring Plan?
- How will this stakeholder group develop? What will its responsibilities be?
- What is the timeline and scale of the developer mitigation program? Does it involve new assessments or diversions of funds?
- Is Harrison Street designated as a bicycle route?

## **III. Public Input – What We've Heard So Far**

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*Thérèse Casper, SDOT*

The South Lake Union Transportation Study began in October 2003 with a public open house held at the South Lake Union Armory. Thérèse described the feedback SDOT had received both at the open house and through e-mails, comment forms, and other communication with the public. Input to the project to date includes:

- Provide better pedestrian/bicycle connections.
- Improve east/west transit service.
- Improve and/or provide additional connections over Aurora Ave/SR-99.
- Manage parking appropriately.

## **IV. Existing Issues and Potential Ideas**

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*Chris Wellander, Parsons Brinckerhoff*  
*Eric Tweit, SDOT*

Chris Wellander, Parsons Brinckerhoff transportation engineer, described existing conditions, preliminary analysis conducted by the technical team, and potential ideas. Chris described issues, proposals and ideas that the project team has already considered for non-motorized facilities, transit routes and connections, traffic, transportation demand management (TDM), and parking. The following summarizes Chris's presentation of existing issues and corresponding ideas or proposals:

### **Non-Motorized Facilities**

Issues:

- No east/west bike facilities currently exist.
- Mercer & Valley are pedestrian barriers to the Lake Union waterfront.
- I-5 ramps are barriers to north/south pedestrian and bicycle movements east of Fairview.
- SR-99 and Broad Street are pedestrian and bike barriers to east/west travel.
- East side of South Lake Union lacks north/south bike facilities.
- Limited access to Capitol Hill.
- Streetscape in some areas of South Lake Union is unfriendly to pedestrians and cyclists.
- Valley Street lacks sidewalks on north side.
- Pedestrian access is critical to attracting transit riders.

Proposals and Ideas:

- Include bike lanes on a revised Valley Street, and on Thomas or Harrison Streets.
- Improve streetscape and pedestrian facilities on Mercer & Valley Streets.
- Provide additional crossings of SR-99/Aurora Avenue adequate for non-motorized modes.
- Consider potential bike facilities for the east side of South Lake Union.
- Add additional, non-motorized connections across I-5.
- Look for ways to incorporate pedestrian amenities such as pocket parks, paths/sidewalks, and green space.
- Repair and improve sidewalks throughout South Lake Union.
- Improve around-the-lake bike and pedestrian facilities.

### **Transit Routes and Connections**

Issues:

- Transit vehicles are stuck in congestion at difficult intersections at Fairview, Mercer and Valley.
- Route 70 service is perceived to be slow.
- Some north/south transit service bypasses South Lake Union for downtown.
- There are currently limited bus shelter facilities.

- East/west transit service is peripheral to South Lake Union.
- There are limited transit connections to surrounding neighborhoods.
- South Lake Union is not well connected to regional transit service, especially routes to the south and east.
- There are perceived bus/bike conflicts on Dexter Avenue.
- The streetscape in some areas is not conducive to pedestrian transit access.

#### Proposals and Ideas:

- Install southbound transit signal priority (TSP) at Fairview & Valley and Fairview & Mercer intersections.
- Add an advanced green signal for buses on northbound Fairview at Harrison, and northbound TSP at the intersection of Fairview & Denny.
- Consider bus stop consolidation.
- Improve north/south bus route service frequency.
- Construct additional bus shelters.
- Consider modifying route 8 service to Thomas Street.
- Consider new east/west transit route in the north end of South Lake Union.
- Connect new, or modified, transit service to proposed monorail station at 5th & Broad.
- Consider moving bike lanes on Dexter to Westlake to better separate bus and bicycle traffic.
- Improve the pedestrian environment.

### **Traffic**

#### Issues:

- There is no direct westbound connection from I-5 to Seattle Center.
- Limited access and connections on Fairview at Valley and Mercer.
- Heavy weaving volumes on Valley Street.
- There is considerable eastbound congestion on Mercer Street, particularly after events.
- SR 99/Aurora and Broad Street are barriers to east/west travel.
- Northbound movements on Fairview are impacted by Mercer/Valley congestion.
- Congestion on Denny Way.
- Current one-way street system complicates local access.

#### Proposals and Ideas:

- Consider roadway modifications to improve westbound connections, such as 2-way Mercer Street, a Roy Street underpass, and others.
- Consider additional east/west crossings of SR 99/Aurora Avenue
- Consider lane geometry and signal modifications on Fairview.
- Consider modifying lane geometry for east/west arterials south of Mercer.
- Review signal coordination on Denny Way.
- Consider a 2-way Westlake/9th Avenue configuration.
- Consider new signal locations.

Chris discussed TDM and parking strategies that the City is considering for South Lake Union. The idea of allowing (and encouraging) developers to build fewer parking spaces to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicle commuters, and encouraging appropriate transit service and facilities for other modes of transportation, generated discussion by the participants. Participants expressed some concern about the effects this strategy would have on surrounding neighborhoods and traffic within South Lake Union.

In addition to discussing general issues and modes, Chris presented preliminary analysis for several specific areas including a two-way Westlake and 9<sup>th</sup> configuration, changes to the Mercer/Valley Corridor, and coordination with the Alaskan Way Viaduct project. He presented the benefits and potential problems with a two-way Westlake and 9<sup>th</sup> configuration. A two-way configuration is often used to enhance a street's community atmosphere and to emphasize retail and pedestrian uses, while one-way couplets primarily emphasize through-traffic and higher speeds. Chris said that preliminary modeling for this concept, using year 2030 PM peak traffic data, shows that east/west travel times remain similar to today, while northbound travel times on Westlake are projected to degrade by approximately two minutes.

Chris introduced Eric Tweit, project manager for the Mercer Corridor Project, to discuss the upcoming Mercer Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process and the alternatives being considered for the Mercer and Valley Street configuration. Eric discussed trade-offs between a one or two-way Mercer Street and said that both would be studied thoroughly in the Mercer Corridor EIS. Scoping for the Mercer Corridor EIS is expected to begin in early 2004.

### **Questions/Comments**

- Are traffic projections made on the assumption that there will not be any improvements to transit, HOV, ped/bike, and that everyone will just drive to work in single occupancy cars?
- What time of day are the traffic projections representing?
- Do traffic projections for 2030 include the streetcar?
- Do north/south traffic projections take into account activity on Eastlake Ave? There is congestion on Eastlake and Fairview today.
- Are new companies coming to South Lake Union projected to have enough staff that they could provide their own transportation system?
- The mode-split goal could be increased if walking and more housing were included for South Lake Union.
- What is the present day mode-split in South Lake Union?
- The need to transfer downtown in order to get to South Lake Union by bus should be eliminated and direct bus service to the neighborhood increased.
- Is there research to support the idea that reducing parking spaces will increase Commute Trip Reduction (CTR), or is it a lofty idea?
- Eastlake is often used as a "park and ride" for people who drive and then take busses downtown. The Eastlake community is worried that reducing parking in South Lake Union will increase the number of people who park for the day in Eastlake. The key to the preservation of the Eastlake neighborhood is maintaining parking for businesses. Losing parking will hurt businesses and lead to

neighborhood blight. Eastlake survival is dependent on not losing even one parking space.

- Building more housing in South Lake Union will encourage people to walk to work and not use their cars.
- A single occupancy vehicle strategy has been the primary way for this region. Cities around the world have improved livability by reducing space for cars. It works; we just do not have any examples here in Seattle.
- Has a study been done on through traffic from Westlake/Broad to the waterfront?
- Does this study include the removal of Broad Street?
- The priority for the Queen Anne neighborhood is to restore street connections. Stoplights on Aurora may bring a higher quality of life and ensure a lively streetscape.
- Uptown is a developing urban center and connections between the South Lake Union urban center and the Queen Anne urban center are vital for the Queen Anne/Uptown economy. East/west connections are very important. Aurora has been a barrier to economic development in Uptown.
- Since the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Mercer Corridor are very connected projects, which comes first for funding?

In summary, Chris pointed out that the South Lake Union area will attract significantly more trips in 2030 and that the existing transportation system and policies will require modifications to support this influx.

## **V. Small Group Session**

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*Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues*

Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues facilitator, described the small group activity and said that the primary purpose of the work session was to hear feedback from the South Lake Union community and other stakeholders on what should be studied in the South Lake Union Transportation Study. Amy explained that the team would appreciate input on four general areas transit, traffic, pedestrian/bicycle facilities, and other issues. The group counted off randomly and divided into three groups. After brainstorming and discussing ideas and potential solutions in small groups, participants reconvened and presented their ideas to the larger group.

Themes, or general ideas heard during the small group session included:

- Increase connections between I-5 and Queen Anne, South Lake Union and the lake, and Eastlake and Westlake.
- Improve/maintain freight mobility through South Lake Union.
- Improve the pedestrian experience.
- Increase transit options, reliability and ease of use.

### **Issues, Ideas and Comments**

#### **Transit**

- Streetcar:

- Extending the streetcar to Seattle Center would benefit lower Queen Anne and Uptown.
- South Lake Union is isolated. The streetcar is a great mode to connect the neighborhood with downtown and South Lake Union Park.
- Extend the streetcar to Fremont.
- Add a streetcar leg from Thomas Street to the monorail station at 5<sup>th</sup> and Broad, Seattle Center or Roy Street.
- Will increase South Lake Union's cosmopolitan atmosphere.
- Permanency will attract development.
- The Eastlake community is against extending the streetcar (or rail of any kind) along Eastlake Avenue.
- Streetcar is not a good idea as it will be a financial burden for businesses and property owners in South Lake Union.
- Streetcar is not necessary; instead expand the existing bus system to meet increased need.
- Streetcar will add to traffic congestion.
- Encourage more direct transit connections to South Lake Union.
  - Eliminate the need for commuters to transfer downtown, as transfers discourage transit use.
  - Aim for five-minute service from downtown.
  - Add Aurora express bus stops in South Lake Union.
  - Add a mini transit center off I-5 to drop off employees in South Lake Union before proceeding downtown. Maybe work with Community Transit as part of RTID.
- Encourage transit-oriented development and increased transit to support anticipated development.
  - Design places for bus layovers, or other amenities that attract more transit.
  - Work with Metro and explore partnerships with property owners.
- Increase east/west connections.
  - Add transit service on Thomas Street.
  - Add east/west bus routes
- Study the feasibility of a water taxi between the north end of Lake Union and South Lake Union. Look at tourist use versus commuter use. Landings should be at South Lake Union Park and Yale Street Landing. Maintain places for pick-up and drop off of passengers.
- Transit is not reliable or easy to use.
  - Implement priority signals for transit and let employee shuttles also use them.
  - Eastlake bus service (route 66) is infrequent and often slowed by congestion. PEMCO and Fred Hutchinson employees frequently use this service. Relieve congestion on Eastlake by changing the timing on the light at the entrance to I-5 and at the queuing for I-5 at Stewart Street.
  - Build more bus shelters.
  - Route 70 is overcrowded and usually standing room only. Add more service on this route and improve reliability. Especially important because 800 employees are coming to Fred Hutchinson in spring 2004.
  - Drop-off locations are not convenient.

- Transit routes on Westlake and Fairview are slow. Route 8 does not come often enough.
- Offer more transit service within South Lake Union
  - A circulator shuttle bus between major employers.
  - Improve transit for Cascade including more connections, routes and a streetcar spur.
  - Add more transit options to Westlake Ave, in addition to the streetcar.

### **Pedestrian/Bike**

- Increase ped/bike connections across Mercer and Valley.
  - Improve pedestrian access to South Lake Union Park.
  - Make Valley Street narrower and pedestrian friendly.
- The bridge in front of Zymogenetics has cracks and an employee was hurt.
- Tie South Lake Union to the regional bike trails system (i.e. to Alki, Burke Gilman Trail).
- Build a pedestrian overpass to Capitol Hill.
- Maintain the bike lane on Dexter, or make it easier on bicyclists by moving the bike lane to Westlake.
- Restrict SOVs from Terry Avenue to make the street more pedestrian friendly.
- Improve pedestrian amenities.
  - Employees want to be able to walk for exercise at lunch.
  - Extend green streets.
  - Make good walking routes to streetcar so employees can go downtown for lunch.
  - Improve the pedestrian experience near Mercer and Aurora—feels like a freeway under Aurora. Improve pedestrian east/west connections to Seattle Center with wider sidewalks and less of a steep grade.
  - Pedestrian bridge over Aurora.
  - Wide sidewalks are more pedestrian friendly.
- Areas of South Lake Union are not conducive to bicycling.
  - Identify hazards and safe bike routes.
  - Add signage directing bicyclists to safe routes.
  - Build an overpass instead of an underpass at Roy Street.
- Bike routes around Lake Union are important.
  - Complete the trail through Eastlake.
  - Mark and light the bike trail (especially through Eastlake).
  - Connect the bike trail all the way around the lake.
- Improve pedestrian access from Cascade to South Lake Union Park.
  - Pedestrians get stuck in the middle of the I-5 off ramps.

### **Traffic**

- Improve freight mobility through South Lake Union.
  - Develop an east/west freight corridor.
  - Enhance freight access to Ballard and Interbay.
  - Reduce wait time and improve traffic flow for throughput traffic going to Elliott.
  - Widen Mercer to better accommodate 53' trailers.

- Add freight access off SR-99 to South Lake Union.
- Remember the needs of light industry in South Lake Union (e.g. Terry Avenue and florists) – often cannot use smaller streets.
- It is critical to be able to easily get around Lake Union, between Eastlake and Westlake without getting slowed by traffic coming or going to I-5.
- Connect the street grid across Aurora/SR-99.
  - Lower Aurora and add east/west overpasses.
- Narrow Valley Street.
- Improve access to South Lake Union Park.
  - Make left and right turns onto Valley easier, maybe by adding traffic lights.
  - Make Mercer two-way to pull I-5 traffic off Valley.
  - Add a bike lane to Valley.
- Local streets are not used very much so accessibility around South Lake Union is not a problem.
- Improve connections to Capitol Hill.
  - Add connections underneath I-5.
  - Build overpasses at Harrison and/or Thomas.
- Intersections are confusing around Cascade Park.
  - Reduce the traffic on these streets by adding four-way stops.
- Two-way traffic on 9<sup>th</sup> and Westlake.
  - Will help back-ups on Roy/Valley trying to turn left onto Westlake.
  - Concerns about losing a lane of traffic.
  - Divert north/south traffic to other routes, so congestion does not increase.
  - Will north/south throughput be reduced?
- Ease congestions and queuing time on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue southbound.
  - More green time for 9<sup>th</sup> southbound at Mercer.
- Eliminate Eastlake traffic back-ups.
  - Add U-turn or center turn lane to northbound I-5 around Thomas or south of Denny.
  - More-synchronized traffic lights.
  - Add a left turn onto I-5 south of Stewart.

### **Other**

- Utilize South Lake Union Park and make it easily accessible.
- Housing
  - Increase housing and encourage a broad range of housing options and prices.
  - Make housing affordable for all – attract a mix of residents.
  - Housing reduces congestions and increases community.
- Encourage spot re-zoning on Terry Avenue so when businesses leave new, mixed-use development can be built. Encourage housing on Terry and near South Lake Union Park.
- Parking:
  - One common parking garage instead of several separate projects.
  - Incorporate parking as part of Seattle City Light’s substation.

## **VI. Next Steps**

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*Thérèse Casper, SDOT*

Thérèse announced that the next stakeholder work session would be held on January 15, 2004 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. A location has yet to be determined. She thanked participants for coming and encouraged them to send in the worksheets handed out during the small group session if they thought of further ideas, issues or comments that the team should consider.

The work session adjourned at 7:00 PM.