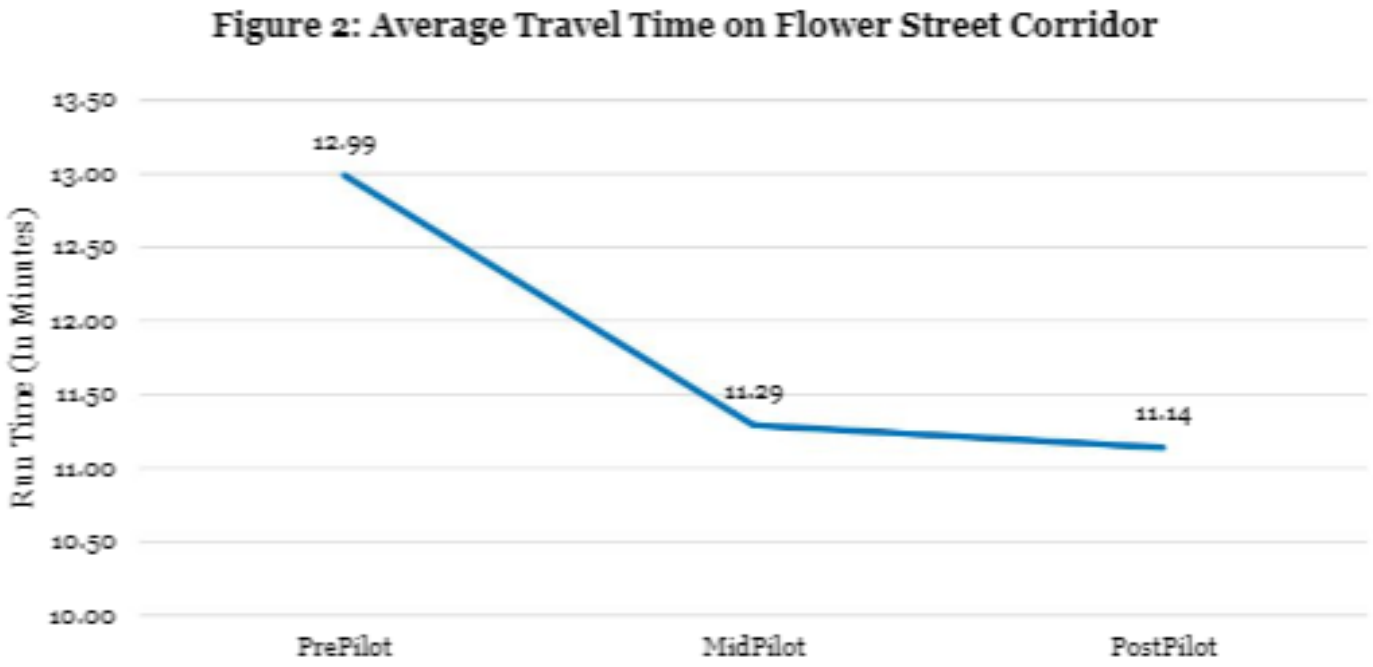
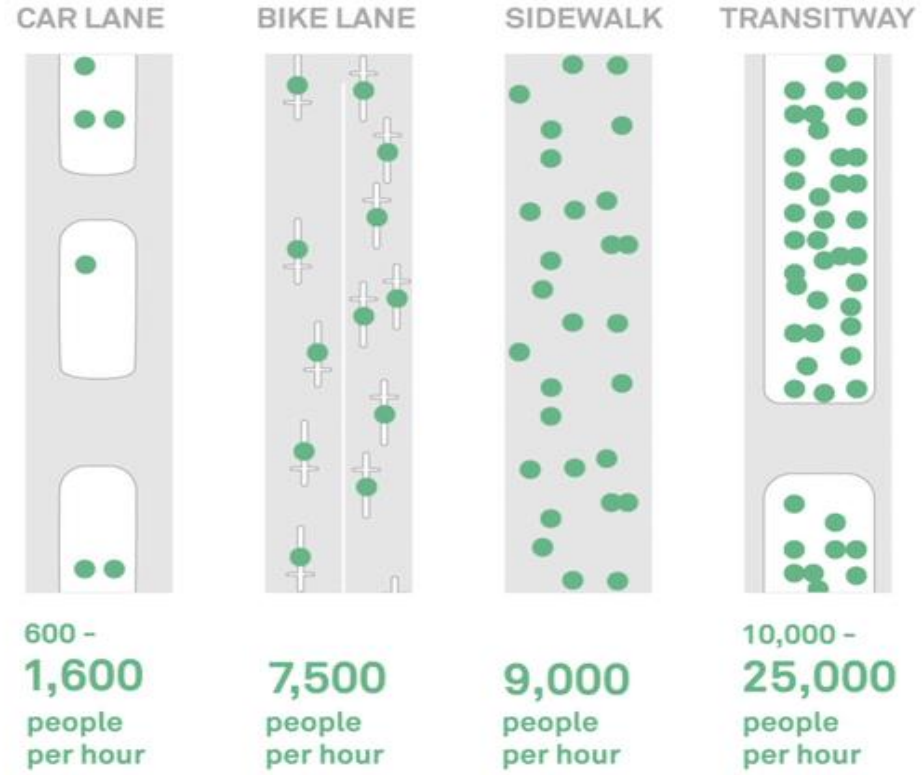
# Transit Lane Policy Development

*Standardizing a policy for transit lane implementation*


Transit Advisory Board – May 26, 2021
Christine Alar – SDOT Transit & Mobility

# Transit Lanes Improve Travel Time & Throughput




*"A Budding Model: Flower Street Bus Lane"; Eno Center for Transportation, May 2021*

# Opportunity statement

*The Transit Lane Policy will create a more comprehensive approach to identifying and implementing transit lanes, using consistent criteria to identify a network of near-term and long-term priorities.*

*This approach will enhance clarity and consensus internally and with partners, will expedite project delivery, expand the scale of transit lanes in Seattle, and will standardize implementation and operations for transit lanes. This is an opportunity to analyze  transit priority with other policies such as Vision Zero, Seattle RSJI Initiative and Climate Action Plan.*

*The Transit Lane Policy is planned to be finalized in Q3 2021 and will identify an approach for transit lane installation for approximately 5 years.*

# Two Part Approach

The Transit Lane Policy project has two elements:

1. Draft Policy and systemwide application to identify projects (focus today)
    a. This will establish a City policy and a series of metrics that can be used to identify where transit lanes should be installed
    b. The policy can be used for project development in several divisions
2. Near-term identification of projects to support COVID recovery
    a. T&M staff are working with Transportation Operations, Policy & Planning, and Metro to identify corridors with the greatest transit need using pre-Covid and Covid ridership data along with ReSet geographies and transit delay information

# Project Background

Policy Element

- Shift from opportunistic implementation of transit lanes, (responding to requests or issues) to a broader strategic implementation plan for transit lanes
- Project-by-project modeling, outreach, and approval delays project delivery
- Need to align vision and future funding with existing policy, including climate goals

COVID Recovery Transit Lanes

- Desire to ensure that transit is moving reliably for an attractive option post-COVID, and to prevent mode shift to driving
- Recognize the value of improving travel for essential workers who have been riding through out  COVID

# Existing Policy Supports Bold Approach to Transit Priority

## Climate & Comp Plan

- Dramatic action is needed to support goal of 82% reduction in passenger vehicle emissions by 2030 (Climate Action Plan)
- 9 of 10 trips are zero emissions by 2030 (Transportation Electrification Blueprint)
- Optimize operations of bus rapid transit, RapidRide, and streetcar corridors by adjusting signals and providing exclusive travel lanes (Comprehensive Plan)

## Equity

- TEF strategies to support accessible, equitable mobility options and transparent decision-making (Transportation Equity Framework)
  - Related strategies within Decision-making, Transparency and Accountability; Infrastructure; Planning & Maintenance; Community Engagement

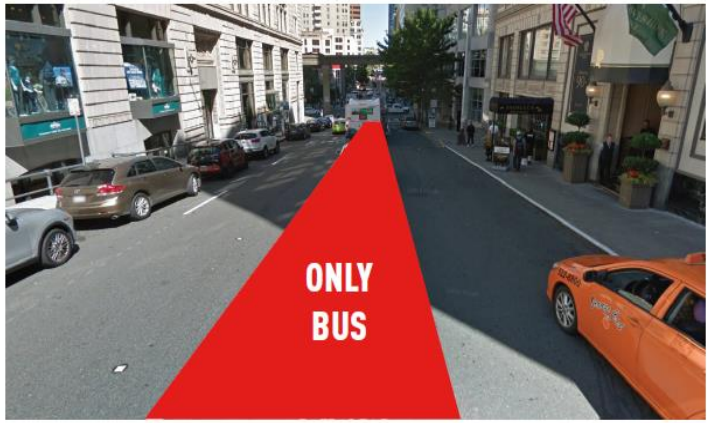
## Mobility

- SDOT vision for reliable, time-competitive transit through capital and investment in the Frequent Transit Network (Transit Master Plan, Move Seattle Levy)
- ReSET priorities to make transit a safe and successful to support economic, green, and equitable recovery from COVID-19
- Transit as a priority between Urban Villages & Neighborhoods (Multimodal Integration)

# Policy Vision

*SDOT envisions a City where transit is the preferred mode of travel. It must be safe, affordable, equitable, and importantly – timely and reliable. Transit should be time competitive with auto travel and offer a high-quality customer experience. To advance this vision, founded in the City's established policies and goals as described above, a significant expansion of transit priority and transit lanes will be needed.*

Olive Way between 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue




Olive Way between 6th Avenue and 7th Avenue


Olive Way between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue

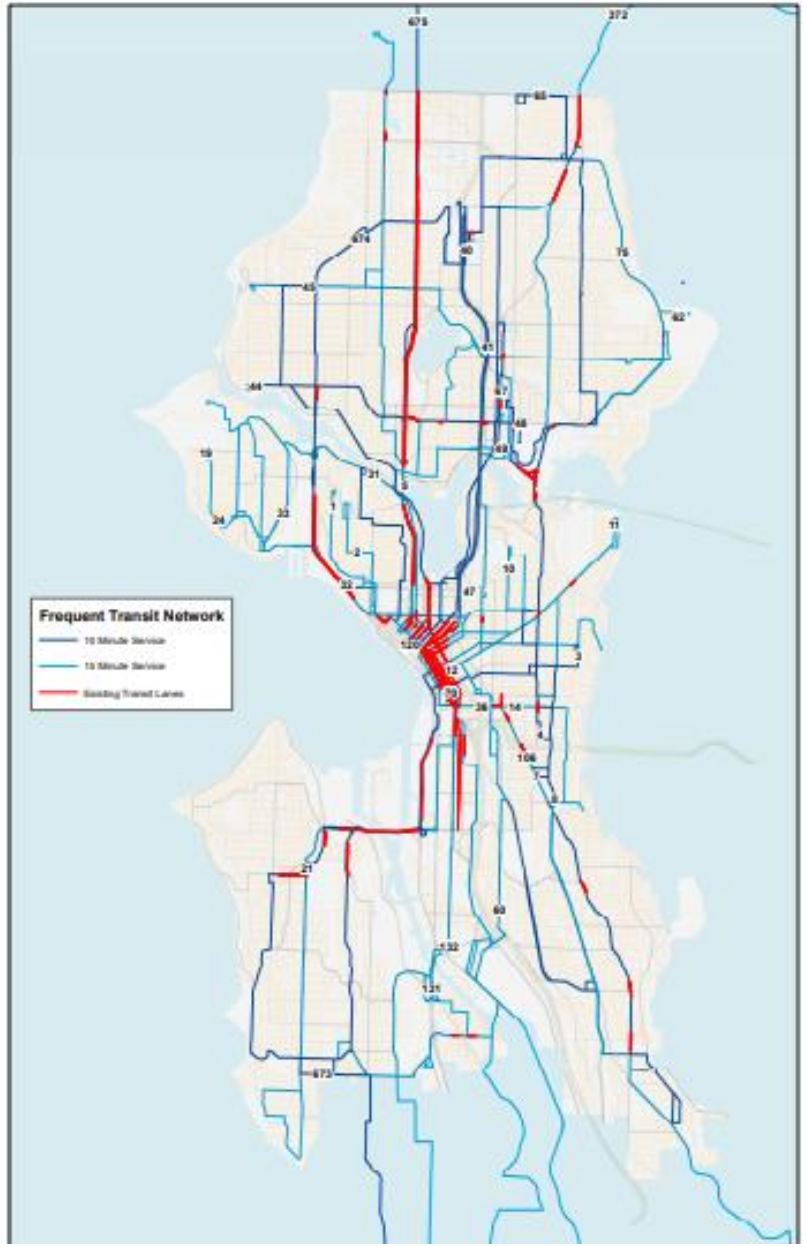

Olive Way between 7th Avenue and 8th Avenue

# Policy Development Process

- The City's Frequent Transit Network (FTN) is the established priority for transit service investment
  - Using the current RET process, SDOT staff will update the FTN to incorporate additional equity focus
  - The FTN includes Frequent (15-minute) and Very Frequent (10-minute) route classification
  - These routes are the focus of STBD service hours and TPMC, RapidRide corridors
- The FTN will be the focus for both transit service and capital investments
  - Greatest benefit to largest number of transit riders, building on equity assessment in the FTN RET.
  - Policy would not preclude improvements in other locations, but would require justification to demonstrate comparable value and alignment with equity

# Scope of the FTN & Transit Lane Implementation to Date

- There are ~35 miles of existing bus lanes in Seattle
  - Almost 90% of these are on the FTN
- About 13% of the FTN currently has bus lanes
- Policy work recognizes the value of prioritizing within this scope; some portions of FTN unlikely to rise to funding priority



# Proposed Transit Lane Policy

***SDOT will provide transit priority and transit lanes on the Frequent Transit Network (FTN) to ensure transit travel that is safe, affordable, equitable, reliable, and time-competitive with and preferable to automobile travel.***

***SDOT will evaluate all FTN network segments and non-FTN segments that support transit as investment candidates where there is a compelling benefit to transit passengers and service operations.***

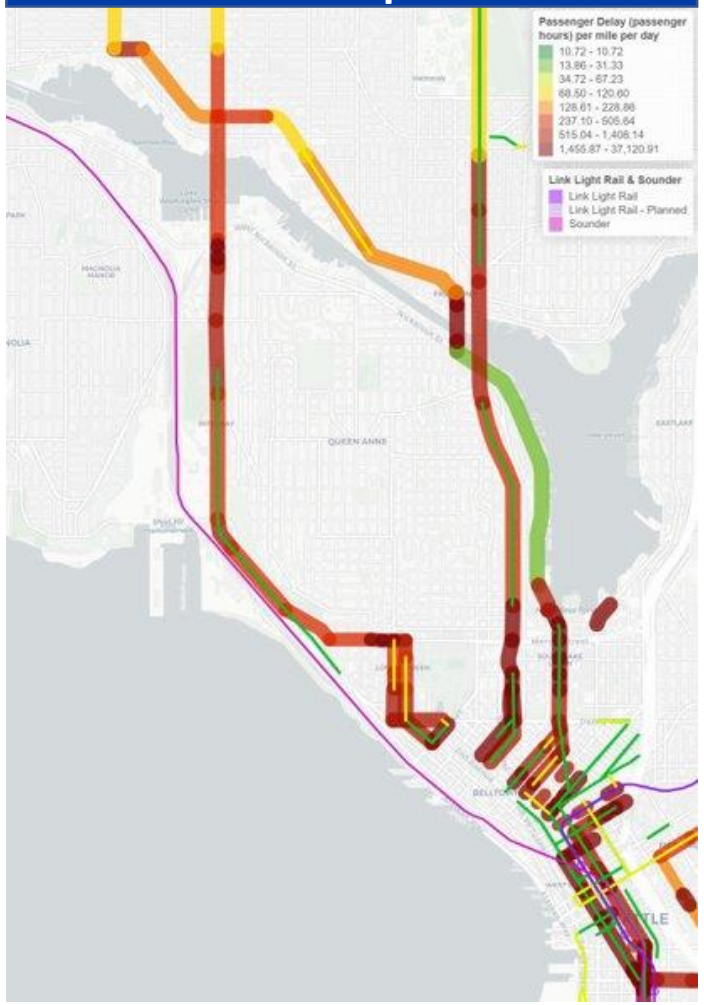
- Transit lane priority projects may be considered outside the FTN if there is a compelling benefit to transit passengers and service operation.
- Transit lanes will be considered for all modes of public transit vehicles (bus, streetcar, light rail, etc)

# Transit Lane Prioritization: Examples of Key Metrics Used in SDOT Speed and Reliability Tool

| | |
|---|---|
| Equity | Area of Need Score (Aggregates demographic data) |
| Equity | Number of Routes High Opportunity Score (Metro metric) |
| Load | Daily Passenger Load |
| Load | Maximum peak passenger load |
| Frequency | Maximum buses per hour through the segment |
| Passenger Delay | Passenger Delay (passenger hours per mile per day) |
| Reliability | Travel Time Variability (standard deviation of travel time to average travel time, within a time period) |
| Reliability | Travel Time Reliability Ratio (standard deviation of travel time within a time period to a reference standard deviation i.e. fastest time period) |
| High Variability | Reference Travel Time Ratio (ratio of slowest travel time to fastest observed across the service day) |

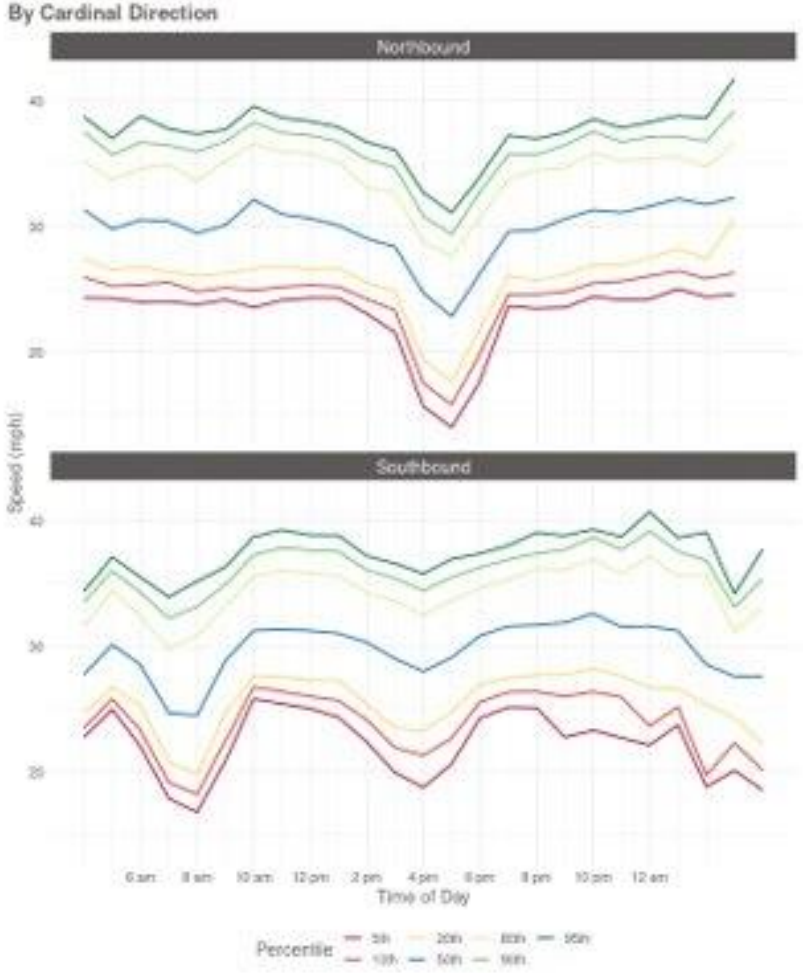
# Transit Lane Prioritization: Example Data Sources

## Area Snapshot




## Corridor

## Directional Data



# Future Work & Next Steps on Policy Development

- Finalize metrics with SDOT Divisions and Metro for project evaluation
- Develop feasibility assessment process, including thresholds for when more detailed traffic modeling is needed
- Develop policy recommendations around transit implementation (e.g. standards for time of day restrictions, freight or other shared lanes, paint approach)
- Development of an ongoing monitoring and evaluation approach, including performance standards

# Project schedule – Transit Lane Policy

**April**

- Complete Streets Steering Committee
- SDOT comments and internal review of policy elements

**May**

- Take draft policy to TAB & check with other modal boards, small community-based working group, key transit stakeholders
- Offer briefings to interested City Councilmembers

**Summer**

- Revise policy based on input and produce summary document
- Launch public comment with web update
- Begin application of policy to identify 5-year priority project list

# Additional questions & comments?

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