

# Alaskan Way Safety Project

90% Design Virtual Public Meeting – Questions and Answers

January 2024

## 1. How is the Alaskan Way Safety project different from the Elliott Bay Connections project?

The Elliott Bay Connections (EBC) project will construct a shared use path on the east side of Alaskan Way, with landscaping, creating a space intended for more relaxed, recreational uses. The Alaskan Way Safety project, on the other hand, will construct a protected bike lane on the west side of Alaskan Way for more regular, commute-related use — except on sailing days, where the detour in front of Pier 66 will be on the east side during Port operations — SDOT has and will continue to coordinate closely with Elliott Bay Connections project team through the remaining design process and construction of the Alaskan Way Safety Project.

## 2. Will this project impact vehicle traffic along Alaskan Way?

The Alaskan Way Safety Project will reduce the number of travel lanes, from two northbound and two southbound vehicle lanes to one lane in each direction with a center turn lane. This change is closely aligned with findings from SDOT's Vision Zero Review, which showed that reducing lanes on multi-lane arterial roads slows people speeding and makes it safer for pedestrians. The street will continue to support freight movement and the changing traffic patterns resulting from Waterfront activities.

We are seeing that people who are traveling through downtown will use the new Elliott Way, reducing the north/south traffic on Alaskan Way. We expect that people who are continuing to use Alaskan Way are there to visit the terminals and businesses, not really as a passthrough downtown.

## 3. For the art pieces that were mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, are there examples of what type of art this will be? Murals, imprints like in the Pike/Pine buffers, etc.

The artwork is still in process and still being developed. Toka Valu is the artist and he's working independent of SDOT. We're coordinating with him, but he hasn't shared all of the details. We do know that it's going to be in the ground, in the buffer, and potentially in areas of the sidewalk and concrete. There's not going to be a lot of murals sticking up in the area or anything, but we will definitely share more.

## 4. The traffic on Alaskan Way is low now but will probably increase when the new Pine St Connector is open next spring. Was this incorporated in the traffic studies for this project?

Yes, and the traffic patterns and staging have evolved a lot in the last couple years as construction has progressed. The modeling that was done **accounted for** the new Elliott Way connection, and even after construction is complete the majority of traffic will continue to use

Elliott Way and the northern portion of Alaskan Way will still see much lower volumes. Alaskan Way used to have 12 to 15,000 vehicles per day, **and is forecasted to drop to 3,000 to 4,000.**

**5. Is the bike traffic that traverses around the aquarium a protected bike lane?**

Yes, that is a protected bike lane and is the portion being led by the Waterfront Seattle program. It'll be raised at sidewalk level around the aquarium, not at street level, but it will be a separate space.

**6. Are there plans to connect this new bike lane to the existing 1st Ave bike lane via Broad St in the future?**

Yes, but the scope of this project is on Alaskan Way between Broad and Virginia. The Bicycle Master Plan calls for a future connection, so that may be a future project, but it's not within the scope of this project.

**7. The Port wants the bike lanes entirely on the east side after Pier 62. What is the protected bike lane on the west side. The Port is Pier 66 and Pier 69. Why is the protected bike lane on the west side if the Port wants it on the east side?**

On the west side, it's really important to have a dedicated protected bike lane for bicyclists that is separated from pedestrians. We recognize we are detouring during cruise operations and keeping that continuous connection as seamless as possible for the majority of the year is important for safety and to ensure the bike facility is for all ages and abilities. We have been working very closely with the Port of Seattle for the last year and a half on this project design and we have engaged them in every part of the project design process. The Port is on board with our current design.

**8. What type of protection will be used for the west side protected bike lane?**

Generally, it's a concrete curb – 6-inches tall, and 3ft wide. It's a concrete, solid curb, it's formidable – you aren't going to be able to drive over it. You could, but it would be uncomfortable. We also have bollards in front of Pier 66. There are some driveways along this stretch and at some of those driveways the protected bike lane will be raised to increase the visibility of bikers and require cars to slow down before crossing the bike lane.

**9. Given the lack of pedestrians on the east side and heavy Port and non-Port pedestrian traffic on the west side, what is the rationale for placing pedestrian and bike traffic together? Especially given the port wants the bike lanes on the east side. On the central waterfront the bikers and pedestrians are separated. Why not do the same on the northern waterfront? Pedestrians to the west, bikes to the east.**

On the west side, it's really important to have a dedicated protected bike lane for bicyclists that is separated from pedestrians. We have been working very closely with the Port of Seattle for the last year and a half on this project design and we have engaged them in every part of the

project design process. The Port is on board with our current design. Keeping pedestrians on both sides of the street is also important, we're not reducing sidewalk width at all so there will still be plenty of pedestrian space on the west side as well as additional space on the east side. With all of the private and public investments going into improving the waterfront, we expect volume of pedestrian and bike traffic to increase and thus will need additional space to allow people walking, biking, and rolling to access both sides of Alaskan Way. Our understanding is the Elliot Bay Connections project is consistent with the approach above.

**10. Will this project include trees along Alaskan Way?**

The Alaskan Way Safety Project will not be adding any trees. We're not removing or adding trees. The Elliott Bay Connections Project will be reviewing tree health and longevity with the City urban forestry group to develop a balanced plan to improve available growing conditions for trees to remain, identify opportunities for adding trees and replacing trees that are removed or moved with a larger available soil volume.

**11. I know this might be out of scope for the project, but do know whether the shared path used for detour will be widened as part of the Elliott Bay Connections project?**

As part of this project, that shared use detour path will have one segment that's a 10-foot wide protected bike lane between Blanchard and Bell and then an existing shared use path between Bell and Wall. The Elliott Bay Connections project will review opportunities to widen the portion used for the Alaskan Way PBL detour.

**12. The Port is a major driver of the economy, obviously we need to cater our needs to this economic driver for the good of our community. Wouldn't it be better to always be on the east side of the road? It seems like the crossing the street should be a minor inconvenient year-round.**

The Alaskan Way Safety project is proposing a protected bike lane on the west side of Alaskan Way to extend the waterfront protected bike lane and aligning with the Elliott Bay Trail to the south avoiding arterial crossings, except on sailing days, where the detour in front of Pier 66 will be on the east side during Port operations. Previous public feedback and technical analysis supported the approach that is indicated on the plans. We have been working very closely with the Port of Seattle for the last year and a half on this project design and we have engaged them in every part of the project design process. The Port is on board with our current design.

**13. Are you considering adding more substantial protections than the curbs later on? If not, what is your rationale for considering the curbs to be enough?**

We're not considering adding additional protection. We used our design standards Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), our engineering standards when designing our bike lanes, and the protection we're providing is sufficient and substantial and provides the safety we're looking for to make it an official protected bike lane.

**14. Perhaps you've put too much weight on the desires of the activist bicycle community rather than the needs of the Port and what is good for our economy.**

We've worked hard to incorporate the needs of all stakeholders. We really try to take into account all the different perspectives and try to bring forth a design that meets the needs as well as we can. We also take into account the economy, we are really trying hard, which is why we're doing this today. There are a number of really exciting and large-scale projects happening along the waterfront, so this is really building off that synergy and Seattle as a world class city deserves to have a waterfront that serves all users a safe space to enjoy the waterfront.

**15. Does this project include any sidewalk improvements?**

Yes, it does. There are areas where we're building curb ramps and improving curb bulbs and making some sidewalk adjustments and improvements. There's some cracking and heaving in the sidewalk that we're fixing. So, we're going through and upgrading and making sure that it's really pedestrian friendly and safe.

**16. Who is responsible for maintaining the protected bike lane?**

SDOT is responsible, it's in City of Seattle's right of way, it's considered an SDOT asset. There is conversation and work being done on the bollards. During cruise operations, the bollards will be picked up and removed so there can be loading where the protected bike lane is in front of Pier 66, so there will be some shared maintenance of that to make sure it's done correctly and safely and maintained but ultimately, the protected bike lane is SDOT.

**17. What is the timing for this project's construction and the Elliott Bay Connections construction?**

Speaking for the timing of this project's construction, we're looking to finalize design by early next year and go into construction by next summer. Construction will go through the middle of 2025. The Elliott Bay Connections is in early design, they have permitting and design to get through. We have been in coordination, they're in early design still but their process is a little different than our process at SDOT. As soon as we have more information, we'll definitely be able to share on our project web page so check back on our project web page.

**18. Does this project add any bike racks?**

I don't believe it's in our current scope at this point but it's something we can consider going forward. We know it's a popular place to bike today.

**19. How can we stay informed about construction?**

We will be sharing all our project updates through our project webpage as well as through our listserv. If you have email and prefer to receive updates via email, please use the link in the chat.

Once we begin construction, we'll probably send out bi-weekly email updates and update our project webpage bi-weekly as well.