Georgetown to Downtown Safety Project

Nearing Final Design Public Meeting—Questions and Answers

November 30, 2023

Design

- **How do you decide whether to use concrete barriers or paint and posts to protect riders? Is it a funding issue?**
    - Much of the time, when we use paint and posts to protect our bike lanes it is because we need to provide safety improvements at a lower cost. For this project, we are using paint and posts in some places because we know there is future construction planned in the next few years that will require removing whatever we build. Using permanent materials would be a poor investment of resources and takes away from spending that time and money building more effective improvements.
    - One of these areas is on the east side of 6th Ave S, where Seattle City Light (SCL) is starting construction within two years of our project's completion. When SCL finishes, they will install some new stretches of sidewalk and protected bike lanes next to the sidewalk with a barrier in between.
    - Another area where we've chosen to use paint and posts is on 6th Ave S near S Bradford St. The pavement in this area is in poor condition and we expect most of the roadway will need to be replaced, so it doesn't make sense to install concrete protection for the bike lanes when it would have to be taken out and redone during those repairs.

S Lander St & 6th Ave S

- **How will bikes will move through the intersection of S Lander St and 6th Ave S in both directions?**
    - People riding northbound on 6th Ave S will cross S Lander St with the vehicle traffic signal to the northeast corner of the intersection. There will be a bike turn box where riders can wait for the second signal to cross 6th Ave S to the two-way protected bike lane on S Lander St.
    - For people riding southbound from the two-way PBL to the one-way PBL on the west side of 6th Ave S, we are planning to create queueing space for cyclists behind the crosswalk on the northwest corner. Riders can then cross S Lander St with people driving southbound on 6th Ave S.

- **What materials will be used on S Lander St to keep bikes protected from traffic?**
    - We will protect the new bike lanes on S Lander St and the west side of 6th Ave S with a concrete barrier. We will use flex posts for this block of bike lanes on the east side of 6th Ave S because we know that Seattle City Light will have to dig up and replace this section of road for construction work planned within two years of this project's completion.
- **What are the expected changes in traffic from removing a southbound lane on 6th Ave S between S Forest St and S Lander St, and removing a northbound left turn lane?**
    - We don't expect changes in traffic flow with a reduction to one lane in the southbound direction because the rest of 6th Ave S, north of S Lander St, is currently only one lane and the rest of 6th Ave S south of S Forest St will also be one lane with no significant impact expected.
    - We prioritized maintaining two northbound lanes to keep up with the capacity of cars coming off I-5.
    - We also don't expect any significant changes in traffic flow from reducing the second left turn lane from S Lander St onto 6th Ave S northbound. This change should reduce collisions at this intersection, help drivers of large trucks make their turns, and greatly improve safety.
- **What are the traffic volumes on S Lander St? I'm worried about feeling exposed to traffic while waiting in the bike box. Have you considered other options to better separate cyclists from traffic?**
    - We looked at several options before deciding on the current design. First, we considered a traditional approach where a turn box would be in front of the left turn lane. This would allow northbound cyclists to continue on a single light cycle but require them to mix with vehicles approaching the intersection. Feedback from the cycling community to pursue as much separation as possible led us to use two-stage turn boxes instead, where cyclists first cross Lander St and then cross 6th Ave and provides more separation from vehicles.
    - The most important constraint at this intersection is that Sound Transit will be starting construction here sometime in the future, no earlier than 2027. They plan to build an overpass with the same bike lane we're proposing, so any work we do here will be replaced by very high-quality materials in the near future.

Airport Way S & S Lucile St

- **This design will encourage people to bike on S Lucile St and Airport Way S to access the new route, but both of these connecting streets feel very dangerous to ride on due to fast-moving freight and no shoulder. Have you considered this? Are there plans to eventually improve Airport Way S and S Lucile St?**
    - Our project adds new bike lanes on Airport Way S from S Lucile St to S Alaska St that will be protected by a concrete barrier to ensure safety for cyclists.

    - North of S Alaska St, transitioning to 6th Ave S improved the feasibility for a safe and accessible bike route because of the lower average speeds than on Airport Way S and the connection to the SODO Trail. Once we build these new bike facilities, we think many people who bike on Airport Way S will transition to the new route. It will still be legal for people to ride on Airport Way S or on the sidewalk if they prefer it.
    - South of S Lucile St, we don't have plans to construct safety improvements yet. Soon, we hope to begin planning and outreach to connect this route to the Georgetown to South Park Safety Project. Building that connection will require very close engagement with residents and business owners in central Georgetown which we couldn't fit into the budget of either of the two current projects in Georgetown.
    - We don't currently have plans to make any east-to-west connections, but this project is the first step in implementing the Bike Master Plan and creating a bicycle connection through SODO.
- **The original project plan called for a PBL the entire length of 6th Ave S or Airport Way S. Was using the SODO Trail a compromise due to lack of budget or lack of political will? The SODO trail lacks connectivity to the rest of SODO. Has there been any thought given to exploring connectivity options for the SODO Trail to the rest of SODO?**
    - The biggest issues with designing this entire route on Airport Way S is that north of S Spokane St, putting in a bike lane would have enormous effects on freight businesses and transit.
    - Budget was also part of the decision. Connecting this route to the SODO Trail means that a mile of the project is already built. This allowed us to use higher quality materials for the rest of the route and build the safety improvements more quickly.
    - Sound Transit had plans to repave and rebuild portions of the SODO Trail, and add at least one additional access point to the trail north of S Lander St.
    - Additionally, the East Marginal Way Corridor Improvement Project, which includes a protected bike lane, is starting construction soon. Once complete, the project will create another great route on the western side of SODO.
- **How will cyclists navigate the intersection of S Lucille St and Airport Way S?**
    - People biking on Airport Way S westbound will have two different options to make the transition to the new two-way bike lane on the west side of the street at S Lucile St. One option is to wait in the green bicycle box at traffic level for the traffic light. People who don't want to wait at street level can use the bicycle ramp to wait for the signal on the sidewalk.
    - People biking down S Lucile St and turning onto Airport Way S will be able to use the sidewalk (blue triangle on the graphic) or the truck apron (purple area on the

graphic), which is a textured and slightly raised area designed to encourage people driving to take wider turns but allows people cycling or operating freight to travel over it. Please refer to slide 10 of the presentation.

- **How will cyclists approaching this intersection from the south turn left onto S Lucile St, for example, to ride from Beacon Hill to the Georgetown Playfield?**
    - If you're traveling from southern S Lucile St, coming from Beacon Hill, and you want to make a left turn onto the northern S Lucile St to get to the Georgetown Playfield, cyclists would use the same traffic signal that people going north on Airport Way S use. You have the option to use the bicycle box in the traffic lane or use the bicycle ramp to wait on the sidewalk before crossing with the signal.
    - When looking at slide 10 in the presentation, you could ride over the purple curb extension or go between the yellow center line and the purple area to make the turn. Northbound Airport Way S and westbound S Lucile St will still be open for people biking and driving.
    - Cyclists can also choose to continue straight on the southern S Lucile St and make a right turn onto 8th Ave S to approach the playfield from the back, avoiding some traffic signals.

S Spokane St & 6th Ave S

- **At the intersection of S Spokane St and 6th Ave S, will there be a southbound bicycle signal phase? There is no mixing zone and bikes stop in the blind spot of trucks. Is the northbound mixing zone long enough for WB-67 semi-trucks according to the Freight Master Plan design guidelines?**
    - We recognized the potential for blind spots so there will be a phased signal and the stop bar for bikes will be positioned in front of the vehicle stop bar. People biking will stop beyond where vehicles will stop, well within the forward view of a driver. Cyclists will also be given a head start of a few seconds to create separation between people biking and driving at the intersection until cyclists reach the concrete protected bike lane.
- **What changes were made to the intersection of 6th Ave S and S Spokane St since 60% design?**
    - We made two big changes at this intersection. Cyclists will now ride up onto the sidewalk and cross the slip lane with pedestrians. We also added a bike-phased traffic signal to force vehicles to stop before the slip lane crossing so people biking and walking can cross safely.

Northern connection from the SODO Trail to Downtown

- **Do you have an image of the planned northern connection from the end of the SODO trail to share?**
    - We don't have graphics for what the northern connection will look like at this time, but we expect to share our plans on the website in Spring 2024. We plan to build this connection before the rest of the project is completed, but delays are possible due to the extensive coordination we need to do with King County.
    - This section connects the north end of the SODO Trail to 6th Ave S along the north side of Royal Brougham Way S. There will be new bike lanes and an off-street path on 6th Ave S to Seattle Blvd S. Short segments of improvements on Seattle Blvd S and 6th Ave S will connect to the existing bike route on S Dearborn St.
- **What is the timeline for the design of the northern connection to downtown via 6th Ave S?**
    - To begin design work we need King County to submit a street closure permit that includes space for the new multiuse path along 6th Ave S. That will allow King County to keep a portion of the street closed and build fencing to accommodate both uses. The County would still be able to keep a portion closed and build fencing to allow bicycle and pedestrian access through the block. King County was given a short extension on their current permit, but it expires in less than a year, so design and construction for this section of the route will happen in 2024 once an agreement regarding timing is reached with the County.

S Nevada St and 6th Ave S

- **At the intersection of 6th Ave S and S Nevada St, did you consider a half-signal for bike crossing instead of stop signs? Due to low traffic on S Nevada St, I worry about stop sign compliance. Also, drivers may not expect diagonal bike movement at a 3-way stop.**
    - We didn't consider using a signal at 6th Ave S and S Nevada St mainly due to cost reasons. We modeled this transition after other similar configurations around the city, including the intersection of 9th Ave N and John St at the NE corner of Denny Park in South Lake Union. It has been successful so far, showing no reported bicycle/vehicle collisions. 6th Ave S and S Nevada St have lower traffic volumes, but we expect it to perform just as well.
- **S Nevada St has low traffic, but the intersection of 6th Ave S and S Nevada St had an average weekday daily traffic (AWDT) count of 11,500 in 2018, including a lot of truck traffic. A diagonal bike crossing seems hazardous without at least a half signal.**
    - Average weekday daily traffic matters a lot in SODO. 11,500 sounds more like volumes on 6th Ave S north of S Spokane St. South of S Industrial Way. Traffic

volumes on 6th Ave S are between one and two thousand vehicles per day. Additionally, on S Alaska St between 6th Ave S and Airport Way S, the counts were below one thousand on an average weekday.
    - These low traffic volumes make us comfortable that the intersection of 6th Ave S and S Nevada St will support a diagonal crossing.

Outreach

- **Will you be asking for public feedback on the two crew-built segments before constructing it?**
    - We will be continuing to reach out to businesses and property owners near where we will build these two new segments. Our inbox and phone line are always open to collect comments and incorporate feedback where it's feasible.
    - We'll be sharing preliminary designs of the S Lander St segment on our website soon. We'll share designs for the segment connecting the SODO Trail to downtown by Spring 2024. This section will take longer to make initial designs because of the more complex coordination with King County Metro.
- **Why are you calling this project "Georgetown to Downtown" when it neither goes into Georgetown nor connects to Downtown?**
    - This project does build a new connection to downtown via the bike lanes on S Dearborn St. Some people may also choose to continue riding on north 6th Ave S until reaching the bike lanes on King St.
    - We do acknowledge that we're not building a route through the heart of Georgetown and that we're not building a connection to other bike lanes on the south end of the route. We hope to build both additions in the future.
- **The SODO BIA provided input for this project. What community pedestrian or bicycling groups did SDOT solicit for input?**
    - Groups we've engaged with over the length of the project include the SODO BIA, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways, Cascade Bicycle Club, Duwamish Valley Safe Streets, South Park Neighborhood Association, Georgetown Community Council, and Ampersand Bike Club.
    - We've also connected with businesses owners and employees who work at locations along the route and many people walking or biking to work nearby, including some of the business owners.
- **Can you speak to what feedback from cyclists you incorporated and which changes were made as a result of that feedback?**
    - The main piece of feedback we've received from bike advocates has been to design as much separation as possible between people driving and biking. This feedback has influenced many of our designs at traffic signals and our decisions to use concrete-protected bike lanes wherever possible. We're designing the

route to avoid having cyclists and drivers mix and using sturdy materials that will remain in good condition for years.

- **Does SDOT publish estimated changes to emissions for projects like the Georgetown to Downtown Safety Project?**
    - Typically on smaller projects like this one we do not calculate the expected environmental impact. Larger projects are required to evaluate and publish full environmental impact statements that would include expected emissions impacts.
    - With this project, we expect there to be some reduction in emissions from people shifting from using their personal car to cycling in this area, but we don't typically calculate the amount of reduced emissions.