



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

TAB Members:

Priyadharshini Balan
Deborah Barnard
Ashwin Bhumbala
Zachary Burton
Shirley Chu
Dana Coppernoll-Houston
Katie Freeman
Dexter Jenkins
Art Kuniyuki
Sandro Pani
Kyler Parris
Carolyn Tillinger

*The Seattle Transit Advisory Board shall **advise** the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City **on matters related to transit** and the possible and actual impact of actions taken by the City upon all forms of public transportation.*

*The Board shall be provided the opportunity to comment and make recommendations on City policies, plans, and projects as they may relate to **transit capital improvements, transit mobility, and transit operations** throughout the City...*

*The Board shall help facilitate City policies, plans, and projects that support local and region-wide transit mobility efforts, to help **ensure a functioning and coordinated transit system** throughout the City and region.*

*The Board shall function as the **public oversight committee of revenues collected under Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD) Proposition 1**, as described in Resolution 12 of the STBD...*

The Board shall make an annual report to the City Council on the status of its work program and the achievement of its goals.

**City Council Resolution
31572**

City of Seattle
Seattle Transit Advisory Board

August 4, 2025

To: Harrison & Mercer Project Staff, Interim SDOT Director Adiam Emery, Mayor Bruce Harrell, Deputy Mayor Jessyn Farrell

Re: Harrison & Mercer Transit Access Project – TAB Feedback

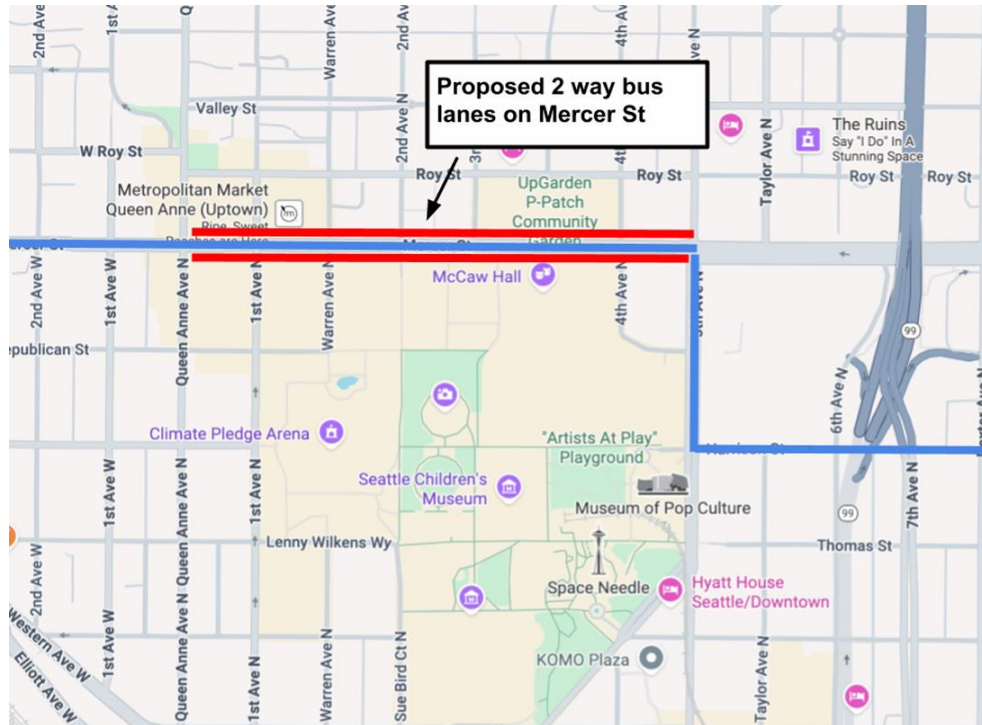
Dear SDOT, Mayor Bruce Harrell, and Deputy Mayor Jessyn Farrell,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB) was recently given a presentation on June 25th about the Harrison and Mercer Transit Access Project, which is almost at 30% of the design phase. The TAB believes that this is the perfect time to give our feedback and suggestions on this project before it develops further into the design phase.

The TAB welcomes the bus lane conversions on Mercer St. between Queen Anne and 1st Avenues as well as 3rd and 5th Avenues, conversion of paid parking spaces and load zones to accommodate for bus zones, and turn restrictions onto northbound 4th Ave N. These street updates would improve transit frequency, reliability, and safety for riders, as well as increasing ridership on Mercer St. **However, these proposed design updates do not go far enough in prioritizing transit in this corridor and it would be a missed opportunity to not do more.**

The current plan for eastbound Mercer St. is to put bus lanes between 3rd Ave N and 4th Ave N, with some of the bus lanes going slightly east of 4th Ave N, but not quite all the way to 5th Ave N. Then westbound Mercer St. would add bus lanes between 1st Ave N and Queen Anne Ave N. However, this amounts to less than 50% of Mercer St. getting new bus lanes, which is unacceptable and almost defeats the entire purpose of adding bus lanes at all. The proposed pocket bus lane conversions would only minimally help Metro buses skip traffic. Buses would still get stuck in traffic in the right lane in between the bus lane conversions and buses would struggle to get out of their pocket bus lane.

Therefore, the TAB is urging SDOT to update the project design to include continuous bus lanes on the entire stretch of Mercer St. going eastbound and westbound between Queen Anne Ave and 5th Ave N, with these bus lanes being enforced 24/7 and with bus signal priority. The TAB would like SDOT to consider using Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes in areas where load and taxis zones will be removed as a solution to address concerns put forward by businesses and Seattle Center.



Pocket bus lanes on Mercer St. will face the same issues we see on Denny Way. There, the only bus lanes are between Fairview Ave N and Steward St., which helps the Route 8 skip traffic that is trying to get onto I-5 or go over the Denny Way bridge. However, this pocket bus lane's impact on the 8's reliability is woefully small and does not go far enough in improving the frequency or reliability of the route. According to the King County Metro's 2024 System Evaluation, Route 8 is one of the slowest all-day routes in King County even though it served more riders per service hour during peak commute times than any other route. The pocket bus lanes on Denny Way did not solve Route 8's awful performance and we should not make the same mistake on Mercer St. Even with full bus lanes on Mercer, the Harrison and Mercer Transit Access Project should not be a replacement for extending bus lanes on Denny Way.

Bus lanes on the entire stretch of Mercer St. would significantly reduce transit delays, especially during peak traffic hours. The RapidRide E Line on Aurora Ave saw a 35% increase in ridership from 2013 to 2014 when the RapidRide project was completed and bus lanes were added to the route. The dedicated bus lanes were the reason for the increase in ridership as they improved reliability and frequency in the corridor. We see this philosophy implemented in the very same project on Harrison St and we want to see more of what is being planned on Harrison St. to be planned on Mercer St. as well. Bus lanes are cost-effective and adding red paint to streets is a lot cheaper than the other infrastructure improvements that are planned for this new transit corridor.

The TAB is well aware that if more load zones and paid parking zones are removed to extend bus lanes, then accommodations will be needed. Sections of the bus lanes that will be replacing load and taxi zones could be Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes, which would allow delivery trucks and taxis to briefly use the lane to access businesses, which would help balance bus priority while allowing limited local access for businesses and Seattle Center. BAT lanes are part of the Route 40 Transit-Plus Multimodal Corridor project and they are projected to reduce transit travel time by 5-10%. Once this project is complete, SDOT will have a lot of new data on the effectiveness of BAT lanes and the TAB hopes that will influence expanding BAT lanes to other transit projects, including the Harrison and Mercer Transit Access Project.

We are experiencing a worsening climate crisis and Seattle's main pollution contribution comes from single occupancy vehicles (SOVs). According to Seattle's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, transportation accounts for nearly 60% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Seattle, with the majority of that coming from SOVs. Commute Seattle's 2024 Survey results show that there are still more people driving SOVs in the city center than taking transit, completely contrary to the goal that is set in place in the Climate Change Response Framework (CCRF) to reduce SOV trips and increase the share of trips taken via transit from 11% to 24%. If the City of Seattle wants to accomplish this goal, then bolder changes need to be made to get people out of cars. Bus lanes on the entire stretch of Mercer St. would help accomplish this and put the City of Seattle one step closer to the transit ridership goal in the CCRF.

To summarize, the TAB is urging SDOT to update the project design to include continuous bus lanes on the entire stretch of Mercer St. going eastbound and westbound between Queen Anne Ave and 5th Ave N, with these bus lanes being enforced 24/7 and with bus signal priority.

Thank you for listening to us. The Seattle Transit Advisory Board is happy to provide further clarification or discussion.

Sincerely yours,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB)

Co-signed by the Fix the L8 Campaign

