



TAB Members:

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*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 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*

Date: July 26, 2018

To: Members of the Move Seattle Levy Oversight Committee

Subject: Transit Plus Multimodal Sub-Program Recommendations

Thank you for the opportunity to make recommendations on the way forward for the Transit + Multimodal corridor program. We understand that you have eight levy programs to evaluate, so we have provided you with our high-level findings and recommendations as well as more specific context to support those high-level findings and recommendations.

High Level Findings and Recommendations:

Findings

- Inaccurate funding assumptions: The original cost estimates for the seven Transit + Multimodal corridors outlined in the Move Seattle Levy are no longer accurate, and in some cases the cost estimates for corridors have more than doubled. In addition, the federal funding environment has decreased the likelihood of these projects receiving federal funding within the timeline of levy, or – in some cases – at all. Given that the original levy funding plan assumed significant federal matching funds, this reality has left a large hole in the budget of the Transit + Multimodal corridor program. Finally, despite the fact that there are other levy subprograms earmarked for arterial paving and bicycle and pedestrian improvements, the Transit + Multimodal program budget was assumed to cover these items and not just transit improvements in the seven corridors.
- Increased project delivery timelines: Local construction timelines, as well as the federal funding process, have stretched. This has created uncertainty that all of our funded projects will be completed as full Transit + Multimodal corridors by the sunset of the Move Seattle Levy.
- Expansion of project scope: Community engagement during and after the passage of the levy lead to the scopes of the Transit + Multimodal corridors expanding beyond what the levy originally envisioned.

Recommendations

- We encourage SDOT to reorder corridors and phase projects as necessary to maximize the benefits to the community that take place within the levy timeline, including actively pursuing alternative designs with levy-only funds in each of the seven corridors.
- We support focusing on corridor improvements that speed transit times in corridors with severely constrained funding, or where limited matching funds are available. Where funding allows, we encourage SDOT

to pursue additional non-transit improvements, specifically pedestrian safety and access to transit, and all ages and abilities bicycle improvements.

- We recommend SDOT align MSLOC subprogram spending, as well as other city resources if available, to maximize the benefits seen along Transit + Multimodal corridors. We suggest prioritizing AAC paving, sidewalk, and bicycle improvement money to create a resilient network along these corridors.

Specific Context for Recommendations:

Findings

SDOT faces significant risks in their ability to deliver the original levy commitment in the Move Seattle Levy Transit + Multimodal Sub-program due to the following reasons:

- Inaccurate funding picture: The Transit + Multimodal Sub-program estimates \$326 million in capital investments along seven transit-heavy corridors, but as of July 2018, SDOT has not secured or identified at least \$234 million of that funding. The primary driver for this funding gap is new uncertainty with the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants program, the process for which has taken significantly longer than expected and which may not distribute as many funds as the city originally expected. SDOT plans to leverage nearly \$100 million in funding for two corridors (Madison and Roosevelt) with funds from the program. In addition, SDOT is expecting the final corridors to cost much more than was originally estimated in the levy due to a combination of the region's exponential growth (leading to drastic increases in the cost of construction supplies) and to SDOT's original cost estimates being overly optimistic.
- Timing issues: While King County has committed to bringing the RapidRide Expansion Program to the City of Seattle, the Phase 1 work (occurring during the lifetime of the Move Seattle Levy) is likely only to include funding for four of the seven corridors outlined in the levy (Delridge, Madison, Rainier, and Roosevelt). Seattle will need to make improvements to all seven Transit + Multimodal corridors realizing that the full RapidRide corridor may/will only come to fruition after the Move Seattle Levy has ended.

Recommendations

Due to the limited available funding SDOT has to allocate to the Transit + Multimodal Sub-program, we recommend that SDOT:

- Make at a minimum strategic investments in all corridors and – in corridors with constrained funding – prioritize investments that support travel time savings metrics for transit; for instance, reserved lanes and transit signal priority, over other multimodal plans, particularly those that could be funded from other sources (e.g., new sidewalks via the Move Seattle levy Pedestrian sub-programs).
- Support an equity lens to prioritize investments between different routes. We realize that different communities have differing dependence on fast, frequent bus service, and we encourage the city to prioritize investments that help historically disadvantaged populations. Considering the abundance of fast, frequent Metro routes that are not branded as RapidRide, and encourage the city to evaluate whether each piece in the RapidRide kit of parts is a good fit for each of the Transit + Multimodal corridors.

- Align spending in other Move Seattle Sub-programs, especially the paving, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), bicycle, and pedestrian programs to lessen the capital burden on the Transit + Multimodal program, and create a “win” for all City residents, regardless of their travel mode of choice. We especially highlight the importance of ITS that work along major transit corridors, instead of against them, and which prioritize pedestrian travel along bus routes (for example, the Mercer Adaptive ITS has prioritized east-west movement above north-south transit corridors).
- Make phased capital investments ahead of full Transit + Multimodal implementation to realize benefits sooner, where a phased approach would not increase overall project costs or jeopardize federal funding. In this phasing, we encourage the city to scope its environmental review with alternatives such that funding-constrained projects could be scaled back without having to conduct/pay for additional environmental review.
- Reorder the subprogram implementation timeline by beginning project development earlier to take into consideration longer federal funding and construction timelines, so that more corridors are likely to have received significant capital investments by the time the levy ends. SDOT has started this approach with Fremont corridor, and we encourage looking for more opportunities for early acceleration. In particular, consider expediting the Delridge corridor, because the project is not waiting for federal grant funding, the corridor serves a particularly transit-dependent community, and surrounding cities have committed to funding part of the project.
- Check-in with Levy Oversight Committee and Transit Advisory Board for projects competing for federal grant funding when the federal budget is passed and when list of projects recommended for funding is printed in the Federal Register, in addition to at 30% design.
- Continue working with funding partners, such as King County Metro, to establish a realistic overall project budget and delivery plan as soon as possible. This will minimize duplication of effort and avoid wasted resources by allowing SDOT to design to a realistic budget early in the process, and clarify what capital investments each authority is responsible for. This agency coordination will ensure that the Move Seattle levy improvements for these corridors – such as paving and bicycle infrastructure – align with future investments required by King County should the route become a Metro-branded RapidRide line. We are concerned, for example, that part of a corridor would be repaved through Transit + Multimodal subprogram funds from the Move Seattle levy but then would need to be repaved again in a few years in order for Metro RapidRide elements to be installed.
- Establish a new estimate for what is possible with currently secured funding for each corridor. Specifically for the Roosevelt corridor, we request a scope with secured and local funds only, which could be delivered in time for Northgate Link opening in 2021. Be transparent with the public about realistic outcomes given a constrained funding environment during the entire design process, making financial trade-offs explicit. When presenting these options for feedback from the Seattle Transit Advisory Board and the larger community, include metrics for transit time savings, ratio of car trip duration to transit trip duration, and people throughput.

Sincerely,

Seattle Transit Advisory Board