

3rd Avenue Transit Corridor Improvements

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Director, DPD

Shannon Loew, Chair

Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair

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Thaddeus Egging

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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Thaddeus Egging

Rachel Gleeson
Theo Lim
Martin Regge
John Savo
Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Project Description

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and King County Metro Transit are undertaking updates to 3rd Avenue and its transit oriented amenities. This project will focus on making improvements along 3rd Avenue between Denny Avenue N and S Jackson Street and will include elements that address transit amenities, improved lighting, enhanced landscaping, and artwork.

As of late 2015, the project includes a budget of \$8.1 million for the design and construction and is separated into two phases. Phase I focuses on creating new bus stops and enhancing corridor elements within the Business District. Phase II will focus on enhancing elements in the Pioneer Square Neighborhood. Secured funding will be used to design and construct phase I of the project, while funding for phase II of the corridor improvement project will be identified at a future date.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the project. The purpose of this meeting is to review the concept design for the 3rd Avenue Transit Corridor Improvement Plan. At this meeting, the SDC voted 8-2 in favor of the concept design, with several recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

November 5, 2015

9:00 – 11:00 am

Type

ROW

Phase

Concept Phase

Previous Reviews

None

Project Team Present

Eric Tweit

SDOT

David Hewitt

HEWITT

Matt Porteous

HEWITT

Attendees

Art Brochet

SDOT

Chris Degracia

Citizen

Shane DeWald

SDOT

Marcus Elliot

Pertect

Yasaman Esmaili

HEWITT

Calder Gillin

SvR Design

Gary Johnson

DPD

Kristen Ramirez

SDOT/OAC

Paul Roybal

King County Metro

Laura Treadway

Enviroissues

Melinda Wind

HEWITT

Summary of Presentation

Eric Tweit, of SDOT, introduced the project and provided a brief update. Mr. Tweit explained that, because of limited funding, the proposed corridor improvements would be separated into phases after completing the concept design. The project team is in the process of deciding which improvements should be included in phase I of construction. Once figured out, the team will continue developing a detailed design for phase I, while the remaining improvements will remain at the concept phase until further funding becomes available.

The 3rd Avenue corridor improvement project will be implemented over several years and will coincide with other City projects including the Pioneer Square Gateway project, Coordinated Street Furniture, and the Center City Streetcar project. The 3rd Avenue project includes a design strategy that will address specific elements along the corridor. The sidewalks along the corridor will include an amenity zone, which will serve as buffer between the pedestrian sidewalk and the street. The amenity zone will include areas for public transit operations and tree planters, which will include either structured soil or a modular suspended pavement system. Planned activity



Figure 1: 3rd Ave. Corridor

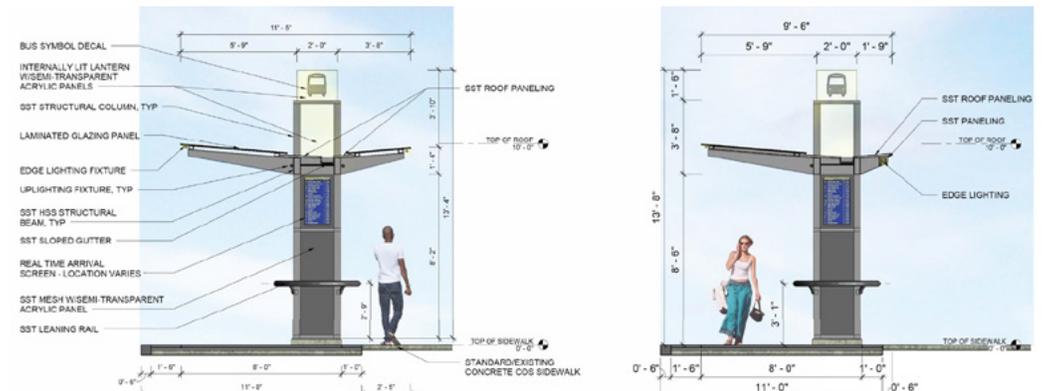


Figure 2: Proposed transit canopy design

Together the curb treatment and feature paving delineate transit-oriented uses from pedestrian through-traffic and provides visual continuity.

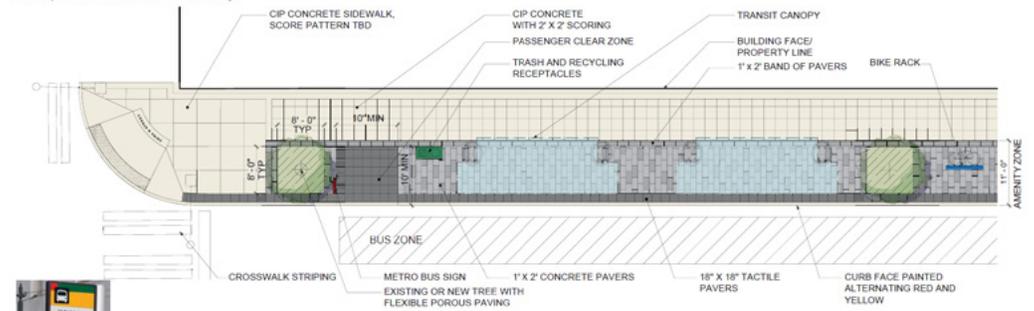


Figure 3: Proposed transit stop design

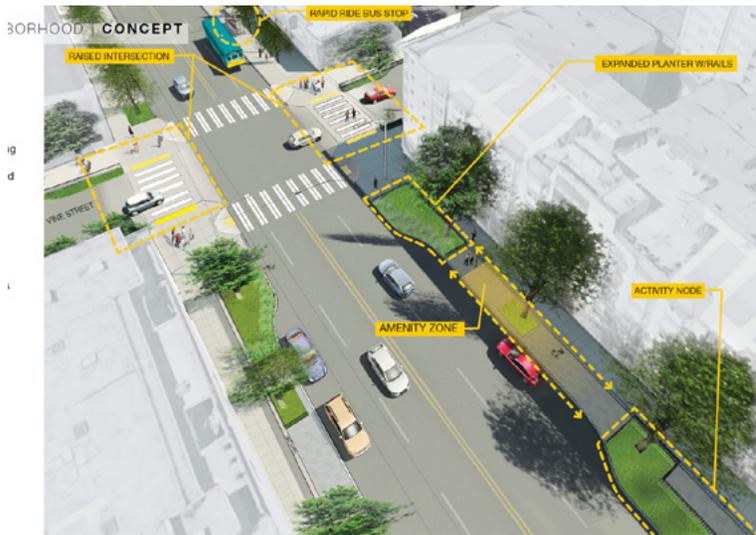


Figure 4: Belltown proposed design concept

nodes and flexible loading zones will also be located throughout the corridor. Activity zones will include seating opportunities, programmable space, and landscape plantings, while flexible loading zones will consist of bollards, tree canopies, and amenity zones to provide a buffer between pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Proposed bus station improvements along the 3rd Avenue corridor will include 10 by 10 foot paved area for passenger boarding, a bicycle rack, canopy trees, and two shelters with real time information (see figure 2 & 3). The transit canopy design for bus shelters will include a beam spanning two columns with a glass canopy above. The designs will not include seating areas. Rather, shelter columns will include leaning rails for resting.

The project is focused on 3rd Avenue between Denny Avenue and S Jackson Street. The project affects three distinct downtown neighborhoods – Belltown, the Retail Core/ Business District, and Pioneer Square (see figure 1). The existing rapid ride stations along the corridor within the Belltown neighborhood will be retained. Proposed improvements within the Belltown Neighborhood include generating a greater amount of street use through the design of raised intersections as well as amenity zones and activity nodes, which will correspond with adjacent land uses (see figure 4).

The Business District design improvements will include an 11-foot wide amenity zone and bus stop transit canopies. Improvements will also include a several flexible loading zones (see figure 5). The project team has proposed two new locations for bus stations between Pike and Pine Street as well as Marion and Columbia Streets to help relieve congestions at existing stations within the district. The project team has also proposed suspended art installations at the intersections where Pike and Pine Streets cross 3rd Avenue.

Corridor improvements within the Pioneer Square Neighborhood will include amenity zones on blocks with bus stops, flexible loading zones, and activity nodes as well as reclaimed public space at the intersection of 3rd Avenue S, Yesler Way, and Prefontaine Place S (See figure 6). Transit canopies will be smaller to reflect the intimate scale of the surrounding neighborhood.

Agency Comments

Shane DeWald, of SDOT’s Urban Forestry Division, explained that the division has had a great deal of interaction with the project team and is very happy with the progression of the project.

Public Comments

None

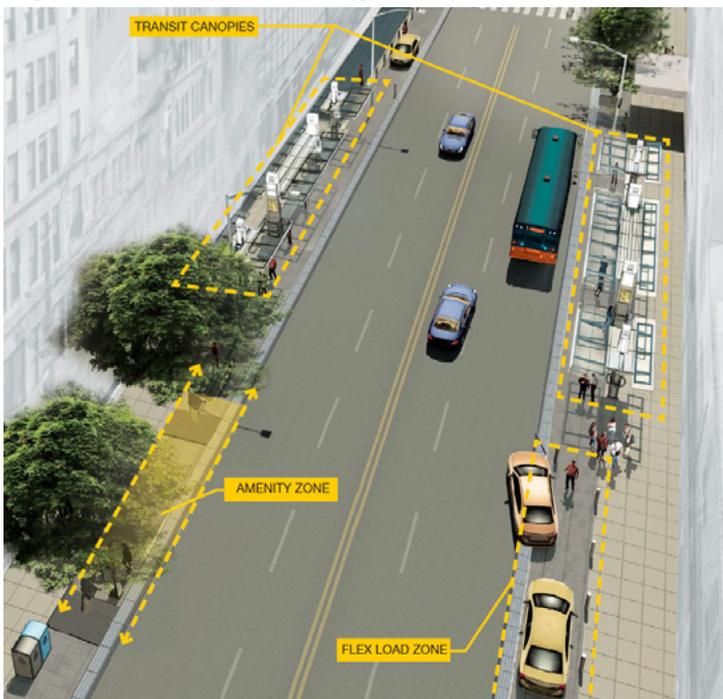


Figure 5: Business District proposed design concept

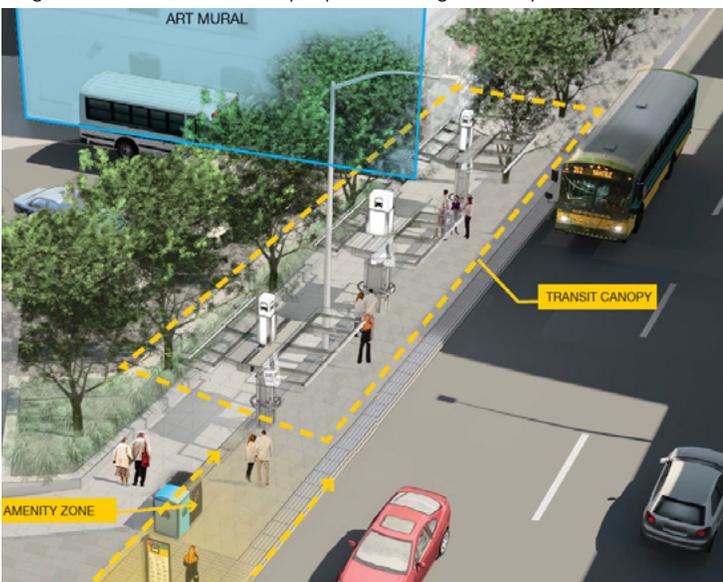


Figure 6: Pioneer Square proposed design concept

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Organization, goals, and vision
- Amenities
- Materials
- Sustainability

Organization, goals, and vision

Although it is evident the project team has provided an initial concept for the corridor, the Commission agrees that the overall goal for the how the corridor should function lacks in clarity. Commissioners recommended the project team identify the main function of the corridor, encouraging them to focus on pedestrians first, and then transit, before designing specific elements. The SDC also recommended the project team focus on creating a corridor that not only provides a space for efficiently loading and unloading buses, but is also welcoming for all users. The Commission appreciated the use of flexible loading space, which restricts loading times to off-peak hours, and encouraged the design team to further research how the space can be made safer for pedestrian use.

Amenities

While the Commission understands CPTED recommendations can limit the design and function of street furniture, they encouraged the project team to consider wind and rain protection as well as providing limited seating at bus stations in order to accommodate the needs of all users. Because of limited funding, the SDC recommended the design team focus on providing adequate wayfinding along the corridor before addressing the need of additional lighting near historic building facades. Although they appreciated the inclusion of artwork near major intersections, the Commission would like the project team to consider incorporating art throughout the transit corridor. The SDC also recommended the project team research how publicly accessible restrooms may be incorporated along the 3rd Avenue corridor.

Materials

The Commission appreciated the team's use of canopy trees to define public space. Commissioners also appreciated the discussion centered on soil structure and open-air areas for tree roots along the corridor. While they commended them for these efforts, The Commission also encouraged the design team to select materials that addressed stormwater management issues.

Sustainability

Commissioners requested the design team discuss on-site drainage during future presentations, especially in areas where large amounts of sidewalk are being eliminated.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for the concept design presentation. The Commission appreciates the level of detail the project team provided in the organization of the sidewalk and loading areas, as well as other elements within this complex space. The SDC approved the concept design plan for the 3rd Avenue Transit Corridor Improvements, 8-2, the concept design with the following recommendations:

- Define design priorities for pedestrian and vehicular use in the 3rd Avenue Corridor
- Explain in detail the pedestrian benefits associated with every element proposed
- Clarify that pedestrians will have adequate circulation and boarding space
- Consider how pedestrians waiting for transit interact with surrounding uses
- Encourage the continued focus on the selective use of crosswalk tables
- Strongly suggest that the corridor design consider the use of all users – sight impaired users in mixed loading zones as well as public restrooms and seating
- Pay attention to detail of curbing, bollards, paving treatments in flex loading zones in order to protect pedestrians using the space
- Strongly consider basic social needs and services when selecting site amenities
- Incorporate weather protection, seating, and visibility in the design of transit canopies
- Balance the scale of vertical and horizontal elements of the transit canopy in order to create a slender appearance

- Understand how much signage and light will fully contribute to wayfinding within the corridor
- Encourage the early involvement of an artist throughout the design process
- Encourage a selective and limited use of lighting along building façades
- Prioritize lighting to be used for wayfinding and safety measures
- Seek additional opportunities to address sustainability through stormwater management and maintenance of the landscape

The following are comments from those commissioners that voted against the project:

Ellen Sollod– Although I appreciate the amount of thought and design strategies the team has put forward, I have too many questions surrounding the aspirations of the project, including whether this design results in 3rd Ave feeling like a great street, for me to feel comfortable about approving the conceptual design.

Shannon Loew – This is a major piece of infrastructure for the city. Although specific sections of the plan are designed with great detail, the design team has skipped over identifying important priorities that the commission supports along this corridor. If we are not articulate about these priorities now, it is going to be hard to defend the project later when issues concerning the budget or scope arise. We need an initial concept that would make this a great corridor that prioritizes the pedestrian over automobiles. I want to make sure that we are set on incorporating core priorities that focus on creating good places for pedestrian use. I do not think we are there just yet.