

Script for MLK Way PBL Presentation

1. MLK Way Protected Bike Lane Early Design Drop-in Session

Welcome to the pre-recorded portion of tonight's online drop-in session. The presentation script has been translated and is available to download on the project webpage so you can follow along. If you are listening to this recording at some point in the future, you can email any questions or comments to MLKWay@seattle.gov.

2. Our vision, mission and core values

At SDOT we want to deliver projects that contribute to a thriving, equitable community that is powered by dependable transportation.

We want the transportation system to provide people with safe and affordable access to places and opportunities, and we are guided in doing this by our values of equity, safety, mobility, sustainability, livability, and excellence.

3. Presentation Overview

We'll start with some basic information about the project, including what we heard during public outreach this spring.

Then, we'll cover the current design at four key spots along the corridor.

And we'll end by talking about what comes next before moving to questions.

4. Project Background

The purpose of the project is to improve safety for people walking, biking, and driving, and create better connections to transit and to destinations between Mt. Baker Station and the future Judkins Park Station.

We are focusing on the section of MLK Jr. Way S between Rainier Ave S and S Judkins St with a goal of completing improvements by 2023.

5. Project needs

This project began earlier this year following outreach for the citywide Bicycle Master Plan Implementation Plan back in 2019.

We heard loud and clear a need for more connections in Southeast Seattle, especially heading north and south. This community process helped identify MLK as well as Beacon Ave as top

priorities citywide. Once the project is complete, a route of protected bike lanes, the I-90 bike path, and neighborhood greenways will allow for safe and comfortable cycling trips between Mt. Baker and Downtown Seattle, as well as the neighborhoods in between.

If you use 23rd Ave or I-90, you've probably seen that Sound Transit's construction of the new Judkins Park light rail station is well underway. It's expected to open in 2023, and we want this project on MLK to be ready to help riders reach it. SDOT is working on several projects to improve access to this station for people walking and biking to help more riders reach what will be high-quality, dependable transportation to jobs and other destinations.

Seattle is also working to improve traffic safety with a Vision Zero goal of ending traffic deaths and serious injuries. In many locations MLK functions as more of a highway than a city street, with high rates of speeding as well as run off the road collisions, left turn, pedestrian, and other collisions that can be addressed through improved design. We want this project to improve traffic safety for all users.

6. Project analysis so far

The project so far has included an analysis of different options. This helped determine what design should be developed further based on its ability to provide safety and connectivity while staying in budget and avoiding traffic and other impacts. We've also been working with other SDOT projects in the area, such as improvements to Metro's Route 7 bus and the Accessible Mt. Baker initiative.

And the pandemic is affecting all of us, including how this project has approached working with the community. I will hand things off to Lisa to discuss what we've learned through public outreach so far.

7. Project outreach

Thank you, Jonathan. As we worked on early design, we have been working with you remotely, through mailers, emails, phone interviews with businesses and organizations, and posts on social media.

We also had an online survey open for several weeks in April and May, which received 439 responses citywide, with great responses from the 98144 zip code in the project area as well as its immediate neighbors.

8. What we heard – Top 3 Reasons People Travel Along MLK

We learned that recreation and errands were the most commonly reported reasons for traveling along the corridor. Perhaps driven by the many parks, the tennis center and the p-patch, and by the shopping center and small businesses present in the area.

Commuting is also a common reason to use this street, including to jobs in both downtown and the neighborhood.

Many people also wrote in that visiting family and friends or attending events and worship also brought them along MLK.

9. What we heard—Top Modes of Travel

Driving was the most common way that survey respondents used the street, but many people reported cycling on it as well.

This part of MLK Way is also host to Metro’s Route 4 and Route 8, drawing transit riders to the corridor.

Sidewalks are present along all but one block of MLK, providing access to people traveling by foot.

10. What we heard – Top issues experienced when traveling along MLK

The two biggest issues reported with the way the street works today are uncomfortable walking and biking conditions and speeding.

No bike facilities are provided on MLK in this area, and in many locations the sidewalk is immediately adjacent to moving traffic.

Speeds are high in this area, although the recent speed limit change may have reduced these since spring. Many of the run off the road and single-vehicle collisions may have speed as a contributing factor.

We also heard reports of near-misses with vehicles turning at intersections and driveways, as well as spots where the pavement or the sidewalk need repair.

11. What we heard – Improvements along MLK that respondents would most like to see

The project elements most popular were new protected bike lanes, repairs to pavement and sidewalks, and new crosswalks.

These findings will help guide the project as we work to develop the design.

12. What we heard – Respondents favored Alternative 3

We also asked what form the protected bike lane should take if they were built.

One-way protected bike lanes were favored by 2/3 of the survey respondents, compared to about 1/3 in support of a two-way bike lane on either the east or the west side of the street.

This one-way protected bike lane option was favored in our analysis as well based on its expected performance for safety, feasibility, and connectivity.

Since the survey closed we have worked to develop this one-way protected bike lane concept further, and now Jonathan will share the design work so far.

13. Current Design – MLK Way and S Massachusetts St

Now we will show how this design would look at four points along the corridor. During the Q&A after the presentation we can have these available on the screen if you have specific questions.

The first point is at MLK and S Massachusetts St, location 1 on the map near Sam Smith Park and the I-90 lid. This is where the street has a neighborhood feel and directly serves peoples' homes, and has already seen some safety improvements. Today the street has one travel lane in each direction, a center turn lane that transitions to a left turn lane at S Massachusetts Street, and parking on both sides. Sidewalks are present, but no bike lanes.

The current design introduces protected bike lanes on each side of the street, separated from traffic and parking by flexible posts. The travel lanes and the turn lane would be retained, as would one lane of parking on the west side of the street. One lane of parking on the east side would be removed and lanes would be slightly narrowed to create space for the bike lane.

Green pavement markings are used at bus stops, driveways, and intersections to help highlight where cyclists will be present, and turn boxes will be provided to help cyclists make left turns without having to merge into general traffic. These design details are included not just at this location but throughout the project area.

Also shown here but present throughout the project are shared bus stops, where buses merge into the bike lane to pick up and drop off passengers similar to what you see today on the S Alaska St and S Myrtle St protected bike lanes on Beacon Hill.

14. Current Design – MLK Way and S Plum St

The next location is near Plum St and Hill St, opposite the Amy Yee Tennis Center, location 2 on the map.

Here the street currently has four travel lanes and a center turn lane. There are sidewalks, but no parking and no bike facilities.

The design proposal here replaces two of the travel lanes with the protected bike lanes, again separated from traffic by flexible posts. This is effectively what we call a road diet or rechannelization. It not only introduces dedicated space for bikes but also makes it easier to

maintain a 25 mile per hour speed while driving, compared to the four lane design the street has today.

We are considering adding new parking north of S Plum St on the west side of MLK to serve destinations in the neighborhood and replace some of the spaces that would be removed near the previous location.

This also includes a new pedestrian crossing at S Plum St, which will meet a new sidewalk planned for construction around the time Judkins Park Station opens.

That crosswalk would include a flashing beacon to help signal drivers and cyclists that someone wants to cross. It would also fill one of the longest gaps between improved crossings in the project area. And it will include new curb ramps for people rolling who are using a wheelchair or stroller.

15. Current Design—MLK Way and S Bayview St

Next is location 3, centered on the two legs of S Bayview Street. That's near the Lowe's and the Pepsi facility.

This part of the corridor continues to have four travel lanes and a center turn lane today. Sidewalks are present except on the east side of the street between S Bayview and McClellan, and there are no bike facilities.

The design is similar to the previous location, but the northbound bike lane is being designed as a multiuse path for both people walking and biking. We heard a desire to keep pedestrians and cyclists separate and so space on the path would be dedicated for northbound bikes and pedestrians walking in both directions. This fills the final sidewalk gap in the corridor, improving access and reducing the need to cross the street to walk on a sidewalk.

It also introduces a new crosswalk on the south side of the Bayview and MLK intersection, where none is currently provided given the lack of a sidewalk. Finally, it also upgrades the curb ramps at this intersection to improve travel for people rolling.

While we expect the design will help make it feel more natural to drive the new 25 mph speed limit, speeds and collisions have historically been higher in this part of MLK. Because of this, we are planning to have a concrete barrier between traffic and the bike lane to provide more separation in key locations.

16. Current Design—MLK Way and S McClellan St

The final location is closer to Mt. Baker Station, at S McClellan St which is marked as location 4 on the map. This is opposite the gas station and the planned Mt. Baker affordable housing developments. Today the street has four travel lanes and a center turn lane, which becomes a

left turn lane at McClellan. This location is also used by Metro buses accessing the current location of the Mt. Baker Transit Center.

The design replaces one lane in each direction with the protected bike lanes, generally separated with concrete barrier north of McClellan and by flexible posts south of McClellan. Openings in the bike lane are provided to maintain access to businesses and the transit center, although new affordable housing currently in planning will soon change the way the east side of the street looks today.

This part of the project will also include some of the Accessible Mt. Baker transportation improvements.

17. Accessible Mt Baker Walking/Biking Improvements

You may be familiar with the Accessible Mt. Baker initiative that is helping guide transportation improvements in this part of the neighborhood. Several of these projects are under review to be built as part of the MLK project alongside the new bike lanes.

Building several of these at the same time helps bring about these improvements faster, reduces the construction impacts of multiple projects, and can help reduce costs.

The projects under consideration are:

- more space for people walking to wait for the crossing signal at Rainier and MLK,
- sidewalk and crosswalk widening and repair along Rainier,
- a new crosswalk beneath the existing footbridge,
- and improved pedestrian crossings on S McClellan Street.

That wraps up the design portion of the presentation, I'll hand it back to Lisa with the plan for the rest of tonight.

18. Next Steps

In just a few moments we will begin answering questions if you are watching this live for the next half hour or until we've answered all the questions received tonight.

After that we will have a brief online survey available with some topics we would like feedback and ideas on. That will be open for one week.

You can stay informed by checking the project website or signing up for email updates.

We will be taking what we learned tonight and from the survey and using that to further develop our design, and will check back in again this fall.

As we further develop the design we will be able to get into more specifics, such as where we will be working on pavement repairs and how the Rainier and MLK intersection will function with a new crosswalk.

19. Questions

We are going to turn our screens on shortly and respond to the questions that you have been submitting through the Q and A function. You can continue to submit questions and we will do our best to get to all of them. We will collect all the questions and post them, with our answers, to the website.

You can also email your questions in at any time to our project email inbox at MLKWay@Seattle.gov