



Script for MLK Way PBL 30% Design Presentation

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

Welcome and thank you for listening to the pre-recorded presentation for the MLK Way Protected Bike Lane Early Design drop-in session.

We will start this presentation with a land acknowledgment.

We acknowledge the original inhabitants of this place, the Coast Salish and Duwamish tribes, who since time immemorial have hunted, fished, gathered, and taken care of these lands. We respect their sovereignty, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water.

2. Presentation Overview

Before we get started, I would like to introduce the members of our SDOT project team who are presenting today. My name is Lisa Harrison, and I'm the communications and outreach lead for this project. Jonathan Frazier is also presenting and is the project developer.

The script for this presentation 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.

During this presentation, we will begin by sharing the Seattle Department of Transportation's mission, vision, and core values.

Next we'll start with some basic information about the project, including what we heard during public outreach so far.

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

And we'll end by talking about what comes next.

3. 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. I will now turn the presentation over to Jonathan.

4. Project Background

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

We are focusing on the section of MLK Jr. Way S between Rainier Ave S and S Judkins St. Construction could begin by the end of 2021, 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, in an area where four community members have tragically lost their lives in collisions in just over a year.

We have begun to introduce changes this year such as changes to pedestrian signals and a reduced speed limit to improve traffic safety sooner, but want a project such as this one to help those new changes work even better.

6. Project analysis so far

The project began with 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.

Since the last time we checked in we've developed what we call a 30% design, where many of the major questions about the project have been answered but there are still details to resolve. It's a good time to share the design and incorporate feedback.

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 well as private and public construction in the area.

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 also been working with you remotely, through mailers, emails, phone interviews with businesses and organizations, and posts on social media.

In the spring, we were forced to delay an outreach event due to COVID, but we had an online survey open for several weeks in April and May. In August, we hosted an online drop-in session to share early designs and opened another online survey to gather your feedback on the design. We received 184 responses from the online survey. In the next few slides I'll share what we heard from our August outreach.

8. What we heard – Parking

We asked about on-street parking and which side of the roadway people would prefer the parking to be maintained. 58% of the responses we gathered preferred parking to remain on the east side.

9. What we heard—Top Priorities for Bike Lanes

Finally, we asked what your top priorities for protected bike lanes were and the top two answers were:

1. Ample space and physical protection between bicyclists and vehicles
2. Dedicated signals for bicyclists and vehicle left turns

10 What we heard – Top priorities for Pedestrian Improvements

Another topic we asked folks to provide their feedback on was their top priorities for pedestrian improvements.

The top priority was to extend the sidewalk corners. These provide more room and space from traffic while waiting to cross the street.

11. What we heard – Top priorities for Pedestrian Improvements

We also heard that folks want the sidewalks widened or repaired. These improvements provide a smoother surface and expands the space for people walking and rolling.

12. What we heard – Top priorities for Pedestrian Improvements

And the third priority chosen was to widen crosswalks. This provides greater visibility for people crossing the street.

That wraps up the brief outreach recap. I will now turn the presentation over to Jonathan.

13. Current Design – MLK Way and S Massachusetts St

Now we will show how this design would look at five points along the corridor. The first four locations will be familiar if you joined the last event, but we will also go into detail on the intersection of Rainier and MLK which did not yet have a design to share last time.

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 seen some safety improvements already. 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 design introduces protected bike lanes on each side of the street, separated from traffic and parking by flexible posts. The travel lanes in each direction and the turn lane would be retained, as would one lane of parking on the west side of the street. One lane of parking would be removed and lanes would be slightly narrowed to create space for the bike lane. Parking on

the east side would be removed in order to preserve more parking on the west side of the street near destinations such as churches, businesses, and non-profits.

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 area 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 adding new parking north of S Plum St on the west side of MLK where it is currently restricted. This will help calm traffic, serve destinations in the neighborhood and replace some of the spaces that would be removed near the previous location.

This also potentially includes a new pedestrian crossing at S Plum St, which would 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 including a concrete barrier between traffic and the bike lane to provide more separation in key locations.

There is also an area where water has significantly damaged the pavement between S Bayview St and S McClellan St. Our design proposes repairing this damage to improve safety and comfort for all users and we are seeking funding to replace the concrete pavement panels and make improvements to slow down future damage.

16. Current Design—MLK Way and S McClellan St

The next 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 Proposed 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. It proposed several near-term projects to be built by 2024, which including the protected bike lane and several proposed changes to the Rainier Ave S and MLK Jr. Way S intersection.

At our last event we shared that several of these projects were under consideration to be built alongside the protected bike lane, and asked for your help to help prioritize them. I'm happy to share that funding is likely available to build all of these. Building them at the same time helps bring about these improvements faster, reduces the construction impacts of multiple projects, and can help reduce costs.

In the Mt. Baker area the protected bike lanes will cross Rainier Ave S and provide access to Mt. Baker Station. People riding southbound will cross with the traffic light, and can pull into Mt. Baker Station via the wide driveway. People starting from Mt. Baker Station heading north can use a new curb ramp to reach a bike box beneath the new traffic signal where they can wait for the green light.

Improvements on MLK south of Rainier were paused this summer due to the budget impacts of the pandemic, but funding to continue early planning may become available next year to continue this design farther south.

18. Accessible Mt Baker Proposed Walking/Biking Improvements

Let's walk through each of these elements since these are new since the last meeting.

#1 Two expanded corners to provide more space and separation from traffic for people waiting to cross the street. These are both on the east of side of Rainier. The northeast corner outside of Starbucks will see a significant expansion, the southeast corner outside Franklin High School's playfield will be expanded by a few feet.

#2 Wider and repaired sidewalks on the east side of Rainier for a smoother surface and more space for people walking and rolling. There is more room to expand the sidewalk on the north

side, the constraints of the playfield mean that the expansion on the south side will be narrower.

#3 Is refreshing the crosswalks and making them wider across Rainier Ave S and MLK Jr. Way S to provide more visibility and more space for people crossing the street. We are looking at using the black textured strips recently installed at Rainier Ave S and 23rd Ave S to help people who are blind understand where they are in the crosswalk.

#4 Is a new crosswalk and traffic signal on the south side of the intersection to provide a place for people to cross without needing to climb the existing pedestrian bridge. The bridge will remain in place for people who prefer not to wait for the light or who are used to using it, but it's important to provide a ground-level crosswalk at this location to reconnect the intersection and protect people who aren't using the pedestrian bridge.

#5 A right turn on red restriction to help people walk across the street with more separation from people turning, and is important to add along with the new crosswalk to keep people safe.

#6 Improvements at two intersections of McClellan St. Signal changes to help people cross the street called leading pedestrian S intervals have already been added where S McClellan St intersects with Rainier Ave S and again at MLK Jr. Way S.

As we are making these improvements we are also going to be rebuilding the curb ramps to make them better for people with wheelchairs or strollers, and refreshing the pavement markings as needed for people driving.

And that wraps up the design section, Lisa will describe what happens next.

19. Next Steps

We have an online survey available for you to submit your feedback on the designs we just discussed. Please visit the project website for the survey link. The survey will be open until Friday, November 20th. We're hosting an online drop-in session on Tuesday, November 17th. We will share information about the project and host a live Question and Answer session.

We will be working to stay in touch with you throughout this project.

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

20. Questions/Wrap-up

Thank you for watching this presentation. Remember, the online survey is open now through Friday, November 20th and there is an online drop-in session on Tuesday, November 17th.

If you are watching this presentation after these dates, you can email your questions at any time to our project email inbox at MLKWay@Seattle.gov