

Rainier Avenue S Bus Lanes

Outreach Summary

January 2023



Presented by



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

the Vida
AGENCY

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Project Overview

The Seattle Department of Transportation is working in partnership with King County Metro to improve transit reliability in the Rainier Valley. The Route 7 is one of Seattle's busiest bus routes, serving 8,000 riders per day (11,200 riders per day prior to the pandemic). While Route 7 buses are scheduled to come every 10 minutes or sooner, buses are often delayed due to traffic congestion on Rainier Ave S. To help improve transit reliability on this important corridor, we're adding bus lanes on Rainier Ave S. For more information, visit our [project webpage](#).

Phase 1 (completed July 2022) We installed a northbound bus lane between S Alaska St and S Walden St, and a southbound bus lane between S Oregon St and S Edmunds St. A travel lane was converted into the new bus lanes and no existing on-street parking was removed.

Phase 2 (outreach in Fall 2022) We're evaluating additional changes to further improve transit reliability and travel times, including expanding bus lanes further north on Rainier Ave S. We evaluated 2 options to extend the northbound bus lane on Rainier Ave S to S Grand St. We estimate this change will save people riding the bus 5 minutes during congested morning hours.

Options:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. A continuous northbound bus lane, one general travel lane, and center turn lane between S Grand St to S Walden St | 2. A continuous northbound bus lane between S Grand St and S Walden St that maintains 2 northbound travel lanes and removes the center turn lane between S Grand St to S College St |
|--|---|

Project Purpose

Our purpose is to: Improve transit reliability on Rainier Ave S, including frequent routes with high ridership such as the Routes 7, 48 and 106.

Allow transit to continue to be a lifeline and better serve the Rainier Valley community as we collectively recover and rebuild from the pandemic.

Smoothly connect people on the bus to the new Judkins Park Light Rail Station opening in 2023, in addition to existing transit hubs like the Mt. Baker Light Rail Station and the McClellan St Metro Transit Station.

Enhance reliability for very frequent bus service in the morning during the AM peak period, with one northbound bus coming about every 3.5 minutes to help people get where they are going on time and experience more consistent travel times.

- During an average morning trip, people on the bus can save 2 minutes after the bus lane is installed. During the most congested morning trips, people on the bus can save 6 minutes with a bus lane.

Project area



Project Timeline

- **Early 2022:** Complete design and begin outreach for Phase 1 project
- **July 2022:** Construction of Phase 1 project
- **Fall 2022:** Outreach on Phase 2 project
- **2023-2024:** Final design and implementation of Phase 2 project

Outreach

Outreach Goals

With the Phase 1 project, our purpose was to inform the community about the outreach we have done to date and inform the community of the implementation of the Phase 1 bus lanes.

Our goal for Phase 2 was to gather community feedback about the two options and strategies on how to address barriers to taking the bus.

Language Access

We translated materials into eleven languages: Amharic, Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Japanese, Korean, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese. We also worked with Department of Neighborhoods Community Liaisons to conduct outreach to communities that primarily spoke these languages. We also ran a multicultural media campaign. More information about the materials, Community Liaison outreach, and the multicultural media campaign can be found in the following sections.

Outreach Methods

We conducted Phase 1 outreach from May to July 2022, and Phase 2 outreach from September to November 2022. We also maintained ongoing outreach from late spring through the end of this year via ongoing activities like our project inbox.

Survey: For 6 weeks (from September 27 to November 13), we hosted an online and paper survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback about the two design options, experiences traveling on Rainier Ave S, experiences riding the bus, and what would encourage people to take more bus trips. We received 1,330 survey responses, including 210 survey responses in languages other than English.

Mailer: We informed people about the Phase 1 bus lane implementation by sending a mailer to 11,986 addresses in the project area. For Phase 2, we expanded our mailing area further south to 20,292 residences and businesses. The Phase 2 mailer notified people about the two design options, survey, and public meeting.

Multicultural media and digital campaign: We launched a multicultural media and digital ad campaign to raise awareness around the project. We worked with Converge Media, Seattle Medium, Runta News, Rainier Ave Radio, NW Vietnamese News, Seattle Chinese Post, and South Seattle Emerald. The campaign included online ads, interviews, and earned media.

Website: The Rainier Bus Lanes [project website](#) was maintained as a multilanguage webpage with project information and updates.

Peachjar flyer: We used Peachjar to send a digital flyer to Seattle Public Schools within the project area. The flyer was available from October 11 to November 11, 2022, and included information about the project, survey, and public meeting.

We targeted 14 schools around the project area: Rainier Beach High School, Sugiyama High School, South Shore PK – 8, Dunlap Elementary, Orca K – 8, Dunlap Elementary, Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, John Muir Elementary, Interagency Academy, Hawthorne Elementary, Graham Hill Elementary, Franklin High, Aki Kurose Middle, Thurgood Marshall Elementary, and Washington Middle

Peachjar distributed 6,899 flyers via email. The flyer received 5,354 impressions (number of times the flyer was shown) and 1,020 views (number of times a user clicked through).

Listserv: Email updates were sent via project listserv throughout Phase 1 and Phase 2. All email updates are documented on the project webpage.

Social media posts and blog posts: Information about the project was posted online via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as [blog posts](#) that shared [Phase 1](#) and [Phase 2](#) project updates.

In Person Events: Between June 2022 and October 2022, we staffed community and pop-up events to spread overall project awareness for both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects and listen to community feedback. A list of events is below

June 3, 2022 – Rainier Valley Safeway Pop Up

July 2, 2022 – Rainier Valley Safeway Pop Up

July 9, 2022 – King County Public Health Event

August 20, 2022 – Big Day of Play Event

October 12, 2022 – QFC Pop Up Event

October 18, 2022 – Rainier Beach Safeway Pop Up Event

October 30, 2022 – Boo Bash

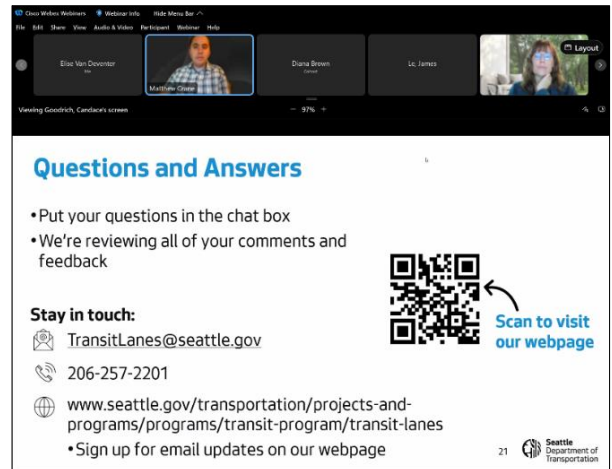
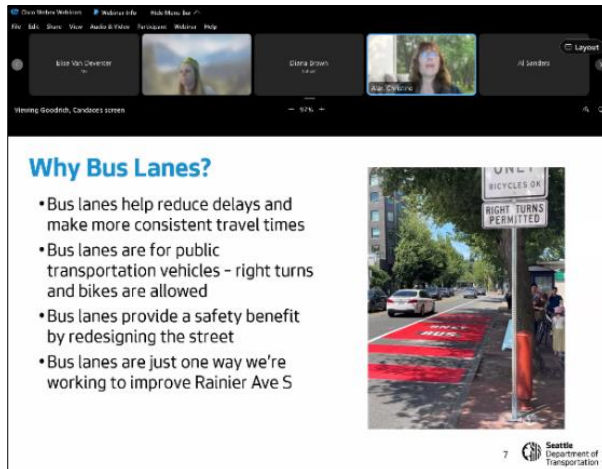


SDOT team members listen to a community members feedback outside at pop-up event.



SDOT team members listen to a community members feedback outside of the Safeway on Rainier Ave S.

Public meeting: We held a virtual public meeting on Tuesday, October 25, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM. The public meeting was advertised via web update, mailer, and listserv emails. Approximately twenty people attended the event. The purpose of the public meeting was to share information about the project, review the design options for Phase 2, and answer questions. A summary of questions and answers from the meeting is available [online](#)



A screenshot of our virtual public meeting presentation on October 25th

Business Outreach: In May 2022, we connected with businesses in the project area via door-to-door outreach and phone calls to make sure businesses were aware of the Phase 1 project and to answer any questions. In October 2022, we informed businesses about the Phase 2 project feedback opportunities including the survey and public meeting.

Community Liaisons: We partnered with the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and worked with 9 community liaisons to conduct outreach within their communities and with people who speak languages other than English. The community liaisons met with community members to share information about the project and collect feedback. They provided \$20 grocery store gift cards to people as compensation for their time and feedback. Community liaisons engaged with people who speak Somali, Tigrinya, Cantonese, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Amharic, Korean, and Japanese.



Community Liaison Regina with community members as she conducts outreach.

Bus signs along the corridor: We coordinated with King Country Metro to post 25 posters at the most used bus stops along the corridor to inform the public about the project and promote survey participation.

What We Heard

Across all our outreach methods, we heard a variety of feedback from the community about the bus lanes. Below is a summary of the main themes and topics we heard while conducting outreach. There is some overlap of comments between topic categories.

Phase 2 bus lanes options¹

- **Option 1:** People who walk, bike, or take the bus tend to prefer Option 1. People prefer Option 1 because they think it will improve safety and because they want to keep the center turn lane to have better access to businesses and reduce crashes from people making turns. The center turn lane is also often used by freight vehicles to load or unload.
- **Option 2:** People who drive tend to prefer Option 2. People prefer Option 2 because they think it will help with traffic congestion by maintaining 2 lanes for people driving north of College St.
- **General feedback:** Regardless of preferred option, people expressed many of the similar concerns including increased traffic congestion and safety risks from people speeding or illegally driving in bus lanes or center turn lanes.

Safety

- **Speeding and illegal use of bus lanes:** People driving are illegally using the bus lanes to speed and/or pass other cars or avoid congestion. This is dangerous for people legally entering the bus lanes to make right turns or pedestrians crossing the street at intersections. There are concerns that this behavior will continue without enforcement and if the bus lanes are expanded further north.
- **Speeding and illegal use of the center turn lane:** Similar to the bus lanes, people driving are illegally using the center turn lane to speed and pass other cars or to avoid congestion. This poses a danger to people who use the center turn lane to make turns.
- **Speed cameras:** People would like to see speed cameras or other enforcement to address safety concerns of people driving.
- **Collisions:** People concerned about the number of pedestrian deaths and accidents along Rainier Ave S due to unsafe driving. People want to see SDOT make changes to help mitigate this.

¹ Feedback on the 2 options was primarily collected through a survey. See the survey summary report for more information.

- **Bus stop safety:** People are concerned about safety at bus stops and believe that investments are needed to improve safety at bus stops, particularly at night. We heard that certain stops do not feel safe, some lack cover or shelters for people waiting for a bus, and others lack surrounding sidewalks making them dangerous to walk away from during busy hours.
- **Signalized intersections and dedicated pedestrian crossings:** People expressed interest in seeing more signalized intersections and/or dedicated pedestrian crossings to help people safely cross the street. People support including a signal at Grand St in Option 1, and also expressed a need for improved pedestrian crossings at other locations such as Rainier Ave S and Walker St. Other locations that were mentioned with a need for safety improvements include Rainier Ave and Martin Luther King Jr Way S, and the intersections of Rainier Ave S, Letitia Ave S, and S Charlestown St, and Rainier Ave S near S College St.

Traffic

- **Traffic congestion:** Many people are concerned with increased traffic congestion (both on Rainier Ave S and other nearby streets) due to the implementation of the bus lanes. People asked that delays for people who drive be taken into consideration in addition to the needs of people who take the bus.
- **Cut-through traffic:** People are concerned about increased cut-through traffic and traffic diversion on neighborhood streets from people trying to avoid congestion on Rainier Ave S. This increased traffic also poses safety concerns since people are speeding on these residential streets.
- **Access to businesses:** People are concerned about impacts to businesses on Rainier Ave S, particularly from increased traffic potentially deterring people from visiting these businesses. People value the center turn lane in order to have easy and safe access to businesses on Rainier Ave S.
- **Cumulative impact of other projects:** People who live in Rainier Valley neighborhoods said that the cumulative traffic impact of other projects such as Lake Washington Blvd and the addition of bike lanes on MLK Blvd makes them feel trapped. People have questions and concerns about how SDOT is considering these cumulative impacts of several projects.

Barriers to taking the bus

- **Safety:** People said that they do not feel safe walking to or waiting at bus stops. Safety for people on the bus is another key concern.
- **Reliability:** People want buses to be more reliable.
- **Bus conditions:** People stated that unclean bus conditions make riding the bus less desirable.
- **Education:** People do not always know how to ride the bus, nor do they know about programs or services available to assist people in riding the bus. In-language resources and outreach are helpful.
- **Access:** For many people, the bus does not serve them in the areas where they live or need to travel to/from. Many people relied on the VIA service and would like to see that service reinstated.
- **Time and duration:** People indicated that the bus does not always serve people at the times of day that they need to travel, particularly late evening or early mornings. In addition, trips by bus sometimes just take too much time and people need to choose other modes such as driving a car.
- **Difficulty of taking the bus for certain trips:** Many people accomplish several needs in a single trip, such as dropping children off at school or running an errand on the way to work. These types of trips are too difficult to do by bus or would take too much time. Similarly, it can be too difficult to do things like carry multiple shopping bags on a bus trip.

Bus travel times and bus lanes

- **Improved bus travel times:** People who ride the bus are grateful for the new bus lanes, which have led to improved travel times (particularly people who depend on transit as their main transportation option). Other people asked how much time buses are saving since the Phase 1 bus lanes were built.
- **Expanded bus lane network:** People want to see additional bus lanes, including a southbound bus lane.
- **Need to improve overall experience for people riding the bus:** People said that buses need to be made reliable, safe, efficient, and have more frequent service for the expanded network of bus lanes to achieve its goal. People appreciate seeing the city invest in transit, particularly for the many people who rely on transit as their primary transportation option.
- **Bus lane restrictions:** People are interested in options for a peak hour bus lane versus a 24/7 bus lane. People are also interested in opening the bus lanes to people driving on the weekends.
- **Southbound bus lane:** People are interested in options for a southbound bus lane. People asked if Option 2 would make it more difficult to add southbound bus lanes in the future.

Bike lanes

- **People who bike need safe and accessibility lanes:** People who bike stated that bus lanes provide a safe alternative to riding on the road. More bus lanes offer a more convenient and consistent option to people who bike who don't feel safe sharing the road with cars.
- **Support for bike lanes on Rainier Ave:** People support having bike lanes on Rainier Ave since it is a flat and direct route.

Outreach and public information

- **Clear signage:** People who drive have said that changing the road and travel lanes can be confusing for people. Clear information and signage are needed so that people who drive can avoid making mistakes or receiving tickets.
- **Education:** People expressed confusion about how to drive in bus lanes, including the types of vehicles that can use bus lanes. More education and clear information are needed.
- **Previous outreach:** People have questions about outreach that has been done to date regarding adding bus lanes on Rainier Ave S. People also asked why the current outreach does not include an option to not add a bus lane.

Community Liaisons Outreach

The below section focuses on what we heard directly from Community Liaisons while they were out conducting outreach in the community.

- **Options:** Feedback about the 2 options is mixed. People like Option 2 because it seems better for traffic. People also like Option 1 because they think it is safer and easier to access businesses with a center turn lane. People are supportive of either option and whatever is best for the community. People are supportive of the project because they think it will help people who rely on transit and create bus trips that take less time. People think that a more reliable and affordable transit system is good for everyone in the neighborhood and its better for the environment. People who drive are also happy with more people being able to take the bus to help reduce traffic.
- **Safety:** Safety is a top concern for the community, both for people driving and for people walking, rolling, and biking. People mentioned several crossings on Rainier Ave S, such as Walker St, that need improvements to help people cross the street safely. People who drive appreciate efforts to make the road safer. Other key concerns related to safety include the lack of pedestrian lighting, sidewalks, safety at bus stops and on the bus.
- **Construction impacts:** People are concerned about construction and the impact it has on local businesses. They're also appreciative of how an area looks nicer once construction is over.
- **Traffic and parking:** People are concerned about traffic getting worse with the loss of a travel lane to add a bus lane. The impacts are hard for the community, but people also appreciate seeing investments in the community. People want more access to parking and for the streets to be less crowded, but they understand that there are constraints around providing that. Some people think that Rainier Ave S is too small and would like to add another lane.
- **Transit riders:** People who ride the bus (particularly the Route 7) ride it frequently. They often take the bus multiple times a day and not just to/from work. People are grateful for the Route 7 bus service and for investments to make the service better.
- **Bus lanes in phases:** Building the bus lanes in phases is confusing for people driving in addition to changes in the road design in general. People also asked about adding southbound bus lanes.
- **Improvements to the bus and bus stops:** People voiced concerns about conditions on the bus and at bus stops. People would like to see bus stops and buses better maintained (cleaner, repaired broken items), and better road maintenance of bus lanes. People living in the community wish there were more bus routes, particularly within residential areas (for example, something that connects MLK, Seward, and Othello). People also like VIA service and are supportive of additional service.

- **Materials and outreach:** The large, laminated posters explaining the options were very helpful. The posters were easy to use, easy to understand, and particularly helpful for people who don't read or speak well. Business owners/employees are often too busy to take the survey and having incentives was important. People appreciated that we took the time to make sure they understood the project, hear their feedback, and answer their questions.

Appendices

[Phase 1 Mailer](#)

[Phase 2 Mailer](#)

[Peachjar Flyer](#)

[Bus Stop Flyer](#)

[Phase 2 Survey](#)

[Survey Analysis Report](#)

[Multicultural Media Campaign Report](#)



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