Lake Washington Boulevard Renovations Project

Phase 1 Construction – Engagement & Public Meeting Questions and Answers

Overview

The Lake Washington Boulevard (LWB) Renovations Project aims to enhance safety and improve access for all users and transportation modes along the boulevard from Mount Baker Beach to Seward Park.

The City of Seattle is implementing this project through a phased approach to effectively manage resources, expedite improvements, and address community needs in a timely and comprehensive manner. This strategy allows the city to deliver immediate, high-priority safety and accessibility upgrades while planning for long-term enhancements across the entire three-mile corridor within the available budget. The phased approach also enables the City to leverage matching funds from the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board's Complete Streets grant and supports an incremental, adaptive process that prioritizes continuous monitoring and data-driven adjustments to ensure the project's success.

On December 12, 2024, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), in collaboration with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), hosted a public meeting to share updates on the Lake Washington Boulevard Renovations Project following the completion of Phase 1 construction earlier that fall. The meeting offered an opportunity to share a performance evaluation of the first phase of improvements and to discuss what is planned for future phases.

Held in person with a hybrid virtual option, the event had over 300 attendees. The meeting began with a presentation from representatives of both departments. Small group discussions were facilitated by City staff, with each group reporting out to the full audience what they discussed. The evening concluded with a public comment period, during which community members were invited to share questions and feedback. Questions raised during this portion of the meeting were recorded and are answered in the sections below.

To access the materials presented at this meeting and to learn more about the project, please visit the project webpage: https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/lake-washington-boulevard-renovations

Community Feedback Summary

Overall Sentiments

Meeting attendees expressed both enthusiastic support and strong opposition to the project's safety and traffic calming measures. Supporters noted that Phase 1 improvements made the

corridor feel safer for all users, especially pedestrians and cyclists. They favored completing the remainder of the planned treatments and expanding safety measures throughout the corridor.

In contrast, opponents viewed the project as unnecessary or disruptive, arguing that it benefits a narrow group of recreational cyclists at the expense of seniors, people with disabilities, and residents reliant on cars. While the project preserves vehicle access and does not introduce traffic diversions, some attendees opposed to the safety improvements expressed frustration with the inconvenience of slower driving speeds.

Speed Cushions and Traffic Calming

Speed cushions were among the most polarizing treatments included in the project. Supporters credited them with significantly reducing speeding and making the corridor safer for walking and biking. Some called for more cushions, particularly on the southern segments of the corridor to address persistent speeding issues. However, opponents criticized the speed cushions for causing discomfort and raising the risk of vehicle damage. They also expressed concerns about safety hazards for motorcycles and vans equipped for mobility access. Some noted that the cushions prompted dangerous driving behavior as people attempted to avoid them.

Safety and Enforcement

The community discussed the project's focus on safety through engineering and design, with general agreement on the importance of safety but differing views on the proposed solutions. Some felt enforcement measures like speed cameras, radar signs, or greater police presence were needed, while others pushed for clearer signage, better lighting, and improved pavement markings as more immediate solutions. There was a general consensus on prioritizing safety, but opinions diverged on how to achieve it.

Equity and Inclusion

Equity concerns sparked substantial debate. Several attendees criticized the engagement process for failing to represent South Seattle's racially and economically diverse communities, arguing that the project favors recreational use over residents' needs. Some pointed to the demographic makeup of attendees and claimed that decisions are being driven by a vocal, unrepresentative minority. Others countered that equitable access to safe, walkable, bikeable streets is a core social justice issue, particularly for those who do not own cars. This disagreement highlighted differing interpretations of what "equity" means in the context of public space.

Neighborhood Impacts and Traffic Diversion

Residents raised concerns about potential increased traffic, speeding, and noise on nearby residential streets due to changes on LWB. Many called for continued monitoring of impacts,

with some advocating for stronger mitigation strategies such as diverters or redirecting traffic to arterials like Rainier Avenue. These comments reflected a broader desire to ensure that the city is approaching the project holistically and in consideration of broader neighborhood impacts.

Process, Communication, and Transparency

Frustration with the City's engagement and communication process was expressed, with some feeling frustrated by its prolonged nature, while others were concerned that certain voices and perspectives might be left out. Several participants reported not receiving notices about the meeting or the project itself. Some expressed distrust in the data used to justify the changes, particularly around collision and injury statistics. Despite these criticisms, many attendees urged the city to make a clear decision and move forward, expressing frustration with the ongoing consultation cycles.

Suggestions and Future Vision

Numerous attendees proposed ideas for long-term improvements to Lake Washington Boulevard, emphasizing the need for eventual modal separation to create a designated space for people biking on the boulevard. Suggestions included adding rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) crossing enhancements, improving signage, introducing rumble strips, adding additional bike parking, adding more restroom facilities, and enhancing overall park amenities. The group also discussed the potential to convert the boulevard to one-way travel to make space for a bidirectional protected bike lane, a proposal that received a mixed reaction from community members. While opinions on the project varied, there was widespread agreement that the city must develop and communicate a clear, long-term vision for LWB, one that prioritizes safety, is informed by data, and accommodates all users and transportation modes.

Questions and Answers

1. **Why is a bike path on the west side of the LWB not being considered? Why hasn't there been a feasibility study for a designated, separated bike path using City property? What does it take (financially or politically) to build bike lanes, accessible pedestrian paths, and vehicle routes together? Has the City evaluated the feasibility of widening the existing footpath into a bike path? Could the City study making LWB a one-way street to accommodate separate bike and car lanes?**

   While a separated bike path on the west side of Lake Washington Boulevard is not part of the current project, it remains a potential long-term improvement. The Seattle Transportation Plan identifies the corridor for a future multi-use trail, but additional funding, coordination, and study would be needed to advance that vision. Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Seattle Department of Transportation will continue to collaborate and keep the public informed as opportunities for long-term enhancements are explored.

2. **What data was used in the survey (average speed vs. 85th percentile)? Was the speed data presented accurately?**

   The project survey presented the 85th percentile speeds (85% of the motorists drive at or below this speed), collected in multiple locations along the corridor. In addition to traffic speeds, other factors such as context, collision history, activity levels, conflict density, and community feedback were taken in consideration for this project.

3. **Please explain the discrepancy in collision data — 12 vs. 100 collisions cited. Which is correct?**

   This question is in reference to SDOT's 2023 Lake Washington Blvd Visioning Process Final Report and Recommendations. On page 12 of the report, there was a correction to the collision date. There were 101 reported collisions in total along this three-mile stretch of Lake Washington Boulevard from 2015 to early 2022. Of the 101 crashes, 9 of them were between people driving and people biking.

4. **When we compare Bicycle Sundays to non-Bicycle Sundays, what is the % increase of vehicle traffic on Hunter Boulevard S and Cascadia Ave S?**

   The city is continuing to monitor the potential impacts to streets in adjacent neighborhoods. Please visit the project webpage for updates related to the project's associated traffic evaluations.

In 2022, SDOT conducted an evaluation of traffic volumes and speeds on Lake Washington Boulevard and adjacent streets and found minimal impact. Access the evaluation report on SDOT's webpage.

5. **What is being done to address traffic that speeds up after leaving the improved segment of LWB? When will speed bumps and crosswalks be installed north of 42nd (especially at S Horton St and Mt. Baker Beach)?**

   The project proposes the installation of additional speed cushions at sections of LWB unaddressed by treatments in Phase 1, including the north mile, at S Horton St, on approaches to curves, and the south mile at S Dawson St. Additional traffic calming in the form of speed cushions will be installed in future phases of the project.

6. **Will flashing beacon lights be added at more crosswalks, including 43rd Ave S?**

   Flashing beacon lights (RRFBs) are currently not included in the scope of the project. Speed reduction and the ability to address the full extents of the project corridor within the available budget were prioritized in these initial phases of the project. Pending additional funding, additional improvements may be included in future phases of the project.

7. **When are improvements planned for Lakeside Ave S (Coleman Park to I-90)?**

   Lakeside Ave S is not within the extents of the project corridor (Lake Washington Boulevard from Lake Park Dr S to S Juneau St). Any potential future improvements to Lakeside Ave S would be separate from the Lake Washington Boulevard Renovations Project.

8. **Will additional lighting or reflective paint be added on road edges?**

   As a part of Phase 2 of construction, SDOT will be painting the road edges along the length of the corridor. Lighting is not currently included in the scope of the project.

9. **Why is the city not using RCW 46.63.250 to install speed cameras in the park? Will the City install speed radar signs or cameras along LWB?**

   SDOT presented an update to the Seattle City Council on April 15, 2025. You can view the presentation online, watch a video of the meeting on the Seattle Channel.

The Seattle City Council passed and the Mayor signed legislation to update Seattle's automated traffic safety camera (ATSC) program and align the Seattle Municipal Code with changes to State law passed in 2024. You can read the text of the legislation here. As Council amended in the legislation, SDOT staff will prepare an evaluation of the locations identified within the legislation as well as other locations citywide, including LWB, for potential new ATSC deployments, based on new ATSC implementation guidelines SDOT will finalize this summer to compliment the legislative updates.

10. **Why isn't there more enforcement or police presence for speeding and dangerous driving?**

    We recognize that enforcement is one way to encourage slower speeds and the Seattle Police Department (SPD) remains a key partner. SPD is actively working to address staffing shortages by hiring additional officers to address traffic enforcement needs. Through this project, engineering treatments are being installed to enforce safer driver behavior through the roadway's design.

11. **Are there plans to reduce the speed limit further (e.g., to 20 mph)?**

    In 2020, speeds were lowered on most arterial streets across the city to 25 MPH. Reducing the speed limit further is not included in the scope of the project.

12. **How will aggressive passing and increased emissions from speed up/down behavior be addressed?**

    The project aims to calm traffic through design elements like speed cushions and visual narrowing of intersections. These measures aim to promote slower, safer speeds. The city will keep monitoring the corridor and explore appropriate steps to respond to community concerns.

13. **Is there coordination with fire department regarding emergency access and speed cushion impacts?**

    Yes, there is ongoing coordination between SPR, SDOT, and the Seattle Fire Department (SFD). Speed cushions, in lieu of speed bumps, were the selected as the traffic calming treatment for LWB to accommodate the wheelbase of an emergency vehicle and minimize delays.

14. **Why wasn't everyone in the neighborhood notified of the meeting by mailer? Why was the public meeting not representative of South Seattle's diversity (e.g., 98118 demographic)?**

The Seattle Parks and Recreation Public Involvement Policy states that mailers must be sent out to residents within a 300' radius of the project site. The residential mailing boundary for this project has been within half a mile of the corridor. Over 10,000 mailers were sent out throughout Phase 1 of the Lake Washington Boulevard Renovations Project. In response to the feedback we've received from members of the community and to extend the project's reach, we have increased this area to all residences within a mile of the corridor.

15. Who is receiving the surveys, and why are residents not aware of them?

The Lake Washington Boulevard Renovations Project's Design Concepts Survey received over 1,400 responses, over 79% of which were from residents of the project corridor's zip codes (98118, 98144, and 98122). For more information about who we heard from and what we heard in the project's engagement, please access the Project Outreach Summary and Final Design Report.

16. Could the road be re-striped or redesigned with narrower lanes to slow traffic without speed cushions?

As part of Phase 2 of construction, SDOT will re-stripe both the centerline and edge lines, add edge line striping in areas that are not currently painted, and add reflective pavement markings along the corridor. This provides visual cues for drives to follow the curvature of the roadway during daylight and dark hours and encourage slower driving speeds.

17. Why are speed cushions so high compared to other areas (e.g., Arboretum or Boyer)? Could tabletop speed humps or other designs be used instead of abrupt bumps?

The speed cushions installed on Lake Washington Boulevard are designed and spaced to engineer the roadway to the signed 25 mph speed limit.

18. Could speed cushions be staggered between lanes to discourage passing?

Speed cushions are designed to encourage slower vehicle speeds while maintaining emergency vehicle access. Their configuration, including spacing and alignment, is based on the wheelbase of Seattle Fire Department vehicles, allowing emergency responders to straddle the cushions without delay. The speed cushions installed in the northern section of this corridor in 2024 were specifically designed to maintain emergency vehicle access while effectively reducing speeds for passenger vehicles. When speed cushions are staggered or offset and don't fully cross both lanes of traffic,

certain combinations of traffic conditions and lane configurations may delay emergency response and can encourage weaving where drivers cross into oncoming traffic to avoid the speed cushion.

19. Can the design be simplified to reduce confusion and risk?

SDOT traffic operations and engineering staff reviewed and approved traffic calming design elements used in this project. The designs intended to reduce vehicle speeds while preserving access to properties and destinations along Lake Washington Blvd S within the project Area. As with all SDOT projects, we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the design and make adjustments if needed to ensure safety and clarity for all users.

20. What is the plan to manage traffic diverted into residential streets like Juneau, Mt. Baker, and Seward Park Ave?

SDOT will continue to monitor and evaluate traffic impacts in the neighborhoods near Lake Washington Blvd between Mount Baker Beach and Seward Park, particularly in relation to any roadway changes. SDOT will perform regular volume counts at the locations that were studied as part of the Rainer Ave S Vision Zero & Lake Washington Blvd Keep Moving Street Data Analysis. SDOT will also continue to monitor community feedback about traffic impacts in the neighborhoods adjacent to this project.

21. Is there a coordinated citywide strategy when restricting Rainier Ave, LWB, and other south-end arterials?

Yes, SDOT looks at both individual streets and the overall street network when we do safety work in the South End. Arterials like Rainier Ave S, Martin Luther King Way S, Wilson Ave S, Beacon Ave S, and Lake Washington Blvd have all received our attention because of community requests for safer streets and concerning crash, injury, and fatality data. The overall goal is to make all streets in the South End safer for everyone and redesign high-speed arterials specifically for safer speeds and easier crossings for people walking. Since there are so many projects happening at once – both in planning and in construction – we've been using a website and map to share information holistically. The What's Happening in Southeast Seattle? website is a good resource to see the big picture and then focus on specific projects.

22. Will the City install modal filters or diverters on adjacent neighborhood streets?

SDOT will continue to monitor and evaluate traffic impacts in the neighborhoods near Lake Washington Blvd between Mount Baker Beach and Seward Park, particularly in relation to any roadway changes. SDOT will perform regular volume counts at the locations that were studied as part of the Rainer Ave S Vision Zero & Lake Washington Blvd Keep Moving Street Data Analysis. SDOT will also continue to monitor community feedback about traffic impacts in the neighborhoods adjacent to this project.

23. Can cut-through traffic from Rainier Ave be better redirected to avoid neighborhood congestion?

Traffic diversion from arterials to neighborhood streets and cut-through traffic in general are a longstanding challenge that city has been working to improve. Wayfinding apps like Waze and others can direct people driving to use quiet residential streets instead of arterials to save a few minutes of drive time. Our approach in the South End has been to respond to community requests for safer streets by focusing on where the data is telling us the most crashes and injuries are happening. Our analysis shows that multi-lane arterials like Rainier Ave S and Martin Luther King Way S need to be high priorities when we look to slow speeds and make it safer to cross the street. At the same time, we're doing traffic calming on side streets and trying to make neighborhood cut throughs less attractive to people driving. We've added neighborhood greenways, healthy streets, safe routes to school projects, changed signal timing, and used many tools to try and discourage and slow any increase in traffic diversion.