

2024 Transportation Levy Readiness & High-Level Implementation Approach – September 2024

A. Overview of this Document and Upcoming Deliverables

This document describes the initial readiness assessment and high-level implementation approach, requested in Council Resolution 32137, that the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is undertaking to prepare to deliver the 2024 Transportation Levy, if approved by voters in November 2024. This document is the first of multiple pieces of levy implementation information, including:

- SDOT’s proposal for a 2025-2026 “with levy” budget amendment as part of the current budget deliberation process, including a revised 2025-2030 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) reflecting an initial spending projection for the new levy
- Information requested by Resolution 32137 for the Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program, Transit Passenger Safety, and Electric Vehicle Charging programs
- Annual Levy Delivery Workplan (if the levy is approved, due January 31, 2025)

B. SDOT’s Approach and Initial Readiness Actions to Implement the Levy

SDOT is taking steps now to be ready for implementation of key levy activities and planning in January 2025. This approach includes:

- A focus on early deliverables and demonstrated success, especially through crew-delivered work that can be constructed more rapidly,
- Early identification of program priorities through collaboration with community members and stakeholders,
- Comprehensive thinking about needs so delivery is aligned with current challenges and incorporates mitigation efforts,
- Recognizing the need to continue to completion Levy to Move Seattle large projects that are the currently the focus of SDOT’s construction and contracting teams,
- Proactive staffing and resource preparation (especially for items with long lead times),
- Leveraging external funding sources through interdepartmental work teams and collaboration,
- Timely startup of the new Levy Oversight Committee and Transportation Funding Task Force, and
- Early scoping of the approach and resource needs for high priority, new, and expanded programs.

SDOT’s approach to readiness gets us off to a fast start in developing new programs, positioning initial new levy projects for Q1 2025 construction, and prioritizes initial work on the largest capital projects that will take years to develop. This approach anticipates that spending for both hiring and procurement can begin immediately in January 2025.

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To get ready for levy delivery, SDOT focused in Q2 and Q3 2024 on work planning for all proposed levy programs. Program owners, subject matter experts, and resource managers were involved in developing strategies and early wins to showcase the types of changes that stakeholders support. The conceptual planning work included:

- preliminary work planning for early years using Attachment A to the Levy ordinance as the guide
- strategies for expedited project delivery, including internal process adjustments and a variety of construction methods,
- development of a new strategy for community engagement that focuses on early outreach and project co-creation with community
- resource planning to establish staff assignments and the initial new hires needed to support new programs, such as People Streets and Public Spaces, Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program, Electrification, and Transit Passenger Safety
- a focus on aligning project selection with the Seattle Transportation Plan, Transportation Equity Framework, Vision Zero Action Plan, Climate Change Response Framework, and SDOT's approach to asset management and equity analysis

This internal work allowed us to identify the areas in our pipeline for project design and delivery, as well as continued maintenance and operations, where early resources and planning are most needed. It also influenced the number of existing positions we propose to hire immediately following a successful vote and the number of new positions that will be needed for SDOT to start strong.

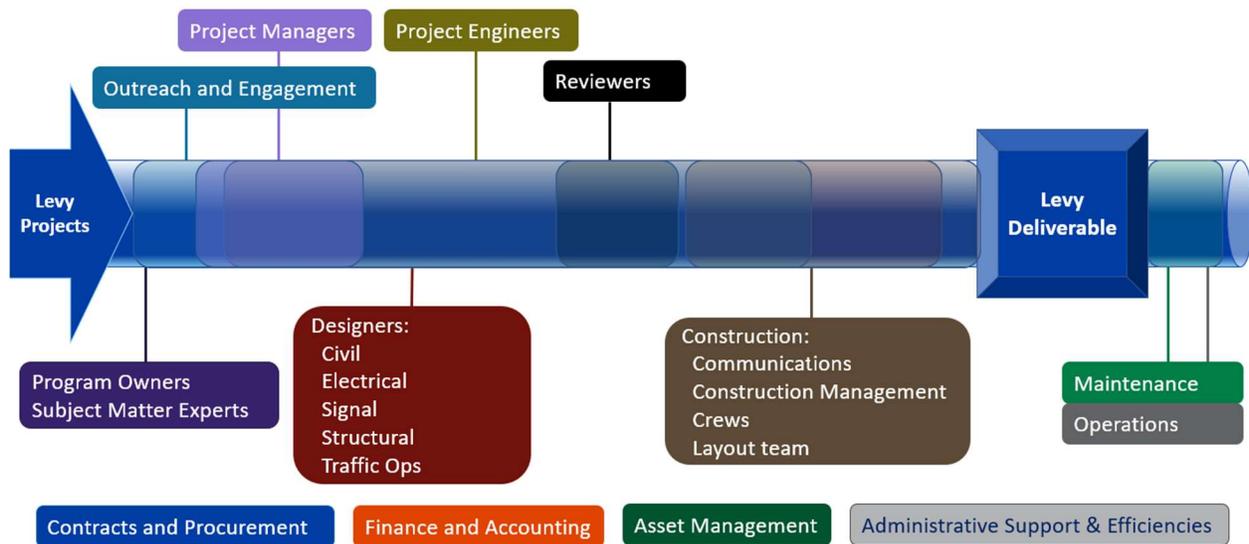
C. Additional Factors Crucial in Levy Preparation Work

Identifying the initial staff and consultant support needed to start strong in 2025 involved the internal resourcing review described above, but also relied heavily on other considerations. The key things that factored into how we then made our resourcing and preparation decisions included an assessment of where our delivery pipeline was constrained, the need to accommodate additional non-levy work, and lessons learned from the Levy to Move Seattle Oversight Committee.

[Project Development Timelines and Pipeline](#)

Capital projects go through significant steps on the path to construction. It is especially important to start the planning and development of large multimodal capital projects early, since they can take several years to move into construction in order to meet state and federal environmental requirements, cultivate grant opportunities and meet state contracting requirements. SDOT looked at this delivery pipeline as part of our preparation work, and at what points in the process resources would be needed to keep things moving. The graphic below shows the early work by Program Owners to scope and initiate projects, Outreach and Engagement to solicit community input, Project Management support, and Designers to begin the key work of finding real design solutions. It is helpful to think about it as an actual pipeline in which early steps are required to advance to successful design and construction.

Levy project pipeline as organizing principle



Analyzed through this pipeline approach, SDOT looked ahead to projects identified for construction in 2025, as well as the outreach, planning, and design work needed in 2025 for construction in 2026, 2027, and beyond. Because the early phases of project delivery are crucial to delivery, initial resourcing evaluation focused on increasing our planning, development, and design capacities to start this pipeline moving. We proposed staffing increases for areas of constraint, for example our capacity to review projects quickly. We also looked at how consultant support and alternate contracting delivery methods could augment staffing and crew deliveries in 2025 while we hire and train new staff.

Balancing SDOT Core Services and Other Community Deliverables

In thinking through the readiness needs of the 2024 Transportation Levy, we also considered non-levy commitments and community expectations. In addition to levy deliverables, there are many other significant lines of transportation work that the community expects to see provided by the City. The Levy to Move Seattle funded approximately 30% of SDOT's budget. Some of the large Levy to Move Seattle projects, like Rapid Ride J construction, will be in construction in 2025 and completed in the following years. Some new efforts, like planning and permitting for Sound Transit 3 (West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions), will also be underway. Areas of SDOT's core lines of business, commitments, and responsibilities that we considered in readiness planning included:

- Snow and Ice, Emergency Response
- Levy to Move Seattle 2025 –2026 deliverables
- Regional agency coordination including Sound Transit 3 planning and permitting and WSDOT's Revive I-5 project
- Downtown Activation and FIFA 2026 Men's World Cup preparation
- Regular maintenance and operation needs
- Street use and traffic permits
- Day to day traffic operations

[Lessons Learned from the Levy to Move Seattle](#)

Levy readiness is an opportunity to apply lessons learned from the Levy to Move Seattle:

Levy to Move Seattle Lessons Learned	Transportation Levy Approach
<i>Major capital projects, such as the Maintenance & Modernization paving corridors, will take a long time to develop and build. These projects are often strong leverage candidates for grants and partnership funding, which adds additional timeline and planning considerations.</i>	Continue to seek leverage funds for major capital projects. Define project schedules with flexibility on starting and end points to accommodate these leverage opportunities and other unknowns.
<i>Transportation projects can create significant transportation benefits, but multi-year construction impacts can result in adjacent business and community frustration.</i>	Launch community relationships earlier in project design process through new outreach and engagement approach; work with other departments (i.e. Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Economic Development) to incorporate additional support strategies especially during construction; perform analyses of post-project delivery, design and impact evaluation as outlined in Council resolution 32137.
<i>New or significantly rescoped program work, such as accelerating sidewalks, require thoughtful early planning to define approach combined with longer-term flexibility to adjust as needed.</i>	Proactively create project teams for new or rescoped programs early in the levy and create multiple delivery options. For example, the accelerated sidewalk delivery necessitates early staff for outreach, planning, design and will utilize both in-house and contracted delivery methods to increase flexibility. SDOT early planning in multiple program areas will proactively identify resource needs and delivery strategies.
<i>Multi-year programs with many ongoing projects should expect course corrections mid-stream as priorities and needs change, or as unplanned events or emergencies occur.</i>	Acknowledge the likelihood of disruption and adjustment over the life of the levy from the outset. SDOT plans to communicate workplans through the Annual Levy Delivery Plan, and work with the new Levy Oversight Committee to record changes for clarity and transparency.
<i>Availability of staff capacity directly influences ability to execute programs and stay on schedule.</i>	Proactively plan for early staffing needs across programs, using awareness that needs early in the project pipeline (such as project development, outreach, design and permitting) differ from project construction and require earlier staffing.

D. Deliverables Informed by Levy Readiness & Action Plan Approach:

The approach outlined in this document will be the foundation for levy-funded work planning and financial actions occurring in late 2024 and early 2025. This section provides an overview of the type of work SDOT expects to accomplish early in 2025 if spending for both hiring and procurement can begin immediately in January.

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A cornerstone of the Levy Readiness effort will be the 2025 SDOT levy program workplans, and **Appendix A** details Early Readiness Considerations by Program Category. **Appendix B** provides another lens into what to expect in the first six months following a successful levy vote.

Initial levy work in 2025 will vary by season, as there are types of work that cannot be performed during Seattle's wet and cold winters, such as asphalt and markings. Here is a sampling of what the public may see early in 2025:

- Ten community walks held to select new sidewalk projects for first four years of the levy
- Outreach and scoping for new sidewalks including Greenwood Ave N and Gilman Ave W, development of an accelerated sidewalk delivery team, and methods to increase sidewalk repair
- Downtown Activation, and People Streets and Public Spaces investments on Third Avenue, Fortson Square, Occidental Promenade and other key locations in advance of FIFA and other major events, in alignment with other agencies
- New positions posted at a variety of levels within SDOT, and new programs established once staff are hired
- Start of design on major corridor maintenance and modernization projects, with early focus on corridors with already secured grant funding such as Roosevelt Way NE, Pinehurst Way NE and E Marginal Way
- Request for Proposals issued and beginning design of mechanical and electrical repair packages for Fremont, University and Ballard bridges, programming of crew-delivered bridge repairs, and initiation of Project Readiness bridge studies
- Programming of expanded Vision Zero work citywide on high-injury network corridors, intersections and expansion of Leading Pedestrian Interval and safer crossings
- Advancing Aurora Avenue N planning in partnership with WSDOT to identify a preferred alternative and phasing plan that will drive implementation schedule
- Programming for operations funding to efforts like keeping the Transportation Operations Center open 24/7, and signal maintenance that keeps people moving citywide
- Building up a protected bike lane maintenance approach, and continuing to add hardened protection to existing bike lanes, including hardening of the E Union St protected bike lane

E. Change Management

Levies are powerful confirmation of current goals and conduits for priorities of decision-makers and the public. The proposed 2024 Transportation Levy establishes funding for existing programs beyond the expiration of the Levy to Move Seattle and creates funding for new projects and new programs. New endeavors or those with significantly different or expanded scope than the last nine years will involve learning curves, adjustments, and course corrections along the way.

As acknowledged by the current Levy Oversight Committee in their recommendations, and SDOT's own lessons learned from the Levy to Move Seattle: Flexibility is important to be able to respond to changing conditions and unforeseen events.

Over the eight years of the 2024 Transportation Levy, SDOT anticipates that changes may be needed to the programs or projects identified in Attachment A of Council Bill 120788. In these cases, SDOT will follow this approach:

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- Evaluate changes against and relative to the Council’s adopted ordinance and resolution, and make recommendations for needed changes in alignment with the adopted documents to the greatest extent feasible
- Utilize the new Levy Oversight Committee to share challenges, opportunities, and proposed adjustments, and document adjustments through annual levy-funded workplans and reports
- Engage with Council regularly and rely on existing supplemental and annual budget processes to adjust resource needs
- Maintain transparent communications with the public, documented through the new Levy Oversight Committee and the new levy’s delivery dashboard

F. Conclusion and Next Steps

This document describes the initial readiness assessment and high-level implementation approach and is the first step in an iterative and ongoing process. SDOT’s approach to readiness gets us a fast start to developing new programs, puts initial new levy projects out the door for Q1 2025 construction and prioritizes initial work on the largest capital projects which will take years to develop. SDOT will be continuing to delve deeper into the program development, project definition, work planning and resourcing efforts that will inform future documents.

This initial work emphasizes early commitments and priorities through initial resource actions including identifying key vacancies for early hiring and new positions requested through a 2025-2026 proposed with-levy budget amendment recommendation. The 2025 mid-year supplemental budget and the Proposed 2026 Budget are subsequent phased opportunities, if needed, to approach workforce alignment.

The immediate next deliverables that will be presented to Council include a 2025-2026 budget amendment proposal, including a revised 2025-2030 CIP, and the 2025 Levy annual workplan in January 2025.

Appendix A: Early Readiness Actions

The 2024 Transportation Levy has 11 program areas, some of which have early commitments and deliverables. The following table highlights those issues and considerations by program areas:

Program Area and Key Commitments	Initial Readiness Needs
<p>Vision Zero, School & Neighborhood Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Zero • Aurora Ave N Safety Corridor Project • Safe Routes to School • Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program • Neighborhood-Scale Traffic Safety Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased funding: Levy doubles Vision Zero funding. Needs direct program staffing and pipeline support. • Pipeline support example: Leading Pedestrian Intervals require signal engineers and technicians. • New Programs: Neighborhood-Initiated Safety Partnership Program and Neighborhood-Scale Traffic Safety Programs require definition of workplan and approach.
<p>Street Maintenance & Modernization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arterial Roadway Maintenance & Modernization Corridors • Paving spot improvements for arterial repair, and pothole response. • Markings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long lead time: Arterial Roadway Maintenance Corridors are multi-year efforts to design, fund and build. • Early starts: Key initial priorities are Roosevelt Way NE, Pinehurst Way NE and E Marginal Way, for which SDOT has secured grants and have the earliest delivery requirements.
<p>Bridges & Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge Structure Repairs and Upgrades • Bridge Preventative Maintenance Program • Project Readiness to advance structure design for 6 structures • Areaways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Program: The initial Preventative Bridge Maintenance focus is on contract procurement and execution; design for complex bridge repair projects is supported by consultants. • Near-term deadline: Project Readiness initial cost estimates needed in 2026 to inform considerations of the Transportation Funding Task Force
<p>Transit Corridors & Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit Improvements and Access to Light Rail • Transit Spot Improvements • Transit Passenger Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long lead time: Light rail and transit projects (e.g. RapidRide R) schedules are tied to agency partner actions; planning and design phase for initial levy years • New Program: Transit Passenger Safety Program definition and development/execution of needed agreements with program partners
<p>Pedestrian Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Sidewalk and Sidewalk Alternatives • Sidewalk Safety Repair • ADA Program • Stairways • Crossing Improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased funding and hard deadline: Top readiness priority is defining approach and associated resources needed for accelerated sidewalk delivery of 250 blocks in first 4 years of the levy

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<p>Signals & Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic Signal Timing • Traffic Signals and Maintenance • Sign Maintenance • Transportation Operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pipeline Support: Operations staff are essential to most deliverables. Pipeline support for these programs comes from a variety of groups and disciplines. Hiring lead times for new traffic engineers can be long, requiring early recruitment initiation.
<p>Bicycle Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected Bike Lanes • Upgraded Bike Lanes • Bike Spot Improvements • Burke-Gilman Trail Missing Link • Neighborhood Greenways • Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Program: Early readiness priority is on maintenance and upgrades to existing bike lanes, while planning begins on new connections • Pipeline Support: Equipment and supplies will be as important as planning, design and delivery staffing
<p>People Streets & Public Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Streets Capital Projects • Downtown Activation • Lid I-5 Private Funding Study • People Streets and Wayfinding Maintenance • Pedestrian Lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Program and near-term deadline: 2025 focus would center on levy-funded activation and place-making improvements needed before the 2026 Men’s World Cup, including 3rd Ave investments and initial tactical improvements on Occidental Promenade, as well as setting up the program for future year People Streets and Public Space investments outside of downtown
<p>Climate & Resiliency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and Electrification Program • Low Pollution Neighborhoods • Urban Forestry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Program: Climate and Electrification Program requires program definition and workplan development in conjunction with Seattle City Light, Seattle Parks Department, and Seattle Public Libraries. 2025 focus on establishing the multi-department structure and evaluating results of current curbside EV charging pilot.
<p>Freight & Goods Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight Spot Improvements • Heavy Haul Network • Freight Program • Port Connection to I-90/I-5 • Leary Way Industrial Zone Safety Improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Funding: 2025 focus areas include construction of freight spot improvements and initiating planning for the new program components which will require planning, design, development, engagement and funding strategy development
<p>Good Governance & Equitable Implementation Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight Committee Auditing and Professional Services • Property Tax Relief Outreach and Education • Durable Infrastructure Solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing the new Levy Oversight Committee • Recruitment and consultant procurement for the Transportation Funding Task Force • Posting new Transportation Levy Website and Dashboard and establishing reporting formats • Developing and sharing the Annual Levy Delivery Plan by January 31, 2025

APPENDIX B: Levy Readiness 6-month calendar

Month	Legislative & Good Governance	Project Actions
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levy Vote – Nov 5 • Council consideration of 2025-26 budget amendment to incorporate Levy, including revised 2025-2030 CIP reflecting an initial spend plan for the new levy • Prepare and update communications regarding levy outcome • Engage with key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial work to set up community engagement events for accelerated sidewalks • Start design of winter-weather work • Initiate hiring to fill currently vacant positions • Start procurement of materials and equipment needed for expanded crew delivery • Initiate contracts for highest priority consultants • Initiate planning for new employee onboarding, training, and facilities needs
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor and Council initiate process to create LOC • Initiate steps to select Transportation Funding Task Force members including issuing consultant RFQ • Begin development of 2025 Transportation Levy dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design underway for 2025 crew delivered projects • Post initial Request for Proposals for bridge planning and structural repair • Confirm approach and workplan for new or expanded programs • Project development begins on longer-duration projects like AAC
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council receives 2025 Levy Workplan per Resolution 32137 • Set up financials for new levy programs and projects • Develop 2025-2026 Grant Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin levy-funded work appropriate for winter conditions • Initiate hiring to fill new positions • Design continues for 2025 crew delivered projects • Onboard key City department partners to Levy workplans and commitments (SPU, SCL, FAS, OSE, DON, OED, OPCD)
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team development to support Task Force engagement and materials • Initiate Initial spend plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial community walks to select accelerated sidewalk projects • Design continues for 2025 crew delivered projects • Additional Request for Proposals issued for bridge projects • Project development and complete streets scoping on longer-duration AAC projects
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor and Council complete selection of LOC and Task Force members • Council confirmation of Task Force Members per Resolution 31245 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute contracts for initial bridge planning work • Additional community walks held to select new sidewalks • Design for 2025 crew-delivered projects transitioning to scoping for 2026 projects
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target window for first Task Force meeting (Q2) • Target window for first LOC meeting (Q2) • Launch 2025 Transportation Levy dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional community walks held to select new sidewalks • New program staffing complete; onboarding and training begins • 2025 crew delivered work scheduling for summer season • Initial scoping of 2026 crew-delivered projects underway