

CHAPTER 2: BALLARD-INTERBAY CONTEXT

This chapter explains the character and existing conditions of the BIRT study area, and the outcomes and recommendations of recent planning efforts. More than two dozen plans led by the City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, WSDOT, Sound Transit, King County Metro, and neighborhood organizations were completed between 2010 and 2020. This chapter summarizes transportation investments, land use and development plans, and recommendations from these previous plans and studies. It also includes a snapshot of neighborhood characteristics, including demographic and employment trends.

A full list of the plans reviewed is included in Appendix B.

FIGURE 2-1: PROCESS TO SUMMARIZE THE PLANNING CONTEXT

We reviewed previous plans and studies (2010-2020)



... with a focus on these three elements



Anticipated Transportation Investments

- Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions
- King County Metro bus routes and capital improvements
- Bicycle, pedestrian, and freight facilities



Land Use and Development Plans

- The Armory Development Concepts
- Terminal 91
- Expedia Campus
- Fishermen's Terminal Redevelopment



Demographic Data

- Population
- Housing markets
- Income
- Commute patterns
- Industry and employment

* The Ballard Bridge Planning Study will be published publicly in November 2020.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

This section provides a snapshot of BIRT study area characteristics, including the economic and employment landscape, commute patterns, demographic and housing trends, development patterns, and the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses.



Population and Workforce Characteristics

Ballard and Interbay have experienced major population growth over the last decade. Population density in Ballard is greater than the average population density citywide.

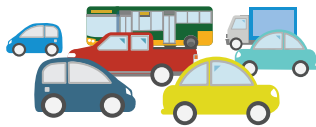
In 2019, the study area population was approximately
95,200



Commute Patterns

Most study area residents work in Downtown Seattle, the Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC), the University of Washington / U. District, downtown Ballard, downtown Bellevue, and the Bel-Red area.

Workers in the BIRT study area predominantly commute from areas north of the study area, and some commute from areas immediately to the east or west.



~23,000

workers commute into the study area's commercial and industrial zones from outside the study area



850

workers both live and work within the commercial boundaries

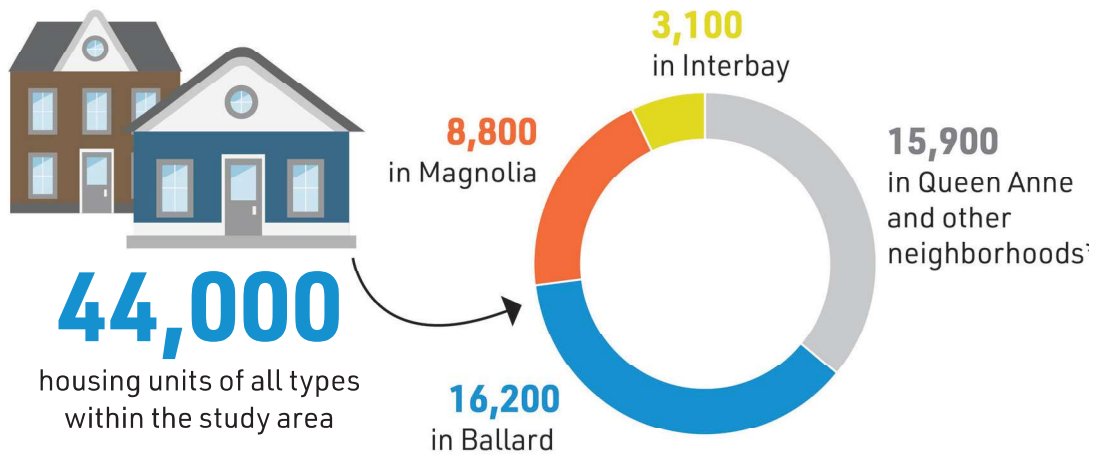


3,100

workers live within the residential study area boundaries



Housing



*Data is provided at the neighborhood level, therefore this figure includes the entire Queen Anne neighborhood, not just the portion within the BIRT study area.

The greatest density of housing units is in downtown Ballard and along the north end of 15th Ave W in Interbay. Areas of lower density in housing units are north of NW 65th St, east of 8th Ave NW, in central and western Magnolia, and in upper Queen Anne.

Magnolia has the greatest proportion of owner-occupied housing. Interbay and Ballard have a greater proportion of rental units than owner-occupied units.

Ballard



69% rentals

Interbay



56% rentals

Magnolia



45% rentals

AN INDUSTRIAL AND MARITIME CENTER

Seattle's connection to the water is at the heart of the City's history and economic success. The Ballard and Interbay areas embody the importance and diversity that Seattle's limited industrial and maritime lands bring to the City, the region, and the many people who live and work there. As areas to the north, south, and east densify, it becomes increasingly important to ensure people and goods have quality access to this economic center, and that connections to regional transportation facilities (including SR 99 and I-5) are maintained.

Port of Seattle facilities are an international gateway for imports and exports, and the freight corridor is critical to economic activity in commercial fishing, the cruise ship industry, and tourism.



Industry, Maritime, and Freight

The Ballard-Interbay Northend Manufacturing Industrial Center (BINMIC) is 1 of Seattle's 2 major industrial centers with about

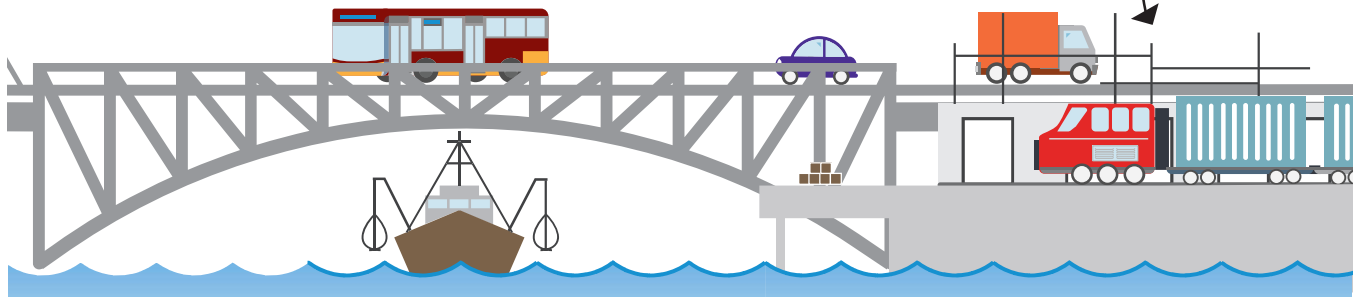
28,700
jobs in 2018

50%

of study area jobs are in the service sector

12,000

jobs are freight-oriented



Overall, employment within the BIRT commercial study area has grown by 0.7% annually since 2000, and by 2.1% annually since 2010.



Fastest growth:

Construction and resource sector



Decrease:

Government and manufacturing employment



Most growth:

The service sector—more than 3% annual growth

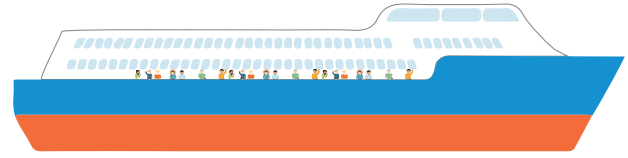
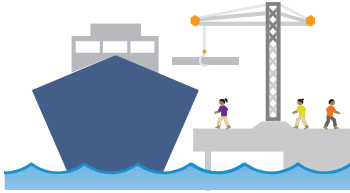
Vessels using BIRT docks employed

~7,200

workers and generated

\$671 million

in business revenues in 2017



Seattle's cruise ship industry generated

\$900 million

in local business revenue in 2019

The unique freshwater, tide-free marine environment of the Lake Washington Ship Canal reduces maintenance costs and prolongs vessel life for an estimated 700 commercial and 4,000 recreational vessels. These include vessels from 9 different commercial fishing fleets, plus ocean-going freight-shippers that communities in Alaska and elsewhere rely on year-round for crucial supplies and equipment.

Commercial fishing vessels that use the Locks represented an estimated \$545 million in ex-vessel earnings and contributed roughly \$785 million in seafood export value in 2015.

COVID-19 Business Impacts

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on Ballard-Interbay businesses.



In Spring 2020, a City of Seattle survey found that nearly half of business respondents expressed concern about making rent or mortgage payments, and uncertainty about future business activity. As of May 2020, more than 1,000 temporary and over 130 permanent layoffs were reported. The 2020 cruise season was also canceled, wielding significant economic impacts.

The top 3 impacts experienced by businesses in the study area were:

- 1.** Decline in business activity due to uncertainty
- 2.** Fewer visitors to the region
- 3.** Reduced access to customers due to remote working

PREVIOUS BRIDGE STUDIES

The Ballard Bridge Planning Study (2020) and Magnolia Bridge Planning Study (2019) are the 2 most recent efforts to examine the rehabilitation and replacement of the 2 bridges. Bridge planning studies represent one early step in an extensive process to determine how to replace or rehabilitate each bridge. Chapter 7 describes in greater detail the timeline and funding requirements for the replacement of each bridge.

Below are general themes from the recent planning studies and related bridge studies conducted between 2010-2020.

Ballard Bridge

Ballard Bridge and 15th Ave W/NW

The Ballard-Interbay Northend Manufacturing Industrial Center (BINMIC) is one of Seattle's designated industrial centers, with the 15th Ave W/NW corridor heavily used for freight travel. The Ballard Bridge, as one of the City's significant north-south travel and freight corridors, carries about 59,000 vehicles each day, including roughly 1,500 trucks.¹ Daily truck volumes are projected to increase to 2,500 trucks by 2035. The bridge is also heavily used by commuters, including people driving, taking transit, bicycling, and walking. 15th Ave W and NW serves multiple express and local routes as well as the RapidRide D Line.

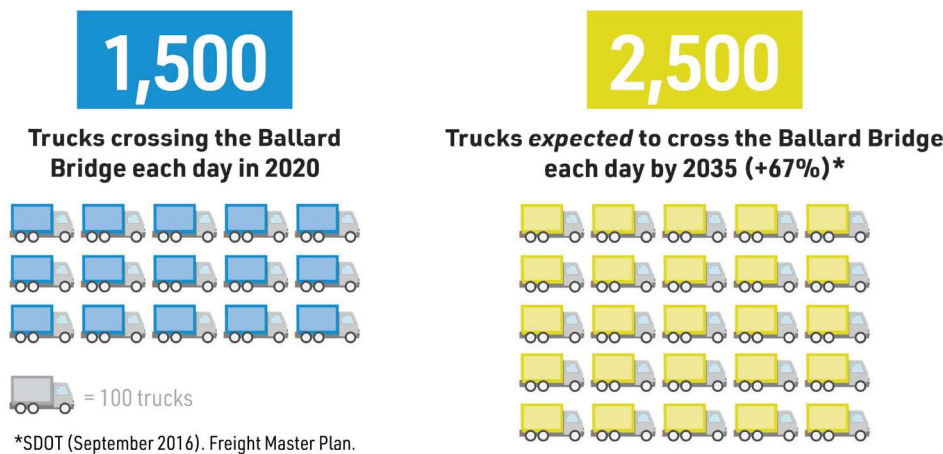
Industrial businesses in the study area depend

on access to the 15th Ave W/NW freight corridor to transport many industrial materials to local and regional markets, such as primary metals; intermediate products, like fabricated metals; and final goods, including airplanes, food, and apparel. Many of these businesses are net exporters of products to the U.S. and internationally, and help drive Seattle's economy and job market.

Ballard Bridge safety improvements and replacement

The 15th Ave W/NW freight corridor provides access to Port of Seattle facilities which are an international gateway for imports and exports. The freight corridor is critical to economic activity in diverse maritime industries, including cruise and tourism.

The Ballard Bridge Planning Study (2020) considered several alternatives for bridge rehabilitation or replacement. The Bridge Safety Analysis (2018) and Ballard Bridge Sidewalk Widening Study (2014) explored ways to make the sidewalk safer and more comfortable for people walking and biking across the bridge as a key north-south connector for non-motorized travelers. In 2014, SDOT's Bridge Seismic Retrofit Program completed work to minimize movement on the Ballard Bridge in the event of an earthquake.

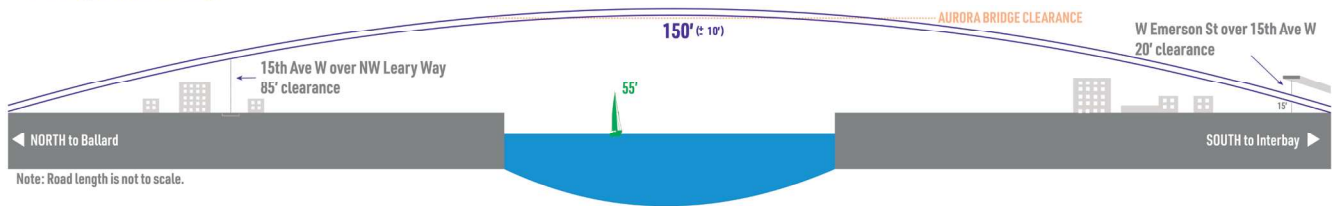


1 SDOT (2018). SDOT 2018 Traffic Report. Available at: https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/About/DocumentLibrary/Reports/2018_Traffic_Report.pdf

FIGURE 2-2: BALLARD BRIDGE REHABILITATION AND REPLACEMENT OPTIONS

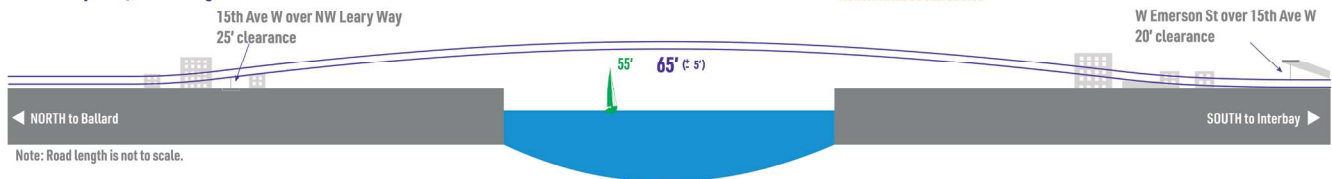
HIGH LEVEL FIXED BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

5% slope / 6,435 ft long



MID LEVEL MOVEABLE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
Significant reduction in number of bridge openings.

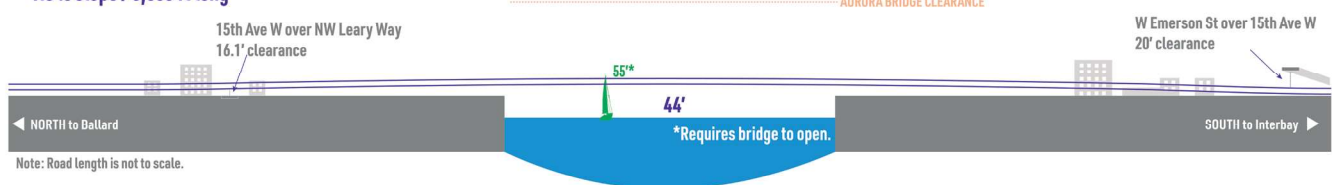
5% slope / 5,335 ft long



REHABILITATION OF EXISTING MOVEABLE BRIDGE (LOW LEVEL)

Similar number of bridge openings to today.

1.5% slope / 3,035 ft long



Note: Images are not to scale.

This graphic represents 3 of the technical alternatives under consideration in the Ballard Bridge Planning Study. Bridge design will be determined at a future date.

Public Engagement Themes

Key themes from public engagement related to the Ballard Bridge include:

- Improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle facilities are a top consideration; Ballard Bridge is too narrow and uncomfortable for people walking and biking
- Coordination between the bridge replacement and Sound Transit is important to ensure access to future light rail stations and multimodal connections based upon the final rail alignments
- Access to bicycle facility corridors like the Burke-Gilman Trail, Ship Canal Trail, and Leary Way NW need improvement
- The low-level bridge alternative received significant support because it maintains existing connections to the north bridge terminus. The low-level bridge offers the least grade and climb for people walking, biking, and rolling
- A key benefit to a mid-level bridge is the reduced number of bridge lifts required for passing ships



Magnolia Bridge

The Magnolia Bridge connects the neighborhoods of Magnolia and Interbay, providing 1 of 3 street connections between Magnolia and the rest of Seattle. It also provides access to the Elliott Bay Marina, Smith Cove Park, and the west side of Terminal 91. The bridge crosses the Smith Cove tidelands, which are filled in and are now in use for port and industrial activities, including a seasonal two-berth cruise ship terminal. The bridge serves residents of Magnolia traveling to and from work; employees of local businesses in the Magnolia Village area; buses connecting Magnolia to Downtown Seattle, Queen Anne, Ballard and other neighborhoods further north; emergency response services; and visitors that come to enjoy the commercial area, parks, and other amenities.

The Magnolia Bridge provides transit connections for buses from Magnolia to Downtown Seattle, Queen Anne, and Ballard. Roughly 20,000 vehicles cross the Magnolia Bridge every day,² which is similar to less than other bridges in the area (e.g., 20,000 vehicles/day on the W Dravus St bridge and 25,000 vehicles/day on the West Emerson St bridge).

Magnolia Bridge replacement

The Magnolia Bridge was built 90 years ago and received structural updates in 1957. After damage from the 2001 Nisqually earthquake, SDOT prepared an Environmental Assessment to study the bridge's replacement and comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). However, since the project did not proceed with construction and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was not issued, the document is expired. In 2019, SDOT completed the Magnolia Bridge Planning Study³ to identify route alternatives that meet the needs of the community, update the bridge replacement cost estimate to adjust for inflation, and create an emergency transportation plan for unexpected closures. The study determined the 2 most viable and publicly supported alternatives to be the following:

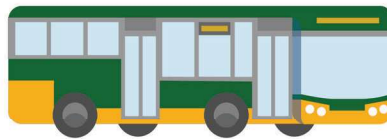
1. Alternative 1: New Armory Way Bridge and Western Perimeter Road to Smith Cove Park/ Elliott Bay Marina
2. Alternative 4: In-Kind Replacement of the existing bridge adjacent to its current location

Every day, the Magnolia Bridge serves ...



20,000

Vehicles



75

Bus trips

King County Metro Routes 19, 24, 33
(based on pre-COVID-19 schedules)



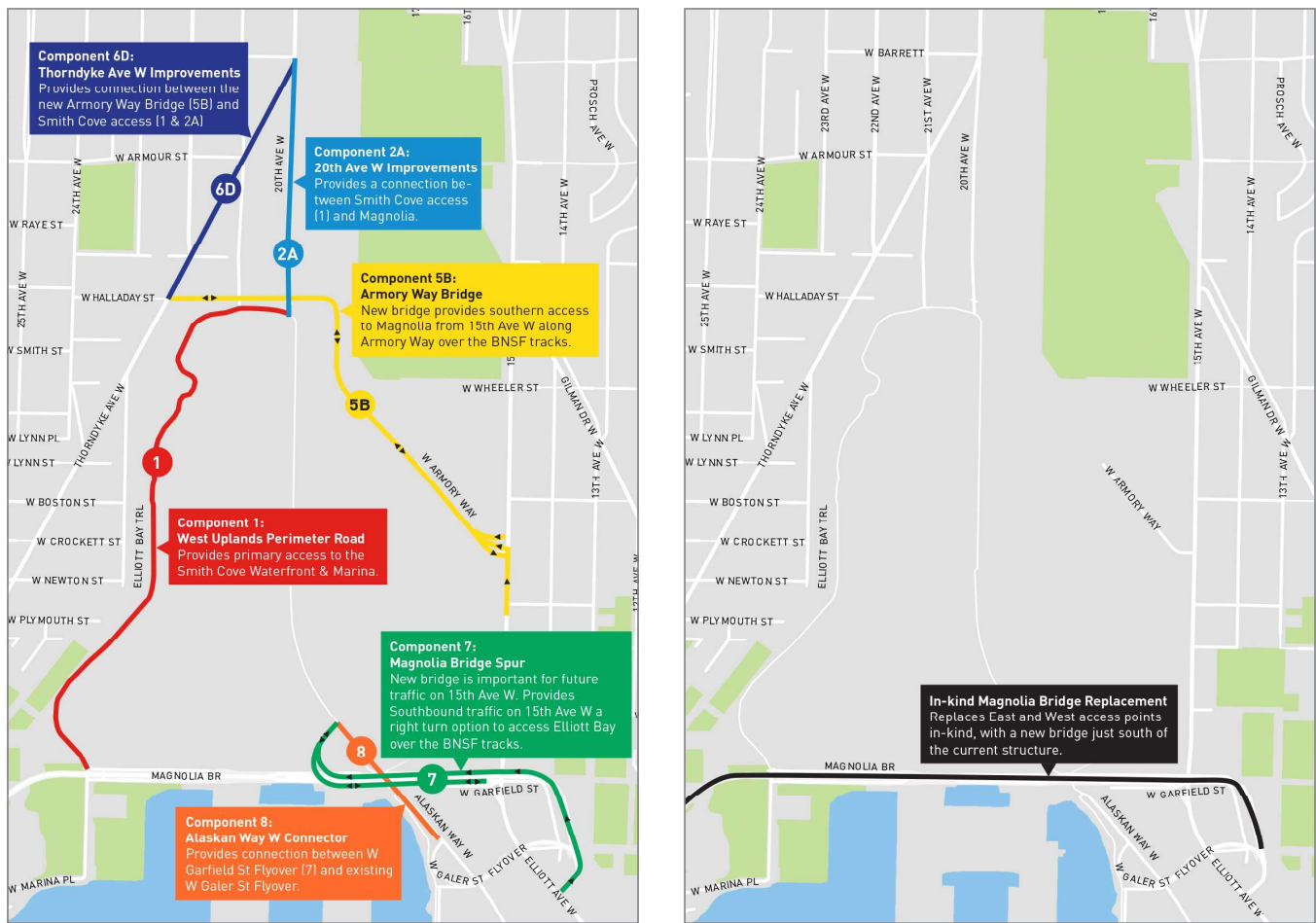
3,000

Bus passengers

² SDOT (November 2017). Magnolia Bridge Traffic Maintenance During Bridge Closure. Available at: <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/SDOT/BridgeStairsProgram/bridges/MagnoliaBridgeTrafficMaintenance.pdf>

³ SDOT (April 2019). Magnolia Bridge Planning Study. Available at: <https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/BridgeStairsProgram/bridges/Magnolia/MBPS-AlternativeAnalysisMemo-Spring2019.pdf>

FIGURE 2-3: MAGNOLIA BRIDGE REPLACEMENT ALTERNATIVE 1: NEW ARMORY WAY BRIDGE AND WEST UPLANDS PERIMETER ROAD (LEFT); ALTERNATIVE 4: IN-KIND REPLACEMENT (RIGHT)



Public Engagement Themes

Key themes from public engagement related to the Magnolia Bridge include:








- Most of the Magnolia community who participated in study engagement stated a preference for the in-kind Magnolia Bridge replacement
- The Port of Seattle prefers the In-Kind Replacement over the New Armory Way Bridge components' multiple turns and tight curves en-route to and from Terminal 91, as well as the property impacts associated with those components
- There was concern that the Armory Way Bridge would reduce parking and access to nearby residences, increase light and noise pollution impacting adjacent residents and businesses, and increase travel times for certain trips
- People expressed concern about the ability of W Dravus St to successfully accommodate more trips and multimodal traffic as the area grows
- Limit environmental impacts and right-of-way acquisition with bridge alternatives; the ideal solution avoids or mitigates impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, minimizes impacts to natural hazards, and limits right-of-way acquisition
- Maintain access to the Smith Cove waterfront and improve connections between the Magnolia neighborhood and the Smith Cove waterfront



ANTICIPATED TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

A variety of transportation projects are planned or proposed in the study area to connect existing trails, improve safety for vulnerable travelers, improve access to current and future transit stops and stations, deliver reliable, high-capacity transit for residents and workers, and enhance reliability for freight and goods. Table 2-1 shows some of the most important projects and network enhancements.

TABLE 2-1: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM INVESTMENTS UNDERWAY OR PLANNED IN THE STUDY AREA

| Completing Connections in the Bike and Trail Network | Map Label |
|---|---|
| <p>The Burke-Gilman Trail is a 20-mile regional, mixed-use facility that serves as a major transportation corridor for commuters and recreational users. It is complete except for a 1.4-mile segment through the Ballard neighborhood, known as the “Missing Link,” which is identified as one of the City of Seattle’s top-rated trail priorities in the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan. Elements of the project continue to work their way through the legal system, which has delayed construction of the trail until at least 2022. SDOT will continue to pursue resolution through the courts to complete the Burke-Gilman Trail Missing Link as planned.⁴</p> |  |
| <p>Bicycle network connections are also recommended in the Bicycle Master Plan and Interbay Trail Connections Project to provide protected facilities between the Ballard Locks and the Ship Canal Trail to the east and the Elliott Bay Trail to the south.</p> |  |
| Improving Intersection Safety | |
| <p>The City of Seattle’s adopted 2017 Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) presents a Priority Investment Network, which identifies the street segments that are priorities for improvements such as adding sidewalks where they are currently missing. Many of the missing sidewalks in the study area are unlikely to be prioritized in the upcoming years considering economic conditions and the City’s emphasis on prioritizing neighborhoods with historical underinvestment.</p> |  |
| <p>Intersection signalization or capacity improvements are recommended at several locations including 15th Ave W/Gilman Dr W, and W Galer St/Thorndyke Ave W.</p> |  |
| Transit and Light Rail Expansion | |
| <p>Today, 15th Ave W/NW (including the Ballard Bridge) is part of the Very Frequent Transit Network and the Magnolia Bridge is part of the Frequent Transit Network.^{5,6} Multiple King County Metro express and local routes use the 15th Ave W/NW corridor, including the RapidRide D Line.</p> |  |
| <p>Sound Transit’s West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions will provide light rail connections to residential and job centers throughout the region. The Ballard-to-Downtown extension is expected to start service in 2035 and will add 7.1 miles of light rail service from Downtown Seattle to Ballard, including a new Downtown Seattle rail-only tunnel. There are 3 stations planned in the study area: Smith Cove, Interbay, and Ballard stations.</p> |  |
| <p>Metro Connects, King County Metro Transit’s vision, includes new bus services in the 2040 enhanced transit network from east Seattle and east King County that will terminate in Interbay. Metro and Sound Transit will identify bus layover and transfer facilities as new Ballard light rail extension stations are planned. Other investments will include bus-only lanes and transit priority features.</p> |  |

⁴ SDOT (October 2020). Ballard Multimodal Corridor. Available at: <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/bike-program/ballard-multimodal-corridor>

⁵ SDOT (2016). Seattle Transit Master Plan. Available at: <https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/TransitProgram/TMP2016CH4.pdf>






FIGURE 2-4: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM INVESTMENTS UNDERWAY OR PLANNED IN THE STUDY AREA



LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Redevelopment is being considered in several locations that would support industrial uses, repurpose underutilized land, and increase density near planned high-capacity transit.

TABLE 2-2: DEVELOPMENTS UNDERWAY OR PLANNED IN THE STUDY AREA

| Terminal 91 Uplands Redevelopment | Map Label |
|---|---|
| <p>The Port of Seattle plans to develop two 50,000 square-foot (100,000 total) light industrial facilities and associated site infrastructure development. Phase 2 will develop another 300,000 square feet of light industrial facilities. Infrastructure improvements include paving, water, sanitary sewers, storm sewers, lighting, electrical power, natural gas, communications, and landscaping.</p> |  |
| Fishermen's Terminal Redevelopment | |
| <p>Roughly 60,000 square feet of new light industrial space will be developed for complementary maritime businesses by the end of 2022. The new "Gateway" building is planned in the area of the existing vacant bank building and Net Sheds 7 and 8.</p> |  |
| Armory Site Redevelopment | |
| <p>The National Guard's Armory relocation needs prompted the Department of Commerce to convene the Interbay Public Development Advisory Committee to make recommendations for possible future uses for the site.⁷ Armory site development concepts include a mix of uses including industrial, manufacturing, housing, office, and open space. The Department of Commerce explored 6 redevelopment scenarios for consideration, but the site's land uses have yet to be determined by the City of Seattle.</p> |  |
| Transit-Oriented Development | |
| <p>Anticipated investments in high-capacity transit, including RapidRide and the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions light rail, call for higher-density development at stations and transit hubs, and along transit corridors. Accessible and convenient connections to transit stops and stations—for buses and light rail—are identified as critical for ensuring that transit is a viable mode for residents and workers in the area.</p> |  |
| Connections to the Waterfront | |
| <p>Neighborhood plans in Ballard and Magnolia recommend improving connections between residential neighborhoods and waterfront areas. Access for people walking or biking to Salmon Bay from Ballard, or to Smith Cove from Magnolia, should be safe, seamless, and comfortable.</p> |  |

⁶ Washington State Department of Commerce (October 2020). Interbay Public Development Advisory Board Committee. Available at: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/about-us/research-services/interbay-public-development-advisory-committee/>

FIGURE 2-5: DEVELOPMENTS UNDERWAY OR PLANNED IN THE STUDY AREA

