

Seattle Department of Transportation

2021 TRANSIT SPOT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM REPORT



June 2022



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

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OVERVIEW

The Transit Spot program is led by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), Transit and Mobility Division, with support from several teams within SDOT, including Project Development, Capital Projects, Transportation Operations, Maintenance Operations and Communications. The program is part of the Levy to Move Seattle. Approved by voters in November 2015, the 9-year, \$930 million Levy to Move Seattle provides funding to improve safety for all travelers, maintain our streets and bridges, and invest in reliable, affordable travel options for a growing city. This annual report describes 2021 program accomplishments.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the program is to build smaller-scale transit capital investments that improve the operating environment for transit, making trips faster, safer, and more reliable for transit riders. The goals for the program include:

1. Reduce travel delay and increase reliability for buses.
2. Improve safety for transit riders, bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.
3. Improve passenger experience by making passenger facilities better.

FUNDING

The Transit Spot Improvement program is funded by a variety of funding sources, including voter approved and partnership funds. These sources include the Levy to Move Seattle; Vehicle License Fees (VLF), including a \$20 VLF implemented in 2010 and the Seattle Transit Measure \$60 VLF approved by voters in 2014 and 2020; and partnerships with King County Metro and Sound Transit.

PARTNERSHIPS

To maximize the use of available local resources, the Transit Spot Improvement program successfully partners with other SDOT programs to plan, design, and implement projects. Partner programs include Your Voice Your Choice; Sidewalk Repair; Americans with Disability Act (ADA); Bike, Pedestrian, and Pavement programs; Vision Zero; and Safe Routes to Schools.

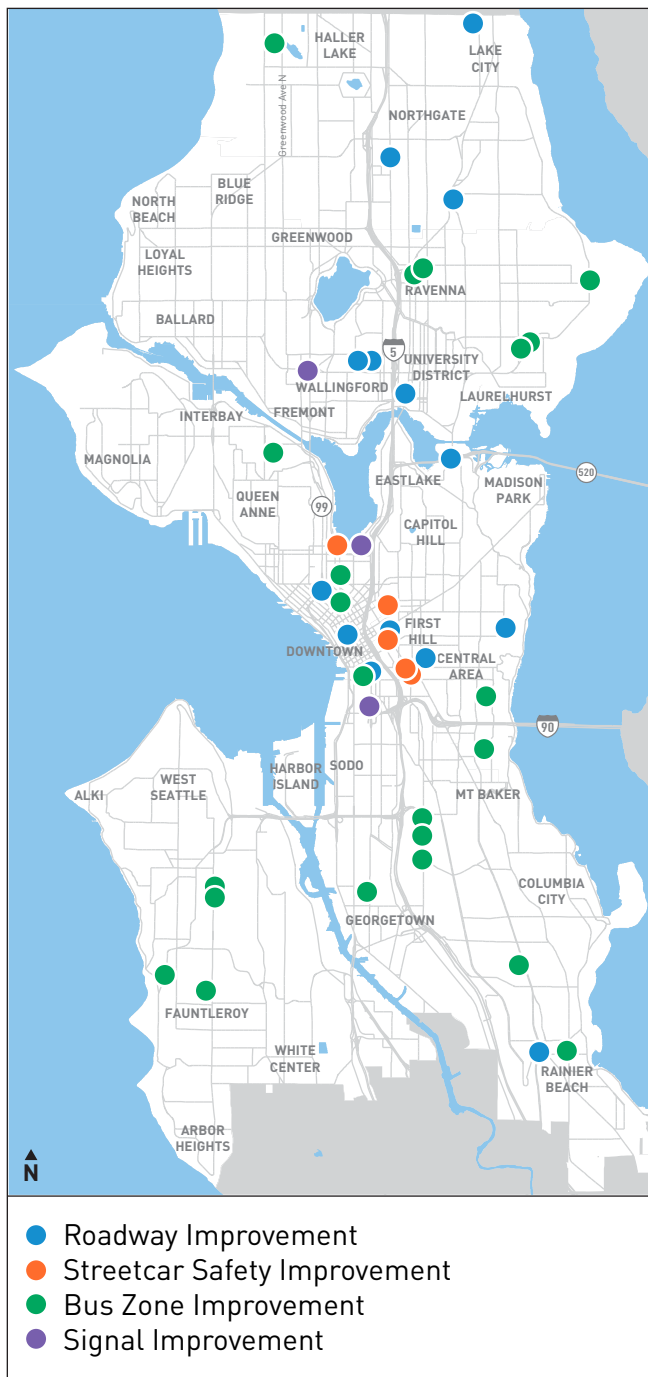
ADVANCING EQUITY

SDOT recognizes equity as a core value and believes transportation must meet the needs of communities of color and those of all incomes, ages, and abilities. SDOT's goal is to partner with communities to build a racially equitable and socially just transportation system.

To help achieve this goal, SDOT created the [Transportation Equity Program](#) which provides department-wide policy and strategic advisement on equitable, safe, environmentally sustainable, accessible, and affordable transportation systems that support Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, low-income populations, people living with disabilities, and other communities historically and currently underinvested in by government.

The transit spot improvement program contributes to the goals of the Transportation Equity Program by seeking to make transit safe, attractive, and reliable. Staff participated in the development of the Transportation Equity Framework in 2021, which is ongoing. The transit spot improvement program also continued to prioritize investments in historically underserved or currently disinvested areas.

MAP OF 2021 TRANSIT SPOT IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



SUMMARY OF 2021 TRANSIT SPOT IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Type of Transit Spot Improvement	Total Completed
Bus-Only Lanes	2
Bus Stop and Rider Amenities	22
Traffic Signal Upgrades	3
Roadway Improvements	12
Streetcar Safety	6
Total Projects Completed	45

2021 SPOT IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. BUS-ONLY LANES

SDOT converted existing travel lanes to dedicated bus-only lanes to improve transit travel time and reliability in congested areas. Before implementing these changes, SDOT conducted an evaluation of benefits and trade-offs of converting a general-purpose travel lane to a bus only lane. The capital investment for a lane conversion can include signage, lane markings and red paint to reinforce the “bus only” lane designation.

Accomplishments include:

Location	Project
Third Avenue (between Stewart Street and Virginia Street)	Southbound bus-only lane
7th Avenue North (between Denny Way and Harrison Street)	Northbound bus-only lane

HIGHLIGHTS

Third Avenue between Virginia Street and Stewart Street

In fall 2018, SDOT installed travel restrictions on 3rd Avenue between Yesler Way and Stewart Street. Automobiles were restricted from traveling on 3rd Avenue during 6 AM and 9 AM and 3 PM and 7 PM, Monday through Friday. Because of this restriction, southbound vehicles were required to make right turns from 3rd Avenue to Stewart Street. Due to lack of signage and roadway markings, there were a high number of violations occurring on 3rd Avenue and Stewart Street which caused delay for buses traveling south on 3rd Avenue.

In May 2021, SDOT installed a red bus lane on southbound 3rd Avenue between Virginia Street and Stewart Street. On this section of 3rd Avenue, King County Metro operates several routes including RapidRide C, D and E lines. Given the high volume of buses, riders often experienced delay traveling southbound



3rd Avenue Southbound Bus-Only Lane between Virginia Street and Stewart Street

on 3rd Avenue. By restricting the southbound middle lane to bus-only, buses are now able to bypass automobile traffic.

2. BUS STOP AND RIDER AMENITIES

To make riding transit more attractive and comfortable, SDOT makes improvements to existing bus zones by installing bus benches, bus shelter footings, rear door landing pads, and bus bulbs. Rear door landing pads allow passengers to board and alight from the rear of the bus, while bus bulbs provide more waiting area for transit

riders. In some cases, the transit spot program partners with other SDOT programs such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) program to provide enhancements such as curb ramps. The program also partners with King County Metro to install bus shelters which provide riders with weather protection and a seating area.

Accomplishments include:

Location	Project
Southbound Fauntleroy Way and Southwest Myrtle Street	Rear door bus pad
Northbound Westlake Avenue and Denny Way	Safety railing
Southbound Westlake Avenue and Harrison Street	Safety railing
Westbound South Henderson Street and Rainier Avenue	Rear door bus pad
Southbound Martin Luther King Way and South Hill Street	Rear door bus pad
Northbound 4th Avenue and Weller Street	Curb repair
Southbound 35th Ave Southwest and Southwest Webster	Rear door bus pad
Northbound 35th Ave Southwest and Southwest Dawson	Rear door bus pad
Northbound 35th Ave Southwest and Southwest Hudson	Rear door bus pad
Southbound Martin Luther King Way and Dearborn Street	Rear door bus pad
Southbound 4th Avenue and Dawson Street	Rear door bus pad
3rd Avenue West and West Fulton Street (northbound and southbound)	Bus zone relocation
Northbound 15th Avenue South and Columbian Way	Bus shelter footing
Southbound Columbian Way and South Oregon Street	Bus shelter footing
Southbound Sand Point Way and Northeast 40th Street	Rear door pad
Southbound Sand Point Way and Northeast 50th Street	Rear door pad
Eastbound Northeast 65th Street and 57th Avenue Northeast	Rear door pad
Southbound Greenwood Avenue North and North 134th Street	Rear door pad
Westbound Othello Street and Martin Luther King Way	Bus zone expansion
Northbound 15th Avenue South and South Spokane Street	Rear door pad
Southbound Roosevelt Avenue (between Northeast 66th and Northeast 67th St)	Sidewalk restoration
Northbound 12th Avenue Northeast and Northeast 67th Street	Bus bulb

HIGHLIGHTS

The bus zone located on 3rd Avenue West and West Fulton Street was improved by expanding the waiting area and making the zone more accessible to people with disabilities. This improvement benefits riders using King County Metro Route 3, 4, 13 and 29.



3rd Avenue West and West Fulton Bus Zone Expansion

The bus zone located on 15th Avenue South @ South Oregon Street was improved by expanding the waiting area and making the zone more accessible to people with disabilities. This improvement benefits riders using King County Metro Routes 60 and 107.



Bus zone and ADA improvements - Northbound 15th Ave @ Columbia St.

3. TRAFFIC SIGNALS

SDOT installs bus-only signals to provide buses an advance signal at busy intersections. These signals allow buses to proceed ahead of general-purpose traffic and thereby reduce delay and increase reliability. SDOT partners with King County Metro to identify signal locations and install bus only signals that meet the requirements for King County Metro, Community Transit and Sound Transit buses. These transit agencies require a special transit signal head that drivers have been trained to recognize.

Accomplishments include:

Location	Project
Fairview and Valley	Replace signal head with light rail transit head
4th Ave and I-90	Install overhead sign to allow transit to turn left from eastbound I-90 to northbound 4th Avenue (cars are prohibited from turning left from this lane)
Aurora Ave and Phinney	Replace signal head with light rail transit head

HIGHLIGHTS

On southbound on Aurora Avenue N approaching North Phinney Way, just south of N 46th Street, buses are allowed to proceed past North Phinney Way while traffic on N Phinney Way stops at the signal, providing a protected merge for approaching buses. However, the signal controlling buses was a nonstandard “blue light” display no longer used for this purpose. The transit signal was replaced with a new light rail transit-style 3-section signal head. It has indications for go (vertical line), caution (triangle), and stop (horizontal line) and provides a clear indication to transit operators of how to proceed, as they merge into the transit lane and increases safety for transit riders.



Aurora Avenue and Phinney Way Bus Signal

4. ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

The transit spot improvement program makes changes to existing right-of-way, curb space (restricting or adjusting parking and loading) and adjusts travel lanes (shifting traffic stop bars) to improve bus operations on roadways. These

changes make it easier for buses to operate in the urban environment and reduce the potential for collisions with other modes of transportation. Benefits to transit riders include reductions in travel time and a safer travel experience.

Location	Improvement
Jackson Street (between 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue)	Install channelization markings and signs to reinforce curb lane is for right turns and transit only
East Union Street and Broadway	Restrict eastbound parking to allow buses to use curb lane
Southbound Martin Luther King Way and South Henderson Street	Install yellow lane marking and reflective markers
Montlake Blvd and SR 520	Reinstall “No Right Turn” sign
33rd Avenue East (between Spring and Union)	Install parking lane lines
Northeast 145th Street and 30th Avenue Northeast	Re-channelize street to improve bus turning movement
North 45th Street and Thackery Avenue	Restrict parking to allow bus turn
North 45th Street and Latona Avenue	Restrict parking and relocate stop bar
Ravenna Boulevard and Northeast 92nd Street	Install double yellow line
5th Avenue Northeast (between Northeast 100th Street and Northeast 105th Street)	Install interim bus layover
12th Avenue East and East Jefferson Street	Relocate stop bar and install left turn signal
Northeast 40th Street and 7th Avenue Northeast	Shift eastbound stop bar west and shift center line south to accommodate southbound to westbound turn

HIGHLIGHTS

At the intersection of NE 145th Street and 30th Avenue NE, King County Metro operates Route 65 which travels eastbound on NE 145th Street. Buses were experiencing difficulties turning right due to the shallow curb radius on the southwest corner and the narrow southbound lane. The northbound lane was narrowed to accommodate a hatched buffer between the northbound and southbound lanes. Buses turning eastbound right from NE 145th Street onto 30th Avenue NE can now drive over the buffer, giving them more space to make the turn safely.

This improvement enables safer turns and reduces chances of collisions between turning buses and northbound cars. Delay for transit riders is reduced by approximately 8 seconds per trip which benefits 2,350 riders on Routes 64 and 65.



Before: Intersection at 30th Avenue NE and NE 145th St



After: 30th Avenue NE @ NE 145th Street Intersection Improvements

5. STREETCAR SAFETY

SDOT owns and maintains the South Lake Union and First Hill Streetcars. To enhance the safety of streetcar passengers and other users of the right-of-way, SDOT makes safety improvements

such as separating bicycle facilities from the streetcar tracks, installing bicycle signals and installing barriers to prevent automobiles from parking in or too close to streetcar tracks.

Accomplishments include:

Location	Project
East Yesler Way @ 10th Ave	Install tuff posts to prevent cars from crossing over into streetcar tracks
Broadway @ Alder	Install tuff posts to prevent cars from crossing over into streetcar tracks
Broadway @ Harvard	Install tuff posts to prevent cars from crossing over into streetcar tracks
Fairview and Valley	Streetcar and bike lane markings to guide bicyclists away from streetcar tracks
Westlake Ave and Broad St	Re-channelization to prevent cars from blocking Streetcar tracks
Broadway and Denny	Install bicycle signal and markings to guide bicyclists away from streetcar tracks

HIGHLIGHTS

SDOT installed a southbound bicycle left turn pocket with bicycle signal on Broadway at Denny to better align cyclists entering the Broadway protected bicycle lane at its northern terminus.



Broadway and Denny bicycle signal and markings

6. NORTH LINK TRANSIT RESTRUCTURE

In October 2021, Sound Transit opened three new Link light rail stations in north Seattle, extending light rail service from the University of Washington – Husky Stadium to Northgate Transit Center. King County Metro, Sound Transit, and Community Transit made changes

to bus routes to connect people to light rail, respond to changing transportation needs, and improve mobility and access for historically underserved populations.

To support the changes, SDOT implemented several transit spot improvements, including new bus layover and roadway changes.

HIGHLIGHTS

In September 2021, SDOT made operational improvements to 5th Avenue North between NE 100th Street and NE 105th Street to provide layover space for Community Transit buses. SDOT re-channelized 5th Avenue and added designated spaces for Community Transit buses. The layover will be temporary until the Lynnwood Light Rail Station opens. After the opening, buses will be relocated.



New bus layover - Southbound 5th Ave between NE 100th St and NE 105th St



Before and After: Bus bulb - Northbound 12th Ave and NE 66th St



Sidewalk restoration - Southbound Roosevelt Way (between NE 66th St and NE 67th St)



Curb restriction - Eastbound NE 45th St and Thackery



Curb restriction - Northbound Latona Ave and NE 45th St

2022 LOOK AHEAD

The Transit Spot Improvement program had a very successful year, managing multiple priorities for its resources and delivering 45 spot improvement projects throughout the City. To produce this high volume of projects, the program partnered with other programs, such as Your Voice Your Choice, the Pavement Spot program, and the Sidewalk Repair program to deliver projects. In addition, the program restarted work originally paused due to funding impacts from Initiative I-976, which was overturned in 2020.

As the program heads into 2022, the program will continue to manage a high volume of requests and support the following SDOT priorities:

- Move Seattle Levy funded projects
- East Link-supportive bus restructure capital projects
- Re-opening of West Seattle Bridge
- King County Metro partnered spot improvement projects
- Streetcar and transit safety projects
- Seattle Transit Measure capital investments
- Transportation Equity Framework advancement

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