Not quite a block party:
COVID-19 Street reallocation programs in Seattle, WA and Vancouver, BC

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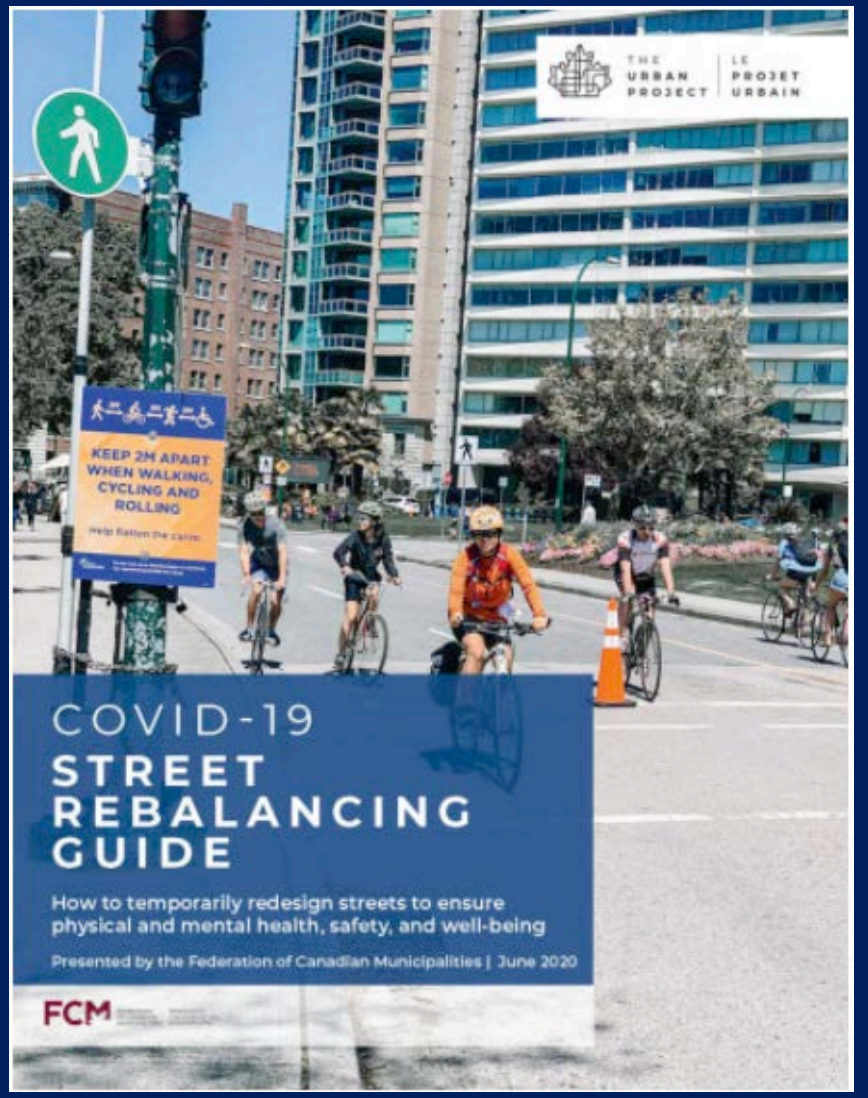
Street reallocation

"Managing urban space is key to ensuring safe public mobility as cities re-open amid continuing [COVID-19] transmission concerns.

That includes 'rebalancing streets' to provide more space to walk, bike and roll alongside vehicle and transit traffic — for physically distant commuting, commerce and exercise."



Emerging concerns

1) How are cities designing street reallocation programs?
2) Where are street reallocations happening?
3) Who has access to and benefits from street reallocation programs?
4) What can we learn from comparing experiences in two cities?

Project outputs

1) Map-based tools for mobility advocacy groups
2) Manuscript for peer-reviewed journal publication
3) Blog post, co-written with advocacy groups

Context

Street reallocation programs managed by municipalities in Seattle WA and Vancouver BC

Managed by:	Seattle	Vancouver
Transportation	**Stay Healthy Streets**	**Slow Streets**
Park Board	**Keep Moving Streets** *(Golden Gardens, Lake WA Blvd, Alki, Green Lake)*	**Temporary road closures** *(Beach Ave, Stanley Park)*

Program intentions and commitments

Seattle

Stay Healthy Streets are an important tool for Seattleites to get outside, travel to essential services and businesses, and exercise

Starting in April, 20+ miles (32+ km) of streets opened for people to walk, roll, bike

Vancouver

Slow Streets are routes for walking, cycling, and rolling that make it easier to exercise and access businesses in your local neighbourhood

Starting in April, 40 km of streets with simple traffic barriers and signs

Program implementation

Seattle

- Upgraded some Neighborhood Greenways (residential streets identified through public engagement with enhanced safety features)
- Selection considered the Race and Social Equity Index, prioritized areas with dense housing or limited public open space, access to essential services

Vancouver

- Slow Streets have been planned on residential/local streets based on several factors: traffic volumes, signalized crossings at busier streets, equity and access to green space, nearby parks, and community amenities

STAY HEALTHY STREETS
Keep it Moving!
It's nice that people are driving the pace of people walking and rolling.
Seattle
Department of
Transportation

STREET
CLOSED

CITY OF VANCOUVER
S L O W
STREETS
STOP

LOCAL TRAFFIC ONLY
DRIVE SLOWLY
WATCH FOR PEOPLE
WALKING ON ROAD

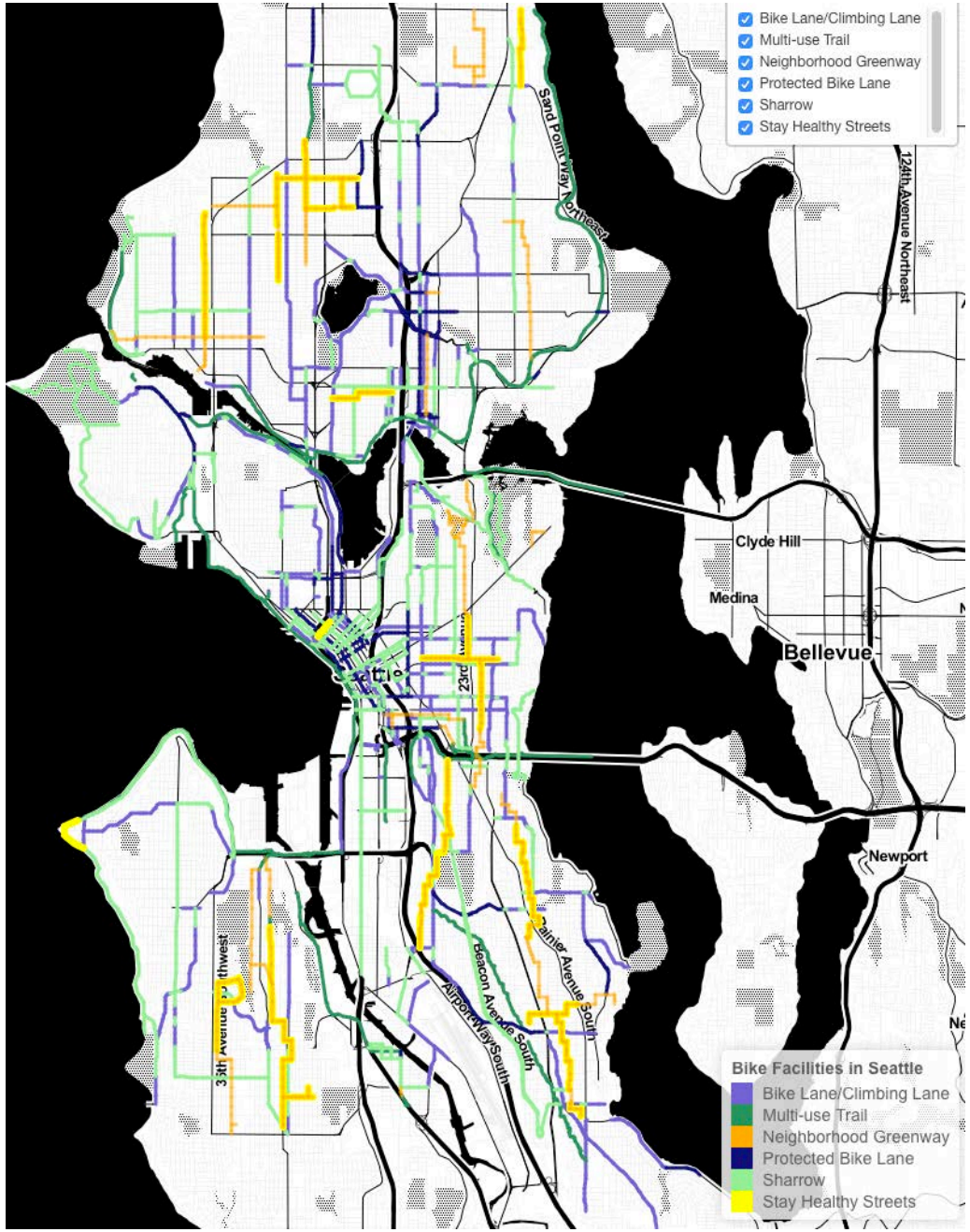
Data sources

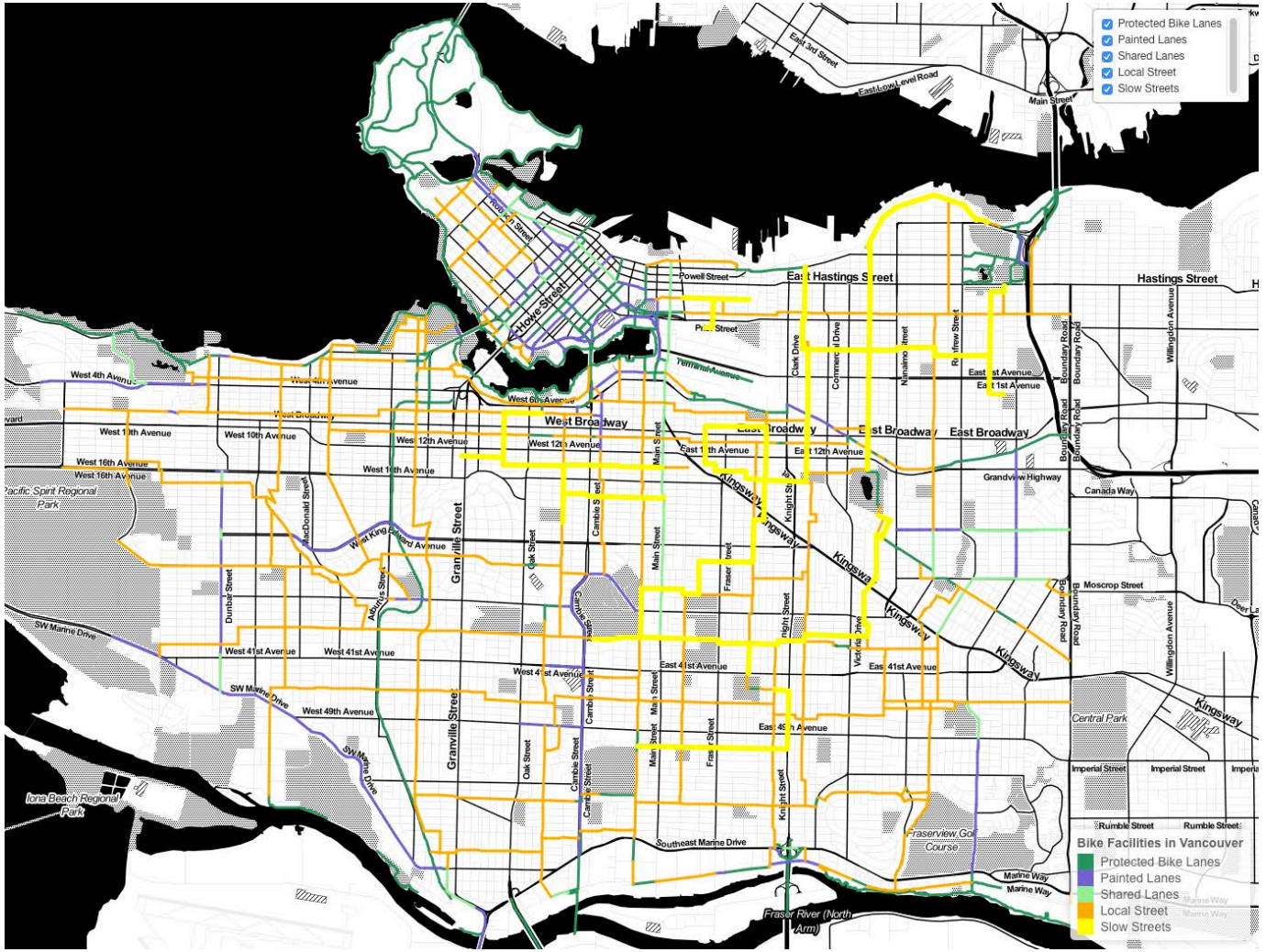
	Seattle	Vancouver
Street reallocations	Created GIS database (July-August 2020) by tracing routes	Created GIS database (July-August 2020) by webscraping and creating routes
Cycling facilities	Open data	Open data
Social-demographic indicators (census tract level)	ACS, 2013-2017 5-year estimates	StatsCan, 2016 census

Classifying cycling facilities

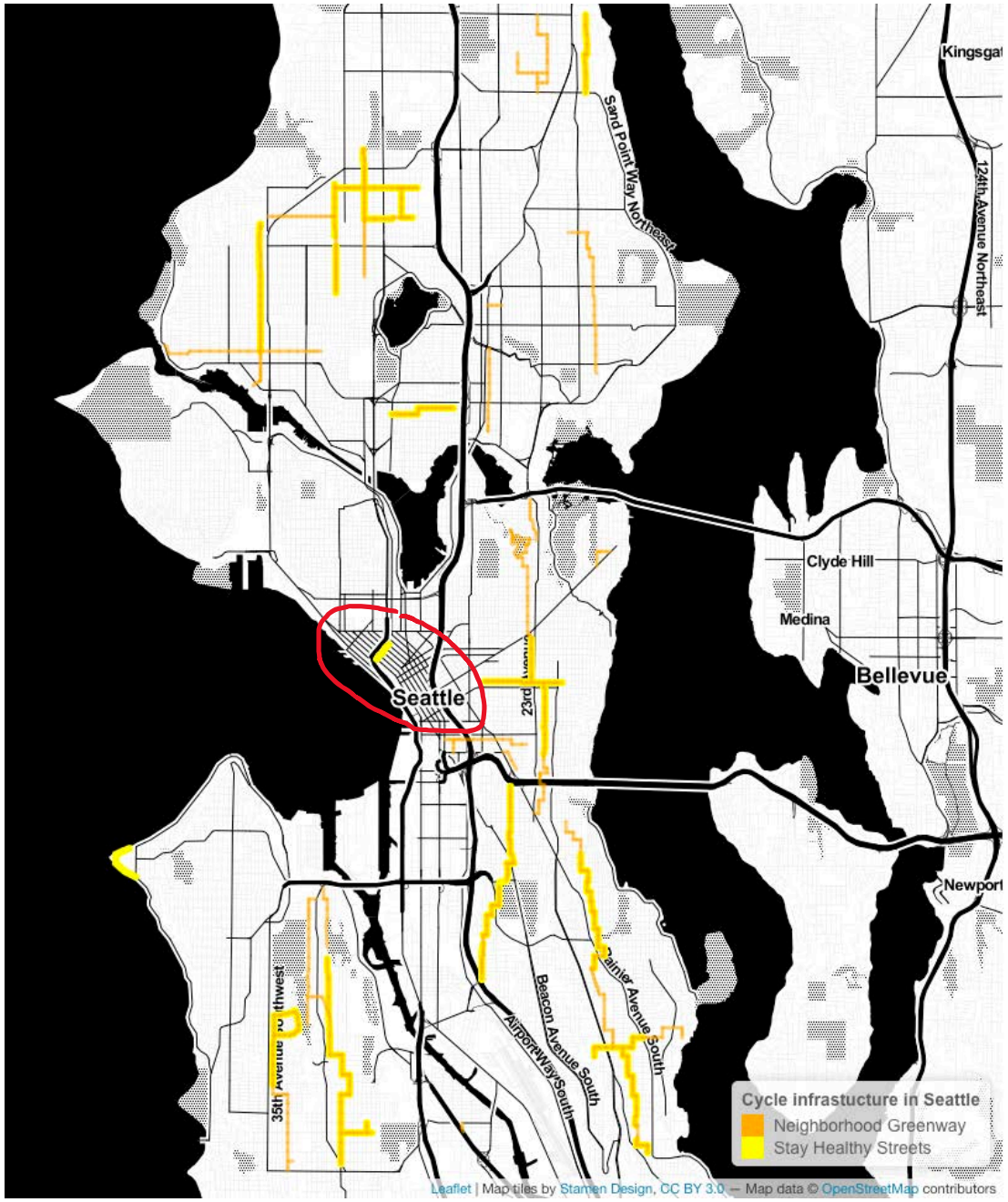
Seattle	Sharrows	Climbing Lane	Protected Lane *(+Bollards)*	Neighborhood Greenways	Protected Lane	Multi-use paths
Vancouver	Shared Lanes	Painted Lanes		Local Streets	Protected Lanes	

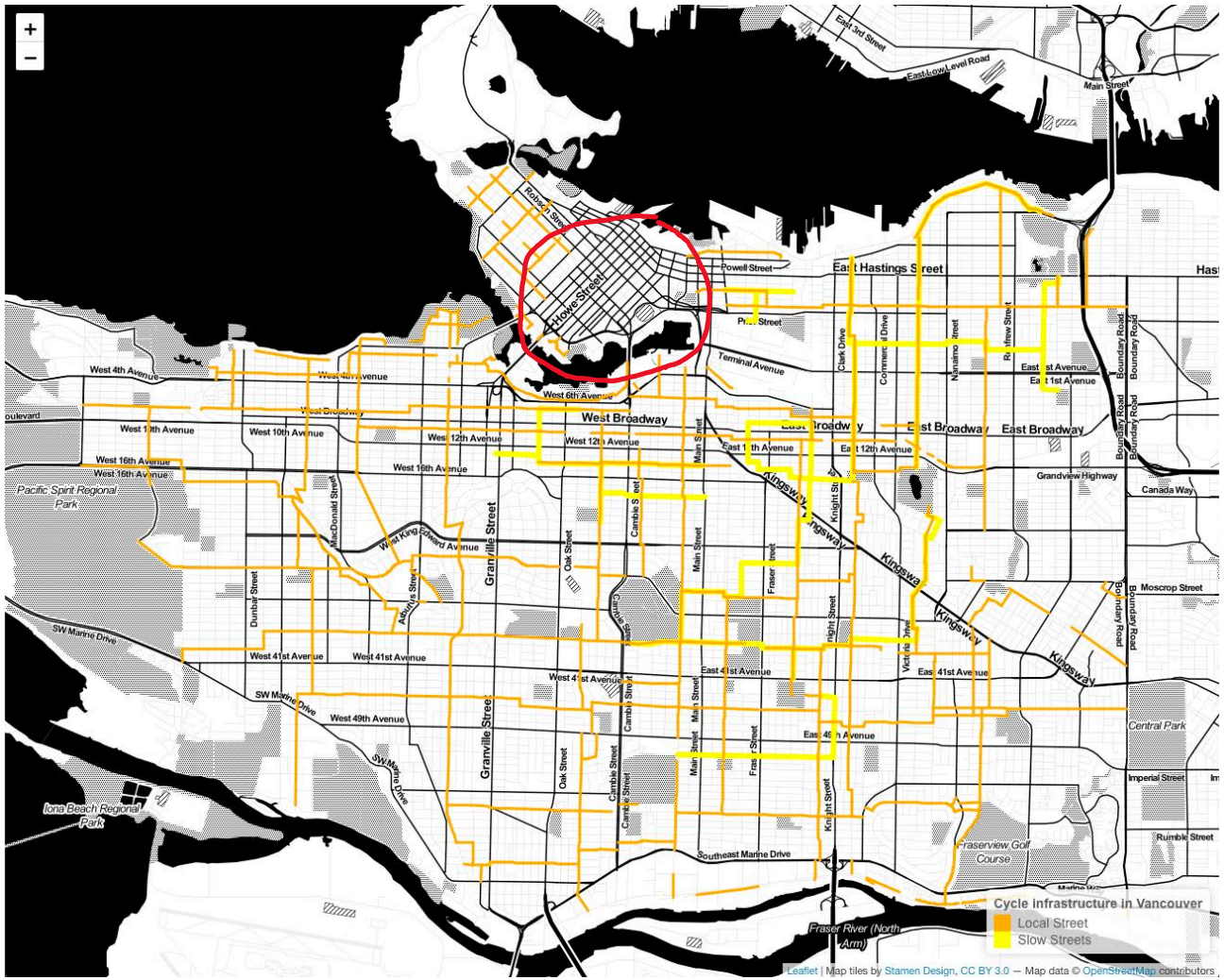
Existing cycle facilities





Street reallocations





Social-demographic indicators

Seattle	Vancouver
Youth (< 15 yo)	
Older adults (65+ yo)	
People of color	
Black/African American	
Indigenous	
People living with disability	Newcomers to Canada
Low household income	
Food stamps	Low income cut off (LICO)
Rental housing	
Active transportation (walk, bike, public transit to work)	

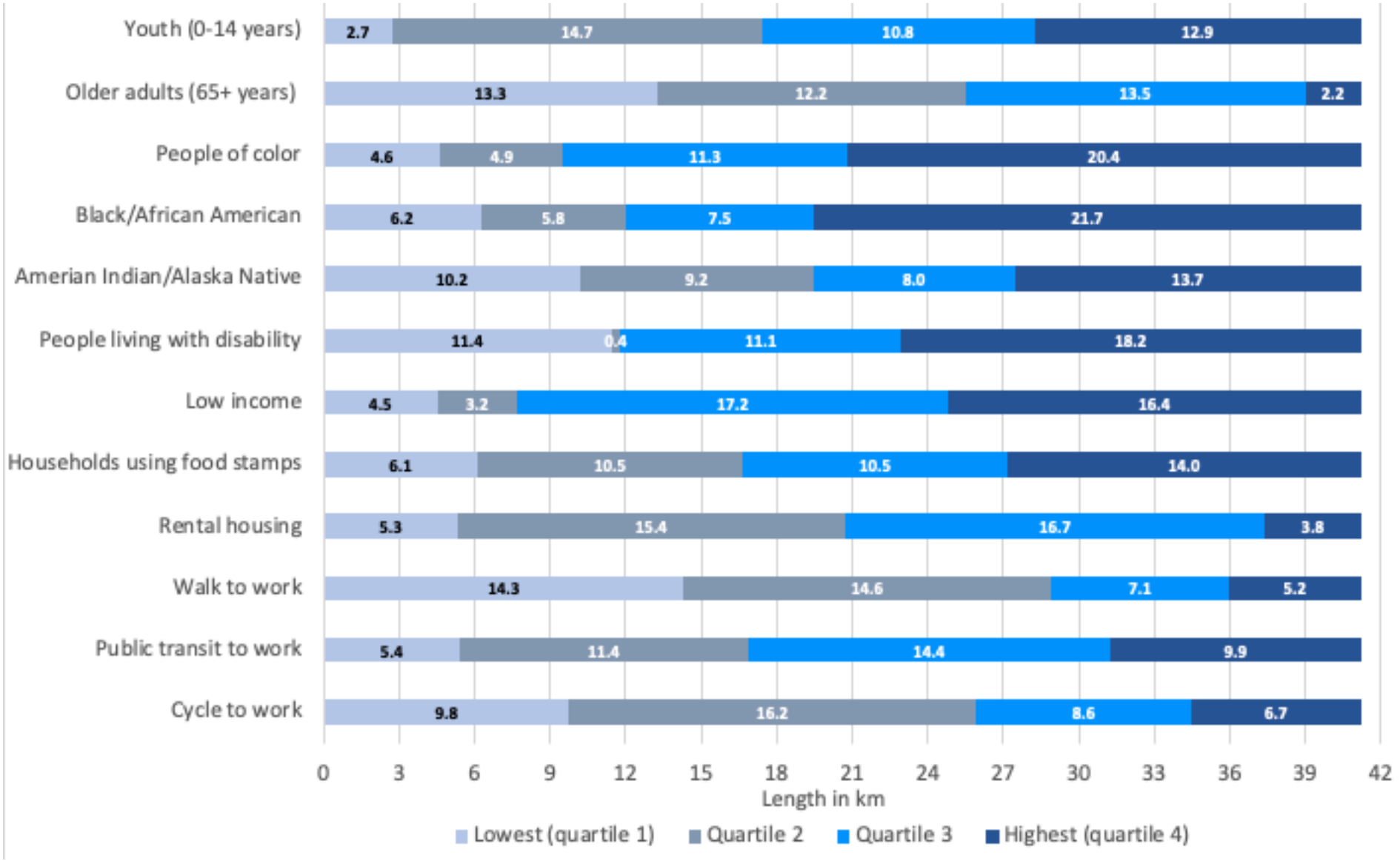
Analysis: Socio spatial inequalities

- Calculated the length of street reallocation interventions within each census tract
- We compared the length of street reallocation interventions across quartiles of each socio demographic and mobility measure

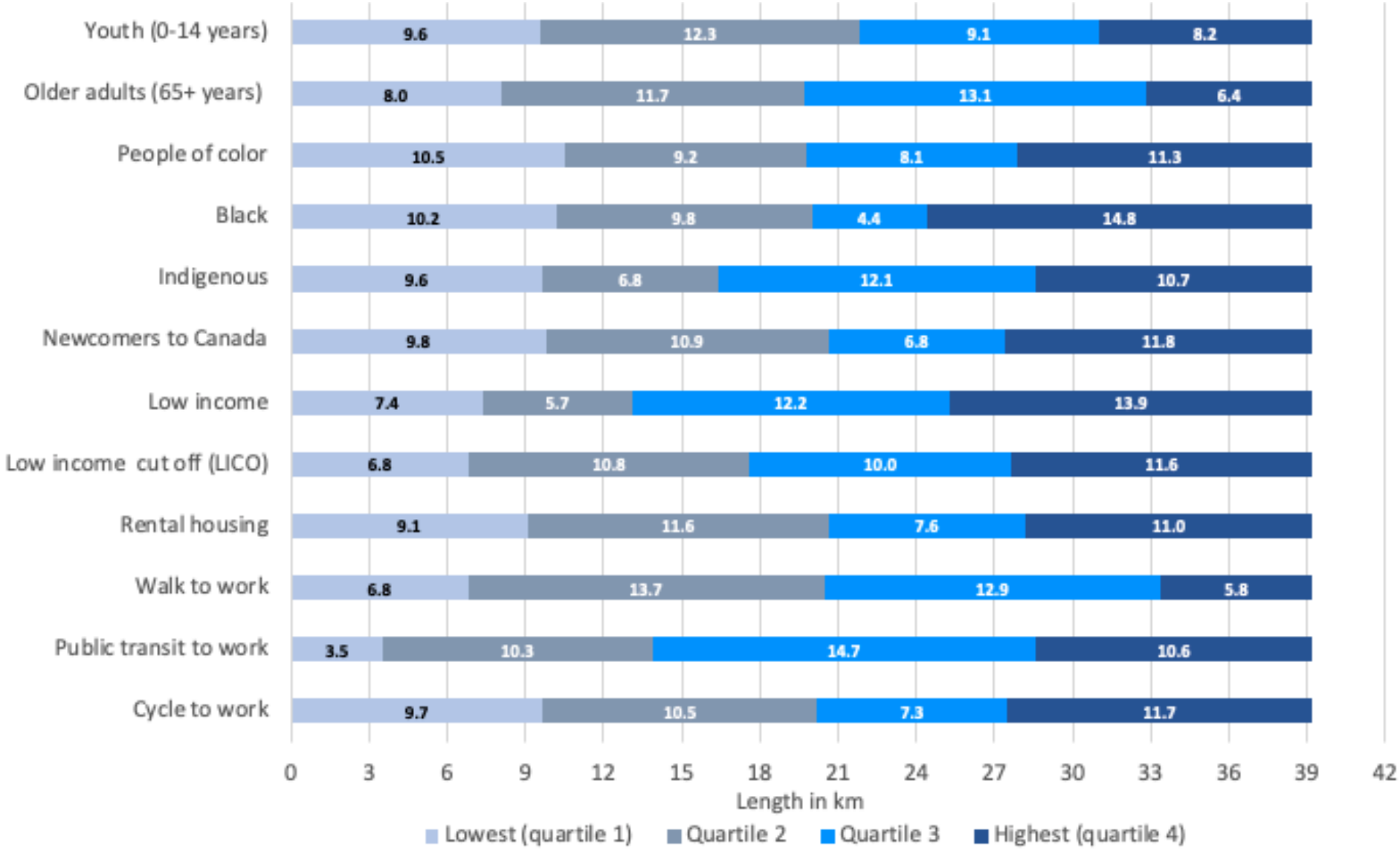
Hypothesis

If cities used equity to guide the implementation of street reallocations then areas with more marginalized populations would receive more interventions.

Inequalities in access to Stay Health Streets, Seattle



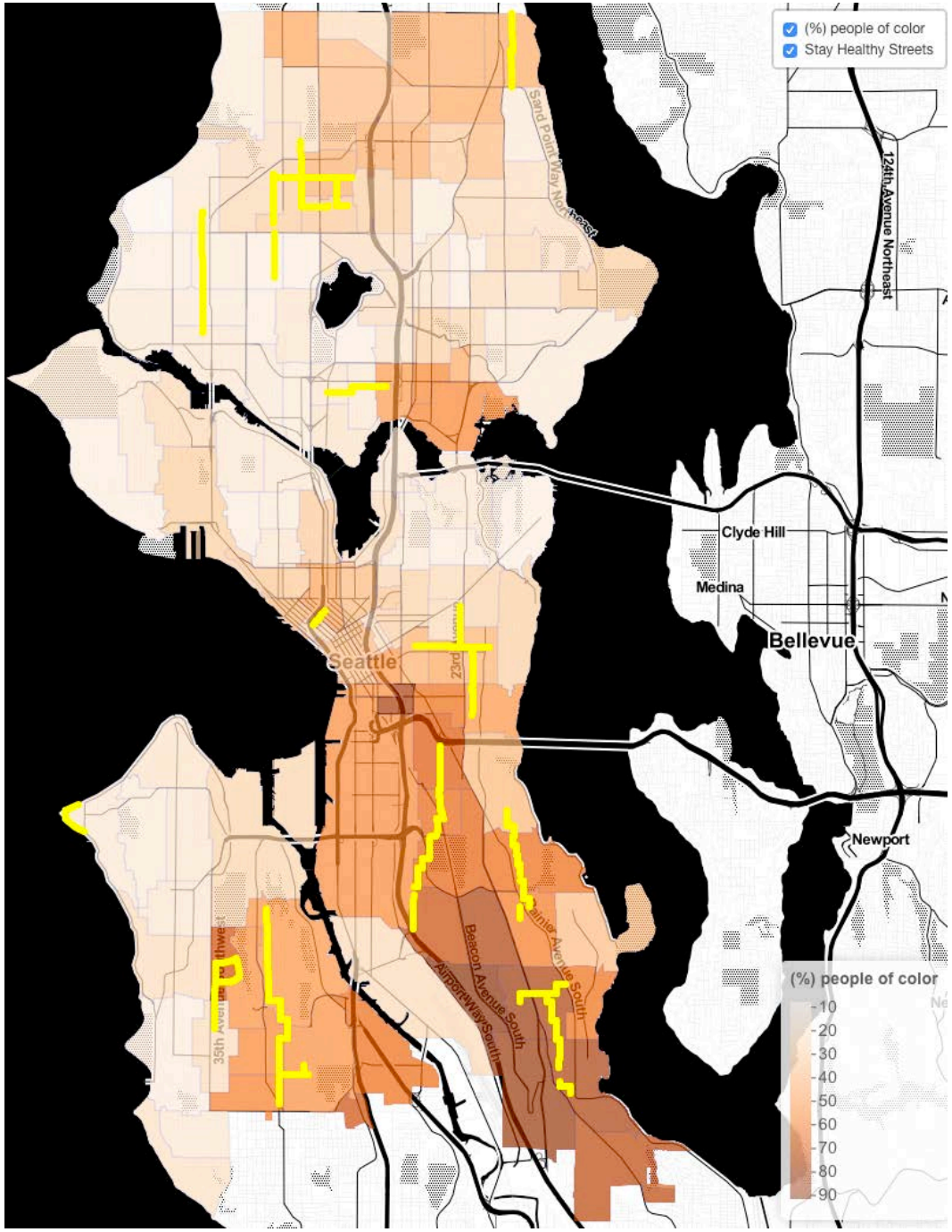
Inequalities in access to Slow Streets, Vancouver

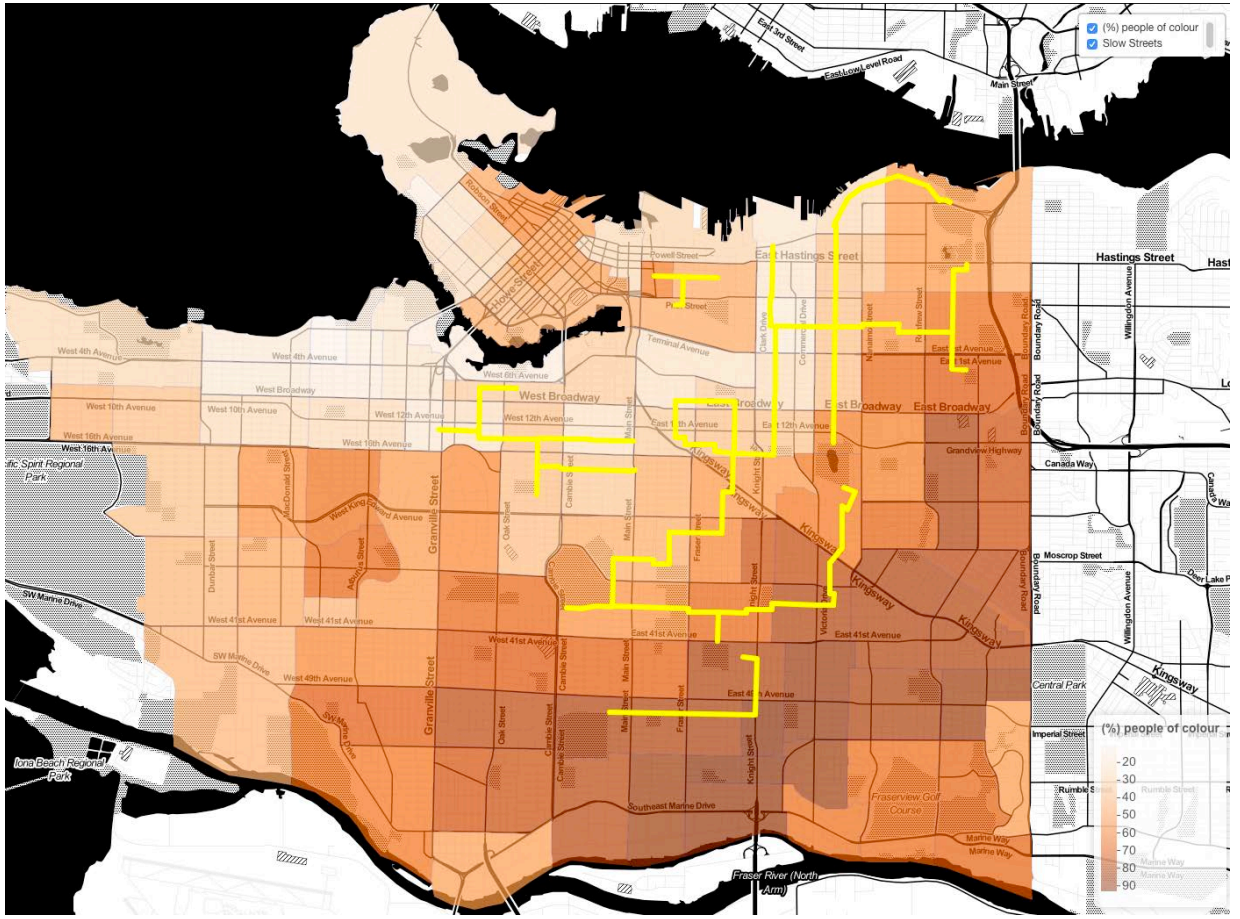


Summary of inequalities

Seattle	Vancouver
Youth (< 15 yo)	
Older adults (65+ yo)	
People of color	
Black/African American	
Indigenous	
People living with disability	Newcomers to Canada
Low household income	
Food stamps	Low income cut off (LICO)
Rental housing	
Walk to work	
Public transit to work	
Bike to work	

Street reallocations & people of color



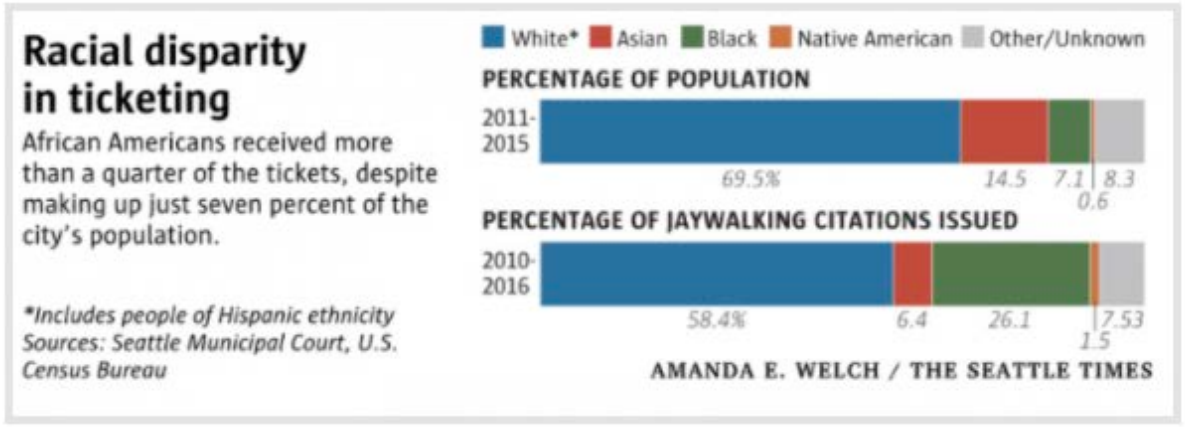


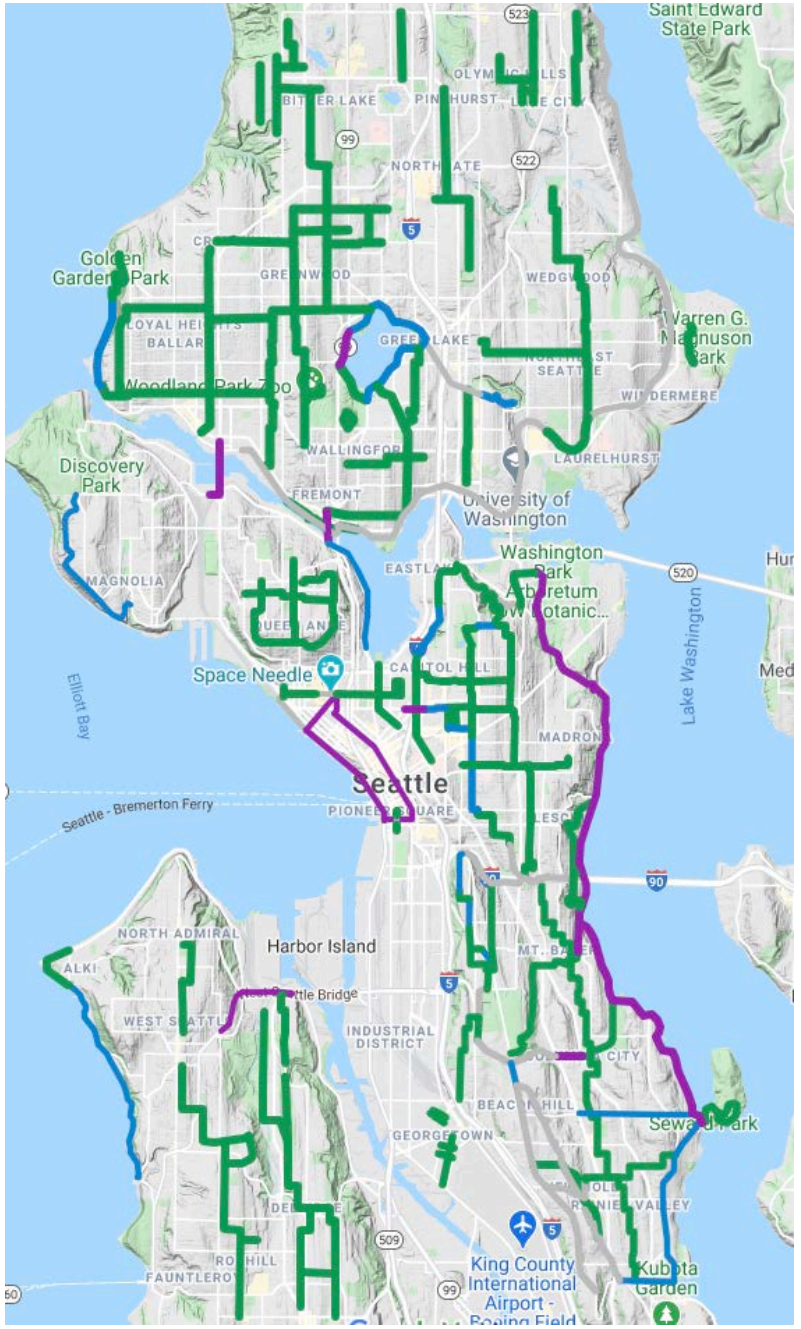
Community engagement

- Engagement started after implementation
- Seattle Stay Healthy Streets survey, July-August (9,000 folks)
  - Use of SHS, where to make permanent upgrades (priorities: install SHS across Seattle geographically and connect to amenities, bike lanes, and in areas with little green space)
- Community liaisons in Seattle doing outreach—on going
  - Prioritized in south Seattle, communities not historically engaged by gov't
- Vancouver Slow Street survey is ongoing, launched September
  - Focuses on use and problems of Slow Streets program. A separate survey planned for permanent upgrades

Community voice (Seattle)

- Unique, community-sourced Stay Health Streets suggestions
- Need data
- Its not enough to close the streets





Seattle Neighborhood Greenways https://seattlegreenways.org/socialdistancingstreets

Challenges that cities face

- Restrictions to where street reallocations can be implemented

  Topography, zoning

- How temporary or permanent are street reallocations?

  Both cities have committed to making permanent changes, integration with transportation planning

- How will cities address mobility needs of different communities?

  What are the outcomes of community engagement and outreach?

Acknowledgements

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Marginalized and priority populations and mobility indicators, Seattle WA and Vancouver BC

	Seattle		Vancouver	
Number of census tracts	135		117	
	Median	IQR	Median	IQR
Youth (<15 years old) (%)	15%	10%–18%	8%	5%–10%
Older adults (65+ years) (%)	12%	9%–15%	16%	13%–18%
People of color (%)	28%	20%–47%	50%	37%–72%
Black, African American (%)	5%	2%–14%	1%	0%–1%
Indigenous (%)	2%	1%–3%	2%	1%–2%
People living with disabilities (%)	0.2%	0%–0.4%	--	
Newcomers to Canada (%)	--		6%	4%–7%
Household median income ($)	$46,100	$34,874-$54,306	$67,840	$59,959–$77,894
Households who use food stamps (%)	1%	1%–2%	--	
Low income cut off (LICO) (%)	--		16%	14%–20%
Rental housing (%)	20%	12%–32%	45%	38%–62%
Active transportation:				
Walk to work (%)	4%	2%–10%	6%	3%–16%
Cycle to work (%)	3%	1%–5%	5%	2%–9%
Public transit to work (%)	20%	16%–26%	29%	26%–33%