



## Frequently Asked Questions

March 2023

### Project status

#### **What is the project status of RapidRide J Line?**

RapidRide J Line is moving forward! We are continuing to plan for RapidRide J Line service from downtown Seattle through South Lake Union to Eastlake and the University District. The project is proceeding into final design following a necessary environmental determination. The project is in the process of securing grant funding prior to starting construction, which is currently planned to start in 2024.

#### **With COVID-19 changing travel patterns, is RapidRide J Line still needed?**

While COVID-19 is unprecedented, our communities still need RapidRide J Line. During COVID, the current Route 70 has maintained a high ridership since the University of Washington and surrounding commercial district create stable demand for transit.

In fall 2019, there were, on average, 9,300 daily weekday rides on Route 70. In spring 2020, in the beginning of the COVID pandemic, there were, on average, 2,500 daily rides. After an adjustment to bus schedules in fall 2022, the average daily weekday rides on Route 70 increased to nearly 3,900. Those numbers have continued to increase. From mid-July 2022 through the end of August 2022, weekly return-to-office figures were 40% or higher for 7 of 8 weeks, the most prolonged stretch above that mark since the start of the pandemic. This has coincided with a 3.4% increase in bus ridership.

Seattle's workforce and population continues to expand, we project that the route will serve communities and commuters well into the future.

Given the rise in telework, households may also decide to downsize to one car and rely on transit more actively.



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Even if the job and population growth along the route stagnates, the route would benefit from the infrastructure upgrades that improve transit frequency, safety, travel time, and reliability.

Transportation is the largest source of emissions, contributing 62% of greenhouse gas emissions in Seattle. Providing attractive alternatives to driving alone is critical to meeting Seattle’s climate change goals.

## RapidRide J Line operations

### **How many buses per hour will stop along the route?**

During peak hours (from 7 – 9 AM and 4 – 6 PM weekdays), RapidRide J Line will arrive every 7.5 minutes along the length of the route.

### **Will the University Bridge openings cause the RapidRide J Line to be delayed?**

We analyzed the potential impact the University Bridge openings could have on the RapidRide J Line as part of the environmental assessment process. The University Bridge is not allowed to open during RapidRide J Line’s peak hours (7 – 9 AM and 4 – 6 PM weekdays) except for rare situations that only occur a few times a year. The bridge opening typically takes up to 4.6 minutes, which the RapidRide J Line can make up for along the rest of the route. Overall, the bridge openings will have a minor impact on RapidRide J Line’s speed and reliability.

### **How will people walking, rolling, riding bikes, and taking transit interact at the upgraded RapidRide stations?**



Each station may be slightly different. Based on the current best practices, where we have a protected bike lane, we will route it behind the bus station to reduce conflicts between the bus and people biking. We may also raise the protected bike lane at the station to encourage people biking to slow down. The bus shelter helps create a buffer between people biking and waiting for transit.



## Maintained business access in Eastlake

### **There is community concern about losing on-street parking on Eastlake Ave E. Are there any updates on parking mitigation strategies?**

Studies of other neighborhoods (both in and out of Seattle) have been reviewed for typical impacts of removing curbside parking and adding bike lanes. The net impacts to businesses are typically neutral to positive. People on bikes will patronize the adjacent businesses.

In addition, the design team has responded to Eastlake community concerns about parking loss by changing the street channelization in a couple key locations near businesses, to recapture some on-street spaces for load zones or short-term parking on Eastlake Ave E. The exact number of spaces isn't known yet, since we are still adjusting the design to see if we've captured the maximum space. The number of spaces is also dependent on what type of spaces they are. For example, truck load/unload spaces may need to be longer than other parking spaces. In 2023, our community engagement will focus on conversations with the businesses close by and we will have discussions about utilization.

Finally, in conjunction with this work, there will be an adjustment of the Zone 8 RPZ to provide access and balance the commercial and residential curb space needs. SDOT is conducting a parking occupancy study to inform these changes.

### **Given the long project timeline, will Eastlake Ave E be repaved in advance of the project?**

No. We've considered whether to repave Eastlake Ave E sooner. That would expand the overall construction timeframe and lengthen impacts on nearby businesses and residents though because there would be construction for the paving and then additional construction for the RapidRide J Line.

At this point, we're still planning to complete the paving, along with replacing a Seattle Public Utilities watermain, along Eastlake Ave E during RapidRide J Line construction.



## Bike facilities

### **Will the project still install protected bike lanes on Eastlake Ave E? Are bike lanes still necessary?**

Yes. As part of the RapidRide J Line project, SDOT still plans to install protected bike lanes on Eastlake Ave E, north of Fairview Ave N. Safety is an important component of the J Line project. Separating people riding bikes from the general traffic provides increased safety for everyone. We anticipate these protected bike lanes will open when RapidRide J Line service starts.

With regards to the effects of bike lanes, we have done an analysis of impacts of similar projects. We found that adding bike lanes has a neutral-to-positive impact on local businesses, as it encourages people on bikes to stop and frequent businesses.

Separately, the [Eastlake Layover Facility Mobility Improvements Project](#) plans to install protected bike lanes farther south on Eastlake Ave E between Fairview Ave N and Stewart St. The protected bike lanes are being constructed in partnership with [King County Metro's Eastlake Layover Facility](#). The protected bike lanes will be constructed by 2023. Construction of the layover facility is expected to last until summer 2024. Please visit the two project webpages for the latest updates.

And at the north end of the RapidRide J Line project, the [11th and 12th Ave NE Paving Project](#) includes new paving between NE 43rd St and NE 67th St, new curb ramps, sidewalk repair, signal adjustments, and a new layout that accommodates a protected bike lane built on the west side of the street.

### **What is the plan for the portion of the protected bicycle lane on Eastlake Ave E south of the University Bridge?**

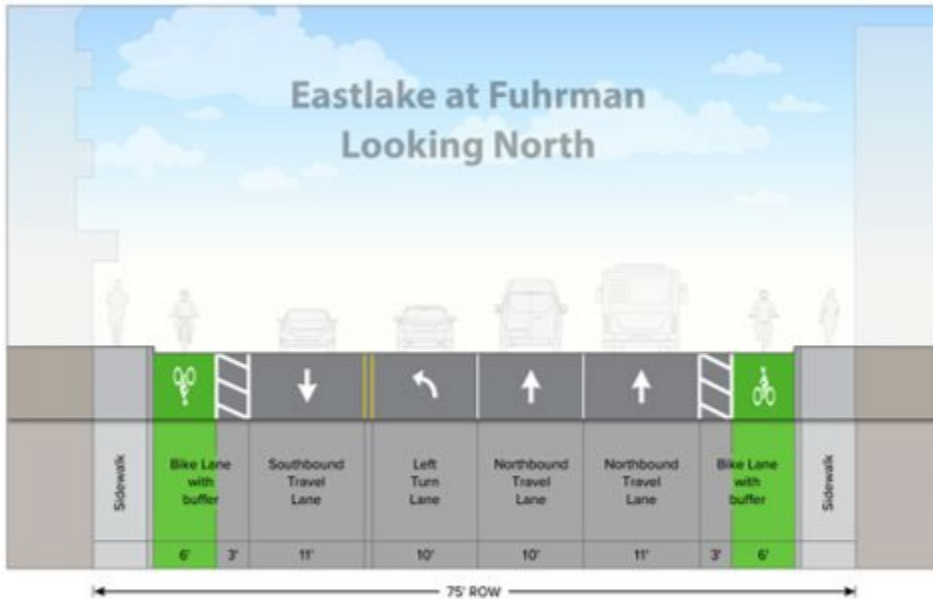
The street width on Eastlake Ave E between Harvard Ave E and the University Bridge is limited and needs to accommodate all travel modes – including people rolling, riding bikes, walking, driving, rolling, and taking transit. Because of the narrow width of the roadway in this section, and in order to accommodate all modes, the original concept design plans did not include the 3-foot buffer that is included along the majority of the new protected bike lanes along Eastlake Ave E.



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In response to comments we received about this section of roadway, the project team made design changes to accommodate the 3-foot buffer for the protected bike lane by reducing the southbound vehicle lanes to one lane.



### Will the RapidRide J Line stations reduce the width of the sidewalk?

The RapidRide J Line project will impact the sidewalk width in different ways at different station locations. Some stations will be located on the current sidewalk/curb area. The sidewalk behind these stations (between station and buildings) will be slightly narrower than the sidewalk on either side of the stop but will always be ADA accessible. Some bus stations will be built as islands, in the roadway, and people waiting for the bus will use those islands and no longer require waiting room on the sidewalk. At these locations there will be more useable space on the sidewalks for people walking and rolling.

### Will SDOT still install protected bike lanes in the U District?

Yes, SDOT still plans to install protected bike lanes in the U District through RapidRide J Line and other projects, such as the [11th and 12th Ave NE Paving Project](#).

With the implementation of the [Seattle Bicycle Master Plan](#), a [citywide bike network](#) offering people comfortable spaces to bike and increased access to transit is materializing. Thanks to recent SDOT paving projects, bike facilities for all ages and abilities are now on NE 65th St., NE Ravenna Blvd., Roosevelt Way NE, NE 43rd St., 15th Ave. NE, and other important routes.



## Will the protected bike lane on 11th Ave NE be on the left or the right side of the street?

Since the RapidRide J Line will now end at NE 43rd St, we're still planning to install the northbound protected bike lane on the right (i.e., east) side of 11th Ave NE between the University Bridge (the bike lane is on the right side of the bridge) and NE 43rd St and move it to the left (west) side of 11th Ave NE at NE 43rd St, with intersection improvements to help cyclists make this right-to-left movement.

Best practices for protected bike lanes are continuing to evolve locally as well as nationally. For example, we've heard some concerns about conflicts on Roosevelt Way NE between people walking, rolling and biking, particularly near bus stations.

Seattle's latest [Right-of-Way Improvements Manual](#) recommends placing protected bike lanes on the left side for one-way streets with high-capacity rapid transit.

Locating the protected bike lane on the left:

- Improves safety for bicyclists by separating them from other modes and removing them from mixed traffic.
- Reduces the number of potential conflicts with cars at driveways and side streets compared to locating the protected bike lane on the right side.
- Maintains the greatest amount of parking on 11th and 12th Avenues NE.
- Optimizes connections to the Roosevelt Link light rail station for people biking.

## Can bike lanes be used as bike lanes during the morning and afternoon commute, and as parking or travel lanes during other times of day?

No. The design for protected bike lanes does not allow for shared usage of this type as physical separation between the vehicle travel lane and the protected bike lane requires 24/7 operations. In addition, the safety of bicycle riders is not limited to the peak hours of travel.





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## Station/stop locations

### Has the project determined whether to shift the northbound RapidRide station planned on Eastlake Ave E between E Boston St and E Lynn St?

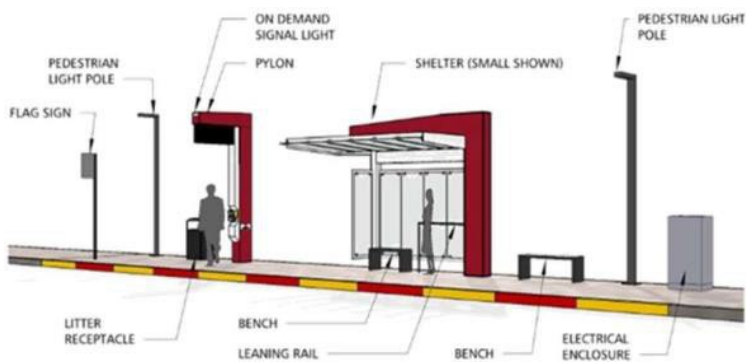
The northbound RapidRide on Eastlake Ave E will be between E Boston St and E Lynn St.

We've heard a lot of interest from the community in this station location and looked at multiple options as part of our final design which included options for shifting it further to the south toward E Boston St or further north to the far side of Lynn St. Factors considered in the evaluation included existing driveway locations, potential impacts to general traffic, transit reliability, stop spacing, safety, potential impacts to businesses, and access for people walking. While there were advantages and disadvantages associated with each option, the preferred option remained the location just south of E Lynn St.

### Will you be updating any of the bus stops in the U District?

Yes, we plan to install new stations and upgrade some existing stops in the U District. (See map on next page)

RapidRide stations have more amenities than a standard bus stop, including real-time arrival information, shelters, and all-door boarding.



### NE 42nd St RapidRide station

We plan to install new RapidRide stations in the U District:

- On Eastlake Ave E/11th Ave NE near NE 41st St
- On Roosevelt Way NE between NE 41st St and NE 42nd St



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The RapidRide J Line is no longer planning to use the existing Roosevelt Way NE southbound bus stop just north of NE 42nd St. However, the stop will remain for other bus routes and the project will expand the station platform and provide other safety improvements to this stop. A new southbound RapidRide J Line bus stop will be located on Roosevelt Way NE between NE 41st St and NE 42nd St. These changes to bus stop locations along Roosevelt Way NE were made to reflect community feedback.

The last northbound stop on NE 43rd St near 12th Ave NE will be a standard signpost with the route name because riders are only dropped off at this location. Since people aren't waiting for a bus, real-time arrival information and a shelter aren't necessary. The bike lane will be raised at the stop location to provide near-level boarding.

The first southbound stop on NE 45th St near University Way NE is an existing stop that currently relies on the adjacent building's overhang to shelter riders while they wait. There's limited space, so while we plan to add real-time arrival information, we won't be able to install all the typical RapidRide stop amenities.

Sound Transit has installed the westbound NE 43rd St stop at the U District Link light rail station as part of King County Metro's [North Link Connections Mobility Project](#) and is now used by route 70. Signage will be updated at this location to reflect it is a RapidRide stop.





# J Line



## J Line



### RAPIDRIDE J LINE ROUTE IN U DISTRICT



- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Bus Route</b>   | <b>Stations and Layover</b>   | <b>Other Transit Facilities</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> SOUTHBOUND</li> <li> NORTHBOUND</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> NEW (OR UPGRADED) J LINE STOP/STATION</li> <li> EXISTING BUS STOP UPGRADED (no J Line service)</li> <li> EXISTING STOP/STATION (no upgrades)</li> <li> BUS LAYOVER</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> LINK LIGHT RAIL STATION</li> <li> LINK LIGHT RAIL</li> <li> ENTRANCE / EXIT</li> </ul> |
- FEBRUARY 2023

## Shortened route in the U District and Roosevelt neighborhoods

### Where will the RapidRide J Line end, turn around, and layover?

The last stop when traveling northbound on the modified route is near the NE 43rd St and 12th Ave NE intersection, one block from the U District Link light rail station. The modified route plans to use the layover that was implemented as part of the North Link Connections restructure in fall 2021. The layover is on 12th Ave NE between NE 43rd St and NE 45th St.

The south end will follow the same alignment as the existing Route 70, turning around downtown at S Main St. (See map above)



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## What is a layover?

After finishing a trip, King County Metro buses often wait for a few minutes before starting their next trip. These planned layovers are important. They help buses start their next trips on time. Layovers also allow bus operators to take necessary breaks, helping them stay alert behind the wheel.

The modified route plans to turn around and start its southbound service on NE 45th St eastbound after a layover on 12th Ave NE.

## Is there a possibility that the line will extend north to Roosevelt in the future?

The work that we are doing on the RapidRide J Line, and with other projects in the area, are forward compatible. This means that work we do now will not prevent the J Line from extending to Roosevelt if in the future if funding becomes available for both capital investment and operations costs.

## Why is the last northbound station one block away from the U District Link light rail station?

If we had located the last northbound station closer to the U District station, the buses would have to double-loop through the neighborhood on their way to the bus layover zone. The double-looping would increase operational costs and bus congestion in the neighborhood. To connect the one-block distance between the stop and station, we plan to add pedestrian and way-finding improvements.

With the North Link Connections restructure, several other transit routes will also connect more directly to campus, some of which will share stops with the RapidRide J Line to streamline transfers. You can learn more on King County Metro's [North Link Connections Mobility Project website](#).

## Will there be additional construction and upgrades on NE 43rd St for the RapidRide J Line?

With the fall 2021 opening of the U District Link light rail station, several projects upgraded NE 43rd St to improve connections for people walking or riding their bike to the station and the University of Washington campus. In addition to repaving and upgrading sidewalks with ADA ramps, these projects added protected bike lanes on NE

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43rd St and installed secure bike storage at the U District station. To improve traffic flow, NE 43rd St was converted to westbound only traffic between 15th Ave NE and Brooklyn Ave NE, with transit only between University Way NE ("The Ave") and Brooklyn Ave NE.

Projects that upgraded NE 43rd St include the:

- [NE 43rd Street Improvements project](#)
- [12th Ave NE and NE 43rd St Paving project](#)
- [Sound Transit U District Link light rail station project](#)

RapidRide J Line will harness and expand on the completed NE 43rd St project between Roosevelt Way NE and 12th Ave NE, including:

- **New pavement** on NE 43rd St between Roosevelt Way NE and 12th Ave NE and continuing down 11th Ave NE to NE Campus Pkwy.
- **Extended protected bike lanes** on NE 43rd St to Roosevelt Way NE and add new northbound protected bike lanes on 11th Ave NE down to the University Bridge.
- **Upgraded intersections with ADA ramps** to improve accessibility.
- **Improved sidewalk and lighting conditions** to enhance accessibility and safety for people walking.
- **Extended Overhead Contact System (OCS)**, the overhead trolley wire that will allow the RapidRide J Line to run on electricity.
- **Modified existing traffic signal at 11th Ave NE and NE 43rd St** to support the trolley wire and analyze if a dedicated phase for people biking would be beneficial.
- **Adding a traffic signal at Roosevelt Way NE and NE 43rd St** to make it easier for buses to turn left onto Roosevelt Way NE as well as improve the experience for people walking and biking.
- **Adding pedestrian crossing signals on NE 41st St at Roosevelt Way NE and Eastlake Ave NE/11th Ave NE** to make it safer for people walking to cross and connect to the new RapidRide stations.



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## Fare Enforcement

### **Will RapidRide J Line service come with increased fare enforcement along the route compared to the Route 70?**

The use of all-door boarding on RapidRide service usually comes with fare enforcement that is different from regular bus service.

Metro is continuing its suspension of fare enforcement on all bus routes. Fare enforcement officers on coaches are providing a broad range of customer services, including answering questions related to using transit.

Metro is exploring the relationship between safety, fare enforcement, policing, and its impact on equity. Metro is working with King County, the King County Sheriff's Office,

cities and community stakeholders to explore ways to provide safety, security and equity to all of our passengers. This effort is the SaFE Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement (SaFE) Reform initiative.

When RapidRide J Line service starts fare enforcement will likely look much different—both as part of the move from regular service to RapidRide service, and as part of Metro's reimagining of safety across the mobility network.

## Project background

### **Why was the decision made to shorten the line? Will a shortened line be completed more quickly?**

The decision in 2020 to end the line at U District Link light rail station was due to funding constraints for construction and operations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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While the federal government has allocated additional funding to King County Metro since 2020, that revenue offset immediate revenue losses and ongoing impacts including reduced fare revenue due to lower ridership, cleaning, and safety improvements (e.g., enhanced bus cleaning, operator safety partitions, mask dispensers), additional leave time to support employees dealing with COVID and preservation of most of our service network throughout the pandemic. These federal funds supported investments beyond what was approved in the 2021-2022 budget. Critically, this includes avoiding the reduction of 590,000 hours of bus service that would otherwise be necessary, as well as investing in electrification and the transition to a zero-emissions fleet.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed by the federal government in November 2021 does not guarantee additional funds for Metro. However, increased funding from established grant programs, including new grants, is expected in the future. This additional funding potentially would allow Metro to do more to meet our target of a zero-emissions fleet by 2035 as part of our commitment to environmental sustainability and to make progress toward the Metro Connects long-range vision.

To keep the RapidRide J Line project moving forward, a revised route – with southbound service beginning on NE 45th St and northbound service ending at the NE 43rd St and

12th Ave NE intersection – was recommended by SDOT and Metro transportation planners in the early months of the pandemic. This location, which is one block from U District Link light rail station, balances getting the northbound route as close to the station and the University of Washington campus as possible, with capital and operational considerations.

The shortened line does not mean the project will be completed more quickly. The project was required to submit a Supplemental Environmental Assessment to the Federal Transit Administration as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to evaluate potential impacts associated with the shortened route, which added additional time to the project's overall schedule. The NEPA process was completed with issuance of the Finding of No Significant Impact published in April 2022, allowing us to proceed with final. We also don't expect the shortened route alignment to reduce the overall construction schedule because construction activities along Eastlake Ave E are likely to require the longest duration and were not impacted by the shortened route.



## What are my alternative transit options in Roosevelt now that the RapidRide J Line will end near the U District Link light rail station?

There are other [bus transit alternative routes](#) in the Roosevelt neighborhood that connect to the RapidRide J Line and the U District Link light rail station, providing options for transit riders in this area.

The originally planned RapidRide J Line route ran parallel to Link light rail between the Roosevelt and U District stations. Riders can use Link light rail to travel directly downtown or transfer to RapidRide J line at the U District station for access to Eastlake and South Lake Union.

Between the Roosevelt and U District stations, Metro routes 45, 67 and 73 currently provide direct bus connections\*:

- Route 45 provides a frequent, all-day connection between Roosevelt and U District stations via University Way NE.
- Route 67 provides frequent, all-day transit options between the two stations via Roosevelt Way NE and 11th/12th Ave NE.
- Route 73 provides local service between the two stations along 15th Ave NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 12th Ave NE, and University Way NE.

Bus connections to the University of Washington, Wallingford, Fremont, Ballard and other neighborhoods can be viewed on [King County Metro's website](#).

Several of these routes will share stops with or provide nearby connections to the RapidRide J Line to help create convenient, fast, and accessible transfers.

\* King County Metro implements service revisions every six months to improve service. There may be minor revisions to some of these routes before the RapidRide J Line opens. As the overall transit system evolves, we'll continue to refine RapidRide J Line's connections to other routes.



## Why not continue to use the revised route 70?

King County Metro implemented network changes through the North Link Connections restructure in fall 2021 when the three new Link light rail stations opened in north Seattle. When RapidRide J Line service starts, it would replace the revised Route 70.

The modified RapidRide J Line deviates from the revised Route 70 to travel along Roosevelt Way NE and 11th Ave NE. We chose to keep this consistent with the original RapidRide J line because it is:

- Consistent with community expectations and input over the last several years on the RapidRide J Line as well as Seattle and King County Metro's long-term planning, including the Transit Master Plan and Metro Connects.
- Consistent with existing grant funding for the project.  
Forward compatible by keeping the option open to extend the RapidRide J Line to the Roosevelt Link light rail station in future years if additional funding resources become available.

The RapidRide J Line will also improve transit speed and reliability by avoiding some of the congestion and additional turns along NE Campus Pkwy and 15th Ave NE. Each traffic signal a bus passes through increases the over travel time and unpredictability. North of the University Bridge, the proposed RapidRide J Line only goes through two traffic signals north, while the modified Route 70 goes through seven.

The RapidRide J Line also plans to add stations at NE 41st St. Compared to Route 70, this would add about an additional 4 minutes for students walking to the dorms along NE Campus Pkwy or for anyone who wants to use the pedestrian overpass on 15th Ave NE.

With the North Link Connections restructure, several other transit routes will provide service more directly to campus, some of which will share stops with or provide nearby connections to the RapidRide J Line to streamline transfers.

King County Metro can't implement the U District portion of the RapidRide J Line route now instead of the revised Route 70 because the RapidRide J Line would require additional capital improvements, like overhead trolley wire. In the meantime, the revisions to Route 70 improve access to the U District Link light rail station by using existing infrastructure and adding a new stop on NE 43rd Street at Brooklyn Avenue NE.





## **When revising the RapidRide J Line, did you consider terminating at Husky Stadium to provide better connections to the University of Washington Medical Center?**

The original alignment to the Roosevelt Link light rail station was identified back in 2016. Shortening the RapidRide J Line to the U District Link light rail station is consistent with community input over the last several years, maintains grant funding, and keeps the option open to extend to the Roosevelt Link light rail station if additional funding becomes available in the future.

Rerouting the RapidRide J Line to Husky Stadium would have been a more significant change to the RapidRide J Line design and would not meet the project's intended purpose and need. Link light rail and other transit routes provide better access to Husky Stadium and the University of Washington Medical Center and transfers from the RapidRide J Line will improve transit connections to these facilities.

## **What is the Supplemental Environmental Assessment?**

In January 2020, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and Federal Transit Administration released the [Environmental Assessment and Section 4\(f\) Analysis](#) for the RapidRide Roosevelt (J Line) project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The document provided a comprehensive analysis of the project, including proposed improvements, technical details, potential impacts, and mitigation strategies.

Before we advanced into final design, the project was required to submit a [Supplemental Environmental Assessment](#) to the Federal Transit Administration to analyze any new impacts from the shortened route, north of the University Bridge. The Supplemental Environmental Assessment included a formal public comment period in 2021.

The Federal Transit Administration did not identify significant impacts based on the Environmental Assessment, Supplemental Environmental Assessment and the comments received, and they issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in April 2022. A FONSI allows the project to move forward with final design. During final design, the project will advance the engineering and continue to work with community members on access strategies, construction phasing, and other concerns.



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## Will the modified RapidRide J Line still maintain RapidRide levels of service?

Yes. The modified route will still meet [RapidRide levels of service](#).

The new route, though shortened, continues the efforts to deliver improvements to transit speed, reliability, safety, and connections between the Belltown, South Lake Union, Eastlake, and University District neighborhoods. Additionally, with the North Link Connections restructure that took effect on October 2021, several other transit routes will also connect more directly to the area (see [North Link Connections Mobility Project website](#)). This was incorporated into the King County budget that was proposed and adopted in late 2020.

## Why has the project name been changed from RapidRide Roosevelt to the RapidRide J Line?

The environmental documentation and Move Seattle Levy refers to the project as the RapidRide Roosevelt project, however when the service starts, the route will be called RapidRide J Line. Future materials will simply refer to this as the RapidRide J Line Project.