



April 27, 2018

Dear Councilmember O'Brien,

I am responding to your April 24th request for additional information and perspective from our department regarding the Washington State Convention Center Addition vacation petitions.

You have asked us to opine on whether the various strategies that will be implemented in partnership with King County Metro and Sound Transit will “fully mitigate” buses coming out of the tunnel in 2019. While we are confident that the actions we are moving forward to implement will keep transit moving in downtown through the period of maximum constraint, there is and will continue to be a wide-range of factors that affect transit travel time through downtown. Many of these factors are not within the city’s control, hence, it would be imprudent of us to state that the actions will entirely offset the added travel time that is described in the WSCCA Environmental Impact Statement.

You asked about the timing of implementation of the various strategies – specifically with respect to the two milestone dates of March 2019 and September 2019. To the best of our abilities, in partnership with King County Metro and Sound Transit, we are moving to have the following complete by March of 2019:

- 2nd Avenue and 4th Avenue signal enhancements
- 3rd Avenue off-board fare payment
- 3rd Avenue extended transit priority hours
- 5th-6th transit pathway

Of the items listed above, the 3rd Avenue off-board fare payment and the 5th-6th transit pathway are the ones we are uncertain will be in place by March of 2019. The 3rd Avenue off-board fare payment project adds ORCA readers to the bus stops that currently lack them. This requires new electrical feeds and the associated civil work. The 5th-6th transit pathway project extends the contra-flow 5th Avenue bus lane north to Marion Street, providing an alternate pathway to 4th Avenue. However, it also means that the contra-flow lane goes through the Interstate 5 Express Lanes reversible ramp at 5th Avenue and Columbia Street, necessitating moderately complex traffic signal modifications.

In addition to the above strategies, King County Metro is considering service restructures that would reduce number of buses on downtown streets. The restructure currently under consideration is for the Metro route 255 to truncate at UW-Husky Stadium station rather than continue downtown. Based on Metro’s current schedules, the restructure will reduce the number of buses during the peak hour by up to 14 buses (approximately 7 buses per direction). Pending further public outreach and legislative action, King County Metro has indicated to us that they anticipate that these restructures would be implemented with the service change in September 2019.

Our staff has been working to identify additional strategies that we could implement should bus travel times be worse than anticipated or the strategies identified above be delayed. These additional strategies are described on the attached sheet and are aimed at keeping transit pathways operating competitively and can be rapidly deployed. While we are moving forward to be ready to implement, I must note that we have yet to solidify how we fund them.

Please let me know if you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Goran Sparrman
Director of Transportation

Attachment: Added Downtown Transit Speed and Reliability Investments

Added Downtown Transit Speed and Reliability Investments

Transit Spot Improvements - Estimated cost \$1,000,000

The following are specific examples of projects within Downtown that fit within the types above, and that would likely have a notable benefit for transit operations (all cost amounts are conceptual estimates):

* Bus Lane Upgrades (4 @ 100k, 400k total): There are currently four all-day bus lanes in Downtown (all within the vicinity of WSCC) that have not yet received a red paint treatment: Pike, Pine, Howell, and Olive. While the lanes already provide a benefit to existing transit, red paint has been successful in improving compliance and reducing violators, improving both travel time and reliability for the routes that use them. Additionally, there are other peak-only bus lanes – such as the lanes on 4th Ave – that could benefit from sign and paint improvements, to improve visibility and clarity.

* Transit Signal Priority/Queue Jumps (2 @ \$75k, \$150k total): There are several Downtown locations that could benefit from queue jumps to prioritize transit through specific intersections. Optimal locations for this treatment can be identified when we understand how transit operations is affected.

* Extend 3rd Ave Restriction (\$100k total): The current transit-only restriction ends at Stewart St, but transit continues to operate further north (as far as Denny for some routes). The benefits that the current restriction provides for transit on the busiest part of 3rd Ave could be provided for transit along the northern part of the corridor as well.

* Bus Zone Improvements (4 @ \$75k, \$300k total): Ensuring adequate space and rider comfort and information can help mitigate the stress associated with degraded travel times. Bus stops most affected by the operational restructures should have adequate shelter space and provide real-time information on bus arrival times.

* Impact Analysis (\$50k total): Conducting an analysis of the specific impacts of the DSTT closure would help direct the above resources towards the projects with the greatest benefits for transit travel times and rider experience.

Additional Signal Operations Engineer - Estimated cost \$325,000 annually

Additional Signal Operations Engineer to support transit movement in downtown - cost estimate includes labor plus a small amount for traffic modeling

* Provide active signal management in SDOT's Transportation Operations Center with focus on AM and PM peak hours: Currently timing engineers are called in during specific events or incidents to address critical traffic issues as they arise. This added position will enable us to monitor traffic conditions and adjust signal timing to address changing traffic demands/ patterns due to construction impacts or incidents on a daily basis. Emphasis would be given to facilitating transit movement and traffic flow along key routes.

* Development of Special Event Timing Plans: Additional staffing would be used to develop special event timing plans to address changing traffic patterns anticipated during known events such as short or long term construction projects, recurring sporting / community events (4th of July and New Year's celebrations, Sea Fair Parade).

