

Dear Port Commissioner Steinbrueck,

Thank you for your thoughtful questions about SDOT's recent announcement that we will proceed with installation of a two-way protected bike lane and on-street parking on West Marginal Way after the West Seattle High-Bridge rehabilitation is complete and the bridge reopens to traffic next year. Please see below for specific responses to your questions.

1) Why is SDOT announcing the decision now, 2 years in advance of the completion of WSB repair project. Why not allow further time for more community and stakeholder engagement on options?

We are excited to share that we are on track to reopen the High Bridge in about a year in mid-2022. We announced the decision to build the two-way protected bike lane and on-street parking now because we have finished our thorough analysis and robust engagement for the project, as well as made a careful consideration of the street's typical use and the unique conditions of its current use.

We also wanted to meet our commitment of making a decision on the West Marginal Way project this year, and the decision acknowledges the impact of the closed bridge on West Marginal Way, as well as stakeholder feedback, by postponing implementation until after the High Bridge reopens.

The project, as planned, will have safety benefits for all travelers and negligible impacts on motorists. Here are a few key reasons informing our approach and decision:

- This project will have minimal impacts to travel times, volumes, and speeds and provide benefits to all travelers by increasing safety and predictability for everyone
- Even with today's historically high traffic volumes, the impact to southbound vehicular travel is predicted to be small, with an average additional delay of five seconds
- Constraints on capacity in the corridor already exist – they begin at the Chelan 5-way intersection, where there is a single, existing southbound lane. This project will continue that single lane configuration for 0.6 miles south to a total 2.5-mile roadway
- This option can be built quickly and cost-effectively as compared with other, less feasible options in the corridor, all of which would require land acquisition, extensive negotiations and agreements, and would come at a much higher cost

In summary, the planned project is viable, can be built quickly and efficiently, and will result in negligible impacts on motorists travel times, speeds, and capacity.

2) How can we be confident that the traffic volumes won't shift in the area following the reopening of the bridge, reopening of Terminal 5 and return to work post-COVID? The world has change in the post-COVID era, why not wait and reassess after those milestones are reached?

Current travel volume and travel time conditions on West Marginal Way represent a worst-case scenario while the street is a major detour route with the High Bridge closed. There are 15,000 more vehicles per day using this corridor then before the bridge closure.

The reopening of Terminal 5 has been a key consideration throughout this project, and we relied upon the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) traffic analysis and assumptions to inform our understanding of future truck distribution and volumes. Per the EIS, T5 will generate only a small increase in southbound traffic volumes once open. Even allowing for other changes in conditions, the future truck and travel volumes on West Marginal Way will not to reach the vehicle volumes experienced today on the street. After the High-Rise Bridge reopens, we expect "back to normal" conditions, and the project can proceed as traffic normalizes and there are no detour routes needed.

3) I'm unclear why SEPA/environmental review doesn't apply here. Please explain. And why, given the amount of concern raised by many stakeholders about the proposed bike lane split on WMW, would you not put the project through environmental review anyway? That would remove lingering doubts raised over the viability of ensuring both bicycle safety and freight mobility.

SDOT will ensure that the project fully complies with SEPA. SDOT's traffic analysis evaluating the potential impacts of the bike lane and the separate, independent signal project show negligible impacts to traffic in the corridor, as described above. We have provided the data collected and corresponding analysis to determine the 5 seconds of additional average delay with the project to the Port of Seattle / NWSA staff and can provide that same information to you as well.

4) In addition to the letter our Port and NWSA executives sent, I'm aware of 5 other letters sent to SDOT raising serious concerns about this project. How are you addressing those concerns directly?

We are using data and analysis to lead the decision making about this project, with policy compliance, the City goals and visions, and community and stakeholder engagement all considered in the final decision. We considered carefully each letter you're referencing and have responded. All expressed opposition to the project from marine, industrial and freight community perspectives. A key concern highlighted is that the project is being built on a Major Truck Street where moving freight is a clear priority, yet could result in delays to freight

and jobs, and worsen safety by increasing bike and freight interactions. We acknowledge those concerns and have confidence that this project meets City goals and values holistically, which includes maintaining the freight priority of the corridor.

We have been meeting 1x1 with adjacent property owners of all the driveways that use the west side of W Marginal Way SW within the project limits to address any concerns with the project and have responded by including solutions into the roadway design, such as driveway cross-hatching to alert motorists to not block driveways and designing driveway access for trucks; we will install the jersey barriers in accordance with their feedback.

5) Given the thousands of living wage jobs those stakeholders' letters represent, how have those interests be weighed against those who support the project?

Our goal is to deliver a transportation system that provides safe and affordable access to places and opportunities for everyone in our city. Thus, we considered feedback from those opposing and supporting the project alike to weigh options and inform our decision. We believe that this project will have positive safety and connectivity outcomes for all travelers in the corridor without negatively impacting access to living-wage jobs or other destinations served by West Marginal Way.

6) If possible, please provide details around what alternatives you have explored. Are there some specific design concepts around the project that can be shared?

We explored four alternatives with stakeholders during the public engagement phase of the project, including different on- and off-street alignments. In short summary, the planned protected bike lane (Option B in the alternatives described below) can be built the most quickly and cost effectively without adverse effects as compared with other less feasible options, all of which would require land acquisition, tree removal, extensive negotiations and agreements, and would come at a much higher cost.

Section 1: Duwamish Trail alternatives



A – Shared space	B – Protected Bike Lane (PBL) [preferred]	C – Protected Bike Lane (PBL)	D – Off-street trail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require removal of all trees • Narrow buffer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can fit with desired widths • Improved driveway sightlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North end point has no space to cross • Current curb lane queueing during peak periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires railroad acquisition • Prohibitively expensive

Our analysis summary:

- A. Enhance existing sidewalk to accommodate people walking and biking
 - a. Cost estimate = \$2.5M (ten City Light pole relocations, removal of 38 trees, rebuild of 10 driveways, and paving the planting strip)
 - b. Maintains poor sightlines for people biking on the sidewalk. Removing 38 mature trees is a detriment to the pedestrian environment and City climate goals and was determined infeasible.
- B. Southbound curb lane two-way protected bike lane (recommended)
 - a. Cost estimate = \$400,000 (jersey-barrier physical separation and green paint)
 - b. Separated space for all travelers with a single southbound travel lane (single lanes are a proven safety treatment)
- C. Northbound curb lane two-way protected bike lane
 - a. Cost estimate = \$400,000 (jersey-barrier physical separation and green paint)
 - b. Separate space for all travelers, but severely constrained street width will not accommodate a safe bike crossing at SW Marginal PI and was determined infeasible

- D. BNSF Railroad track removal to continue the off-street trail
 - a. Several W Marginal Way industrial businesses actively utilize the rail lines for goods movement
 - b. Extremely unlikely that BNSF would shut down operations to allow us to pursue an off-street connection and was determined infeasible

7) How does the grade separated sidewalk/trail option some stakeholders prefer, compare in terms of bike safety freight mobility, costs, implementation, traffic and environmental impacts, etc.? What is the cost differential and how much of a driver is that?

Please see the previous response (#6).

8) I also have heard from our Port staff about possibility of connecting the bike lane parallel to WMW (17th ave) and through the City's Parks Building parking lot. Has SDOT studied this option? Please share what has been explored there?

Staff did explore this idea. Similar to an off-street alternative on the east side of the street, this option would be prohibitively expensive requiring private property acquisition and substantial slope stabilization. The connection that the Port staff were talking about is via an existing signed bicycle route (currently does not meet any bike facility standards) on 16th Ave SW to a disconnected Seattle Parks and Recreation Maintenance Facility property. The proposed project that is moving forward can be built in a matter of weekends, is cost effective, and will not require land exchange, acquisition or construction of structural elements related to grade changes or slope stabilization.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

-Heather

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City of Seattle, [Department of Transportation](#)