Appendix B:
Transportation Workshop Summary

Contents

1 I-5 Ramp Reconfiguration Study Transportation Workshop Summary

Thursday, July 11, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
DocuSign Tower, 999 3rd Avenue, Seattle, Floor 23

Participants Present

Participant	Organization
Chris Arkills	King County Metro
Matt Beaulieu	City of Seattle
Don Blakeney	University District Partnership
Scott Bonjukian	Lid I-5
Jim Curtin	City of Seattle
Alex Hudson	Commute Seattle
Braden Kelley	University of Washington
Alex Krieg	Sound Transit
Jonathan Lewis	City of Seattle
Ryan Medlen	Northwest Seaport Alliance
Geraldine Poor	Port of Seattle
Katy Ricchiuto	Lid I-5 North Coalition
Michael Ruby	Wallingford Neighborhood
Tyler Vasquez	Cascade Bicycle Club
Geoff Wentlandt	City of Seattle
Laura Wojcicki	City of Seattle

WSDOT Cascadia I-5 Team

Robert Acevedo
Rob Berman
Nick Fiorillo
Mandira Ganti
Clair Leighton
Cecile Malik
Erik Memmott
Jennifer Nyerick
Kirsten Pennington
Travis Phelps
Rory Renfro
Christina Strand
Mike Swires
Stacy Thomas

1.1 Welcome, Workshop Goals, and Agenda Review

The meeting facilitator, Stacy Thomas, welcomed participants and reviewed the workshop goals and agenda. The meeting goals included:

- Developing a shared understanding of the I-5 Ramp Reconfiguration Study, City-led Reconnecting Communities work, and WSDOT I-5 Master Plan and how they interrelate.
- Sharing information about existing I-5 ramp area multimodal transportation conditions.
- Gathering feedback on what kind of future analysis should be done to increase our understanding of potential transportation consequences (positive, negative, neutral) of potential future ramp changes.
- Gathering feedback on how participants would like to be engaged in the I-5 Master Plan and City-led Reconnecting Communities work.

1.2 Overview of Program and Projects

Travis Phelps provided an overview of the Cascadia High-speed Rail and I-5 Program and the I-5 Ramp Reconfiguration Study. Cecile Malik reviewed the I-5 Master Plan. Geoff Wentlandt presented an overview of the City's upcoming Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant project.

1.3 Breakout Stations and Themes

Participants split into four groups and rotated through four stations (Downtown South, Downtown North, University District, and Engagement). At each station, participants discussed ramp change implications, future analysis needs, and any notes to keep in mind about the different geographic areas/engagement strategies. Each station had two WSDOT Cascadia I-5 team members who led the discussion and took notes. Following the breakout sessions, WSDOT discussion leads reported key takeaways from their stations to the whole group.

The transcribed station notes are included in later sections. Key station takeaways presented at the report outs are summarized below.

1.3.1 Downtown South

(6th, James, Cherry ramps)

Key considerations include:

- Equity in the area with vulnerable populations
- Emergency access impacts with Harborview Hospital and other medical facilities
- Connections to other ramps and parts of the transportation system and connection to other development - fill gaps
- Safety for people walking and biking – currently dangerous
- Freight usage and volumes by time of day

- James ramp reliability
- Resilience

1.3.2 Downtown North

(Madison, Spring, Seneca, University, Union, Olive, and Yale ramps)

- Pedestrian and bicycle safety is a priority, and there are several areas with safety concerns
- Significant transit changes coming with new RapidRide and Community Transit reductions
- High ridership on Sound Transit Line 545 potentially impacted by ramp changes
- Interconnectedness among I-5, ramps, streets, attractions, destinations, ports, ferries, and airport
- High transportation and development potential with a lid
- Yale connection with Denny is challenging, and the Yale ramp is a good candidate for reconfiguration or closure

1.3.3 University District

(45th and 50th ramps)

- Conflicting bike and transit needs on 45th – not enough room to accommodate needed improvements
- Investigate a mode split between 45th and 50th - focus on transit reliability on 45th
- Area is becoming denser and impacting congestion
- Implications of 47th bridge construction on lidding opportunities
- If ramps are consolidated, need to study how that will impact ramps both north and south, and parallel routes

1.3.4 Engagement

- Important to partner with Community-Based Based Organizations (CBOs) and provide compensation
- Engage/leverage other existing groups, including equity groups
- Meet people where they are
- Focus on terminology/overall message around lidding
- Need to focus on reaching users of the ramps, not just the vicinity around the ramps
- Consideration of ramp area community members and non-auto users

1.4 Next Steps

Participants can provide additional feedback until Friday, July 19. The team will provide a link to the final I-5 Ramp Reconfiguration Study submitted to the Legislature this December. The team looks forward to continued collaboration.

1.5 Breakout Station Notes

1.5.1 Downtown South Station Notes

- Look at transit capacity
- Look at interrelationships between ramps
    - Capacity to absorb traffic when shifted
- Considerations for mode prioritization
- Future development of concept plans
- Break down traffic volumes by mode/type and time of day (ex., medical vehicles, trucks, etc.), as well as origin to destination of ramp volume
- Ramp closing impacts on lid concept
- Air quality and noise impacts
- Impact of diversion on other priority population areas
- Impact on manufacturing and industrial area access
- Safety around ramps – collisions – intersections with non-motorized users
- Connecting community – not connecting to freeway
- How can the report inform the redesign of adjacent roadways?
- Consider signage improvements to improve clarity in wayfinding. Also, challenges with left lane exits.
- How does new and future light rail service impact ramp traffic?
- Improvements to underpasses to make them more inviting and feel more comfortable
- Include express lanes and changes – informing drivers in time
- Downtown South = high safety concerns, especially for pedestrians in very dense and low-income areas
- Lots of vulnerable populations and services in the area
- High need for improved pedestrian facilities and protection from vehicle traffic
- Emergency vehicle access to Harborview must be protected and to pill hill (Swedish)
- Yesler and 6th – mode conflict and safety concerns as vehicles exit and interact with bike facility

- WSDOT right of way along I-5 near low-income residences and services – occupied by people and crime and other concerns
- Can there be a consideration to repurpose/develop?
- James major transit pathway east-west
- Cherry – pedestrian safety concerns
- Off-ramp – Yesler impacts CID
    - Also used to bypass traffic and get on I-90 ramp to get back onto I-5
- James = trolley wires
- This area may be most vulnerable to earthquakes
- Plan for future transportation vehicles and implications
- Consider express lanes to be permanently bi-directional

1.5.2 Downtown North Station Notes

- Need to consider potential impacts on Mercer ramps
- Madison/Seneca: Can we improve access to I-5 Southbound?
- Madison:
    - Poor walking environment
    - Desire for more transit
    - King County Metro making speed/reliability investments
- Spring:
    - Ramp removal leads to more green space opportunities
    - Restrict access from Spring; preserve access from Madison
    - Spring ramp = lower hanging fruit
- Olive Northbound on-ramp:
    - Sound Transit Line 545 heavy ridership - ramp removal would require re-route
    - Connection to SR 520 is still important
    - Olive area is dangerous for pedestrians
- Most of the Community Transit lines will be eliminated imminently
- Inadequate signage on I-5 (directional signage)
    - Need for more advanced signage
- East/West transit: Yale ramp is challenging (regarding connection to Denny)
- All ramp terminals - pedestrian safety is critical
- Desire to convert left-side exits to right-side (from I-5)

- Lids:
    - Need to be pedestrian accessible (don't wall off with wide streets)
    - Illumination (SR 99 tunnel), wayfinding
    - Important to consider what happens under the lid (noise, pollution, camping, etc.)
- Connections between downtown, cruise terminals (charter busses), and airport
- Need to consider small delivery (local package delivery)
- Spring/Seneca:
    - Removal = urban design opportunities; would also simplify ramp terminal intersections
- Upcoming Madison Bus Rapid Transit
- Need to consider traffic diversion
- Do we anticipate any mode shift if ramps are removed or reconfigured?
- Consider broader impacts on surrounding communities (e.g., White Center)
- Consider freight bypass lanes and/or queue jumps
- Need data on truck % on ramps
- Important area for tourists/visitors (library, symphony hall, special events)
- Seasonality considerations
- On-ramp queues - need to better understand area of effect on downtown streets
- Need consistency between left vs right side exits
- Seneca:
    - Opportunity for pedestrian/bike safety improvements
    - Driver behavior (dangerous)
    - Critical bikeway
- Madison/Spring - Could build upon City's corridor investments
- Intersection daylighting at ramp terminals
- Need to reduce vehicle speeds on Union off-ramp
- 6th - Major pedestrian/bike activity area
- High lid potential in this area in general
- Need to consider impacts on non-vehicle users
- Freeway Park = informal bike/pedestrian connection; future lids should better integrate bike/pedestrian infrastructure
- Safety is of foremost importance; lots of multimodal conflicts at ramp terminals
- Street design: consider target users (e.g., vehicles versus bikes versus others)
- Yale - Good candidate for reconfiguration/closure, should be studied further

- Study area should extend beyond the immediate area and consider a broader transportation network
- Union - Safety concerns (collisions)
- Hubbell Way: Dangerous from a pedestrian perspective
- Consider closing access from Spring to I-5 southbound
- 7th - Significant new development activity along the corridor
    - Potential for lid to connect this new development with downtown

1.5.3 University District Station Notes

- Conflicting bike and transit needs on 45th
- Vissim modeling available for ramp reconfiguration
- 45th on-ramp is problematic with all the traffic heading to 520
- Collect data during temporary ramp closures planned near-term (for construction) – months-long lane closures
- Diverting traffic from 45th to 50th is one way to improve transit reliability
    - Preserve/improve 45th for transit
- Land between I-5 & 7th had the potential for high-speed rail alignment
    - Doesn't necessarily exclude lid opportunity
- Electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft – may have a significant role in transportation system in the future (especially to and from SeaTac)
- Can't add weight to overpasses
- Few east-west options crossing I-5
- Rebuilding 45th and 50th suggests a lid - the potential to solve a lot of conflicts
- U District is getting denser
    - Fueling affordable housing needs
    - Limited green space options - City-identified deficit area
- 42nd ramp has an enormous impact on the neighborhood - it affects 45th and 7th, and 50th issues
- Are there other eastbound neighborhood access points to reduce congestion on 45th?
    - Can this benefit the 44 transit line?
- Suggestion: study closing the 45th and 50th ramps and prioritize transit, bike, pedestrians, traffic, and trucks
- Sound Transit 4: underground link
- Make life happy for line 44 on 45th
- Rapid Ride on 45th is limited by parking needs

- A lot of growth is happening east of I-5
- Not much room to create capacity changes with existing land use
- How does consolidation affect current congestion?
- Conduct study of upstream (65th / Ravenna / Green Lake) + downstream if ramps are consolidated
- Neighborhood groups interested in green strip for development if there won't be a lid
- Study of parallel corridors if ramps are consolidated
- Northernmost and southernmost ramps are less ideal for removal compared to others
- Need for in-depth study of freight
- Can ramp reconfiguration provide usable space without closure?
- Safety is very important – especially for 45th/7th intersection
- Lid could solve a lot of problems
    - Also 5th and 7th could be improved
- Potential to extend lid North & South of 45th and 50th
- What are the neighborhood impacts of lid construction?
- 45th & 50th have district usages. Grid connectivity affects how/which ramp can be closed, especially for 50th to the east.
- Focus messaging on opportunities for long-term changes
- What does it look like to split the modes between 45th & 50th
- Construction of 47th bridge likely precludes a lid
- Can some ramps be incorporated underneath the lid?
- Study is needed if any ramp changes
    - Grid connectivity
    - Upstream & downstream impacts
    - East & west impacts
    - Freight impacts
    - 45th can't accommodate desired bike/transit improvements
    - Study lid to address accounting all modes (vs. Rebuilding 45/50 overcrossing and new bike bridge at 47th)

1.5.4 Engagement Station Notes

- 50% of people within a 15-minute walk east-west of I-5 do not own a car
- Impacted people are not just auto users of those ramps
- Regional project with regional implications

    - Diversion of traffic impacts Tukwila, SeaTac, etc.
- Look to Alaskan Way Viaduct/99 - what did engagement look like for closures?
- Implications on the thru trips
    - (e.g., long-distance I-5 drivers)
- Ferry Riders – going from Seattle to Bellevue or SeaTac
- Freight and trucking community
    - Urban goods delivery
    - Industry lists from NW Seaport Alliance for freight
- "Friends of I-5" group – looking at Waterfront Seattle group to have a civic champion of the project
    - Long-term durable support network - stewards/boosters
- South Park – changes to the system – changes in land value
    - Who gets that added value?
    - Anti-displacement measures
- Consider subsidized housing near I-5
- Tourism industry (cruise traffic, convention center, FIFA, mass movements of people, SeaTac)
- Community messaging
    - Users, markets
    - Agriculture movement
    - Truckers – 15-20 minute delays = huge impacts
- Statewide importance of I-5 as a resource
    - Modernize, functional, resilient
    - Community benefits & Lid & integration with a major I-5 improvement
- Non-engagement, maybe tie-in
    - Costs to WSDOT for potential operational changes to ramps/I-5 system
- Go where the people are
- Hospitals on Hill/Montlake/University of Washington medicine - huge implications for ramps
- Look beyond just who is close by
    - Not just census – track around the ramp
    - Focus on users
- Outreach to Gen Z & Alpha – they're not responding to conventional tools/approaches
    - Feedback largely skews 50+
    - Social media

- Equity message and compensation for Community-Based Organizations
    - Meaningful engagement, paying people for their time
- Mobility Board (King County Metro/Sound Transit) & Partner Review Board – Mobility Board includes community perspectives
    - 6 meetings over 18 months, food & stipend
    - Successful model, King County Metro is happy to share that framework
- Climate/growth/migration messaging needs to lead
- Equity Boards – they need support in communicating out to their networks
    - Tools, slide decks
    - Staff contact for community-based organization (CBO) resources
- Many meetings and asks for communities
    - People show up when angry/motivated enough
- Think about the place and the context of other changes in the neighborhoods
- Use the term "covering" instead of "lidding"?
    - "Completing" the I-5 project as a potential framing
    - Rectifying the past
- Areas around the I-5 corridor are peoples' homes
    - Need to be considerate and understand the behavior of people underneath highway infrastructure
- People are busy – be considerate about their time
- Where is there value in getting input and feedback?
    - These are difficult concepts; they can empower obstruction
    - What are the right moments/decisions/level of information we're requesting in our outreach?
    - What kind of questions do we ask? e.g., conceptions; mitigation steps; does this meet your needs? Instead of "should we take out the ramps? Yes or no?"
- Pilot projects to bring the public along
    - e.g., close ramp for 1 month – what were the impacts/experiences?
    - Learn from Revive I-5 work this summer/beyond
- Story of what we *get* instead of what we *lose*
    - How to tell the benefits strongly (transit improvement, how much time people could save through fixes)
- Climate/transportation/high-level goals
    - Impacts/mitigation/inconvenience = a must

- Telling the story about the reality of the limitations we face in moving more cars in our City
- Examples from global cities
- Engaging communities where lidding isn't an option
- Understanding "lidding" as a concept
    - Languages, community understanding
- Business Improvement Districts/Areas
    - May have transport
    - Transportation leads for SoDo, University District, Downtown Seattle Association
- Safety and impacts to communities closest to ramps today
    - Framing around community safety
- Branding for the project to distinguish from other work
    - City of Seattle Transport Equity Workgroup (SDOT)
        - Build off these principles
- Leverage the I-5 Lid Study as part of the initial I-5 study
- City of Seattle impacts
    - Many strategies to improve
        - How to be in constant contact
        - Will be clearer in 2025
- Construction Hub Coordinator
    - City person that Business Improvement Area/other community groups can contact as a go-to
- Education
    - Most people need to better understand concepts first
- Meet people where they are: pop-ups, signs in communities, near on/off ramps
- South Seattle communities
    - Needs other than transportation
        - How to compensate CBOs for their time
        - Food, events in communities where they already are
- Events
    - Think about who is being served at different types of events
- Many single occupancy vehicle drivers at UW are staff – they may not have many resources – and face lots of impacts if there are changes to ramps
- Cascade Bicycle Club – involve CBOs earlier

    - Setting CBOs to review public involvement plans
        - Tone, language, messaging – great insights at CBOs in experience with past projects
        - Subcontracting with CBOs – have CBOs leading parts of outreach and engagement
        - Funding for CBOs to do the work – game changer (incentives, real involvement)
- Keep the Public Involvement Plan flexible – it will change as you implement
    - Reduce Public Engagement Plan length and allow for change

1.6 Additional Comments From Interested Parties

The project team welcomed comments from attendees in addition to those provided during the event. Comments submitted outside of the event are included below.

1.6.1 Scott Bonjukian of Lid I-5

- We are expecting more informative graphics. They should be cleaner/crisper graphics showing some kind of hierarchy (there is none) and without so many colors, fades, and repeated information on each poster.
- "One additional graphic that would be helpful is a map of the entire Downtown study area, wide enough to show specific features like fire stations and hospitals that are currently only referenced in text (go at least west to the waterfront, east to Broadway). This could include the following features or various versions with different layers:
    - Proportional arrows that show ROM of traffic flow
    - The major destination the traffic goes to/comes from (on the map)
    - Time information: Morning versus evening versus weekday versus weekend representations of traffic flows
    - A second version with figure-ground as a base map, as the satellite image doesn't seem to add much
- The "Transportation Implications" notes seem to be based on looking at each ramp individually instead of a more global analysis. This is where there should be close collaboration between WSDOT and SDOT as the impact of a ramp removal could be mitigated by changing the traffic pattern on some of the City streets.
- Information/analysis on possible changes to City surface streets that could support ramp changes.
- Information on what surplus capacity there is for each ramp. It's fine to cite X thousand vehicles per day, for example - but if a ramp can support twice that amount, it's helpful to know. This information should be available at different times of the day.
- Information on how many vehicle trips on the ramps are from people who really don't need to be using I-5, such as traveling only a mile. Myself and other Lid I-5 team members have reported many instances where Google Maps or Waze directs drivers to hop on I-5 for a short distance between ramps, like going from Yale Avenue to James Street to get from Capitol Hill to Pioneer Square. These are not helping ramp capacity and I-5 congestion. Do these types of trips inflate the traffic volume numbers? Shouldn't these routings be discouraged in favor of I-5 through traffic?
- Information on what types/sizes of freight vehicles are using the ramps. There is a big difference between a 60' semi-truck and a 25' box truck in terms of geometries, time of day, pedestrian safety, etc.
- Removing the Spring and Seneca ramps would be the most beneficial for air rights development, a criterion noted in the budget proviso. Options, implications, and other analyses should be focused on these.

- Information/analysis on whether there should be on- and off-ramps in the Downtown core. Wouldn't limiting the ramps at the periphery (Mercer, Steward, and Olive on the north side - Chery, James, and 6th on the south side) significantly reduce traffic congestion both in the downtown core and for I-5 through traffic?
- Information/analysis on whether ramps connected to the left (fast) lane be removed?
- Basic information on current urban interstate freeway design standards, including standard interchange spacing (1/2 mile, 1 mile, etc.) and how that compares to the existing conditions.
- How are priority populations identified? People who drive into Downtown at peak hours are not going to be it - this analysis should consider the people who live next to I-5 as well.

1.6.2 Geraldine Poor (Port of Seattle) and Ryan Medlen (NW Seaport Alliance)

- In addition to looking at traffic changes for the downtown Seattle I-5 ramps, future work must study traffic diversion at a regional level. Traffic may divert as far south as SR-99, SR-518, or SR-509 to enter downtown through alternative surface street connections. We recommend coordinating with WSDOT's SR-509 performance monitoring team to establish a common baseline where possible.
- We would encourage any future assumptions regarding modal shifts of person trips to downtown Seattle to consider transit capacity. This is especially true for infrequent, high-volume destinations such as the convention center, stadiums, or performing arts venues where adequate transit capacity likely does not exist.
- Maintaining travel time for maritime freight and other industrial uses reliant on irreplaceable infrastructure needs separate consideration from general commercial traffic. These uses have fixed points of operation and often use larger vehicles.
- In evaluating future traffic diversion scenarios, please engage us regarding impacts on maritime freight routes. Not only does the public rely on the revenue generated from Port competitiveness, but truck drivers are often paid by the trip.
- Equity should be viewed from a comprehensive lens. We support extensive outreach to directly affected populations, including residents and commuters. We also recommend employee groups that rely on manufacturing, trade, and tourism. Equally as important are communities that may be indirectly impacted by traffic diversion (including outside of the City limits), especially if system changes alter traffic patterns on major truck corridors.
- Any ramp reconfiguration or lidding effort will be a significant capital project. We encourage continued coordination between interested parties to simultaneously address infrastructure issues in the same area, such as the need to seismically retrofit I-5.
- The sequencing of projects will be important to consider. For instance, some discussion at the workshop mentioned increasing capacity at ramps in the south downtown area to assist with future closures in the middle of downtown. In this event, the capital projects to increase capacity

should be completed first.

- "Finally, regarding the "Global Implications Poster," we offer edits that more fully address freight implications; please see highlights:
    - Potential benefits and impacts to priority equity populations, both residents and workers
    - Potential benefits and/or impacts to transportation safety for people walking, biking, rolling, taking transit, and driving, including for people working to move goods
    - Potential benefits or impacts to transit reliability and operations
    - Overall function of I-5 through the downtown core, including volumes, growth projections, and impacts of any ramp changes
    - Modifications to I-5 will be impractical after lid development
    - Potential diversion of car and truck traffic and changes to travel times due to changes in traffic patterns
    - Movement of car and truck traffic within the downtown core area, including access to ferries, stadiums, medical facilities, and other key trip generators and attractors
    - Movement of people walking, biking, and rolling, including access to ferries, stadiums, medical facilities, and other key trip generators and attractors
    - Emergency and first-responder response and emergency evacuation needs for the transportation system in the area and potential benefits or impacts
    - Potential impacts to industrial and local-delivery freight and potential impacts or benefits to freight using I-5, I-90, and Mercer Street due to potential diversion