



Frequently Asked Questions

Bellevue Way SE Southbound HOV Lane

1. How are you coordinating with other agencies implementing projects in the area (Sound Transit, WSDOT, King County)? Can you align your construction schedules?

The [WSDOT](#) and [Sound Transit](#) project designs are complete, and we will connect this project into the configuration left by those projects. We will use transit routing information from King County to advance the design. Since this is a study and not funded for right of way or construction, we will look at how potential construction windows would work with East Link construction if this project moves forward. Typically projects with different contractors cannot both be constructed in the same area, at the same time, however there is an opportunity that this project, if funded for construction, could directly follow the East Link work on Bellevue Way to minimize the overall time of construction disturbance to the neighborhood. The East Link work along Bellevue Way is expected to be complete by 2021.

2. Who decided to pursue these project options? How did it come to be?

The Bellevue City Council added this study to the budget in December 2014. At this point, the project is not funded for construction. We are conducting an initial study and preliminary engineering to help us choose a preferred design. This fall, Council will decide whether to continue to final design and construction.

3. How is the City addressing neighborhood traffic impacts as a result of East Link construction?

The city is committed to working with residents in Beaux Arts Village, Bellecrest, Enatai, Bellecrest and Surrey Downs to help mitigate potential neighborhood traffic impacts as result of East Link construction along Bellevue Way SE and 112th Ave SE. A geographically broad and balanced volunteer committee is working closely with city staff to identify key areas of neighborhood traffic concerns and ways to mitigate them. The goal of the committee is to develop a plan that takes into account the perspectives of all impacted South Bellevue neighborhoods. Staff will then work with Sound Transit's contractors to implement the plan—based on a demonstrated need—following the start of construction, expected to begin fall 2016. The foundation of the traffic committee work stems from a public meeting held April 27, 2016 at City Hall. Information on the committee and a comprehensive meeting summary can be found [online at this link](#).

4. You're proposing to turn a beautiful corridor surrounded by greenery and natural views into a corridor bordered by a light rail line and retaining walls (very different character). How will you retain the natural aesthetics that we value?

Part of the design analysis process is to hear from you about what you value. We have heard that maintaining the natural aesthetics is important. On the west side of the corridor, there are several types of retaining walls that incorporate plantings, and we will be looking at planter options that can incorporate trees, plantings and vegetation in an attractive way. The project team includes landscape architects who will help us integrate the community's preferences into design options.





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5. Traffic noise is a major concern, and your project will just bring more cars and buses through the corridor. How will you address noise impacts? Will it be even worse because you propose removing trees?

Part of our early fieldwork will include taking noise readings from the hillside (as Right of Entries are obtained) in order to model existing noise levels. We can then use noise modeling to predict changes in noise for the HOV widening options being considered. We will also use the model to look at the effectiveness of adding noise walls or other measures to reduce noise levels. Preliminary noise studies have indicated that the noise generated by an additional HOV lane would not be very perceptible, in part because traffic noise is already loud in this area. Trees are typically not an effective noise barrier due to all the openings for sound to travel through.

6. Cut-through traffic is a huge concern during construction. How will you minimize those effects?

East Link construction activity along Bellevue Way SE will reveal a lot about how people travel through South Bellevue, including whether motorists are cutting through the neighborhood. The city will be working with neighborhood residents to help minimize the amount of traffic diversion and to ensure that if motorists use neighborhood streets, they are driving responsibly. If the Bellevue Way SE HOV lane extension is constructed, lessons learned from East Link construction will be shared with the Bellevue Way HOV team because the impacts will likely be similar in scope.

Our study will address how the project is constructed and how traffic would be impacted or maintained for each design option. Traffic during construction will be a part of the criteria used to select a preferred project. One technique used successfully in the past is reader-boards describing travel times for different routes, an approach that can help alleviate congestion. For example, we could use signs around Main Street that estimate time to get to I-90 via SE 8th Street/I-405 as compared to Bellevue Way.

7. It seems like you are proposing a project that won't help congestion because of other pinch points. Will this project be a benefit?

This project fits into a larger context of projects that will affect how the Bellevue Way corridor operates. Today, during the peak afternoon commute on southbound Bellevue Way, traffic regularly backs up when the I-90 ramp meters are on. High occupancy vehicles, transit, and general purpose traffic are all stuck in that backup until they reach I-90.

In the future, when there are operational HOV lanes on I-90 between Bellevue and Seattle in both directions (mid-2017), the HOV lane extension we're exploring would provide an opportunity for HOV and transit to bypass the ramp meter backup, thereby improving transit and HOV speed and reliability. Benefits are going to be most apparent for HOV and transit users, but the added capacity could help all users in the afternoon commute. This study will include a traffic analysis to help quantify that benefit.





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8. What factors will you consider when deciding how far the HOV lane will extend to the north?

The council direction was to study an extension from the Park-and-Ride to the 112th Ave SE / Bellevue Way SE (Y-shaped) intersection. The study will also look at traffic benefits if the project were phased. For example, what would be the benefit if a southbound HOV lane were only constructed up to the Winters House? For comparison purposes, the traffic analysis will also look at the traffic implications if the HOV lane were extended beyond the Y intersection to 108th Avenue NE and onto 112th Avenue SE.

9. How will public participation / input influence your decision?

Bellevue City Council will make the final decision, and we are exploring concepts at their request. We will recommend a project to City Council that makes sense, and demonstrates that we listened to the community in identifying the best option for the corridor.

10. Why does the street need to be widened to the west?

Widening Bellevue Way to the east is not possible due to the future light rail project and Mercer Slough. Sight lines, wall configuration and potential pedestrian connectivity will determine the overall width of widening needed.

11. Why is this being proposed as an HOV lane? Could it be changed to a general purpose lane in the future?

WSDOT is currently expanding the HOV network on I-90 between Bellevue and Seattle, and Sound Transit is extending a southbound HOV lane on Bellevue Way to the South Bellevue Station. Council has directed this study to look at extending the southbound HOV lane further north. For comparison purposes, the traffic study will include an option where this extension is a general purpose lane. However, this study will not look at changing the WSDOT direct access HOV ramp nor changing the future Sound Transit constructed HOV lane to the South Bellevue Station.

12. The HOV lane will not solve the problem of people getting onto I-90, that is what is backing up Bellevue Way.

Corridor travel times today generally increase significantly when the I-90 ramp meters are on during the afternoon commute as the two southbound general purpose lanes back up along Bellevue Way. Adding an additional southbound HOV lane on Bellevue Way allows the ramp meter back up to be bypassed, as the HOV lane feeds into a direct access ramp to Westbound I-90. This project will primarily benefit users of the HOV lane, but as a result of HOV lane utilization, the general purpose lanes could see some benefit, that will be confirmed in the traffic study.





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13. Have you considered making this a reversible lane?

The study will address the feasibility and challenges of making this lane reversible in the future, but will not look at this option in great detail. If the lane were to be reversible, its function and operation would need to be coordinated with WSDOT and Sound Transit.

14. I've heard the water table in the hillside is very high. How will you handle this? Will the project impact groundwater?

A geotechnical analysis will be part of the project study. This analysis will help the engineers understand and address potential impacts to the hillside and groundwater. Past geotechnical information in the project area has not indicated abnormal water table situations. Typical retaining wall design allows for the continued migration and flow of groundwater.

15. Will left turns be permitted across the HOV lane?

Yes, single occupant vehicles can cross the HOV lane to get to left turn lanes that access the future South Bellevue Station and parking garage.

16. This concept was looked at years ago and wasn't seen as viable, why bring it up again?

In the past, the HOV system on I-90 consisted of reversible express lanes to and from Seattle. In the afternoon commute, when southbound Bellevue Way SE is congested, the reversible express lanes were operating eastbound, so there was no HOV lane system to connect into. That has changed with recent WSDOT projects. By mid 2017, there will be HOV lanes in both directions of I-90 between Seattle and Bellevue that operate 24 hours a day. This project can now connect into an expanded HOV lane system.

