# SOUTH BELLEVUE STATION AREA PLAN

STATION AREA PLANNING

CITY OF BELLEVUE WASHINGTON

## BELLEVUE CITY COUNCIL APPROVED PLAN

JANUARY 2016

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# PLAN SUMMARY

## THE SOUTH BELLEVUE STATION AREA VISION

Maintain the wooded, single family neighborhoods and the expansive nature park that define the unique character of this area.

The Bellevue City Council initiated the station area planning program to achieve the program objectives of better integrating light rail with the surrounding neighborhood and of optimizing the benefits of the light rail investment. The plan advances those objectives by working closely with community stakeholders to articulate a vision for the station area; by identifying specific issues and opportunities; and by developing a set of strategies designed to address the issues and realize the vision.

Consistent with Bellevue's adopted Comprehensive Plan land use policies, the South Bellevue Station Area Plan does not include any proposals to increase the amount of allowable development. The primary objective of this project was to work with the community to better integrate the station with the surrounding area and address issues not already being addressed through the light rail permit process. Public outreach engaged multiple stakeholders such as neighborhood leaders and residents of Enatai and Bellecrest, the Eastside Heritage Center, Audubon Society, and Cascade Bicycle Club. Through this engagement, stakeholders identified issues and opportunities and provided feedback that formed the basis for the vision and strategies presented in this plan.

The vision for the South Bellevue station area is to maintain the wooded, single-family neighborhoods and the expansive nature park that define the unique character of this area. The most noticeable physical change to the area will be the light rail elevated guideway, station and parking structure along the east side of Bellevue Way. Stakeholders focused on reinforcing the existing physical character and community character of the area. Strategies are intended to achieve the vision by enhancing the physical elements and addressing issues of maintaining character; traffic, noise and safety; and station access.

The Plan's Issues, Opportunities, and Strategies are discussed in Section 4 and presented in Table 4 on page 35. Community issues and opportunities are presented in three categories:

1. **Character, parks and public facilities:** focus on preserving existing character of residential neighborhood and Mercer Slough Nature Park.
2. **Traffic and safety:** neighborhood safety, bike and pedestrian safety, cut through traffic and increased traffic and noise from Bellevue Way.
3. **Transportation, parking and station access:** providing safe, convenient bus, pedestrian, and bike connections to the stations and preventing park-and-ride overflow parking in the neighborhood.

Traffic and transportation issues were common themes throughout the process. Residents currently have difficulty entering and exiting the neighborhood during peak traffic hours and they are concerned that access and pedestrian and bicycle safety will become worse over time.

The Plan identifies these and other community issues. Table 4 also includes strategies to address the identified issues. Strategies include capital improvements, policy amendments, and other actions carried out through existing plans and programs. These strategies are described in more detail in Section 5. It will be up to Council to approve and ultimately prioritize the individual strategies. Capital improvements that require specific funding will be considered along with other projects competing for funding city-wide. One proposed overarching strategy is to establish a designated capital investment fund for projects approved through the station area planning process. For several of the strategies, follow-up work will be necessary to work out details and confirm support among stakeholders.

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# BELLEVUE'S PROGRAM FOR STATION AREA PLANNING

## STATION AREA PLANNING IS DIFFERENT FROM STATION DESIGN

- Sound Transit is responsible for station design, which is about the physical layout, appearance and function of the light rail station.
- Station area planning is about everything else that happens outside of the station and is the responsibility of the City of Bellevue.

Station area planning is an opportunity to consider what changes light rail may bring to a community, particularly in the area around a light rail station, and to make a plan for the future. The fundamental objectives of station area planning are to:

1. Better integrate light rail into the neighborhood,
2. Take advantage of the station location by making it easier to access, and
3. Optimize the benefits of the light rail investment.

Each station area in Bellevue is unique so Bellevue's program for station area planning is tailored to fit each community's individual circumstances (Figure 1). According to the city's Light Rail Best Practices Committee Report, "The ideal light rail station is one that becomes an extension of the community."[1]

The report also states, "Planning for the area around stations is a common practice by cities with light rail systems and offers a complementary means of engaging the stakeholders."

1 *Bellevue Light Rail Best Practices Final Committee Report, June 17, 2008, p. 17.*

**Figure 1 East Link Alignment and Stations**

Station area plans are within the city's authority and responsibility and they are different than Sound Transit's responsibilities on the light rail project.[2] Station area plans explore a range of issues from pedestrian access to land redevelopment opportunities in the area extending ¼- to ½-mile outside the boundaries of the light rail station. These distances roughly approximate the five- and ten-minute walk distances from a station. Station area plans are much more focused than subarea plans, both in terms of the geography and the issues they cover. Although station area plans must be consistent with the city's adopted *Comprehensive Plan*, they are not adopted or incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. Rather,

2 *The design, construction, mitigation operation and maintenance of the light rail system are the responsibility of Sound Transit and are not part of this station area plan.*

station area plans recommend actions or strategies that the City Council may select to be considered along with other changes in city policies, codes, or funding priorities.

## SOUTH BELLEVUE STATION AREA PLANNING

The *South Bellevue Station Area Plan* is the result of efforts by area stakeholders, including the Enatai Neighborhood Association, and the larger community to identify what is valued for the area's future; to identify the neighborhood issues and opportunities presented by light rail; and to plan a response that addresses the issues and optimizes the opportunities presented by light rail.

After Sound Transit approved the East Link alignment and station locations in April 2013, Bellevue City Council approved the work program for station area planning and directed staff to begin with South Bellevue.[3] The South Bellevue Station planning area encompasses most of the Enatai residential neighborhood on the west side of Bellevue Way from I-90 to the south and SE 16th Street to the north, as well as most of the Mercer Slough Nature Park on the east side of Bellevue Way with roughly the same north/south boundaries (Figure 2). Adopted zoning and policy direction preclude land use changes within South Bellevue's existing single family designations and environmentally sensitive areas.[4] For South Bellevue the station area plan provides an overview of the area, and then looks at issues and opportunities associated with light rail. The focus of the plan is on improving access to the station and addressing other identified neighborhood

### STATION AREA PLAN OBJECTIVES

- Better integrate light rail into the neighborhood,
- Take advantage of the station location by making it easier to access, and
- Optimize the benefits of the light rail investment.

3 *Direction on Station Area Planning Work, May 13, 2013 Council Study Session. http://www.bellevuewa.gov/pdf/City%20Council/PacketExtendedStudySession5-13-133e.pdf.*

4 *POLICY TR-7. Ensure that land use changes near high capacity transit stations are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, recognizing that (1) Transit may support more intense development around some stations; (2) Transit supportive design and orientation may be implemented without changes to land use intensity; and (3) Land use plan map changes would be precluded in existing single family designations and environmentally sensitive areas.*

**Figure 2 Study Area**

issues that are outside the requirements of the East Link light rail project. The report concludes with strategies for addressing the issues and opportunities discussed in the plan.

# COMMUNITY PROCESS

## COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER DRIVEN PROCESS

- Built upon previous East Link outreach
- Visioning and brainstorming workshop
- Ongoing check-ins during plan development
- Disseminated project information through city and stakeholder media (e.g. websites, emails, newsletters)
- Stakeholder focus groups to test draft strategies
- Open house on draft plan

## OVERVIEW

Station area planning is a community stakeholder driven process in which public participation is essential to its success. Station area planning provided an opportunity for stakeholders from each of the study area's unique parts—residential neighborhoods, the Bellevue Way corridor, and the Mercer Slough Nature Park—to envision the community's future goals in relation to the East Link Light Rail project.

To ensure meaningful public input was obtained consistently and efficiently for the South Bellevue Station Area Plan, the city used a variety of methods to engage the public. During the project, the city communicated frequently with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns and aspirations were consistently understood and considered during the planning process.

The city built upon public feedback from previous East Link outreach and sought additional ideas and directional guidance at a

scoping and visioning workshop in the community. In subsequent phases, staff shared initial concepts, solicited further ideas for consideration, and checked progress with stakeholders at various points in the process. A draft plan for stakeholders and the broader community to review and comment on concepts, strategies and approaches was held prior to preparing this final report to Council.

## SCOPING & VISIONING

The city held a scoping and visioning brainstorming workshop in October 2013. The workshop served as an open public forum for interested stakeholders to share ideas and concerns related to the addition of a light rail station to the area. The Enatai Neighborhood Association co-hosted the workshop, and played an active role in shaping its direction. Working with community leaders, the city invited stakeholders to participate in the workshop via postcards, emails and a variety of grassroots methods.

The first half of the workshop consisted of a station area planning overview presentation. Following the presentation, community members clustered in randomly assigned groups of 6-8. Each of these “round tables” had a neighborhood facilitator and a city staff facilitator who guided the discussion and served as a scribe. The small groups identified issues of concern within the ½-mile radius of the station, and potential opportunities for improvement. At the close of the workshop, each table presented key ideas from their brainstorming sessions. These ideas served as the basis for the draft scope and vision for the station area plan. (Figure 3; *Station Area Plan Appendices, A3 Community Engagement*).

## COMMUNITY CHECK-INS & FEEDBACK

Following the October 2013 workshop and during development of the draft plan and strategies, there were numerous community check-ins to share progress with stakeholders interested in

## Figure 3 What We Heard

staying up to date on South Bellevue station area planning, and to solicit feedback on the initial strategies and concepts in the plan. Stakeholders were invited to remain apprised of station area planning, the East Link project in general and future community meetings and participate as much or as little as they desired. These check-ins included sharing information at Sound Transit station design open houses, small group meetings and presentations, meetings with neighborhood and stakeholder groups, email correspondence and two focus groups.

The focus groups were held at City Hall in November 2014, and each included approximately 10 participants. All stakeholders who had participated in South Bellevue station area planning at any point were invited to participate. The focus groups reviewed draft strategies and provided feedback on consistency with previous input and how well they addressed issues. Following the focus groups, participants were invited to complete an online survey to rank their preferences for the station area planning strategies shared during the sessions. (*Station Area Plan Appendices, A3 Community Engagement*).

## COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE & DRAFT REPORT

The draft strategies to address the issues of concern and opportunities were presented to the public at an open house in March 2015. The purpose was to provide the public with the opportunity to review these strategies, engage with staff and share their input before preparation of a final report to the Bellevue City Council (*Station Area Plan Appendices, A3 Community Engagement*).

# SOUTH BELLEVUE VISION

**THE SOUTH BELLEVUE STATION AREA PLAN VISION**

Maintain the wooded, single family neighborhoods and the expansive nature park that define the unique character of this area.

The community impact of a major transportation facility like a light rail station largely depends on the vision established in the long range plans for that area. The vision for the South Bellevue Station Area Plan is consistent with other well-established plans for this area, including Bellevue's *Comprehensive Plan* and *Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan*. This vision was reaffirmed by the community throughout the development of the station area plan.

## CHARACTER

Character, for purposes of this plan, is defined by the natural and built environments that contribute to the area's sense of identity and community. The Light Rail Permitting Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) established a statement of character for South Bellevue for the purpose of the East Link project review:

***Light Rail Permitting CAC Statement of Context and Design Consideration***

*The character of this area is defined by:*

a. *The expansive Mercer Slough Nature Park;*

b. *Historic references to truck farming of strawberries and blueberries;*

c. *Retained and enhanced tree and landscaped areas that complement and screen transportation uses from residential and commercial development; and*

d. *Unique, low-density residential character that conveys the feeling of a small town within a larger City.*

The full text of the CAC's statement is found in the *Station Area Plan Appendices, A2.4 Light Rail Permitting CAC*.

A vast majority of the South Bellevue station area is planned to remain much the same as it is today. Unlike the areas around Bellevue's other light rail stations, there will be no land use changes or transit-oriented development (TOD) in this area.[1] There will be obvious changes to the look and feel of Bellevue Way with the construction and operation of the larger park-and-ride facility and the light rail guideway adding to the existing visual effects of the freeway ramps at I-90.[2] However, for the bulk of the area, the existing low-density, wooded single family neighborhood and the expansive Mercer Slough Nature Park will remain intact.

## PARKS & PUBLIC FACILITIES

The Mercer Slough Nature Park is integral to the character and future vision for this area. A key consideration of the station area plan is to preserve access to the functions and activities of the park. The "visual access" to the park from the south portions of the Enatai neighborhood and Bellevue Way will be altered and

1 *Comprehensive Plan Policy TR-7 precludes land use changes around station areas "…in existing single family designations and environmentally sensitive areas...."*

2 *Sound Transit final design for the South Bellevue park and ride facility, station, Bellevue Way elevated guideway, and reconfigured 1-90 off- and on-ramps are included in the report Appendix, A2.7.*

somewhat obscured by the parking garage, elevated station and elevated guideway from I-90 to just south of the Winters House. At the Winters House the light rail travels below the grade of Bellevue Way for much of the remainder of the route through this study area and no longer obscures views. Portions of the light rail north of the Winters House will be visible from Bellevue Way and the park. Physical access to the park is also being altered; however there will still be access from the park-and-ride and the Winters House, with parking and trail heads at both locations. Illustrations of the South Bellevue parking garage, elevated station and elevated guideway is in the Plan *Appendices, A2.7 Sound Transit East Link South Bellevue Final Design*.

## TRANSPORTATION & STATION ACCESS

Projected population and employment growth on the eastside in general and Bellevue in particular will likely increase traffic on I-90 and Bellevue Way over at least the next decade (see Table 1 below). Bellevue Way will continue to function as a major north-south arterial connecting downtown and surrounding neighborhoods with I-90.

The vision for transportation in this area is to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility within the neighborhood and to improve access from the neighborhood to the light rail station. Additional pedestrian and bicycle system improvements that could

**Table 1 Bellevue 2012 and 2035 Housing, Population and Job Forecasts**

| | Housing Units | Population | Jobs |
|---|---|---|---|
| **City of Bellevue** | | | |
| ***2012*** | *58,400* | *130,200* | *133,400* |
| ***2035 Projection*** | *74,200* | *160,400* | *185,100* |
| **Downtown Bellevue** | | | |
| ***2012*** | *7,300* | *10,300* | *44,855* |
| ***2030 Projection*** | *15,200* | *22,200* | *72,700* |

*Source: City of Bellevue, based on state and regional growth forecasts*

## PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ACCESS

- Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the existing pedestrian and bicycle network in the South Bellevue Study Area.
- Figure 7 shows pedestrian strategies discussed at the March 2015 Open House.

contribute to achieving that vision are evaluated and proposed as part of this station area plan. Although street improvements for automobiles are not being considered as part of this plan, transportation improvements to the study area that are part of the light rail project are described in this section.

In addition to the light rail station and parking garage, Sound Transit will construct a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane from the main entrance of the park-and-ride station south to I-90. Bellevue is considering extending the HOV lane north from the park-and-ride to the "Y" intersection with 112th Avenue SE. One other transportation facility planned for construction as part of the light rail project is a multi-purpose path that will provide a safe, dedicated facility for pedestrians and bicyclists from the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail just north of I-90 to the East Main light rail station on 112th Avenue SE just south of Main Street. Light rail-related projects being constructed by Sound Transit and the potential HOV lane extension by City of Bellevue, are the only changes currently planned to the transportation system within the South Bellevue study area.

**Figure 4 South Bellevue Station Area—10 Minute Walkshed**

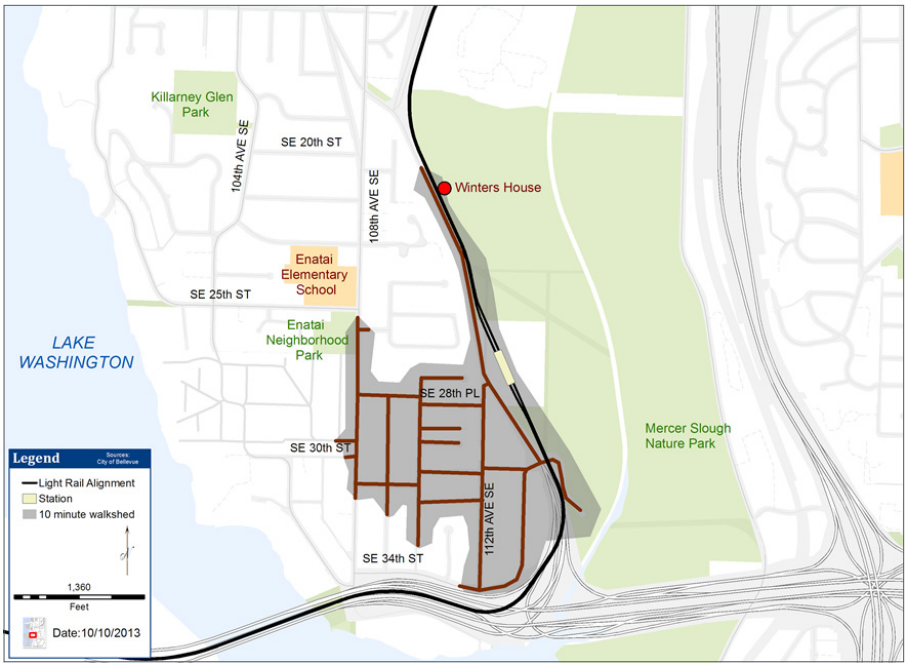


**Figure 5 South Bellevue Station Area—Pedestrian Network**

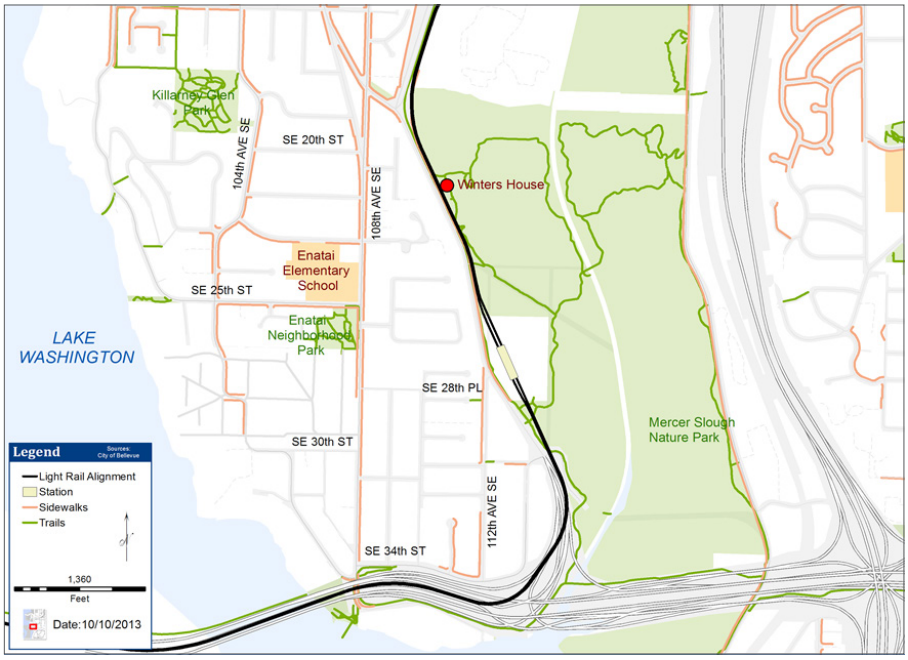


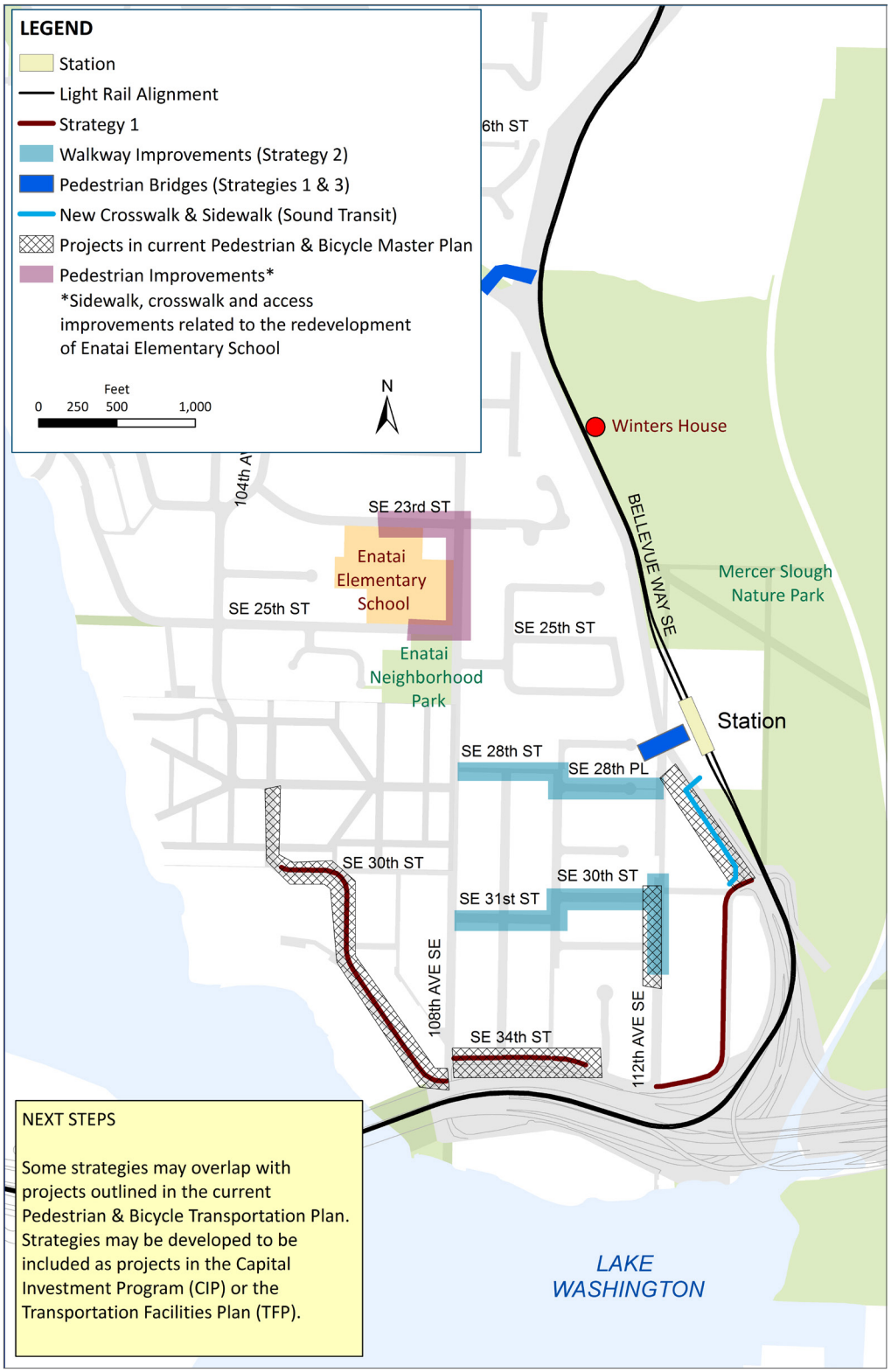

**Figure 6 South Bellevue Station Area—Existing Bicycle Network**

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE SOUTH BELLEVUE STATION

Improving all modes of access to the South Bellevue station is a key focus to the *South Bellevue Station Area Plan*. Alternatives shown below propose non-motorized strategies that:

- Encourage non-motorized access to the Mercer Slough Nature Park, local and regional trail system, and light rail station
- Address bicycle safety
- Provide better local and regional connections to the station

**Figure 7 Pedestrian Strategies Next Steps: March 2015 Open House**



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# COMMUNITY ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES

Several years of public engagement on the East Link project has produced a great deal of discussion and comment. Much of this discussion is related to light rail design, construction, and mitigation, which is the responsibility of Sound Transit and outside the purpose and intent of station area planning.

However, there are other issues and opportunities that have been identified by the South Bellevue community stakeholders through the East Link project that are within the purview of station area planning, including cut-through traffic and neighborhood parking. Additional issues and opportunities including improved access to transit and enhancing the character of the area were identified through this station area planning project. This chapter is intended to provide sufficient information on the identified issues in order to develop feasible, effective strategies. Section 2, *Community Process*, describes how these issues were developed.

# CHARACTER, PARKS & PUBLIC FACILITIES

The three main components that define the character of the planning area can be summarized as:

1. Wooded, single-family residential neighborhood to the west of Bellevue Way
2. Mercer Slough Nature Park to the east of Bellevue Way
3. Bellevue Way itself, a major transportation corridor bisecting the planning area connecting Downtown Bellevue with I-90 and incorporating light rail from I-90 to 112th Avenue SE

Study area background data and existing conditions are found in the *Station Area Plan Appendices A1 Existing Conditions*.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Preserve/reinforce existing character of the residential neighborhood and Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Most of the Enatai neighborhood is a heavily wooded, low density single family residential area with few through streets and sidewalks. The eastern and southern perimeters of the neighborhood abut Bellevue Way and I-90 respectively, and the character of these areas is partly defined by the proximity of these major transportation facilities. Long range plans and policies are in place to maintain the existing land use and character for this area.[1]

The portion of the study area that will experience some change in character is the Bellevue Way corridor. East Link facilities including the elevated structure from I-90 to north of the station, the new parking structure, and the trench running along the east side of Bellevue Way up to the "Y" will alter the appearance and character of this corridor, especially the east side.[2] These facilities will also affect views from the Mercer Slough Nature Park and from the

1 *City of Bellevue Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element, Policy TR-7, p. 181; Southwest Subarea, Policy S-SW-6 and S-SW-12, p. 275, and S-SW-38, p. 278.*

2 *Sound Transit final design illustrations for the South Bellevue park and ride facility, station, and Bellevue Way elevated guideway are included in the Plan Appendices, A2.7 Sound Transit East Link South Bellevue Final Design.*

residential areas that overlook the Park. However, because the light rail is within the existing transportation corridor and because there will be no rezones or transit oriented development around the station, the fundamental character of the neighborhood and Mercer Slough Nature Park are not expected to change beyond what would typically occur over time.

The changes along Bellevue Way also present an opportunity to create a more defined gateway from I-90 into the city with a variety of features such as signage, landscaping and art. The gateway features could be designed to reinforce the unique and distinct character of the areas on either side of the corridor.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Neighborhood safety and crime and increased potential due to the proximity of the light rail station.

A common concern among neighbors of new light rail stations is that there will be an increase in crime. This concern can also change the perceptions of safety in an area. According to the findings of the Light Rail Best Practices Committee:

> *"A primary finding of the research was that crime rates near a station are closely related to the community around it. Communities that had criminal activity before light rail continued to have it. Communities that were relatively crime-free continued to be relatively crime-free. If light rail brings development into an undeveloped area, crime activity may increase proportional to the amount of new development and increase in activity."*[3]

Because there are no rezones or land use changes being considered for this area, any increase in people and activity will be at the station due to transit riders and expanded capacity of the park-and-ride. Although an increase in activity at the station does not necessarily result in neighborhood impacts to safety; it does highlight another finding of the Light Rail Best Practices Committee, which advises "…a proactive approach to security in and around light rail systems [as] a key to ensuring crime does not become an

3 *Bellevue Light Rail Best Practices Final Committee Report, June 17, 2008, p. 73.*

issue."[4] Recent crime statistics for the area are found in the *Plan Appendices A1.2 Land Use and Character, Area Crime Statistics.*

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Maintain identity and visibility of Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Mercer Slough Nature Park is a large wetland and distinct natural area that defines the character of much of the study area. Many park-related issues identified by stakeholders are closely tied to potential impacts from the construction and operation of the light rail facility. These issues are being addressed through the city's permit process rather than through station area planning. However, residents of Enatai do not want to feel "cut-off" from the park and want to make the park more accessible and visible to the neighborhood and public. Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access from Enatai across Bellevue Way will facilitate access to the park for residents. There may be opportunities to program more activities on the west side of the park, including educational programs associated with the blueberry farm operations and historic Winters House. Programs, events and other activities that promote the park and its value as a natural and recreational resource could be a potential draw for residents of Bellevue and the region, and facilitated by increased accessibility from light rail.

## TRAFFIC & SAFETY

This topic encompasses a range of issues and opportunities that are focused on improving the existing roadway conditions and optimizing access to the new light rail station. A top concern in South Bellevue was additional traffic in and around the neighborhood. Neighbors were concerned about additional traffic to the light rail station and expanded park and ride and the historic trend of increasing traffic on Bellevue Way. Participants were most concerned about congestion on Bellevue Way during and after light rail construction for two key reasons: (1) increased cut-through traffic in the neighborhood; and (2) greater difficulty getting into and out of

4 *Ibid.*

the neighborhood. “Hide and ride” parking in the neighborhood was described as an existing problem that would only get worse with the increased demand for parking at the station.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Address neighborhood cut-through traffic and pedestrian/bicyclist safety concerns from increased traffic on Bellevue Way.

Bellevue Way is a major arterial serving downtown and the neighborhoods south of downtown with access to I-90. Major arterials are: “Streets connecting freeway interchanges to major concentrations of commercial activities….” Bellevue Way was designed to carry a substantial volume of traffic between I-90 and Downtown Bellevue. When traffic becomes congested, typically southbound during the afternoon commute, some drivers will attempt to bypass the congestion by entering the neighborhood at the 108th Avenue SE intersection with Bellevue Way and re-emerging at 113th Avenue SE. This results in more traffic on neighborhood streets, primarily 108th Avenue SE, 113th Avenue SE and SE 34th Street. Residents are concerned that additional traffic on neighborhood streets decreases the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, especially children. There have been recent pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements along 108th Avenue SE (2010) which provide greater safety by separating pedestrians and cyclists from vehicular traffic. However, most neighborhood streets in Enatai do not have sidewalks or designated pedestrian or bicycle pathways.

Station area planning is an opportunity to explore and evaluate strategies for discouraging cut-through traffic and for improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Strategies could include additional signage reinforcing the residential character of the area, various techniques for slowing down traffic, and creating additional paths separated from street traffic in limited areas. The latter strategy could be coordinated with other strategies for improving pedestrian and bicyclist access to the light rail station.

One proposal that has been explored in recent years is the addition of a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane on Bellevue Way from the “Y” intersection to the park-and-ride. This improvement would be a city project, separate from Sound Transit’s East Link project to

construct an HOV lane from the park-and-ride to I-90. Preliminary evaluation and analysis indicated that an HOV lane would reduce cut-through traffic on 108th Avenue SE, especially in the future as volumes on Bellevue Way increase over time. This project is currently in the city's *Transportation Facilities Plan* (TFP) and initial design studies are included in the city's capital investment program (CIP) in 2015-2022. Some preliminary conceptual design and analysis has been done on the addition of an HOV lane to Bellevue Way, however, much more design and analysis would be required before the City Council would decide whether to fund construction.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Address neighborhood access issues from increased peak hour traffic on Bellevue Way.

Another issue that has been raised during the light rail planning process is the problem of access for Enatai residents to Bellevue Way and to their neighborhood during peak weekday commute times.

Table 2 provides 2013 counts of average peak and weekday traffic volumes on Bellevue Way for the segment south of the park-and-ride lot. The average number of vehicles on any given weekday is over 38,000 vehicles. Almost 20% of those trips occur during the morning commute (7 a.m. to 9 a.m.) compared to about 15% during the evening commute (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.). As expected, the bulk of the traffic is northbound (70%) in the morning and southbound (63%) in the evening. The situation is typically worse during the evening commute when there are special events (e.g.

**Table 2 Traffic Counts of Bellevue Way**

| | 7–8am | 8–9am | AM Peak | Avg. Weekday Volume | AM Peak as % of Weekday Volume | 4-5pm | 5-6pm | PM Peak | PM Peak as % of Weekday Volume |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***North Bound*** | *1,708* | *2,041* | *3,749* | *19,476* | *19%* | *1,280* | *1,376* | *2,656* | *14%* |
| ***South Bound*** | *743* | *862* | *1,605* | *18,987* | *8%* | *2,261* | *2,283* | *4,544* | *24%* |
| **Total** | **2,451** | **2,903** | **5,354** | **38,463** | **14%** | **3,541** | **3,659** | **7,200** | **19%** |
| ***North Bound*** | *70%* | *70%* | *70%* | *X* | *X* | *36%* | *38%* | *37%* | *X* |
| ***South Bound*** | *30%* | *30%* | *30%* | | | *64%* | *62%* | *63%* | |

*Source: City of Bellevue, Transportation Department, October 2013*

Mariner's baseball, concerts) in Seattle that create longer back-ups on westbound I-90; leading to a higher level of congestion with a longer duration on southbound Bellevue Way.

According to data compiled by the city over the past ten years, the actual volume of traffic on Bellevue Way has declined from 40,663 average weekday trips in 2003 to 38,463 trips in 2013, a decrease of over 5%. As the City continues to grow in population and employment Bellevue Way will continue to be an important north/south connection with I-90, and will continue to experience congestion. The specific issue for residential areas in South Bellevue is one of access due to congestion. Congestion can be managed to an extent but it is not a problem that can be "solved." The challenge of addressing this issue is that there are limited points of access to the Enatai neighborhood due to the existing street system, geography and topography. The city is continuing to study this issue and strategies to address it.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Reduce traffic noise from increased traffic on Bellevue Way.

Several studies have been conducted over the past few years to quantify noise levels associated with traffic along Bellevue Way from the South Bellevue park-and-ride to the "Y" intersection at 112th Avenue SE. A memorandum compiling the previous noise analyses and an assessment of potential mitigation treatments along this corridor is found in the *Plan Appendices A2.5 Traffic Noise Studies*. The memorandum only reviewed traffic noise; noise from the proposed light rail was studied in the East Link Environmental Impact Statement and is not within the scope of station area planning.

Many of the residences along the Bellevue Way corridor are currently experiencing levels of sound exceeding the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) level. Dominant existing noise sources for residences along the west side of Bellevue Way include traffic noise from I-90, I-405 and Bellevue Way SE. Even without light rail or the potential addition of a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane the amount of traffic on these thoroughfares will continue to be significant. The addition

of an HOV lane along this portion of Bellevue Way would require widening to the west and place travel lanes closer to existing residences. Several studies analyzed the effects on noise levels from shifting Bellevue Way to the west and concluded that the increase would be inaudible to barely audible. However, because the existing sound levels already exceed FHWA levels the studies also looked at possible ways to mitigate noise and the relative effectiveness of those approaches.

The Traffic Noise Studies in the *Plan Appendices A2.5* summarizes the types and relative effectiveness of several possible mitigation treatments: noise walls, quiet pavement, vegetation, building insulation, masking sound and noise cancellation. Noise walls are generally the most common and most effective means to reduce noise levels. Quiet pavement types such as rubberized asphalt are sometimes considered an effective measure to reduce traffic noise due to the tire-pavement interface but the benefits do not last long enough to make the technique cost-effective. Rubberized asphalt would be minimally effective for urban projects because travel speeds on surface streets are lower than on highways; the primary source of vehicle noise is expected to be from car and truck engines rather than tire noise. *Appendix A2.5* describes these different noise mitigation techniques, as well as relative costs and effectiveness.

## TRANSPORTATION, PARKING & STATION ACCESS

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Prevent park-and-ride overflow parking in the neighborhood.

According to participants at the October 2013 workshop there is already overflow or “hide-and-ride” parking occurring in the neighborhood. Residents are concerned that light rail construction activity and the eventual operation of the larger park-and-ride will increase the amount of parking in the neighborhood. Construction parking issues will be addressed through the city’s permit process. The focus of this study is on parking issues that may arise once the station and park-and-ride are operational.

The South Bellevue park-and-ride is currently a surface parking lot with 519 stalls. It is heavily utilized, especially by users originating a great distance from the lot. Nearly half (44%) of all users commute from a distance of greater than five miles; reflecting the regional nature of the facility and its service area. Table 3 below lists the major park-and-ride facilities within Bellevue and the percentage of stalls occupied when the study was done. South Bellevue had the highest utilization of the five facilities and it was the only one that was over capacity. It is difficult to predict whether the occupancy rate will be as high once the facility is expanded to about 1,550 total spaces. However, given its location and function as a regional facility there is a presumption that it will quickly be at capacity once light rail is operational. Another factor affecting park-and-ride use is the availability of bus service throughout the system. If local service is reduced more people will drive to a park-and-ride to board a bus or train which not only increases occupancy at the park-and-ride but also contributes to increased traffic volumes and congestion.

**Table 3 Park-and-Ride and Leased Lots 2013 Capacity and Usage**

| Park-and-Ride Facility | Lot Capacity | % Occupancy |
|---|---|---|
| ***South Bellevue*** | *519* | *107%* |
| ***Eastgate*** | *1,614* | *99%* |
| ***Wilburton*** | *186* | *87%* |
| ***Newport Hills*** | *275* | *84%* |
| ***S Kirkland (Bellevue and Kirkland)*** | *783* | *75%* |
| **Total** | **3,377** | |

*Source: City of Bellevue, Draft Commuter Parking Needs Analysis Report, 2013*

The most effective tool the city has to address hide-and-ride parking is a residential parking zone (RPZ) that requires a permit to park on residential streets during the day; when most commuters would be inclined to park in these areas. Additional discussions with the Enatai Neighborhood Association and with the residents of the streets most likely to be affected will help determine interest in an RPZ program and where it could be most effective.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Loss of Sound Transit Express route 550 service north of the "Y" with the opening of light rail service.

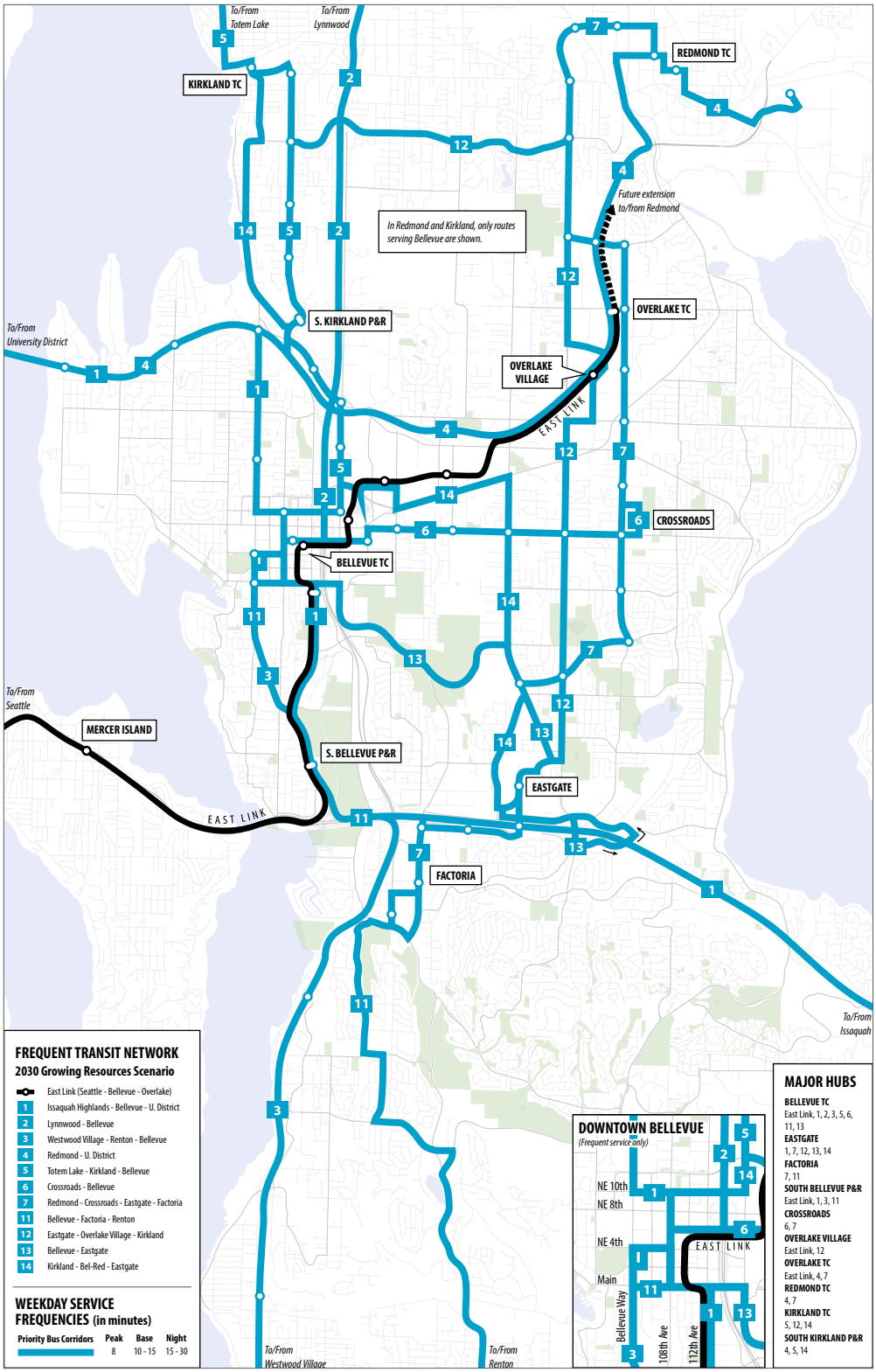
When light rail begins operating in 2023 it will replace the Sound Transit Express route 550 bus service. Although most of that current route will be served by light rail, there is a significant segment along Bellevue Way from the "Y' to Downtown that will not be served by either light rail or bus under the current transit system plan. Residents in the north part of Enatai expressed concern about the loss of the 550 bus service; they are outside of the walk area for the South Bellevue light rail station and do not necessarily want to drive their car to the park-and-ride at the station.

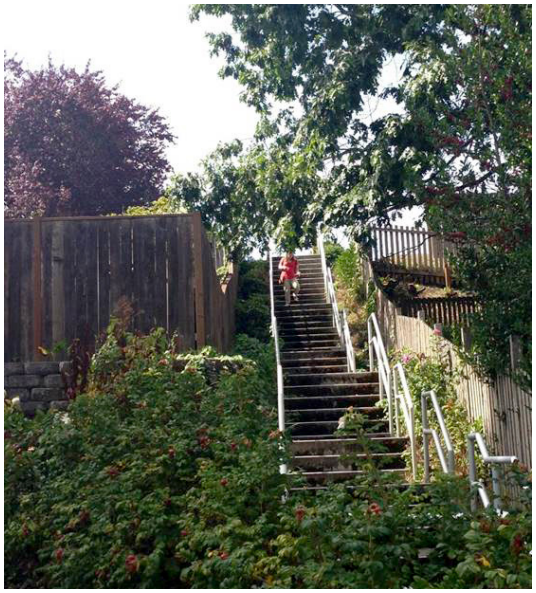
Bellevue has updated the *Transit Master Plan* that considers service needs and proposes allocation of transit service to areas throughout the city. Figure 8 from the *Transit Service Vision Report* (October 2013), is part of Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan* and reflects the city's desire to maintain frequent bus transit service on that portion of Bellevue Way not directly served by light rail (routes 3 and 11 on Figure 8). It is important to note that while this is the city's desire, Bellevue does not operate any of the transit serving the city. This plan is used to influence Sound Transit and King County Metro to plan their service in Bellevue according to local land use plans and other needs identified by the city. Bellevue will lobby both transit agencies to provide service along Bellevue Way consistent with Figure 8. Further information on the City's Transit Master Plan is in the *Plan Appendices A2.3 Bellevue Transit Master Plan*.

**ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:** Provide safe, convenient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists to access the station and Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Participants were interested in better pedestrian and bicycle connections in the eastern portion of the neighborhood coupled with safer crossings of Bellevue Way to the station and Mercer Slough Nature Park. This topic generated several comments with the general consensus that improved access to the station was desirable. There are already pedestrian facilities and designated bicycle routes through portions of the neighborhood (see *Plan*

## Figure 8 Bellevue Transit Master Plan 2030 Frequent Transit Network





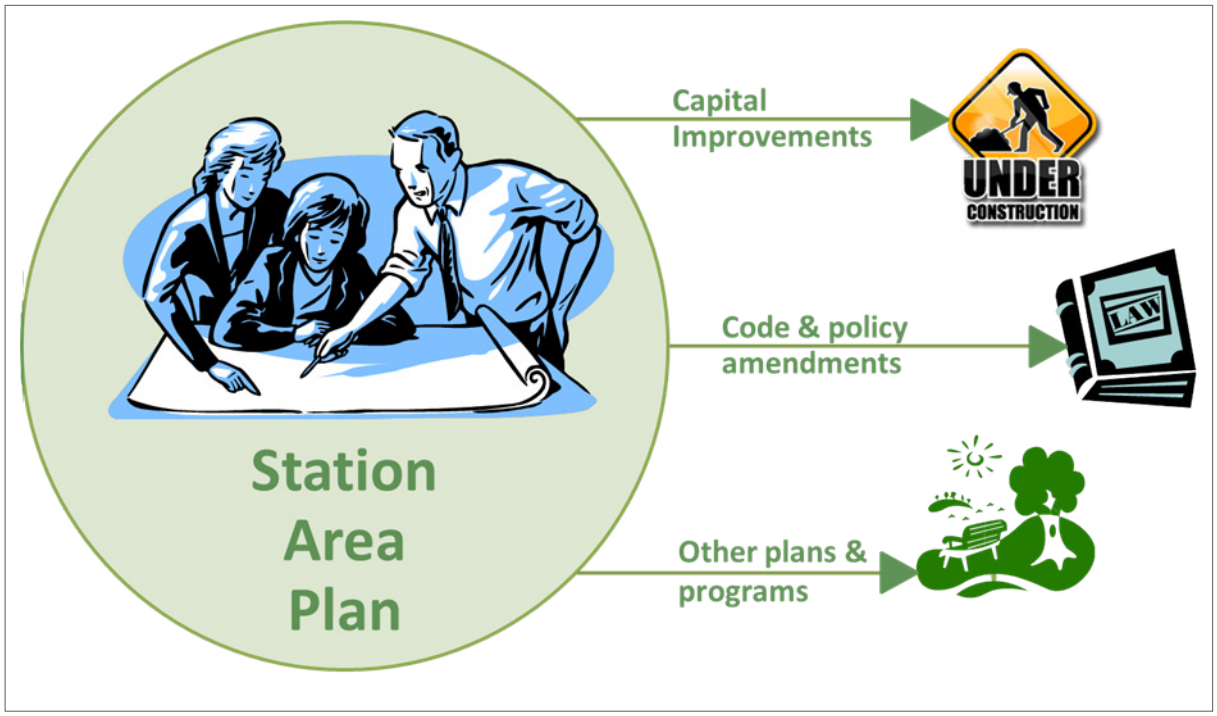
*Appendices A1.3 Existing Conditions, Transportation*). However, the topography on Bellevue Way along with the overall street layout (the presence of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets) results in few direct routes to the future light rail station and even fewer routes that have delineated walkways or walkways separated from the travel lanes.

# STATION AREA PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Station area planning is intended to identify and analyze the issues and opportunities presented by light rail and develop a plan for the future, including a set of implementation strategies. Figure 9 on the next page depicts the three types of implementation strategies contained in this plan.

- **Capital Improvements:** Projects that require some level of construction or installation of physical improvements, such as sidewalks, crosswalks or signs.
- **Code and Policy Amendments:** Changes to Bellevue's adopted regulations and policies to guide decisions by the city about development, city investments in capital improvements and other city programs.
- **Other Plans and Programs:** Actions that can be addressed through existing city programs or other ongoing planning efforts. Examples include the city's Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services program, Neighborhood Outreach program and the Transit Master Plan Update. This category also includes actions that may need additional study or actions that are not directly related to station area planning but may be addressed in

**Figure 9 Three Types of Potential Implementation Strategies**




another way. For example, suggested actions related to the permitting of the light rail project are referred to the Light Rail Permit CAC for their consideration.

Table 4 identifies the list of potential strategies for each of the issues described in Chapter 5 of this plan. Figure 10 shows some of these implementation strategies on the study area map. These issues are not presented in order of priority and at this time there is no funding identified for any proposed strategies. Once the plan is approved by the City Council the actions that require specific funding will be considered along with the other priorities competing for funding city-wide. One overarching strategy that is being proposed is to establish a fund specifically to carry out actions identified and approved through the station area planning process for all of the Bellevue stations. If approved through the budget process, there will be follow-up work with the stakeholders for each station to review and prioritize these strategies for funding purposes.

Italicized potential implementation strategies have either been completed or are in progress.

**Table 4 Implementation Strategies**

## Character, Parks and Public Facilities

**Preserve/reinforce existing character of residential neighborhood and Mercer Slough Nature Park.**

Capital Improvements
- Prepare design scheme for Bellevue Way (e.g. landscaping, art, signage, wall treatments) that reflects natural features and enhances appearance of corridor.

Code & Policy Amendments
- Strengthen policies in Southwest Subarea Plan to encourage tree retention in neighborhood.

Other Plans & Programs
- *Continue to monitor tree canopy coverage as a way to gauge changes in amount of wooded area.*
- Develop educational materials and tree planting program to enhance existing character, especially where trees can screen highway and light rail facilities.
- Implement restoration and habitat enhancement projects in Mercer Slough Nature Park Master Plan.

**Maintain identity and visibility of Mercer Slough Nature Park.**

Capital Improvements
- Work with Sound Transit to install informational signage about Mercer Slough Nature Park and Environmental Education Center at station.

Other Plans & Programs
- Conduct special events at station to promote park facilities and programs.
- Place information about history, facilities and programs of Mercer Slough Nature Park on busses and trains serving South Bellevue station.

## Traffic and Safety

**Neighborhood safety and crime concerns due to proximity of the light rail station.**

Capital Improvements
- Evaluate effectiveness, need and potential locations for emergency call boxes outside of station.

Other Plans & Programs
- Continue to strengthen community ties through events and communication.
- Continue coordination between neighborhood and police to explore ways to improve security through potential actions such as:
  - *Monitoring crime statistics*
  - Increasing police patrols
  - Working with property owners to increase visibility in pedestrian areas
  - Expanding participation in crime prevention programs like Block Watch and National Night Out

*continued on the following page*

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**Address cut-through traffic and pedestrian/bicyclist safety concerns from increased traffic on Bellevue Way.**

Capital Improvements
- *Install "residential neighborhood" signage at key entrances to discourage non-neighborhood traffic.*
- *Assess benefits and implications of adding an HOV lane to Bellevue Way south of the "Y".*

Other Plans & Programs
- Explore additional traffic-calming measures to discourage and/or slow traffic.

**Address neighborhood access issues from increased peak hour traffic on Bellevue Way.**

Other Plans & Programs
- Conduct comprehensive traffic study of neighborhood access issues during peak commute hours.
- Based on traffic study, develop plan for improving resident access.

**Reduce traffic noise from increased traffic on Bellevue Way.**

Capital Improvements
- *Assess noise walls and other sound attenuation techniques along the west side of Bellevue Way.*

Other Plans & Programs
- *Evaluate the feasibility and cost of constructing sound attenuation along west side of Bellevue Way as part of an additional HOV lane study.*

## Transportation, Parking and Station Access

**Prevent park-and-ride overflow parking in the neighborhood.**

Capital Improvements
- Work with WSDOT, Sound Transit, and Metro to install real time information message boards and online tools to direct commuters to alternative parking areas.

Other Plans & Programs
- Coordinate with Metro and Sound Transit to inform commuters about no parking areas.
- Pending neighborhood support, institute a residential parking zone (RPZ) program prior to light rail operation.

**Loss of Sound Transit Express Route 550 on Bellevue Way north of the "Y".**

Code & Policy Amendments
- *Include continued bus transit service on Bellevue Way north of the "Y" in the city's transit Master Plan Update.*

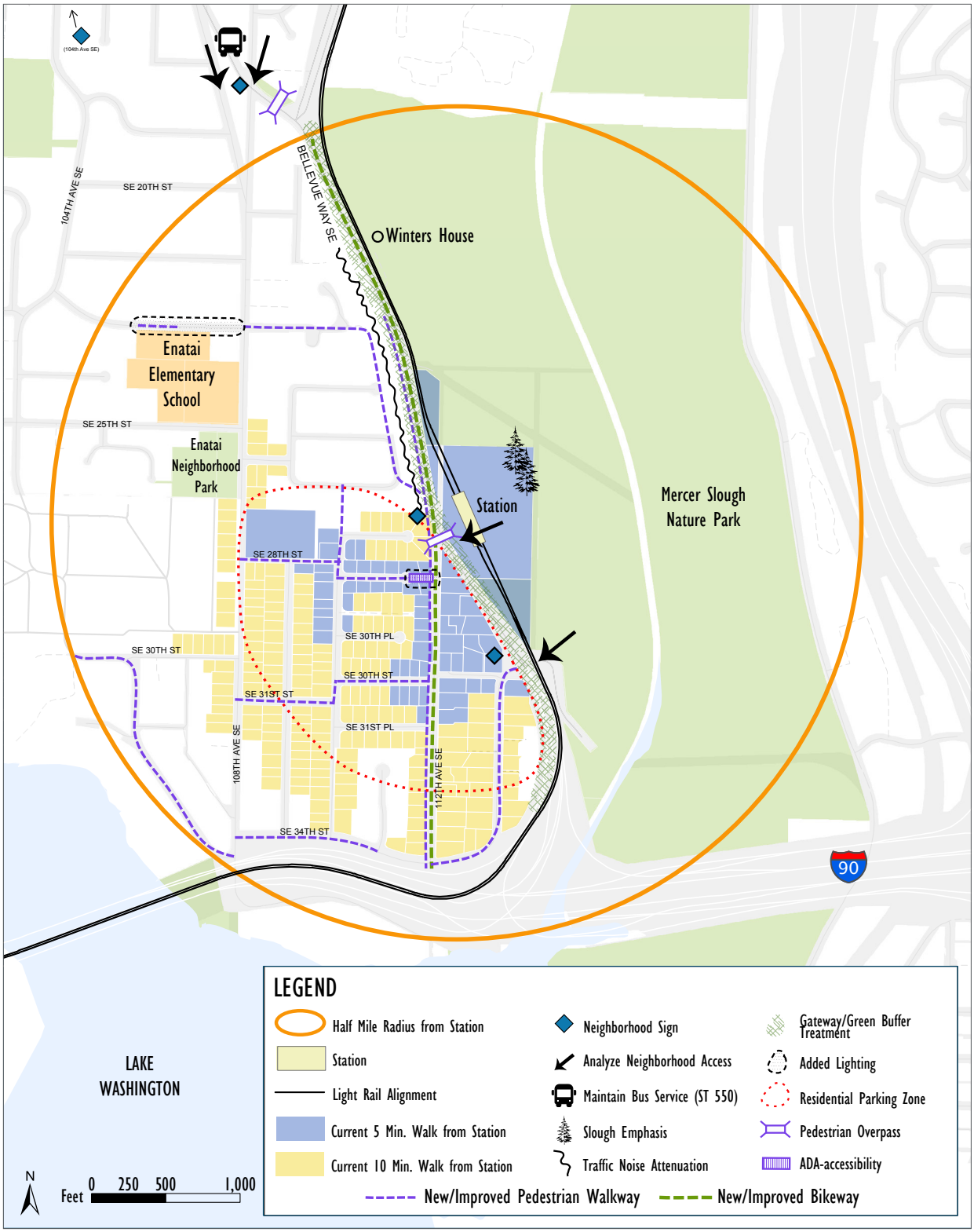
Other Plans & Programs
- Work with transit providers to retain transit service on Bellevue Way north of the "Y".

**Provide safe, convenient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists to access the station and Mercer Slough Nature Park.**

Capital Improvements
- Design and install a wayfinding system (e.g. signage, pavement markings, lighting, landscaping and art) to clearly mark designated routes to the station.
- Install pedestrian-level lighting for designated routes to the station, including additional lighting on stairs.
- Evaluate feasibility and cost of pedestrian/bicycle walkway over Bellevue Way at the station.

Code & Policy Amendments
- Designate walk (including ADA) and bike routes to station in City's Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan.

**Figure 10 Implementation Strategies**



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*Appendices are published as a separate document from this report.*

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A1.2 Land Use & Character (includes area crime studies)
A1.3 Transportation
A1.4 Natural Environment
A1.5 Parks & Public Facilities

### A2 Related Plans & Studies

A2.1 Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan
A2.2 Pedestrian & Bicycle Transportation Plan; Pedestrian & Bicycle Implementation Initiative
A2.3 Bellevue Transit Master Plan
A2.4 Light Rail Permitting CAC
A2.5 Traffic Noise Studies
A2.6 South Bellevue Station Area Pedestrian & Bicycle Access Analysis
A2.7 Sound Transit East Link South Bellevue Final Design

### A3 Community Engagement

A3.1 Visioning and Brainstorming Workshop
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