Bellevue Way SE Southbound HOV Lane

Open House Public Feedback Summary – June / July 2016

Summary

An in-person and online open house was held to inform design options development for the Bellevue Way HOV Project. The focus was to present design options, reflect community feedback to-date, and further identify community priorities and concerns. Notice of the open house was sent to the adjacent neighborhoods, downtown Bellevue, and other stakeholders. Visit the project website to view the material presented at the open house.

Participation

In-Person Open House:
June 15, 2016, 5 – 7 p.m.

- 13 sign-ins
- 20-25 total attendees
- Five individuals completed comment forms

Online Open House:
June 15 – July 15, 2016

- 184 unique visitors
- 251 sessions (times the website was accessed)
- Approximately 50 individuals responded to at least one of the survey questions

Feedback overview

Design and aesthetics: When asked about project design, participants favored features that accentuate the natural beauty of the corridor and include vegetation. Participants most supported wall treatments and plantings, although lighting and public art also received support. Several participants were concerned about light pollution and its impact to wildlife. Feedback was mixed regarding art; natural treatments were favored over brightly colored, trendy features.

Corridor width and project length: Participants supported improvements to traffic flow, but strongly opposed private property impacts. Many also questioned the need for the project, noting that the impacts likely outweighed the potential benefits. Participants supported the inclusion of a shoulder, but many thought other elements (e.g., sidewalk) were unnecessary or redundant with existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Criteria: Participants viewed neighborhood noise impacts and traffic flow improvements as the most important design criteria. Most proposed criteria were deemed important, with the exception of accommodating pedestrians and bicycles on the west side of Bellevue Way.

Additional feedback: Additional comments reflected the public's concern about private property and neighborhood traffic impacts. There were several requests to coordinate construction on Bellevue Way SE with Sound Transit to minimize construction impacts. While some expressed support for the project, many others were skeptical that the project would decrease travel times and improve transit reliability. Comments also reiterated the need for noise mitigation, increased public awareness of the project, and protecting the corridor's natural surroundings like the Mercer Slough.

Feedback Detail

Key themes from the project team's conversations with the public, combined survey results from the open house and online open house, and verbatim open-ended responses can be found below.

Event overview

As Bellevue has grown, traffic has increased along Bellevue Way SE. The City of Bellevue is exploring options to build a new southbound high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane to increase capacity for traffic leaving downtown and to improve transit speed and reliability.

The City is working with the community to explore desired outcomes for Bellevue Way SE and collect feedback through two public open houses. This summary documents public feedback received at the first of these, held on June 15 and accompanied by an online open house available from June 15 through July 15. Identical content and commenting opportunities were available through both forums.

In-Person Open House Participation:
June 15, 2016, 5 – 7 p.m.

- Held at Bellevue City Hall
- 13 sign-ins
- 20-25 total attendees
- Five individuals completed comment forms

Online Open House Use:
June 15 – July 15, 2016

- 184 unique visitors
- 251 sessions (times the website was accessed)
- 1,238 total page views (a page view is recorded each time a user visits a station on the online open house)
- 4.93 pages viewed per session (average)
- Average time on the site: 5 minutes 7 seconds
- Approximately 50 individuals responded to at least one of the survey questions

Feedback: Design features

Overview

- Support was strongest for wall treatments and plantings. Lighting and public art also received public support.
- Feedback strongly favored features that accentuate the natural beauty of the corridor and maintain this neighborhood characteristic. The slough, mature trees, and vegetation are valued, and the public encouraged that the project extend this arboreal feel and soften concrete elements with plantings and vines.
- Light pollution concerns for both residents and wildlife were mentioned.
- Feedback was mixed regarding art; again, natural treatments were favored over brightly colored, trendy features.
- One commenter emphasized that aesthetic features were less important than functionality, and that funding should go towards key elements like noise abatement.

Survey results and verbatim comments

What type of treatment do you think should be included along the corridor?

- Wall treatments: 21
- Plantings: 20
- Lighting: 15
- Public art: 9
- Seating: 2
- Other: 7

#	Comment
1	Neighborhood identification signs
2	Quit trying to spend our tax dollars on stupid stuff like this
3	Sound abatement walls for light rail
4	Garbage receptacle, water fountain
5	None
6	Don't think a sidewalk is necessary on west side as a shoulder could be more practical and there are no walking destinations on west side
7	Don't need sidewalk. You have one on S Transit side. Trees are nice but take too much space

What do you like and dislike about the photo examples provided? (See appendix A for photo examples)

#	Comment
1	Appreciate walls, art, lighting that blend in to surroundings and accentuate native beauty. No seating needed if there is not a walk way. If you are including east side of Bellevue Way, seating should be included. Other is for east side of Bellevue Way assuming no sidewalk/path on west side.
2	As much as I would like the formality of an elegantly lighted corridor leading into the City - and something the south end has done without for decades compared to the north end of Bellevue Way with its well-landscaped medians - I am more and more concerned with the "bleed" of ambient light into our neighborhoods - and particularly along the slough - and its effect on wildlife. With all this construction, we are removing more and more of our wildlife habit and I find that both irresponsible and irreplaceable.
3	Bare concrete walls, or concrete walls decorated with tiles or similar seem like they always end up looking tacky over time. Concrete walls with plants growing on them seem like they hold up the best (e.g., like the walls that were put up along NE 8th Street about 20 years ago).
4	Good, must have - safety, community, ease of use, greenspace
5	How about preserving the slough. Really...art, lighting, seating. This is a natural environment; let's keep it that way. And, please read the research on light pollution.
6	I don't care for the trendy, colored lighting. Everything else looks fine.
7	I like most the plantings. One of the best things about this area of Bellevue is the mature trees and ample vegetation. A huge concrete retaining wall is not visually appealing, and even with some treatments, it's still not super attractive. I am worried about lighting and the light pollution that it will cause. I live next to Bellevue Way and the street lights are visible. More lights would affect our living conditions negatively. Low lights would likely be ok, maybe some that uplight trees (although that is not beneficial for any wildlife that would use those trees for shelter. Public art is always great.
8	In an effort to maintain a minimum of intrusion into the hillside/private properties, the treatments most appropriate would be those not taking up space but enhancing the surface of retaining/sound walls. Vertical growth on the walls is best. As in the photo above, this could be done with some decorative trellis effects. Small trees, bushes, etc. could also work in some places as could accent lighting designed to stay out of the residences above BW. There will be significant art work at the South Bellevue Station including the guideway and I consequently feel that extending the arboreal feel of the area vs. competing art effects is most appropriate. Likewise, seating and such that would necessitate additional widening of BW on the west side is inappropriate and not needful due to the design of the station/P&R grounds and the expanded multi-use path on the east side of BW.
9	Inclusion of nature and art.
10	Lighting should be discouraged whenever possible.
11	Need to maintain the character of the neighborhood. More natural elements, rather than urban would best fit the existing esthetics.

#	Comment
12	None of them appear to meet the promises by the City Council to provide sound abatement. Why do we care about the color of a useless wall? Use the money to meet your promises and build sound abatement solutions!!!!
13	The more naturalist examples (e.g. row of trees, underplanted with ground cover and/or trellises) are most attractive. The "fake" or "artistic" wall treatments look cheap and tacky
14	The vibrant colors detract from the natural environment. Only natural options should be considered
15	Try to make retaining wall look natural - minimize wall of concrete
16	concrete texturizing and vines growing on walls would be helpful softening of the concrete. Art & Lighting might be a distraction resulting in driver inattention. Trees, though nice, take of too much space and drop leave, seeds, etc., into the road which would be difficult to access to clean up. Seating -- who wants to sit next to 3 lanes of idling cars??

Feedback: Corridor widening options (See Appendix B for corridor widening options)

Overview

- Support was highest for the inclusion of a shoulder, but not for other elements that added width or were redundant with bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the east side of the street.
- Comments reflected support for improvements to traffic flow, but strong opposition to private property impacts.
- Some questioned the need for or opposed the project, especially with the addition of light rail to the corridor. They were skeptical that the project would improve traffic, and opposed removing hillside vegetation that would help buffer nearby homes from the East Link project. Some also referenced the project's history – and that public opposition remains.
- Information about costs was requested to help inform feedback.
- Some suggested other measures that could help with traffic flow (lane configurations and traffic light adjustments).

Survey results and verbatim comments

After reviewing this section, please rate the following elements in the project: (Feedback was assessed by assigning a number to each ranking [Very important = 2, somewhat important = 1, not too important = -1, not important = -2, no opinion = 0] and taking the sum for each option.)

Element	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important	No opinion	Total
Inclusion of a sidewalk	8	3	3	25	1	-34
Inclusion of a shoulder	10	12	2	13	2	4
Inclusion of a planter	9	8	6	14	2	-8

Please add any further thoughts on the corridor width options:

#	Comment
1	All stupid ideas. Why do we need HOV lanes when you are burdening the area already with light rail? Is this an admission that light rail will not be successful? Why do you keep heaping traffic "solutions" on this part of the city?
2	Do NOT cut into people's property. They are being damaged enough by Sound Transit. I hope you have YOUR HOME value/peace/peace-of-mind/sanity impacted in whatever way you decide to inflict on these people. Do unto others as you would be done upon.
3	I FEEL STRONGLY THAT PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS SHOULD BE KEPT TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM. There are many homes which sit on the edge of the hill and would lose property and be that much closer the challenges of a main arterial and Light Rail (noise, view, pollution, etc.). I am also against sidewalks which might make access into and out of the neighborhood easier for nonresidents as we already have our struggles with property crimes due to our convenient proximity to freeways.
4	I don't see attendant cost impacts. Sound Transit options always included costs associated with each alternative and should be part of the consideration, ability to evaluate intelligently - because all this impacts taxes.
5	If this has to happen, I prefer Section E: Shoulder, narrow planter, no sidewalk. I think inclusion of a shoulder is a must.
6	Life happens; shoulder is needed.
7	Minimize the impacts on the adjacent homeowners. This is not the place for a bike lane or sidewalk (there is one planned on the east side, as well as existing bike lanes and sidewalks on 1089th Ave. S.E.). Some plantings would help to retain the current beautifully vegetated conditions. The extra lane could function as a break-down lane, minimizing the need for any shoulders.
8	Minimizing width of new cut, minimizes height of retaining wall needed, which is highly desirable. Sidewalk on east side eliminates need for sidewalk on west -- encourage people to use east side. While trees might be nice softening of retaining wall along road, the extra space they need is not worth the extra digging, private property appropriation and height of retaining wall.
9	None of these options re good for Bellevue. We have fought this before and have stated NO! Respect our work and stop trying to destroy our city!
10	Please abandon HOV and consider GP only.
11	Project is very important for safe traffic flows. Reducing the impact of bus delays makes for better vehicle safety, reduces risk of traffic violations and is essential for moving traffic. This is a vital project for future movement of all vehicles in a very congested corridor.
12	Section G option is preferred.
13	The main problem with this project is that it removes the natural vegetative noise buffer between Enatai and Bellevue Way. It was bad enough that Enatai will be impacted by light rail and its noise impact. Adding this removal of the noise barrier is essentially insult on top of injury. I would hope that the City would leave as many trees as possible, plant large trees instead of saplings, and use as much noise mitigation design in the retaining wall as possible.
14	The new ST constructed trail along the east side of Bellevue Way meets the needs for bicycles and pedestrians in this corridor. Do not destroy the hillside for additional width for a redundant bike lane or sidewalk. A shoulder is of little value unless it is 7-8 ft. wide - enough for a stalled vehicle to get off the roadway. Use the signalized crosswalks at each end to put pedestrians and bikes on the east side. I support some softening with a planter and especially if an effective swale is a potential that would help the water quality from the roadway surface.
15	What is wrong with you people. The problem is not with the road, it is with the stop light at the transit station. Do you have any plans to leave any of the South Bellevue wetlands in situ? Looks like to me you want to erase all the slough via roadways and light rail.

#	Comment
16	Why not make one lane for I-90 West. One lane I-90 East and 405 South. One lane neighborhood use only. Start the project as far north on Bellevue Way as possible. And then while you're at it why not make NO LEFT HAND TURN at the light on Old Main.
17	With the impact of light rail already impacting Bellevue Way and destroying the neighborhood we do not need a HOV lane as well. If we weren't taking on the burden of light rail, which will only lessen the traffic burden by 1-2%, then the HOV lane might make sense. To further widen Bellevue Way is an undue burden on Enatai.
18	You should select the option with the least possible impact to the homeowners along Bellevue. Whatever you do, NO SIDEWALK. Enatai already has a rising crime problem, don't add easy criminal access to the neighborhood.
19	Do wall greenery
20	The ST Eastlink rail needs to be operational so people use it before we begin adding another lane.
21	Evening traffic Southbound to I-90 is bad. Improving traffic should be a priority.
22	The City Council has already said they would not do this because the neighborhoods were opposed to it.

Feedback: Criteria

Overview

The two most important criteria were neighborhood noise impacts and traffic flow improvements. The critical area impacts, ability to maintain traffic flow during construction, and construction duration tied in ranking for the third most important criteria. The least important was accommodating pedestrians and bicycles on the west side of Bellevue Way.

Survey results and verbatim comments

How would you rate the importance of the following criteria in evaluating the options? (Feedback was assessed by assigning a number to each ranking [Very important = 2, somewhat important = 1, not too important = -1, not important = -2, no opinion = 0] and taking the sum for each option.)

Criteria	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important	No opinion	Total
Traffic flow improvements	16	2	1	6	1	22
Ability to maintain traffic flow during construction	15	5	1	5	2	24
Accommodating for pedestrians and bicycles on the west side of Bellevue Way	3	5	5	14	1	-22
Private property impacts	14	10	2	3	2	30
Corridor landscaping opportunities	4	9	6	7	1	-3
Vegetation and tree impacts	11	6	6	4	2	14
Wildlife or animal impacts	13	3	5	6	2	12

Critical area impacts, like steep slopes	15	8	2	1	2	34
Neighborhood noise impacts	19	7	1	1	1	42
Construction duration	15	9	2	1	2	35
Impacts to utility infrastructure	6	8	3	6	5	5
Construction cost	12	8	3	3	2	23
Ongoing maintenance cost	11	11	2	3	1	25

Would you add criteria to the list? If so, please explain.

#	Comment
1	Yes, sound abatement and meeting your promises to the Enatai and Surrey Downs neighborhoods. Adding a lane to Bellevue Way is asinine unless you admit light rail is a failure ever before it is built. I use to support taxes in Bellevue, and I use to support light rail. No longer. You want to paint pretty pictures so people can sit in stop-and-go traffic and be pleased by the art. Come on - start spending our tax dollars responsibly, please!
2	Do not do this. We do not need this. We do not allow people to change their behavior – use the East Link LR solution.
3	Let it be. Stop cutting down trees.
4	No – pedestrians, yes – bicycles
5	Priority for mass transit and a bike lane nearby to go north-south.
6	Water flows to Mercer Slough
7	During construction – need access to Bellevue Club. Light Rail and this construction need to coordinate.

Feedback: Additional comments

Overview

The additional comments reflected the public's concern for private property and neighborhood traffic impacts. Additionally, there were several requests to coordinate construction on Bellevue Way SE with Sound Transit to minimize construction impacts. While some expressed support for the project, many others were skeptical that the project would help travel times and transit reliability. Several commenters cautioned that the benefits likely would not outweigh significant impacts to surrounding neighborhoods. Some suggested waiting until East Link begins operation to assess the need for this project. Comments also reiterated the need for noise mitigation, increased public awareness of the project, and supported protecting the corridor's natural surroundings. One respondent asked for additional information about the traffic modeling.

Verbatim comments

Do you have any other feedback to share?

#	Comment
1	Adding the HOV lane is a great idea. It will save me a ton of time driving my kids to their activities on Mercer Island. I'm looking forward to using it and bypassing sitting in traffic on Bellevue Way in the regular lanes.
2	Concerned HOV lane will not really have the highest impact. If HOV is the final decision need to guarantee it will not become a toll lane - i.e. do not want any barriers to business/recreation in downtown Bellevue.

#	Comment
3	• Construction impacts are a big concern--project should somehow be part of ST construction period--not an extension of work after completion of East Link. • Projected congestion relief should be very substantial to offset costs, neighborhood impacts, and lengthy construction period. • Any retaining walls should be designed to function as sound walls to mitigate the existing traffic noise impacting the neighborhood (Enatai). In addition, it's acknowledged that East Link will generate additional automobile traffic along BW with the expanded P&R thus creating more traffic noise. The neighborhood needs thoughtful consideration in this project which presents an opportunity for some degree of noise mitigation. • Minimize property impacts • There is no need for walkway on west side BW--just extends property intrusions. • I continue to be concerned with a lack of awareness in the Enatai neighborhood regarding this project. PLEASE continue to communicate with mailings, etc. to all Enatai residents. • HOV to "Y" only or OPTION 4 is my choice. The intersection of BW and 108th and 112th is already crazy and it's very frustrating to get in and out of the neighborhood at certain times of day. Since good options for access and egress do not exist, complicating the intersection is NOT a viable option and would likely exacerbate the problem we experience of cars lined up on 108th trying to get onto BW.
4	Don't do this. The entire point of Sound Transit is to get people out of cars and onto public transport. Adding road capacity only encourages the behavior you are trying to curtail - namely driving. Just stop. If there is pain in commuting by car, then there is a chance the dang train will actually have people use it. Otherwise this whole ST nonsense has been an exercise in wishful public policy making. It really is unfair that we first get a train rammed down our throats and in our backyards, and now you are seizing property to move a roadway closer to our houses. We get no benefit from either, and are shouldering the burden to make [local business interests] happy. It is a disgrace that the city cares so little for the wishes of and impact on homeowners in Enatai and Surrey Downs.
5	Is this really more related to planning for the loss of one lane of traffic while Sound Transit is under construction? And what impact, if any, will Bellevue Way have once the I-90 HOV lanes are open in both directions in 2017? What are the time studies based on to assume that a third general purpose lane will increase travel time for 112th Ave. commuters substantially beyond 2030 projections? Ditto Bellevue Way commuters.
6	Project needs to start further north on Bellevue Way. A HOV lane is not the answer. One lane for I-90 West. One lane for I-90 East and 405 South. One lane for neighborhood use only. A bike lane is definitely needed.
7	• Question on Overview page: Would [it] provide additional capacity and transit reliability? This is a great question. To me, it looks like this project will be costly and painful to commuters and neighborhood residents and still not help improve traffic much. • Protect natural surroundings: Retaining wall. This section of Bellevue Way will already look and feel much different as a result of Sound Transit. Having a huge retaining wall on opposite side of street is not ideal. Also, I have heard from others that both the ST construction through the slough, as well as this retaining wall if constructed, can negatively affect water flow and drainage. How is this being handled in the design? • How did you come up with the estimated travel times for the various options? I'd like to see the math and modeling that you used. • If this has to happen, I prefer Section E: Shoulder, narrow planter, no sidewalk. • It seems to me that the potential negative impacts greatly outweigh the potential positive impacts. - Negatives include: Impacts to neighborhoods (noise, cut-through traffic, loss of property for owners along Bellevue Way, etc.), construction that will increase traffic woes for many years to come, high cost for only a couple of blocks of HOV lane, increased volume of traffic as additional drivers choose Bellevue Way because of the new lane, possible impacts to Mercer Slough and water table as a result of retaining wall. - Positives include: Faster travel times out of downtown Bellevue, especially for HOV and transit users. However, I'd like to know how you came up with the estimated travel times and what assurances you

#	Comment
	can give that travel time truly will be helped to the degree you claim. Also, how much do you think this HOV lane will help improve the lives of non-HOV drivers? If it doesn't help non-HOV drivers, then the neighborhoods will continue to be plagued by high volumes of cut-through traffic. • My preference is that this project NOT be implemented.
8	This is a terrible idea. Lengthening the HOV lane will only increase cut-through traffic on 108th as commuters try to get to the HOV lane quickly. The only people that will benefit from this very expensive construction project are individuals that don't live in Bellevue and are exiting the area at the end of the work day. Also, robbing the Enatai neighborhood of their natural noise barrier and all city of Bellevue residence of even more trees is a ridiculous concept at this point. The city should consider other less expensive options to get commuters off the roadway and they should prioritize Bellevue residence in planning.
9	Traffic Option 3/purple, Max Corridor w/Section G, Max design features for people, vehicles and greenspace, max criteria, minimize noise, cost & construction duration. Do it right the first time, by planning for the future.
10	What removes the most cut-through traffic in Enatai? What are the bus service and ridership assumptions (does this consider the cancellation of the 550)? Why does the HOV vehicle count roughly double with the HOV operations option? Why are travel times significantly higher in the future except Option 1 (HOV to Winters House)? The left turn lane between 108th Avenue S.E. and 112th Avenue S.E. should be widened another lane to prevent queuing backups into the through lanes on Bellevue Way South.
11	Why is it necessary? Won't the new train take the increased traffic capacity? The schedule appears to be a few months behind. Hate option 3. Too many unintended consequences. Liked Options 2 and 4. Option 1 is a waste of money. Options B, D, or F. I am someone who walks this regularly.
12	Why wasn't this pursued earlier so it could be done when the road will be torn up for sound transit. Now the length of construction will nearly doubled. Option 2 appears to provide the biggest bang for the buck but I'm surprised that option 4 did not produce better results. I question the validity of the model as it doesn't make sense.
13	YES -- I missed it in the earlier input questions. Bicycles should NOT need to be accommodated in a separate lane because they have access via 112th S & 108th S to the bike path on I90 and city streets into Bellevue. Or they can use the east side sidewalk to get to 112th N. Adding a lane for bikes makes the project more difficult and expensive for little gain.
14	maximizing congestion relief on Bellevue Way should not be the primary goal. Preventing cut through traffic, diverting commuter traffic to i-405, and providing alternative transportation that avoids traffic congestion (e.g. sidewalks, bicycle routes, light rail) should be the main goals.
15	We do not need another lane of any kind
16	Go just to Winter House
17	The council needs to respect neighbors and stop trying to kill our property values. Keep your word! No widening!
18	Do take as LITTLE residential property as possible. Do HOV to Y, not Winters House. Do curved sound walls to deflect sound back to roadway. Do greenery.

Demographic information

Are you:

- A neighborhood resident: 24
- A business owner: 3
- Other: 3

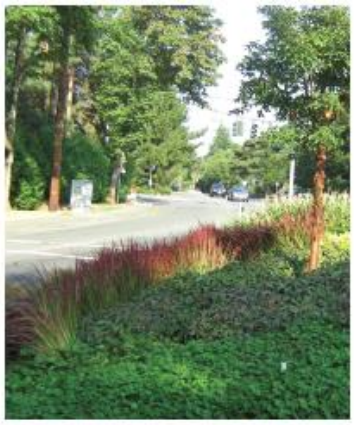
#	Comment
1	Bellevue resident, business manager
2	City resident
3	Interested citizen

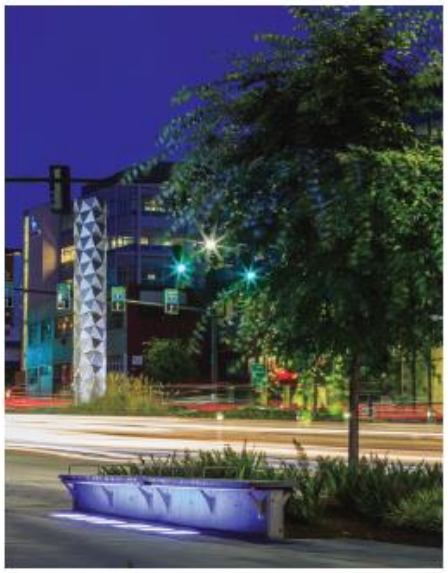
How can we best keep you updated on this project?

- Email: 13
- Website: 3
- Street signage: 1
- Newsletters: 1
- Neighborhood association: 1

Eleven members of the public requested that their contact information be added to the distribution list.

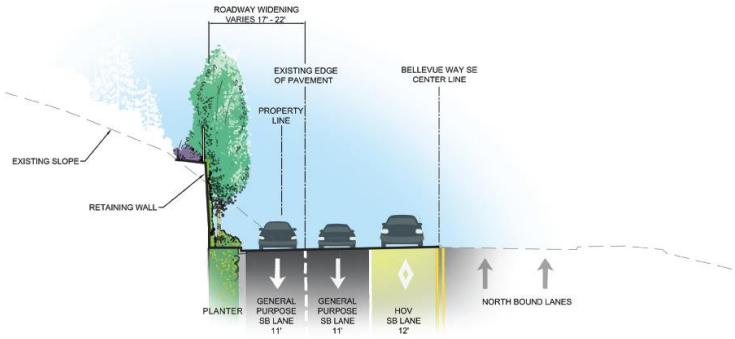
Appendix A: Photo examples



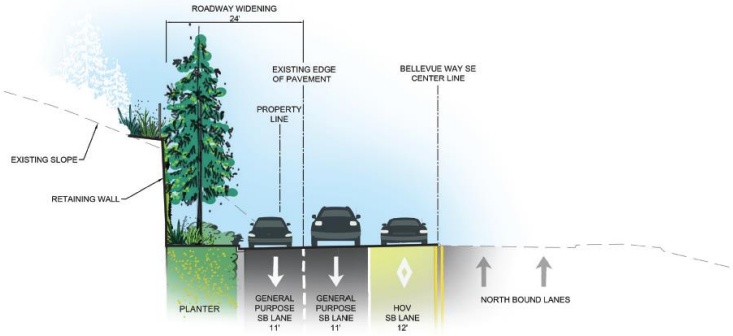


Appendix B: Corridor widening options

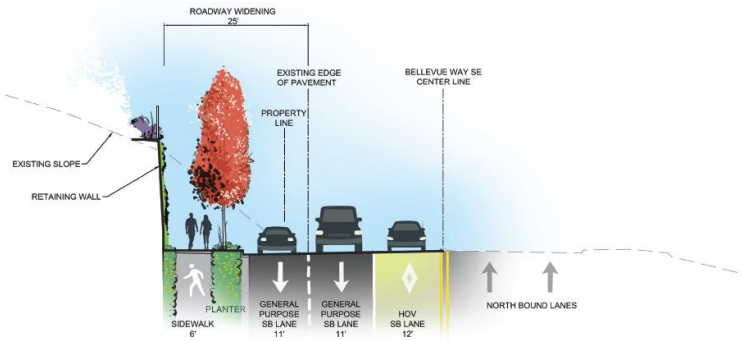
Section A – Planter, No Sidewalk and No Shoulder



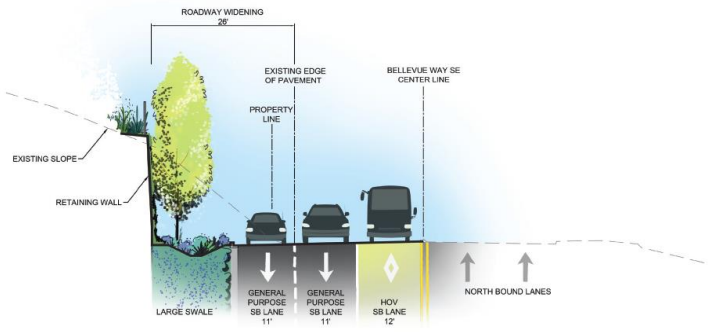
Section B – Wide Planter, No Sidewalk, and No Shoulder



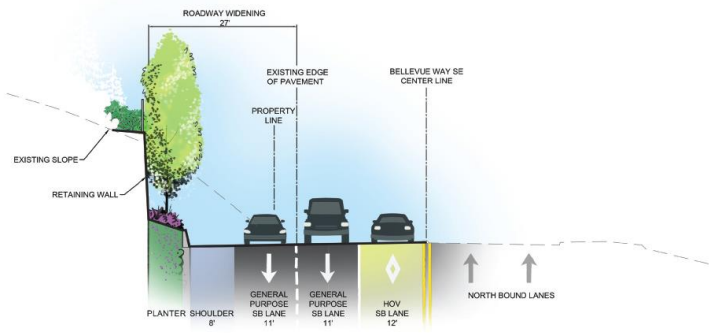
Section C – Planter, Sidewalk and No Shoulder



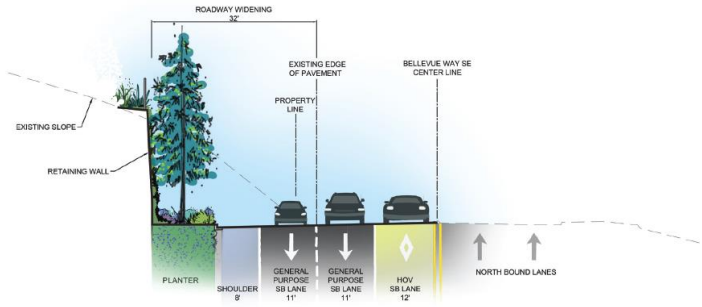
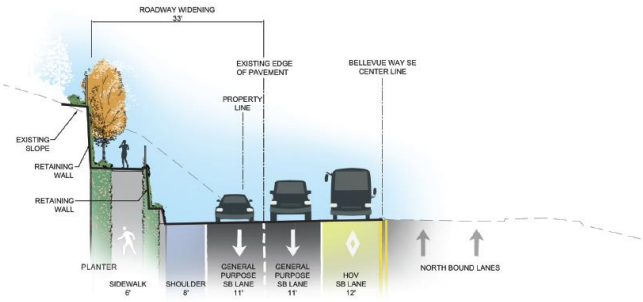
Section D – Large Swale, No Sidewalk and No Shoulder



Section E – Planter, Shoulder and No Sidewalk



Section F – Wide Planter, Shoulder and No Sidewalk



Section G – Planter, Elevated Sidewalk, and Shoulder