



FIG. 7-1 Tacoma Link Light Rail currently connects North Downtown's Theater District with the Dome District to the south. Sound Transit is in the planning stages of expanding the Tacoma Link system.

07

MOBILITY

Improving mobility within the North Downtown Subarea is central to the City’s goal of creating high-density, walkable, bikeable, mixed-use urban centers. The North Downtown Subarea, as an existing transit hub and a densely developed collection of urban neighborhoods, is well-positioned to maximize the opportunity presented by the Tacoma Link expansion. Mobility policy and actions focused on the Subarea should continue to leverage transit investments and enable alternative forms of transportation in order to provide equitable access to the housing and employment resources within North Downtown.

This Subarea Plan’s Vision (see Chapter 1) includes the following components that frame the overall goals for mobility in North Downtown:

- Transportation options - maintaining and enhancing the existing development fabric and capitalizing on local and regional transit resources within the Subarea while supporting walkability, a variety of transportation modes, and future infrastructure improvements
- Connectivity - connections among community amenities and resources within North Downtown as well as to surrounding neighborhoods

The stakeholder process for the Subarea Plan developed the following specific mobility goals for North Downtown:

- Complete the Stadium to Schuster pedestrian connection
- Integrate the Link extension into the North Downtown multimodal network
- Coordinate and implement bicycle routes identified in the Mobility Master Plan
- Maintain current levels of on-street parking (approx. 397 spaces) with a goal of 420 spaces and assess need for additional off-street parking

- Develop 6th Ave and St. Helens as a key gateway intersection, to be enhanced with intersection improvements
- Maintain and improve physical and visual connections between North Downtown and the Thea Foss Waterway

Supporting Policy

North Downtown’s mobility goals are supported by an abundance of programs and policy at the federal, State, regional, and local levels, including:

- Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities
- Washington State Growth Management Act
- Washington State Policy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Puget Sound Regional Council’s VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040
- Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies
- *City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan*
- *City of Tacoma Mobility Master Plan*
- *City of Tacoma Climate Action Plan*

Further details on the above programs and policies can be found in Chapter 1. In particular, the 2010 City of Tacoma *Mobility Master Plan* presents a wide range of specific recommendations that are aligned with the transportation goals of North Downtown.

The primary goals of the Mobility Master Plan are to:

- Develop a active transportation network that reduces auto travel and increases the number of active transportation users of all ages and abilities.
- Complete a safe and comfortable bicycling system that connects all parts of the city (north to south/east to west) and accommodates all types of cyclists by 2025.
- Complete an accessible network of pedestrian-supportive infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb ramps, accessible pedestrian signals, and shared-use paths, in high-priority pedestrian areas.
- Increase the active transportation mode split to 5% by 2015 and continue gains thereafter.
- Increase transit use by enhancing pedestrian access and bicycle support facilities through the development of bikeways and walkways that serve transit hubs.

Tacoma’s “Complete Streets” guiding principle is another key City policy that supports the transportations goals of North Downtown. In November of 2009, the Tacoma City Council adopted the policy, formalizing the goal that “every street built will be ‘complete’ in terms of safely and comfortably accommodating all users and fostering a sense of place in the public realm.” Complete Streets is a nationally-recognized term referring to streets and sidewalks that are designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe and convenient access and travel for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities, as well as freight and motor vehicle drivers. In the Transportation Element of the *Tacoma Comprehensive Plan*, Policy #T-MS-12 states:

Apply the Complete Streets guiding principle, where appropriate, in the planning and design for new construction, reconstruction and major transportation improvement projects to appropriately accommodate all users, moving by car, truck, transit, bicycle, wheelchair, or foot to move along and across streets.

Within the North Downtown Subarea, the Complete Streets guidelines identify Tacoma Avenue, Division Avenue, and 1st Ave as potential “main streets” or “transit priority streets.”

In Summer 2013, the City initiated a process to update the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element, with an anticipated completion date of Fall 2014. The citywide update will be designed to support the transportation goals and policies of the Subarea Plan, and will be grounded in the growth assumptions and proposed land use changes in the Plan. The overall objective of the update is to provide a cohesive, efficient, and effective multimodal transportation system that meets the needs and goals of the community. Specific tasks include Transportation Model and Level-of-Service updates, transit scenario planning, corridor analysis, and a roadway update. To provide guidance for this work, the City established a Transportation Commission in August 2013.

Among the proposed annual amendments to the Sustainability Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan for 2014 (or “2014 Annual Amendment”) are two items that highlight the interconnected nature of transportation policy and sustainable development:

- *Electric vehicle parking and infrastructure provision:* Add design and location standards for new electric vehicle parking and charging stations; establish parking quantity requirements related to origins and destinations focused on providing electric vehicle infrastructure at multifamily developments
- *Bicycle start and end of trip infrastructure:* De-couple bicycle parking requirements from auto parking requirements and set thresholds according to goals for active transportation and GHG reduction; support MoMAP goals of providing short- and long-term bicycle parking with require supportive facilities at long term bicycle parking locations

The amendments are intended to further advance the City’s goals for sustainable development, public health and active living, consistent with and supportive of the goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Vision 2040, Transportation 2040, the City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and the Climate Action Plan.

Growth Forecasts and Traffic Analysis Zones

In 2013, the City of Tacoma completed a effort to develop new growth forecasts and traffic analysis zones (TAZ) for its urban centers and mixed-use centers.¹ The goal was to establish population and employment growth forecasts that properly reflect the City's aspirations to concentrate growth in its downtown core and mixed-use centers. The new targets and TAZs will inform the City of Tacoma's Transportation Master Plan update and related transportation modeling efforts.

The City and its consultant collaborated with PSRC and Pierce County on the following:

- Reconfigure the Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) to align with Tacoma's planning boundaries
- Perform development capacity estimates for Tacoma's Regional Growth Centers (RGC), Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MIC), and Mixed Use Centers (MUC)
- Distribute Tacoma's total population and employment allocations for 2030 and 2040 to the RGCs, MICs, and MUCs

The proposed 2030 allocations for North Downtown are 20,080 new residents, and 19,470 new jobs. The modified TAZ set included several boundary adjustments and additions in order to align the TAZs with the North Downtown Subarea planning boundaries, such that the allocations for the Subarea can be isolated from the rest of the City.

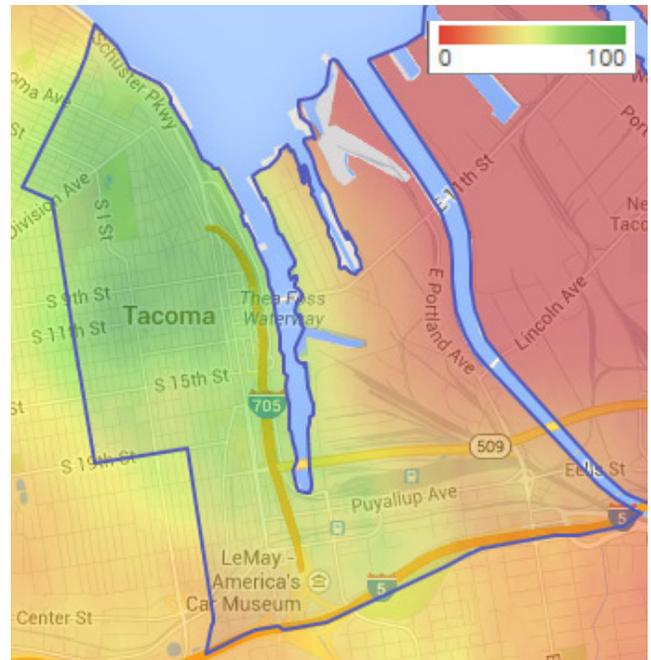


FIG. 7-2 An April, 2014 Walk Score map of Tacoma. The "New Tacoma" neighborhood, which includes the North Downtown Subarea, was rated as "Very Walkable" (areas receiving a score of 70-89 out of a possible 100 receive this designation; areas that score above 89 are known as a "Walker's Paradise.").



FIG. 7-3 Pedestrian amenities in a plaza at the intersection of Broadway and South 11th Street.

1 "A New Approach to Growth Allocations for Tacoma's Urban Centers," Draft: September 2013, City of Tacoma Department of Planning and Development Services

FIG. 7-4 KEY FEATURES OF PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

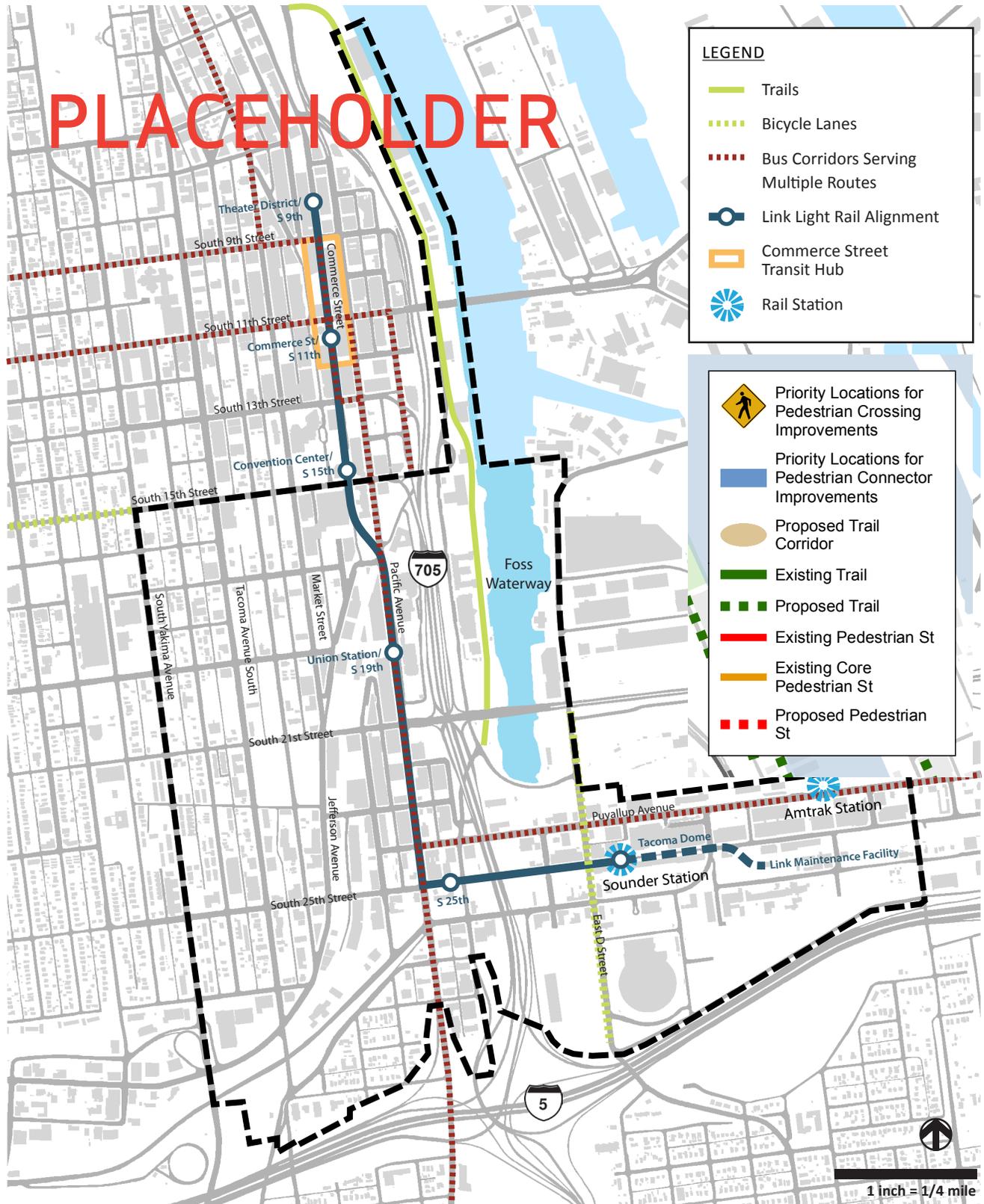
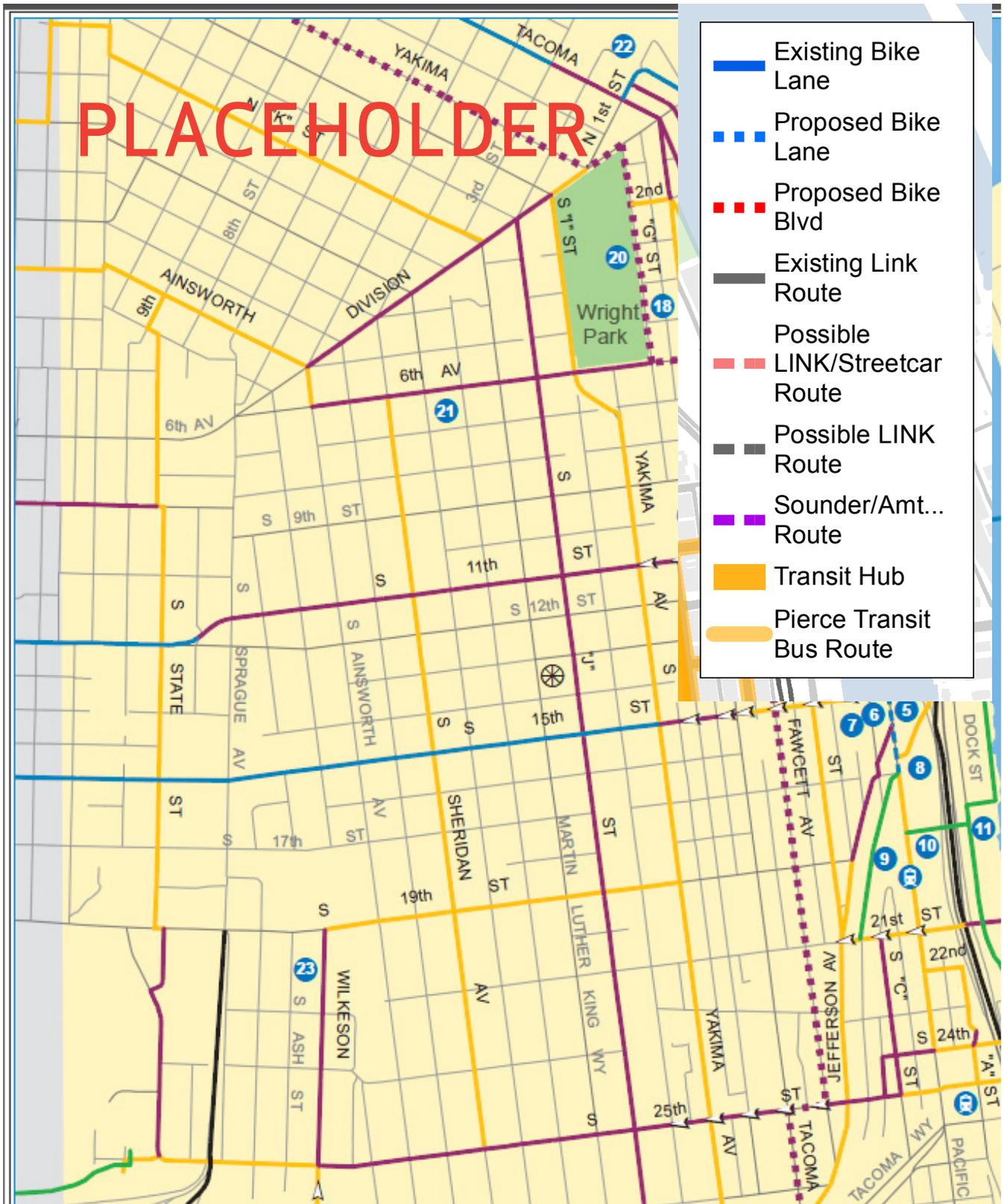


FIG. 7-5 KEY FEATURES OF THE BICYCLE AND TRANSIT NETWORK



DOWNTOWN: *On the go!*

Downtown On the Go (DOTG), an organization developed by Tacoma business owners and business district leaders, serves as the transportation advocate for downtown residents, employees, and visitors. DOTG has a goal of reducing the downtown drive-alone rate by 11% by 2015 in order to support a vibrant, integrated downtown Tacoma and an eventual goal of 35% of employees using transportation modes other than single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs).

The group envisions the future of Downtown Tacoma as an active, compact urban core that is connected locally and regionally, promoting a focus on the movement and interactions of people rather than cars. DOTG seeks to accomplish these goals by providing education about non-SOV transportation choices; encouraging the use of transit, ridesharing, biking, walking and flexible work arrangements; and advocating for transportation choices and land use policies that promote a vibrant downtown. The group also offers services, resources, and programs specific to downtown commuters, businesses, and residents, such as bicycle parking maps and individualized consultations for employees and employers.



www.downtownonthe.go.com/

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The topography of North Downtown presents mobility challenges for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a gain of approximately 300 feet in elevation across the half-mile width of the Subarea (from the Thea Foss Waterway toward the Hilltop neighborhood). This condition has prompted the creation of public stairways, or hillclimbs, to aid pedestrian mobility in areas where there are steep slopes and access is otherwise limited. The Subarea also slopes up from the Downtown Core to the Stadium District, but the increase in elevation in this direction is less intense and can be more easily negotiated by pedestrians and cyclists.

Pedestrian Facilities

Tacoma has a generally walkable downtown center with continuous pedestrian infrastructure and many amenities to serve both locals and visitors. Walk Score, a company that provides walkability assessments, rated “New Tacoma” as a “very walkable” neighborhood, meaning that most errands can be accomplished on foot (see Fig. 7-2).

The quality of the existing sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian infrastructure varies across the North Downtown Subarea. Although the sidewalk network is fairly continuous, the shifting street grid creates some particularly wide intersections that are difficult for pedestrians to navigate and detract from the overall walkability of the subarea. While some streets within the Subarea lack pedestrian amenities such as planting buffers, benches, and street trees, others have received significant recent attention and investment focused on improving the pedestrian experience. Existing sidewalk data is incomplete and inconsistent across the Subarea, making it difficult to identify and prioritize areas for which pedestrian improvements are needed.

Intersection Improvements

In 2013, a “guerrilla” crosswalk installation at the intersection of 6th and St. Helens, an especially lengthy and challenging crossing, spurred a citywide dialogue about pedestrian infrastructure issues. Although the rogue crosswalk was removed by the City, \$2.5 million was allocated from the general fund for a Pedestrian Crossings Improvement Project to identify, evaluate, and construct crosswalks and related improvements. Approximately \$1 million of the total fund is earmarked for Downtown projects. The City will hold a series of “Talk the Walk” forums for community members to give input on which areas should receive improvements.

The Mobility Master Plan identifies key intersections within the North Downtown Subarea that are in need of repair or improvements (see Projects section of this chapter for more information).

Designated Pedestrian Streets

Pedestrian streets are considered to be key streets in the development and utilization of Tacoma’s mixed use center districts due to pedestrian use, traffic volumes, transit connections, and/or visibility. The streets are designated for use with provisions such as increased transparency, weather protection, and street furniture standards. In some centers, these “pedestrian streets” are further designated as “core pedestrian streets” with additional provisions. In centers where multiple streets are designated, one street is designated the “primary pedestrian street.”

The following streets in the Stadium Mixed-Use Center are designated Pedestrian Streets:

- Division from 2nd to Tacoma: core pedestrian street
- Tacoma Ave: core and “primary” pedestrian street
- N 1st St: core pedestrian street
- N I St: pedestrian street



FIG. 7-6 A concept plan by the Theater District Association for intersection improvements at 6th and St. Helens.

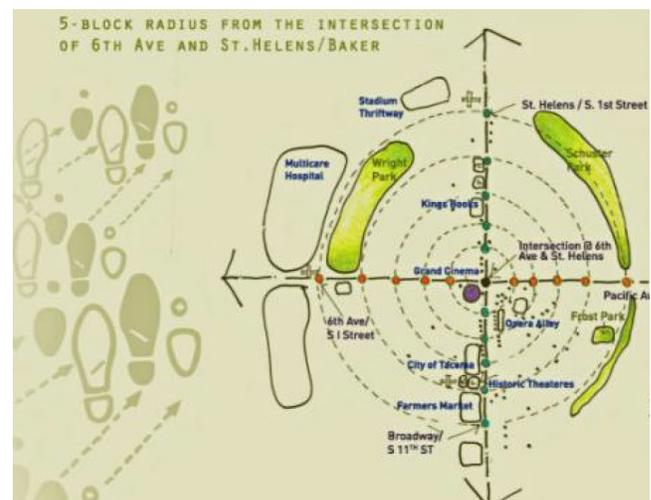


FIG. 7-7 The Theater District Association’s visioning diagram of “walkable urban neighborhood” elements illustrating 6th and St. Helens as a community focal point.

Connections to the Foss Waterway

Although located in close proximity to the Foss Waterway, one of downtown Tacoma’s most attractive urban amenities, the North Downtown Subarea is physically separated from it by a steep slope, and by I-705 and the railroad tracks that parallel the shoreline. The few points of connection for pedestrian access to the waterfront and the Foss Waterway Esplanade occur on the Schuster Slope (via the Bayside Trails), and at 4th, 11th, and 15th Streets.

Recent and planned transportation infrastructure projects, such as the Murray Morgan Bridge rehabilitation and the Schuster Parkway corridor project, have recognized the importance of the connections between downtown and the Foss Waterway, and provide improvements that aid pedestrian access to the waterfront (see Projects section of this chapter).

Gateways

Downtown Tacoma has a number key gateways, or areas that capture a high degree of visibility and a sense of transition and entry. Urban design for these areas should be emphasized not only as places to pass through, but also as places in their own right, through the appropriate use of traffic calming, landscaping, lighting, public art and building outlook.

Gateways are identified by the following:

- Provide identity and meaning to the arrival experience and clearly cross a threshold of scale.
- Exhibit an intensity of activity
- Clearly articulate the emphasis on mode shift to that of human scale through design considerations.

North Downtown gateways identified in the Downtown Element of Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan include the following:

- Division & St. Helens
- 7th & Broadway
- 11th & Yakima

The Theater District Association (TDA), a coalition of neighborhood residents, business owners, art organizations, churches and social services, has identified 6th and St. Helens as an additional gateway. The group has initiated community-funded improvement projects focused on placemaking at this gateway, including the installation of the Goddess Garden and Goddess of Commerce statue at the intersection, a temporary interactive art installation, and several community events located at the intersection.

The group continues to work toward realizing its vision of this north gateway as the center of a walkable urban neighborhood (see Figs. 7-6 and 7-7). The TDA was announced as a finalist for a Neighborhoods USA (NUSA) award for its work on this North Theater Gateway Project (see the Economic Development Chapter for more information on the NUSA award).

Bicycle Facilities

There are currently few bicycle facilities on downtown streets, and those that exist are primarily shared lanes, or “sharrows,” such as those on St. Helens Ave north of South 9th Street, along South 7th Street between Pacific and Commerce, on Commerce between South 7th and South 9th Streets, and on Pacific Avenue between South 7th and South 17th Streets. However, citywide plans for expanding the network of bicycle lanes and shared-use trails include several projects that would serve cyclists traveling to and through the North Downtown Subarea (see the Projects section of this Chapter, below). The recent Stadium Way Arterial Project included the addition of bicycle lanes between the I-705 entrance and the intersection of Stadium Way and North Tacoma Avenue.

Although bicycle facilities within the North Downtown Subarea are currently limited, the Mobility Master Plan (MoMAP) has made expanding active transportation network a priority. Two of the “Top 4” bicycle facility projects that were identified in the MoMAP for prioritized implementation are located primarily in North Downtown (see the Projects section below for details).

Bicycle racks can be found at scattered locations throughout the Subarea, and secure, covered bicycle

parking can be rented at the Pacific Plaza and Park Plaza North parking garages. Businesses can also request free bicycle racks from the City to be installed public sidewalks in front of their business location.

The City of Tacoma has focused specific recent effort on engaging the downtown business community in promoting cycling as an active transportation choice and as a means of not only getting around, but also shopping within downtown. In November of 2013, the City hosted a “Bikes Mean Business” workshop to educate business owners and business district leaders about the connection between “biking local” and shopping local, and how welcoming bicyclists can be a profitable marketing strategy. In early 2014, the City of Tacoma announced a bicycle grant program for business districts to encourage the support of more bicycle customers and to promote cycling visibility. The City is offering up to \$500 per district to bicycle-related projects with business district approval.

Bike Share

The City of Tacoma is working with Alta Bicycle Share on a feasibility study for providing bike share in Tacoma. Bike share is an on-demand bicycle rental program designed for short trips, and functions as another mode of public transportation. Alta Bicycle Share is currently assembling a report that will assess potential bike share station areas, identify important issues, and recommend infrastructure needed for the program to be successful. See the sidebar on Puget Sound Bike Share for a description of a pilot Bike Share program in Seattle.

Transit

North Downtown’s multiple transit assets and continuous street grid (see Fig. 7-4) provide those who live, work and play downtown with a range of mobility options. The Commerce Street transit hub is served by many local and regional bus routes as well as the soon-to-be-expanded downtown light rail system. Although the Subarea currently has robust transit infrastructure, opportunities exist for improved multimodal connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and nearby activity centers.



Puget Sound Bike Share is a partnership of public and private organizations working to bring bike sharing to King County. Our vision is to provide King County residents and visitors access to a low-cost, fast, flexible, and convenient transportation alternative with economic, social, and environmental benefits to the region.

Bike sharing is an innovative approach to urban mobility, combining the convenience and flexibility of a bicycle with the accessibility of public transportation. Bike share systems consist of a fleet of bikes provided at a network of stations located throughout a city. Bikes are available on demand to provide fast and easy access for short trips. As a mode of public transportation, bike share is very good at recovering a large portion of its operating costs from user fees.

Puget Sound Bike Share is readying for a 2014 launch in Seattle, the first phase of which will involve the deployment of about 500 bicycles at 50 streetside stops. The location of the stations will be decided through a public process.



www.pugetsoundbikeshare.org/

TABLE 7-1 BUS ROUTES SERVING NORTH DOWNTOWN TACOMA (APRIL 2014)

Route	Primary Corridor/s Traveled in North Downtown	Route Destinations	Average Weekday Trips	Span of Bus Service
PT 1	6th Ave/Pacific Ave	Tacoma Community College, Downtown Tacoma, Parkland TC, Spanaway Airport, Walmart	52	4:30am - 10:30pm
PT 2	Market/S. 19th	Downtown Tacoma, Bates Technical College, Tacoma Community College, University Place, Lakewood Towne Center	39	6am - 10pm
PT 3	S. 9th/Tacoma Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Mall, Lakewood Mall Transit Center	31	6am - 9pm
PT 11	6th Ave/Division/Broadway	Port Defiance Ferry Terminal, Proctor, University of Puget Sound, Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma General Hospital	12	7am - 6pm
PT 13	Tacoma/St. Helens	North End, Downtown Tacoma, Museum of Glass, Tacoma Dome Station	12	6am - 5pm
PT 14	Division/St. Helens	Proctor, University of Puget Sound, Downtown Tacoma, Museum of Glass, Tacoma Dome Station	12	6am - 5pm
PT 16	N. I/St. Helens	Tacoma Community College, Proctor, Downtown Tacoma	15	6am - 8pm
PT 28	S. 13th	Tacoma Community College, Central Tacoma, Downtown Tacoma	21	7am - 8pm
PT 41	Commerce/Pacific	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Station, McKinley Hill, 72nd St. Transit Center	23	5am - 8pm
PT 42	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Art Museum, America's Car Museum, Tacoma Dome Station, Hillsdale, 72nd St. Transit Center	13	7am - 7pm
PT 45	Commerce/Yakima	Downtown Tacoma, Parkland Transit Center	14	6am - 7pm
PT 48	Commerce/Pacific	Downtown Tacoma, Lakewood Mall Transit Center	24	5:30am - 9pm
PT 53	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Mall Transit Center, University Place, Tacoma Community College	14	6am - 7am
PT 57	Commerce/S. 9th	Downtown Tacoma, Hilltop, St. Joseph Medical Center, Tacoma Mall	26	6am - 8pm
PT 102	S. 9th/Pacific Ave	Tacoma General Hospital, Downtown Tacoma, Dome District, Gig Harbor	5	3pm - 6pm
PT 400	Commerce/Pacific	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Station, Puyallup, Washington State Fairgrounds, South Hill Mall Transit Center	27	5am - 8:30pm
PT 500	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Fife, Federal Way	16	6:30am - 10pm
PT 501	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Fife, Milton, Federal Way	13	6am - 8pm
ST 590/594		Downtown Tacoma, Lakewood, Seattle	85	4am - 10pm
IT 603/605/612		Downtown Tacoma, Lakewood, Olympia/Lacey	28	5:30am - 8pm

Transit Providers: PT = Pierce Transit ST = Sound Transit IT = Intercity Transit (Olympia/Thurston County)

Pierce Transit

Pierce Transit is the primary provider of local bus service in Pierce County. The agency has a significant stake in the future growth of the North Downtown Subarea and provides several key services within this neighborhood. For example, the Commerce Street Transit Center, located between S. 9th Street and S. 11th Streets, provides a point of connection for most local and Regional bus routes. Furthermore, there are several principal transit streets and corridors located within the North Downtown Subarea, which include (but are not limited to): Tacoma, Division, 1st, and Pacific Avenues along with significant service on St. Helens Ave, Market St, Broadway and S. 9th St. Pierce Transit routes in the North Downtown Subarea connect residents, businesses and visitors in the area to critical destinations outside of North Downtown such as Lakewood Towne Center, Tacoma Community College (TCC), various Transit Centers, Park and Rides and other neighborhoods within the City of Tacoma such as the Dome and Brewery Districts. There are also additional transit options available provided by Sound Transit and Intercity Transit.

Over the past several years, Pierce Transit has experienced a significant decline of service due to the Great Recession. The agency experienced a significant decline in sales tax revenue, which provides over 70% of the funding for local fixed route bus service, which led to a 37% reduction in bus services. This resulted in Pierce Transit employing strategies such as fare increases, reduced management, delayed/eliminated capital projects and facility upgrades, and lean process improvements for a more balanced budget. Pierce Transit's service is currently at 427,000 service hours, compared to a total of 617,000 back in 2008. These cuts and decline in local fixed bus service have led to a 50% decline in bus ridership system-wide. In addition, budget revenue forecasts projected an additional 28% cut in service in September 2013. However, there was an 8% increase in sales tax revenue and the Board of Commissioners of Pierce Transit determined that the agency could maintain current service levels through June 2015 and possibly beyond.

Despite budget cuts and reductions in service, Pierce Transit was heavily invested in preserving service in areas with high ridership and providing efficient, effective service to where it was needed. Between 2008 and 2014, bus ridership dropped from 133,504 average daily riders (about 57 average daily riders per stop) to 67,286 (about 26 riders per stop). However, the decrease specifically within the North Downtown Subarea was minimal, which underscores the importance of Pierce Transit's commitment to the social and economic growth of the Subarea. Ridership in the North Downtown subarea decreased from 8,301 in 2008 to 7,750 riders on an average weekday in 2014 - a 6% decrease rather than the 50% drop in ridership that occurred system-wide. The following table compares service within North Downtown to Tacoma's Central Business District (CBD) and the greater Pierce Transit System as of February 2014:

TABLE 7-2 COMPARISON OF PT SERVICE AREAS

	North Downtown Subarea	Tacoma CBD	Pierce Transit Service Area
Total number of riders (%)*	7,750	10,325	67,286
Average daily riders per stop	103 riders per stop	71 riders per stop	26 riders per stop
<i>*Represents total percentage of all riders within Pierce Transit's Service Area</i>			

As the Table 7-2 suggests, The North Downtown Subarea represents a significant portion of Pierce Transit's riders and represents some of the most highly used transit facilities in the county.

Pierce Transit is currently focusing on developing innovative service solutions for various cities in Pierce County via their new Business Development Office. This office provides more tailored localized service to various assets in different cities, spearheaded by different community investment teams and an extensive community engagement process. The agency is also currently in the process of developing its Long Range 2040 Plan, which is anticipated to be completed for adoption in early 2015. The planning process includes developing service scenarios and creating a draft plan for future service. Routes serving the North Downtown Subarea are identified in Table 7-1.

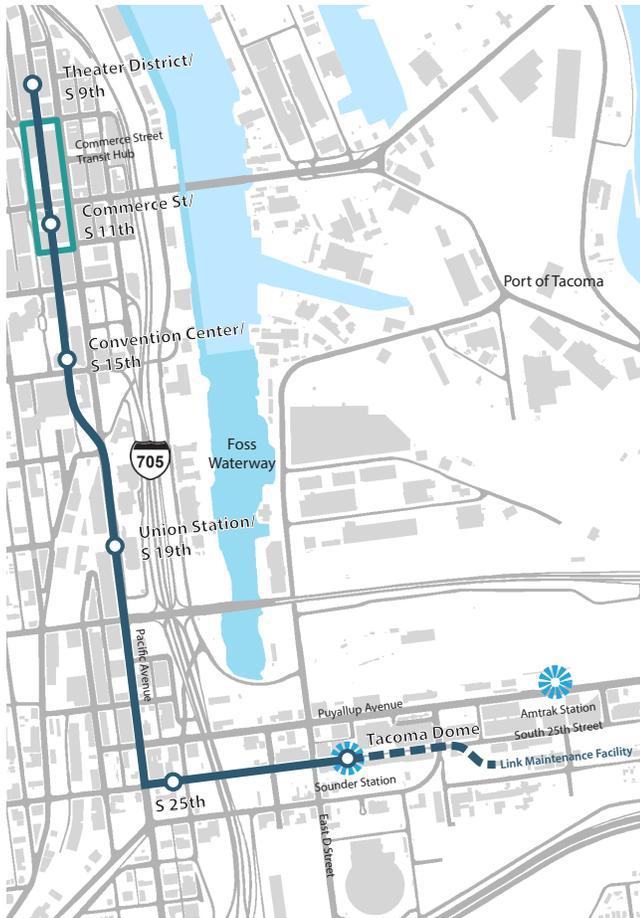


FIG. 7-8 Map of existing LINK Light Rail Service in downtown Tacoma.

Tacoma Link

Tacoma Link light rail currently travels 1.6 miles through downtown Tacoma on East 25th Street, Pacific Avenue, and Commerce Street, with stops at six stations:

- Tacoma Dome
- South 25th Street
- Union Station/South 19th Street
- Convention Center/South 15th
- Commerce Street/South 11th
- Theater District/South 9th

Link trains run every 12 to 24 minutes depending on the time of day. Service is available from 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday and holidays. Currently, all rides on Tacoma Link are free.

As Sound Transit’s only fare-free service, Tacoma Link has provided free rides since it opened for service in 2003. When service began, it would have cost more to collect fares than those fares would generate. However, ridership on Tacoma Link has increased to one million rides per year, which would make fare collection worthwhile. Following comprehensive public outreach in summer 2013, including an open house and public hearing in Tacoma, Sound Transit made the decision to start charging fares.

Beginning in September of 2014, \$1.00 fares will be collected on Tacoma Link, to increase to \$1.50 in September 2016. Youth riders will pay a fare of 75 cents, while senior and disabled riders will pay 50 cents to ride Tacoma Link in 2014, with an increase to 75 cents in 2016. Fares collected will cover a portion of operating costs. For more on the Tacoma LINK expansion project, see the Projects section below.

Roadways

North Downtown's street grid is continuous but irregular. In general, blocks and alleys within the Downtown Core and St. Helens Districts run north-south and are approximately 750' long and 200' wide. The grid shifts significantly at Division Avenue to more or less parallel the shoreline, and blocks within the Stadium District are oriented NW-SE. Stadium District blocks are also smaller, approximately 325' long and 150' wide.

Principal arterials and connections within the North Downtown Subarea include Stadium Way, Division Avenue, Schuster Parkway, North Tacoma Avenue, I Street, South 9th Street, South 11th Street, and South 15th Street. The I-705 freeway spur can be accessed at South 13th Street and exits onto South 15th Street. It also has both on- and off-ramps at South 7th Street.

The Downtown Element of the Tacoma Comprehensive Plan establishes the following street classifications in the North Downtown Subarea:

- Pedestrian/Retail: Pacific, Broadway, and Tacoma Aves
- Transit Priority: Commerce St, Market St, Tacoma Ave, Pacific Ave
- Connector: "A Street", 6th Ave, 9th St, 11th St, 13th St, 15th St
- Bicycle Boulevard: Fawcett Ave
- Urban Residential: Local Access Streets in the St. Helens, Hillside, and Nob Hill areas

Transportation Modeling

In December 2013, the City of Tacoma adopted the South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS,² which included transportation modeling. Scenario-specific forecasts were generated using the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Regional Travel Demand Model. Because the South Downtown Subarea and Hilltop Subarea planning processes were concurrent, the study area for the modeling was an aggregate of the South Downtown and Hilltop Subareas.

Overall, the results of the South Downtown modeling projected no significant negative impacts on transportation, even at the highest intensity buildout scenarios analyzed. Based on these results, we conclude that the buildout scenario for the North Downtown EIS "Action Alternative" would similarly not result in significant negative impacts on transportation. We believe that the South Downtown results are applicable to North Downtown for two main reasons:

1. The buildout scenario development intensities are similar for North and South Downtown
2. North and South Downtown have a similar street grid and transit access

² Tacoma South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS, 2013.

RECENT PROJECTS

Pacific Avenue Upgrade

Pacific Avenue, the City’s original “main street,” is one of the most important streets within the Subarea and within Downtown in general. The street currently suffers from an inconsistent street design and gaps in the urban fabric due to parking garages, brownfield sites and other issues. The long term vision for Pacific Avenue is to restore the street to its former prominence as Tacoma’s first and foremost walking street.

The Pacific Avenue Streetscape project, which broke ground in November 2012, was focused on realizing this goal. The project included the installation of right-of-way improvements in a ten-block area on Pacific Avenue from South 7th to South 17th streets. Key components were innovative stormwater design and pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and vehicle complete streets concepts.

Improvements included new and upgraded sidewalks, new curbs and curb ramps, landscaping, public art, street furnishings, historic streetlights and roadway repaving. A new “Eurocobble” intersection at South 8th Street and a crisscross catenary lighting system from South 7th to South 9th streets creates a new event space. Fourteen rain gardens were installed to treat stormwater before it enters the Thea Foss Waterway downslope from Downtown. As of March 2014, nearly all project components are complete.

Stadium Way Upgrade

The Stadium Way Arterial Project, completed in September of 2014, was implemented with the goal of improving access for all modes of transportation. The project aimed to rehabilitate the deteriorating street, which provides an important connection between Downtown, Interstate 705, and the Stadium District.

The project included pavement replacement, street lighting upgrades, a traffic signal at South 4th Street, bicycle lanes, coordination of new utilities, landscaping



FIG. 7-12 A rendering from the Stadium Way Arterial project depicting crosswalk improvements and pedestrian facilities at a Commencement Bay overlook.



FIG. 7-13 The Murray Morgan Bridge nearing construction completion in 2012.

and the implementation of other Complete Streets concepts. Several retaining walls were also constructed as part of the project, including the restoration of retaining wall along Schuster Parkway.

The nearly \$10 million project is primarily funded by federal grants that were supplemented with State and local matching funds.

Murray Morgan (11th Avenue) Bridge Rehabilitation

In 2007, the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) found the Murray Morgan Bridge structurally deficient and closed it to vehicular traffic due to safety concerns, eliminating an important direct route between Downtown and the Port of Tacoma.

The bridge is both a national and state registered historic structure, a critical emergency access route and a beloved local landmark. The City stepped forward in 2010 to take possession of the Murray Morgan Bridge with a plan to rehabilitate it rather than replace it.

Construction began in winter of 2011, and the bridge reopened in February of 2013. The bridge was retrofitted to meet all safety requirements, provide full access to vehicles and to accommodate marine traffic. New bicycle lanes, improved pedestrian facilities and ADA access enhance the ability for students and others to reach the Center for Urban Waters, the Tacoma Youth Marine Center, and other quickly developing locations on the east side of the Foss Waterway.

A new elevator and stairs will link Downtown to Dock Street and the west side of the Foss Waterway, providing a physical connection for pedestrians to the waterfront. As of Spring of 2014, the elevator had not yet cleared the building department's permitting process.

The project budget was approximately \$57 million, which included \$11 million in State funds, \$26 million in federal funds and a \$20 million federal loan.

STRATEGIES

Engineering Codes

Explicit language can be added to the engineering section of the Tacoma Municipal Code to set forth a framework for the City Engineer to secure traffic analyses for specific projects and to require appropriate mitigation. For model code language describing Traffic Impacts Assessments, see Appendix D in the South Downtown Subarea Plan.

RECOMMENDATION M-1: Move traffic analysis and mitigation for the North Downtown Subarea from SEPA to new engineering codes.

Level of Service Standards

The Transportation Element of the *Tacoma Comprehensive Plan* sets Level of Service (LOS) standards citywide, and currently requires LOS "E" on arterial corridors and LOS "D" on all other arterials and connectors. In 2003, the PSRC revised their LOS standards, considering additional measures such as travel time, transit service levels, pedestrian, bicycle, etc. The PSRC recommendation for all urban centers is LOS E-mitigated.

- With the intent of optimizing utilization of the existing transportation network while minimizing potential impacts on walking, cycling, transit use, community development potential, and the environment, the following revisions of LOS standards are proposed for the North Downtown Subarea:
- Within the Subarea, the City will by operate streets and intersections at LOS E or better.
- Future changes and/or improvements to designated transit corridors will, where practicable, maintain a minimum average delay for transit vehicles equivalent to or less than the vehicle delay associated with Level of Service D.

Vehicle LOS will be measured for selected intersections, streets, and roadways in the Subarea based on one of

the following two methodologies, to be selected at the discretion of the City:

- A modified version of the methodology used by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to determine the severity of congestion at specific locations over a 24-hour period (Annual Average Daily Traffic to one-hour capacity ratio, or AADT/C), or,
- The methodology contained in the most recently published version of the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) published by the Transportation Research Board.

RECOMMENDATION M-2: Set the motor vehicle level of service standard to LOS “E” and the transit level of service to LOS “D”.

Thresholds of Significance for Mode-Specific Impacts

In addition to Level of Service (LOS) standards, the City establishes the following thresholds of significance for impacts to accessibility and mobility. Future changes and/or improvements to designated transit corridors in the study area will, where practicable, maintain a minimum average delay for transit vehicles equivalent to or less than the vehicle delay associated with Level of Service D (as defined in the latest edition of the Highway Capacity Manual). The designation of key transit corridors will occur as part of the City’s update to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, currently underway. Treatments that may be utilized to maintain transit LOS include but are not limited to designated transit only lanes, transit signal priority, transit queue jumps and treatments at transit stops.

RECOMMENDATION M-3: Establish specific thresholds of significance for transit service.

Monitoring

To enable regular evaluation of Plan implementation, adaptive management and mitigation, and to inform planning for operation of and investment in transportation facilities and services, the City of Tacoma will collaborate with WSDOT, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, Intercity Transit, and other public agencies to collect, analyze and report transportation and land use performance data to the public every five years, with baseline data collection to be completed by 2015. Subject data include:

Motor vehicle traffic counts at connections between the state highway and local street systems, including state highway ramp termini located within or immediately adjacent to the Subarea

- Transit ridership (including vehicle passenger loads in relation to vehicle seated capacity)
- Transit vehicle delay at key intersections
- Point-to-point transit vehicle travel times
- Parking occupancy and turnover (on-street and off-street) in selected areas
- Volumes of pedestrian and bicycle traffic at selected screenlines
- Intercept travel surveys of the occupants of selected new or redeveloped buildings

ACTION M-4: Implement a monitoring program to collect transportation and land use performance data every five years.

Adaptive Management

The City of Tacoma will work with transportation service providers and private property owners to adaptively manage the provision of transportation facilities and services and land use plan implementation as necessary to mitigate any identified significant impacts to access or mobility within the Subarea. Mitigation may include measures such as:

- Expanding the use of parking pricing or limiting the supply of off-street parking.
- Adopting more aggressive commute trip/ vehicle trip reduction regulations.
- Providing additional financial incentives for vehicle trip reduction, mode shift, and/or off-peak travel.
- Expansion of multimodal transportation facilities and services.

If significant impacts to transit speed, capacity or reliability are identified, the City will pursue appropriate mitigation measures, such as:

- Funding, or assessing fees on new and/or existing development, to fund additional transit service
- Dedicating street right-of-way to provide transit-only lanes in key corridors
- Installing Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and/or queue jumps at selected intersections
- Other corridor specific transit speed, reliability and capacity improvements agreed to in collaboration with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit.

RECOMMENDATION M-5: Implement an Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program to address potential future impacts to mobility as the Subarea builds out.

Development Thresholds for Impact Fees

As the Subarea gains population and employment, there will be an increasing need for multimodal transportation investments that support travel by walking, biking, and transit. Implementing developer impact fees is one common approach for funding such infrastructure. However, Tacoma does not currently assess any impact fees. North Downtown's real estate market creates a financial environment in which impact fees could pose a significant encumbrance to near-term, catalytic development projects.

The proposed solution is a developer impact fee that is phased in over time based on the amount of new development that has occurred in the local area. A phased-in approach would avoid counterproductive encumbrance of near-term projects, and if properly designed, would only begin to impose impact fees after the real estate market had recovered. It would also make sense from a timing perspective, because revenues would only be generated after new development had begun to create a significant need for new multimodal transportation investments.

This approach would require careful selection of growth thresholds that would trigger the activation of the impact fees, and the fees would need to be consistent with the Growth Management Act requirements. This Subarea Plan's recommendation is for two tiers of development thresholds that would trigger a graduated set of impact fees. The optimum threshold levels would require further analysis to determine, but the proposal is to start with trigger levels of 10 million and 20 million square feet of new development. Determination of the impact fee amounts and the types of multimodal transportation projects that would be funded require further planning and analysis. Transit facilities should be exempt from these impact fees.

RECOMMENDATION M-6: Develop and implement a phased-in developer impact fee system to fund multimodal transportation infrastructure investments as North Downtown builds out.

Development Thresholds for Transportation Management Programs

Consistent with its authority under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the City of Tacoma may require property owners to develop and implement a Transportation Management Program (TMP) intended to reduce the share of tenants and employees who access the site by driving alone. Such programs may be required as a condition of approval for development projects in order to reduce potential parking and traffic impacts on the surrounding community.

Employer-based TMPs frequently include incentives and services for employees, while property manager TMP's may target physical elements that support the use of active transportation. Program elements may include secure and covered bicycle parking, shower facilities, commuter information centers, and charging market-based prices for the use of off-street parking facilities. Tacoma's downtown transportation advocacy group, *Downtown On The Go*, is a potential partner for developing and administering TMPs. Several cities in the region, including Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland and Redmond, currently require selected property owners to implement TMPs as a condition of development approval.

To address the increasing need for TMPs as the Subarea grows, and to avoid overly encumbering near term catalyst redevelopment projects, this Subarea Plan proposes the establishment of new development thresholds to trigger requirements for TMPs. The proposed TMP threshold is five million square feet of new development in the Subarea, after which predefined TMPs would be required as conditions of approval for all future development. Final determination of the optimum threshold and the specific requirements for TMPs would require further analysis.

RECOMMENDATION M-7: Develop and implement regulations that require Transportation Management Programs with specific elements, triggered when new development exceeds predetermined threshold levels.

Transportation Demand Management

As the Subarea redevelops over time, the City could consider implementing the following transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to reduce the vehicle trip generation of new and existing buildings:

Universal Transit Passes

In recent years, a growing number of transit agencies have teamed with developers, employers and universities, and even residential neighborhood associations to provide universal transit passes. These passes typically allow the holder to take unlimited rides on local and regional transit services for a low monthly fee, and the cost is born by the university, employer, property manager, or developer. Passes could be provided by individual developments, or potentially on an area-wide basis. In addition to reducing vehicular traffic, a Universal Transit Pass program would likely reduce parking demand (the Eco-Pass program in Santa Clara County, California resulted in a 19% reduction in parking demand).³

Transit agencies in the Central Puget Sound Region, including Pierce Transit and Sound Transit currently offer a universal transit pass, called the ORCA Business Passport (ORCA stands for "One Regional Card for All"), for sale to selected employers. The ORCA Business Passport is a comprehensive, annual transportation pass for employers, which provides pass-holding employees with unlimited access to regular service on:

- Sound Transit's Link Light Rail, ST Express buses, and Sounder commuter rail trains
- King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Community Transit, Everett Transit, and Kitsap Transit buses
- King County Water Taxis and Kitsap Transit Foot Ferries

Pass-holders are also eligible for a 100% fare subsidy for vanpools and vanship service offered by participating transit agencies.

3 Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, 1997

Participating employers are required to purchase a pass for every benefits-eligible employee, spreading the cost of the benefit over all employees and providing an incentive for all to use transit. Per employee costs vary based on the size of the employer and the location/transit accessibility of the employment site.

Additional information is available at:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/MetroTransit/ORCABusinessPassport/prospective-customers/what-is-orca-business-passport.aspx>

Commuter Trip Reduction (CTR)

The State currently requires employers with employment sites where 100 or more employees are scheduled to arrive for work during the morning peak period to implement a CTR program to encourage employees to walk, cycle, share rides, take public transportation, telecommute, and/or to work a flexible schedule that allows them to commute during off-peak hours (RCW.70.94.531). The City of Tacoma maintains a robust Commuter Trip Reduction Program, but could consider extending it to employment sites 10-99 employees. To minimize the impact of administrative costs on small employers, the City could utilize the assistance of Tacoma commute reduction advocates *Downtown on the Go*.

RECOMMENDATION M-8: As the Subarea redevelops, consider implementation of Universal Transit Pass Programs and/or a reduction of the employee threshold for the requirement of Commuter Trip Reduction Programs.

NOTE: Parking is addressed in the Land Use Chapter.

PROJECTS

Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion

The existing 1.6 mile Tacoma Link light rail line currently serves six stations from the Theater District to the Tacoma Dome Station. Trains run every 12 minutes during the day and served over 1,000,000 riders in 2013. In 2008, voters approved a regional transit expansion plan that included funding to expand Tacoma Link.

Urban light rail not only provides high-quality transit service, but also can be a powerful catalyst for economic development. The proposed Link expansion through the heart of North Downtown would be a major positive step towards meeting both local and regional goals for sustainable development.

The 2013 Sound Transit Tacoma Link Expansion Alternatives Analysis (AA) and SEPA Addendum establishes the following purpose statement:

“The purpose of the Tacoma Link Expansion is to improve mobility and access to the regional transit system for Tacoma residents, employees, and visitors by connecting the existing Tacoma Link system with Tacoma’s major activity centers and destinations within the City. The project will strive to serve traditionally underserved populations and neighborhoods in Tacoma while providing economic benefit to the City as a whole with a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive investment.”

The document identifies the following needs that would be addressed by the project:

- The need to meet the rapidly growing connectivity needs of the corridor and the region’s future residents and workers
- The need to link downtown with other growth centers in the City and encourage economic development within those areas
- The need to serve increasing commute trips to the downtown core via transit

- The need to support the land use planning goals of the South Downtown Subarea Plan, the MLK [Hilltop] Subarea Plan and the other Growth and Employment centers
- The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the City of Tacoma

Opportunity Mapping

“Opportunity Mapping” conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC) Growing Transit Communities (GTC) Partnership confirm the Tacoma Link expansion project’s statements of purpose and need, and provide justification for a high priority for funding. GTC worked with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity to develop opportunity maps for current and potential station areas throughout the region. “Opportunity” is a condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed or excel. Opportunity maps illustrate where opportunity rich communities exist, assess who has access to those neighborhoods, and identify needs to be remedied in opportunity poor neighborhoods.

GTC’s maps show U.S. Census Tracts shaded by level of access to opportunity as defined by 20 indicators: education, economic health, housing and neighborhood quality, transportation/mobility, and health and environment. The mapping for downtown Tacoma and vicinity is shown in Fig. 7-14. All of the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment falls within areas categorized with a “very low” opportunity index.

A primary purpose of GTC’s opportunity mapping efforts is to help guide future transit investments across the region. Ideally, extensions of the light rail system should maximize the connection of low opportunity areas to jobs and resources. Based on North Downtown’s “very low” rating, the Tacoma Link expansion should have a relatively high priority for funding.

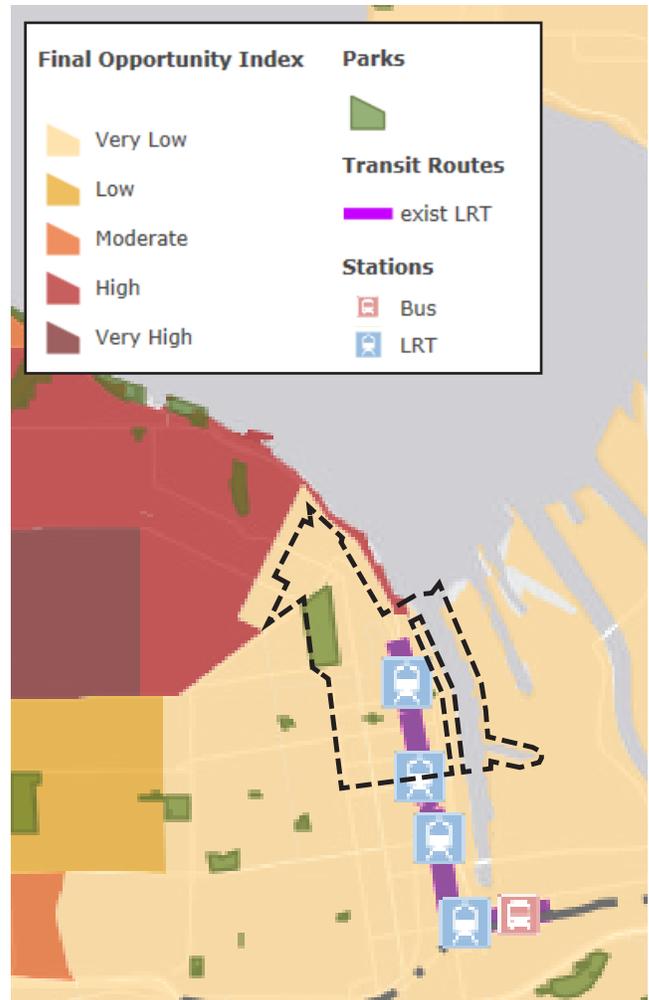


FIG. 7-14 Excerpt from Final Opportunity Index web map by Kirwan Institute, based on five major categories of opportunity (with overlay of North Downtown Subarea boundary)

FIG. 7-15 SELECTED ALIGNMENT FOR THE TACOMA LINK EXPANSION



Corridor Determination

On May 23, 2013 the Sound Transit Board approved the North Downtown Central Corridor, known as “E1,” as the corridor to move ahead with further environmental review for an expansion of the Tacoma LINK light rail system. The preferred E1 corridor will provide a high-quality, frequent transit connection between North Downtown and Hilltop, South Downtown, the Brewery District, and the Dome District.

Sound Transit’s Pre-Alternatives Analysis identified several corridors that would meet community and Sound Transit objectives. Of all eight corridors analyzed, the E1 corridor would serve the largest population in 2040. It would also serve a high number of existing and forecast jobs, a high percentage of low-income and minority residents, a large number of community institutions, and would travel through four historic

districts (Old City Hall, Wright Park and Seymour Conservatory, Stadium-Seminary, and North Slope).

The February 2011 Tacoma Link Expansion Stakeholder Group Final Report highlights the potential benefits of the preferred E1 corridor:

1. Serves underserved communities – in that it has the greatest ability to generate economic development.
2. Serves Tacoma neighborhoods – connecting downtown and other core areas to the Hilltop Subarea including the MultiCare and Franciscan hospitals and Evergreen College
3. Serves downtown Tacoma – potentially creating a loop opportunity between the Hilltop Subarea, the downtown, waterfront, UW-Tacoma, brewery, and dome districts – as well as providing the opportunity for future expansions into the North,

North End Central, and South Downtown Central corridors.

4. Captures high ridership – attracting current and new riders from urban households bound for activities downtown, and at waterfront, UW-Tacoma, Hilltop, Brewery District, and Dome District destinations.
5. Completes regional connections – including the opportunity to link the North, North End Central, Hilltop and South Downtown Central corridors to the intermodal connections at Freighthouse Square to Sound Transit’s Central Link and SeaTac as well as Amtrak.
6. At a comparatively low cost – to serve North Downtown and the Hilltop Subarea as well as provide the basis for eventual expansion into the North, North End Central, and South Downtown Central corridors.

Alignment Determination

On February 27, 2014, the Sound Transit Board identified an alignment along Stadium Way and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way to the Hilltop District for the planned expansion of Tacoma Link light rail service. The alignment has now advanced to the environmental phase of the project for further study and refinement.

The identified alignment would continue north from the existing Theater District Station along Stadium Way to the intersection of North First Street and Division Avenue, then from the intersection of North 1st Street and Division Avenue to Martin Luther King Way and South 19th Street. In this alignment, an expanded Tacoma LINK would operate in both directions on Martin Luther King Way.

After the preferred corridor was selected in May 2013, Sound Transit worked with city leaders, business owners, and residents to define and evaluate alignment options within the corridor. The alignment decision was based in part on the fact that the Stadium District and Hilltop community represent some of the City’s most densely populated areas, with several major health care facilities serving the area.

During environmental review, the alignment will undergo conceptual engineering. Station locations will also be identified, and site options for an expanded maintenance facility in the vicinity of the existing facility near East 25th and G streets will be studied. The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to select the final alignment after the environmental review.

Tacoma Link Expansion Funding

Construction of the Tacoma Link expansion project is contingent on securing local and federal funding. The Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) discretionary Small Starts Program is the federal government’s primary financial resource for supporting locally planned, implemented and operated transit capital investments such as Tacoma Link. Small Starts funding is awarded nationwide on a competitive basis following a rigorous, objective review of potential projects. Sound Transit plans to request Small Starts funds for the Tacoma Link expansion project.

To be eligible and competitive for these federal funds, Sound Transit has been conducting an alternatives analysis (AA) for the project. An AA is the local process for evaluating costs, benefits, and impacts of a range of alternatives designed to address mobility problems and other locally identified objectives in a defined transportation corridor, and for determining which particular investment strategy should be advanced for more focused study and development. The goal of an AA is to provide the public, local officials and potential funding partners with sufficient information to decide: “What is the best transportation solution for addressing our problems? What are its benefits? How much will it cost? And how are we going to pay for it?”

Project funding assumptions include \$50 million from Sound Transit tax revenues, \$50 million from a funding partner, and \$50 million from a Small Starts federal grant. Sound Transit is working with its partners, especially the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma community, to identify an affordable project that is the right fit for Tacoma and the necessary funding. Depending on the project scope,

budget and revenue, these assumptions may need to be revised.

RECOMMENDATION M-9: Work with Sound Transit to secure Small Starts funding for the Tacoma LINK light expansion project.

Maximizing the Tacoma Link Expansion Opportunity

The City of Tacoma has engaged in multiple planning efforts that demonstrate the City’s commitment to creating high-density, walkable, bikeable, mixed-use urban centers that can fully leverage transit investments such as the Tacoma Link expansion. Also, this Subarea Plan provides multiple recommendations that support integration of the proposed Tacoma Link expansion.

Downtown Subarea Planning

Over the past three years the City has been administering Subarea Plan/EIS projects for the three Subareas that comprise the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center—North Downtown, South Downtown, and Hilltop. The primary, unifying goal of all three of these planning efforts is to maximize the accommodation of a population and employment growth and thereby promote sustainable development. As that goal is realized, an expanded light rail system in North Downtown and Hilltop will be a key component for providing equitable access to housing and jobs.

Regional Planning for Transit Communities

As described in the Context Chapter of this Plan, the City has been actively engaged with the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC) Growing Transit Communities (GTC) Partnership, which was funded by a Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities Grant. GTC’s primary goals are to:

- Attract more of the region’s residential and employment growth to high capacity transit communities

- Provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes near high-capacity transit
- Increase access to opportunity for existing and future residents of transit communities

A key component of GTC is a “Regional Compact” that allows municipalities, agencies, non-profits and other stakeholder groups to make a non-legally binding commitment to work in partnership over time to achieve the above goals. The City of Tacoma is an enthusiastic signatory to the GTC Regional Compact.

The South Downtown Subarea Plan was funded as one of GTC’s three “catalyst” demonstration projects, intended to be national examples of planning for equitable transit communities. Although not funded by GTC, the Hilltop and North Downtown Plans are heavily focused on goals and strategies that support the intent of GTC, and are intended to create walkable, mixed-use communities, of which high-quality transit such as the Tacoma Link expansion would be an essential component.

Transit-Supportive Zoning

In order for transit investments to be effectively leveraged, zoning in the vicinity of transit stations must be “transit supportive.” According to the PSRC, transit-supportive zoning should enable “transit-oriented development that achieves transit-supportive densities and mix of uses within transit station areas and corridors.”⁴

The City of Tacoma’s existing zoning in the vicinity of the preferred alignment for the Tacoma Link expansion meets the qualifications for transit-supportive zoning. As described in the Land Use chapter, the alignment passes through DR, RCX, and NCX zoning districts. The DR zone allows for both commercial and residential uses at relatively high densities, with allowed height up to 90 feet, and allowed FAR up to 10. The highest development capacities can only be achieved if projects incorporate “design features,” several of which enhance a transit supportive built environment.

4 Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit, Puget Sound Regional Council, December, 2013.

NCX and RCX zones both allow for commercial and residential uses at transit-supportive densities. For NCX in the North Downtown Subarea, the base allowed height is 65', and can be increased up to 85' with bonuses. The RCX zone allows 60' height.

To further encourage transit-supportive densities, the City could consider adding height and/or FAR bonuses for projects within one or two blocks of the proposed Link alignment.

RECOMMENDATION M-10: Current zoning is highly transit-supportive and no changes are recommended at this time; zoning should be subject to future review once Link is operational and as further redevelopment occurs.

Multimodal Station Access

Efficient multimodal access to station areas is a key component for maximizing the benefits of a transit investment. The City of Tacoma has shown a strong commitment to improving multimodal transportation, most recently in the City's Mobility Master Plan (MoMaP), which received a Vision 2040 Award from the PSRC in 2011.

The goal of the MoMaP is to develop a comprehensive network of bikeways and pedestrian walkways citywide to enhance the safety and comfort of all users. The MoMaP recommends multiple projects in the North Downtown Subarea to improve bicycle facilities, pedestrian connections, and intersection crossings, and described in the Active Transportation Section, below. These improvements will improve non-motorized access to transit throughout the City, including the future Tacoma Link expansion stations.

Steep grades in the vicinity of some parts of the proposed alignment will require special attention to ensure effective non-motorized accessibility to stations. Connections to Stadium Way from the west will be particularly challenging.

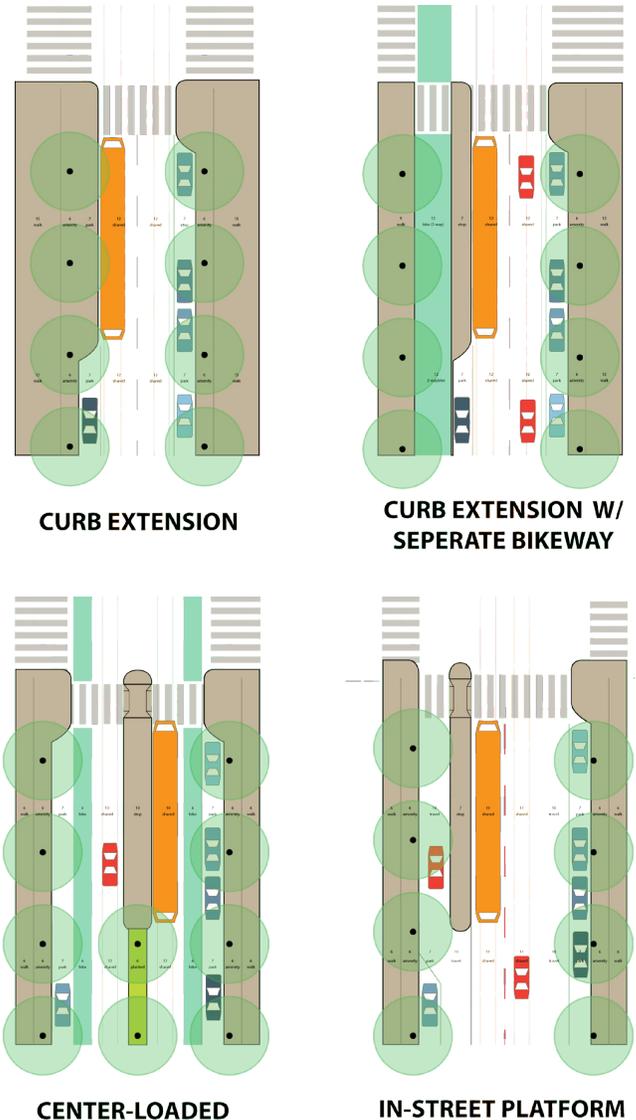


FIG. 7-16 Streetcar loading options from Tacoma's Complete Streets Design Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION M-11: Collaborate with Sound Transit to share responsibility for improvements that support multimodal access to the future stations on the Link expansion.

RECOMMENDATION M-12: Establish a citywide policy that prioritizes projects to improve non-motorized access to Link stations.

Transit Priority Streets

In 2009, the City of Tacoma adopted a “Complete Streets” policy that includes a Transit Priority Street type. The goal of the policy is that “every street built will be ‘complete’ in terms of safely and comfortably accommodating all users and fostering a sense of place in the public realm.” Complete Streets is a nationally-recognized term referring to streets and sidewalks that are designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe and convenient access and travel for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities, as well as freight and motor vehicle drivers.

To support their Complete Streets Policy, the City established Mixed-Use Center Complete Streets Design Guidelines. The guidelines define a Transit Priority Street type as follows:

The Transit Priority typology applies to streets that currently have, or are planned to have, frequent bus service, streetcar routes, or other form of high occupancy transit such as bus rapid transit.

The stated objectives for Transit Priority Streets are:

- Convenient, frequent and attractive transit service receives highest emphasis
- High quality pedestrian environment
- Vehicles are provided access, but flow is regulated/deterred by frequent transit stops and pedestrian crossings
- Bicycles are accommodated in some manner

The Design Guidelines also include specific recommendations for street design to accommodate streetcars, as shown in Figure 7-16. These options

should be evaluated according specific context of each future station site, once determined.

As noted in the Existing Conditions Section above, the streets in the North Downtown Subarea currently designated as Transit Priority Streets are Commerce St, Market St, Tacoma Ave, and Pacific Ave. To ensure the most effective preparation for, and future integration of the Tacoma Link expansion, the City should designate all the streets on the proposed alignment as Transit Priority Streets.

RECOMMENDATION M-13: Designate the following streets on the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment as Transit Priority Streets: Stadium Way, North 1st Street, Division Avenue, and Martin Luther King Jr Way.

RECOMMENDATION M-14: Apply the City of Tacoma’s Mixed-Use Center Complete Streets Design Guidelines to Transit Priority Streets on the Tacoma Link expansion alignment.

Station Location and Design

The siting and design of the Tacoma Link expansion stations should determined in close collaboration with Sound Transit such that investments support North Downtown’s goals to improve the pedestrian environment, support the business district, and catalyze redevelopment.

RECOMMENDATION M-15: Actively engage Sound Transit to collaborate on station siting and design that will most effectively leverage the transit investment and support North Downtown’s vision and goals.

Parking

The off-street parking requirements surrounding the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment are compatible with transit, and allow for reduced parking near the future stations.

The proposed alignment from the existing station on Commerce St. to as far north as South 6th Avenue is within the City’s Reduced Parking Area, where there

are no off-street parking requirements. Along the remainder of the proposed alignment, the standard off-street requirements are 1.5 stalls per residential unit, and 2.5 stalls per 1000 square feet of commercial space. However, for buildings within 10 feet of the Core Pedestrian Streets Division Ave and North 1st Street—which comprise segments of the alignment—there are no off-street requirements.

To address any on-street parking utilization issues that may arise from the Link expansion, the City could implement a range of possible parking management tools. Multiple strategies are discussed in the Land Use chapter of this Plan.

Close collaboration with Sound Transit will also be essential for effectively managing parking in the vicinity of the Link expansion. This intention is described in the Land Use chapter and captured in **RECOMMENDATION LU-6**, which states: *Coordinate parking resource provision and management strategies with the expansion of LINK Light Rail service and with downtown transit in general.*

Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP)

Another example of the City’s proactive approach to promoting growth that justifies transit investments is a grant funded project to study the application of a program recently enabled by State legislation called the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP). In 2013, the City of Tacoma received a Watershed Protection and Restoration grant of \$44,500 from the Natural Estuary Program to study the potential for implementing LCLIP. Through this study, Tacoma will continue its efforts to promote urban redevelopment in its downtown area, while at the same time conserving farm and forest resource land outside the city.

LCLIP combines a real estate tool called Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) with a public infrastructure financing tool called tax increment financing (TIF). It is a tool to provide much-needed funding to finance urban open spaces and amenities like plazas, parks, sidewalks and bike lanes that create and support vibrant, livable cities. For further details on LCLIP, see the Land Use chapter.



FIG. 7-17 Historic images of the Schuster Parkway, circa 1893. Source: 2011 Future of the Bayside Trails Public Workshop/Schuster Parkway Conceptual Design Report.



FIG. 7-18 A conceptual rendering from the 2013 Schuster Parkway Promenade Conceptual Design Report illustrating the recommended configuration for the Schuster Parkway Promenade, an elevated causeway.

Schuster Corridor Improvements

The Schuster Parkway corridor is currently a mix of industrial and residential uses, park space, shoreline and greenbelt habitat, rail and arterial transportation. When constructed in the 1970s, the Schuster Parkway and the Bayside Trails constructed along the adjacent slope replaced underutilized historic rail lines, creating vehicular and pedestrian connections along the corridor. However, the Bayside Trails eventually became overgrown and suffered from the effects of erosion, leading to their closure in 2000 (see the Open Space chapter for more information on the Bayside Trails).

Achieving greater mobility in the Schuster corridor was identified in several planning projects beginning in the 1980s with the Dome to Defiance Report published by the City Club of Tacoma. Other planning documents identify Schuster Parkway corridor as a future non-motorized connection, including the 2013 Shoreline Master Program and the 2010 Mobility Master Plan (MoMaP).

Schuster Parkway Promenade Project

The Schuster Parkway Promenade Project, which will consist of shared-use promenade along Schuster Parkway, is an integral element of the City's vision for expanding and further developing a connected non-motorized network through this corridor.

The promenade will connect the Thea Foss Waterway Esplanade and Downtown Tacoma with Old Town and the Ruston Way shoreline promenade. This trail serves as a critical segment of the 8.5 mile "Dome to Defiance" multi-modal access system that stretches from the Tacoma Dome in South Downtown to Point Defiance Park in the North end of Tacoma, linking together the City's most populous neighborhoods with commercial, recreational, and cultural destinations. Completing the 1.6 mile Schuster Promenade segment will enhance the capacity of the system for all users, promoting active transportation and healthy living.

The following project components were developed through a year-long study and public outreach effort

that began in 2012 and was completed in December of 2013. That effort produced a conceptual design and feasibility study that recommended the following components of the project:

- Shared-use promenade abutting Schuster Parkway, from South 4th Street overpass to McCarver Street in Old Town
- NE 30th Street: Road diet from Old Town to Schuster Parkway to accommodate the promenade
- Elevated promenade along slope sections to enhance views of Commencement Bay, provide for separation from traffic, improve slope stability, and ensure ADA compliance with a relatively flat grade
- Signal and intersection improvements at S 4th Street and Schuster Parkway

The remnants of the Bayside Trails provide opportunities to connect from the Schuster Parkway Promenade to Stadium Way and adjacent upland neighborhoods, and the Schuster slope urban forest could provide important recreational and commuting opportunities to nearby residents. Vegetation management and erosion control on the Schuster slope will occur as a project separate from the construction of the Schuster Parkway Promenade. See the Open Space chapter for more discussion of the Bayside Trails.

RECOMMENDATION M-16: Implement the Schuster Parkway Promenade multimodal corridor project, including key connections to and along the waterfront:

- **Connect the South 4th Street overpass with Pacific Avenue, effectively linking the Prairie Line Trail with the Dome to Defiance trail system**
- **Connect Stadium Way and adjacent neighborhoods to the new Schuster Parkway Promenade and the waterfront via the Bayside Trails**

Active Transportation Projects

Because walking and cycling can meet the need of many daily trips and also provide connections to longer trips on transit, improving active transportation is a high priority for North Downtown.

Mobility Master Plan Bicycle Projects

In general, the principles and recommendations of Tacoma’s Mobility Master Plan (MoMaP) align with the goals of the North Downtown Subarea Plan. Where possible, proposed MoMaP projects that are located within the Subarea should be prioritized to reflect the City’s intention to focus significant growth in the Subarea. The MoMaP proposes the following bicycle infrastructure projects in or near North Downtown:

Short term:

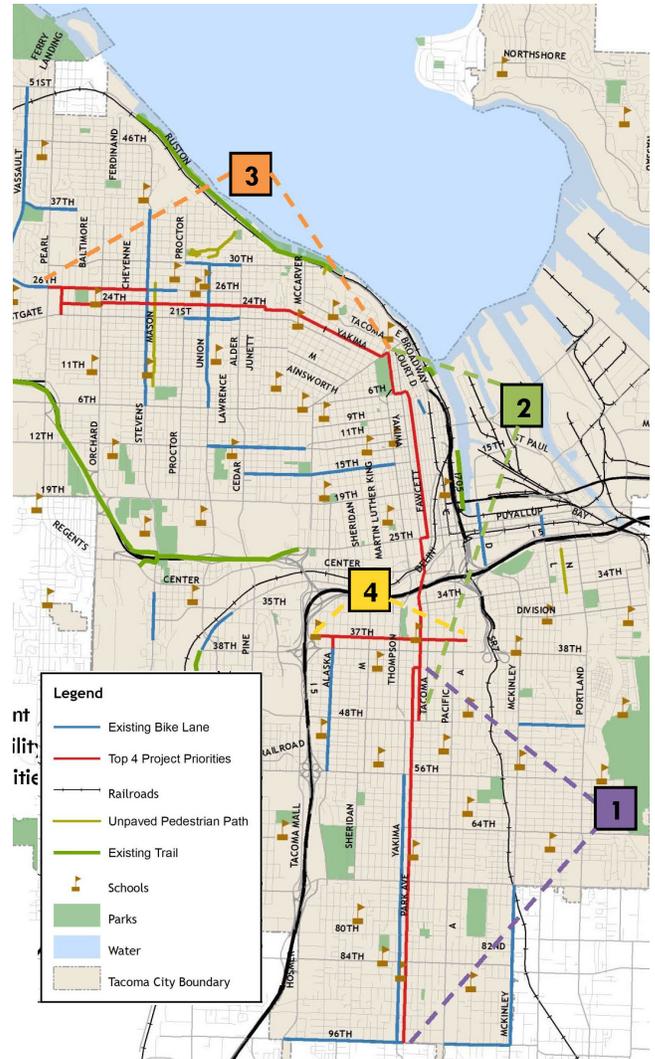
Top 4 Bikeways

The City of Tacoma has dedicated \$500,000 in Energy Efficiency and Block Grant funds and \$500,000 in bond funding to begin implementation of the MoMaP, starting with a collection of priority projects designated as the “Top 4 Bikeways.” These four bikeway projects total over 13 miles and represent 10% of the build-out for MoMaP bicycle facilities (see Fig. 7-19). Two of these facilities, the second and third priority projects, are located within the North Downtown Subarea:

- *Top 4 Bikeway #2:* A 1.7-mile bicycle lane along Tacoma Avenue/South G Street/Delin Street from South 48th Street to South 25th Street, a connecting sharrow on South 25th between Tacoma and Fawcett, and a 1.5-mile bicycle boulevard on Fawcett Avenue between South 25th Street and 6th Avenue
- *Top 4 Bikeway #3:* A .5-mile bicycle boulevard on 6th Avenue between South G Street and Fawcett Avenue and South G Street between Division Avenue and 6th Avenue, a cycle track connection on Division Avenue, a 3.4-mile bicycle boulevard on Yakima Avenue/North 24th Street/North 23rd Street from Division Avenue to North Highland Street, a connecting bicycle boulevard on North Highland Street, and a .8-mile bicycle lane on North 26th Street from North Stevens Street to Pearl Street

In addition to the Top 4 Bikeways listed above, other short-term MoMaP bicycle infrastructure projects within North Downtown include:

FIG. 7-19 The “Top 4” MoMaP bikeways projects

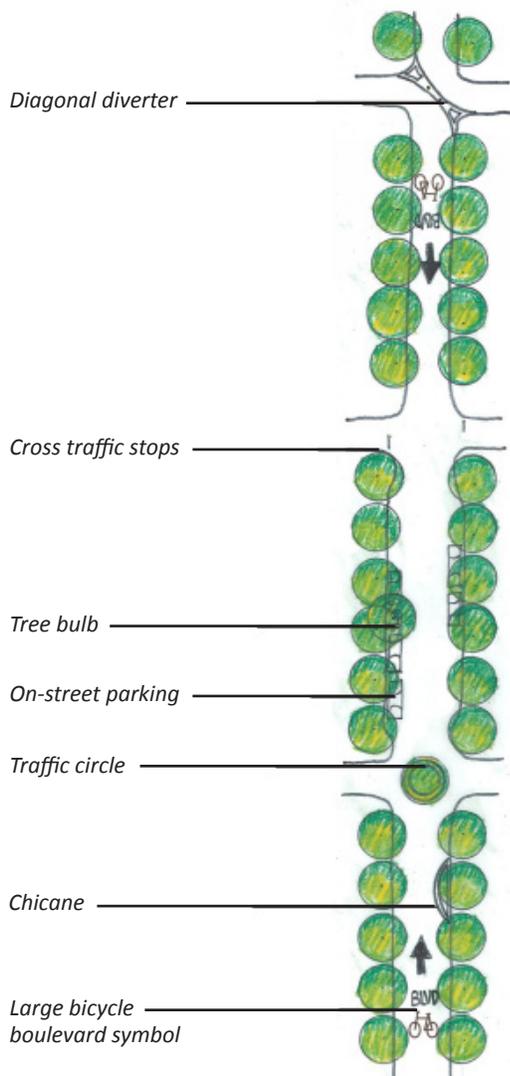


Priority	Street	From-To	Length	Facility Type
1	S Park Ave	E 96th St - S 40th St	3.51	Bicycle Boulevard
1	S 40th St	S Park Ave - S G St	0.06	Bike Lane
2	Tacoma/ S G St/ Delin St	S 48th St – S 25th St	1.72	Bike Lane
2	S 25th	Tacoma – Fawcett	0.07	Sharrow
2	Fawcett Ave	S 25th St - 6th Ave	1.45	Bicycle Boulevard
3	6th Ave	S G St - Fawcett Ave	0.1	Bicycle Boulevard
3	S G St	Division Ave - 6th Ave	0.4	Bicycle Boulevard
3	Division Ave	Yakima Ave - N G St	0.07	Cycle Track
3	Yakima Ave/N 24th/N 23rd	Division Ave - N Highland St	3.4	Bicycle Boulevard
3	N Highland St	N 21st St - N 26th St	0.11	Bicycle Boulevard
3	N 26th	N Stevens St - Pearl St	0.79	Bike Lane
4	S 37th St	A St - S Hosmer St	1.55	Bicycle Boulevard
4	S Alaska St	S 38th St – S 37th St	0.1	Bike Lane
			Total Length:	13.33 miles

Bicycle Boulevards

According to the MoMaP, “Bike Boulevards are streets where motorists and cyclists share the road. Pavement markings and signage indicate bicycle route. Bike Boulevards are used on lower-volume, residential streets. They are designed to be comfortable for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Bike Boulevards often include traffic calming measures such as traffic circles, rain gardens, or street trees as well as wayfinding signage.”

Typical Bicycle Boulevard features



- Bike lanes on 6th Avenue between Ainsworth Avenue and East Broadway (.87 mi)
- Bike lanes on South 11th Street between Ferry Street and Pacific Avenue (1.25 mi)
- Bicycle Boulevard on Broadway beginning at North Tacoma Avenue and connecting to the Prairie Line Trail near South 17th Street (1.43 mi) - see sidebar next page for more information on Bicycle Boulevards
- Shared lane markings along Dock Street between South Schuster Parkway and East D Street (1.62 mi)
- Shared-use path on the east side of the Foss Waterway from the Murray Morgan Bridge to East 3rd Street (.42 mi)

Medium term:

- Bicycle boulevard on Court D and St. Helens Avenue from South G Street to South 9th Street (.64 mi)
- Bicycle boulevard on J Street from North 3rd Street to South 27th Street (1.87 mi)
- Schuster Parkway Trail (1.30 mi)
- Bike lanes on McCarver Street and North Tacoma Avenue from North Schuster Parkway to Tacoma Avenue South (1.50 mi)
- Bike lanes on North 21st Street, North I Street, and South I Street between North Alder Street and Division Avenue (1.66 mi)

Long term:

- Shared-use path on the east side of the Foss Waterway from South 11th Street to Waterway Park (1.65 mi)
- Bike lanes on South 11th Street from Dock Street to East Portland Avenue (.85 mi)

Bicycle infrastructure improvements should be made in accordance with Complete Streets policies of accommodating all users within the right of way.

RECOMMENDATION M-17: Implement the City’s proposed active bicycle infrastructure projects in North Downtown as identified in the Mobility Master Plan.

Intersection Improvements

The MoMaP recommends intersection improvements for locations that previously experienced pedestrian crashes or that were identified by members of the public as needing improvement. Intersection improvements include high-visibility crossings, curb extensions, ADA-compliant curb ramps, and other treatments as outlined in the Design Guidelines (see Appendix E of the 2010 Mobility Master Plan Study for more information).

MoMaP priority locations for intersection improvements within the North Downtown Subarea include:

- South Commerce Street & South 9th Street (originally identified in the MoMap as a short-term priority, this project was completed as part of the Stadium Way Arterial Improvement project)
- South I Street & Division Avenue (short-term)
- South 9th Street & Tacoma Avenue South (short-term)
- Tacoma Avenue & North 1st Street (medium-term)

In addition to these MoMaP priority projects, North Downtown community stakeholders have also indicated that the intersection of 6th & St. Helens is in need of an upgrade - see the Existing Conditions section of this chapter for more information.

RECOMMENDATION M-18: Implement improvements to the North Downtown problem intersections identified in the in the Mobility Master Plan.

Pedestrian Connectors

The shared-use trails identified in the MoMaP represent significant pedestrian connections both within the Subarea and to adjacent districts:

- Schuster Parkway Trail
- Continuous shared-use paths on the east side of the Foss Waterway from East 3rd Street to Waterway Park

In addition to these multimodal trails, the MoMaP also identifies the following project as a long-term priority:

- Hillclimb access from Stadium Way to Schuster Parkway (.23 mi)

RECOMMENDATION M-19: Implement the City’s proposed pedestrian connector projects in North Downtown as identified in the Mobility Master Plan.

North Downtown Sidewalk Survey

Existing sidewalk data is incomplete and inconsistent across the Subarea, making it difficult to identify and prioritize areas for which pedestrian improvements are needed.

RECOMMENDATION M-20: Survey the existing sidewalk network in order to compile a complete and current set of data to use for the identification and prioritization of pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects.