

Overview of Facilities and Programs

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is responsible for maintaining, upgrading, and monitoring the use of the City's system of streets, bridges, retaining walls, seawalls, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and traffic control devices. Seattle's transportation system includes 1,534 lane-miles of arterial streets and 2,412 lane-miles of non-arterial streets. The system also includes 150 bridges, 561 retaining walls, 479 stairways, and 1,000 signalized intersections in the public right-of-way that SDOT is responsible for inspecting and maintaining. Each year, the Department paves more than 26 asphalt arterial lane miles; repairs more than 6,600 feet of bridge and stair railings and more than 2,800 lane-feet of bridge decking; maintains or replaces more than 13,000 traffic signs; services 975 traffic signals; and raises and lowers the City's movable bridges more than 16,770 times.

SDOT's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) outlines the Department's plan for repairing, improving, and adding to this extensive infrastructure. SDOT's CIP is financed from a variety of revenue sources including the City's General and Cumulative Reserve Subfunds, state gas tax revenues, federal and state grants, Public Works Trust Fund loans, partnerships with private organizations and other public agencies, and bond proceeds. SDOT's \$98.0 million capital budget is appropriated as part of its \$193.5 million operating budget.

Highlights

- ◆ **Transportation Funding Package:** In August 2006, the Seattle City Council approved Bridging the Gap, a funding initiative proposed by the Mayor to repair and improve Seattle's streets, bike trails, sidewalks and bridges. The package includes a commercial parking tax and a business transportation tax to be phased in gradually starting in July 2007. In addition, the City Council approved a property tax levy to be voted on by Seattle citizens in November 2006. A new plan for this property tax measure – under which the term of the levy would be reduced to nine years and the annual growth rate in levy revenue would be capped at one percent, plus the value of new construction -- is under discussion as the 2007-2012 Proposed CIP is being completed. SDOT's 2007-2012 Proposed CIP includes approximately \$333 million in funding from Bridging the Gap revenues and from Limited Tax General Obligation bonds that would be serviced with a portion of the revenues.
- ◆ **Fremont Bridge Approaches and Electrical Major Maintenance:** SDOT received a \$20.5 million Federal Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) grant awarded by the Bridge Replacement Advisory Committee and two Public Works Trust Fund loans totaling \$11 million to replace the approaches and electrical and mechanical systems that raise and lower the Fremont Bridge. Construction began in 2005 and is scheduled to be substantially complete in 2008.
- ◆ **Aurora Transit and Pedestrian Improvements:** SDOT has assembled grant funds from both State and federal sources and is preparing environmental documentation for a project to construct pedestrian safety, roadway and transit speed and reliability improvements along Aurora Avenue North from N. 110th St. to N. 145th St. Design and construction work is completed in phases as funding allows. The first phase of construction is scheduled to begin in 2009 between N. 137th and N. 145th Streets.
- ◆ **Spokane Street Viaduct:** Design work to widen the existing structure to the north is scheduled to be complete in 2007. A parallel activity to plan and design an eastbound off-ramp to 4th Avenue South has been initiated and is expected to be complete by the end of 2007. Construction activity to widen the existing structure or build an off-ramp to 4th Avenue is uncertain and pending full funding.
- ◆ **Greenwood Avenue North:** SDOT received a \$2.2 million state Transportation Improvement Board grant and \$1.4 million federal TEA-21 grant to reconstruct and widen Greenwood Avenue North from N. 105th to N. 112th Streets. The project will provide pedestrian safety, transit speed and reliability, signal, lighting and drainage improvements and is scheduled to begin construction in 2008.

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- ◆ **Magnolia Bridge Replacement Project:** Subsequent to the Nisqually Earthquake, the City received a \$9 million Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant to prepare design and environmental documentation to replace the Magnolia Bridge. The environmental discipline reports evaluated four alternative alignments including rehabilitation of the existing bridge. In the spring of 2006, the preferred alignment was selected to construct a new bridge adjacent to, and south of, the existing bridge. Upon completion of the Environmental Assessment and the Type, Size & Location Study, design and construction plans are scheduled to begin in 2007. The total estimated cost is \$196 million with only \$10 million in funds currently available. Assuming a funding package can be assembled in time, construction could begin in mid 2009 at the earliest.
- ◆ **Mercer Corridor:** SDOT is finishing the environmental approvals and starting design on a project to revise the east–west connections from I-5 to Dexter Ave N. along the Mercer Street corridor, including changes to Valley Street, to improve regional mobility as well as neighborhood access and circulation. This project is a centerpiece for the revitalization of the South Lake Union neighborhood, which is expected to accommodate as many as 20,000 new jobs and 8,000 to 10,000 new households in the next 20 years, as well as the new South Lake Union Park.
- ◆ **Alaskan Way Tunnel and Seawall Study:** A Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) addressing refinements to the designs (stacked tunnel and elevated structure), how the project could be built (construction sequencing), transportation management options during construction, improvements to Aurora Avenue north of the Battery Street Tunnel, and the construction of a Steinbrueck Park lid was released in July 2006. Public hearings are scheduled for September 2006. Later in 2006, a construction approach will be selected; noise, traffic, economic and other project impact mitigation plans will be developed; utility relocation plans prepared; and the Environmental Impact Statement finalized for release in 2007. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed scoping for the EIS to accompany a cost-shared feasibility study to determine whether the Corps will participate in construction of the seawall. The EIS and study work will continue throughout 2006.
- ◆ **Arterial Major Maintenance and Other Paving Projects:** SDOT’s 2007 Proposed CIP provides a total of \$16.2 million for the Arterial Major Maintenance and Arterial Asphalt and Concrete Programs, including \$12.8 million from the Bridging the Gap funding package. These ongoing programs rehabilitate and resurface asphalt and concrete arterial streets to preserve and extend the life of street surfaces.

Project Selection Process

The City tries to balance three goals in making infrastructure capital investments:

- ◆ Rehabilitation of existing facilities to avoid the higher costs of deferred maintenance;
- ◆ Increase in the capacity of existing facilities to meet growing demand; and
- ◆ Development of new facilities to provide additional services.

SDOT prioritizes its projects to prepare recommendations on those to include in the budget, the CIP, and the grant development process. The process includes four steps.

Step 1: Identification of Transportation Needs

This step is an ongoing process during which projects for future funding are identified. These needs are developed from a number of sources (not listed in any priority order):

- Ongoing operations and maintenance programs
- Backlog of projects
- Projects in current CIP
- Transportation Strategic Plan

- Projects from SDOT planning
- Neighborhood plans and citizen requests
- Coordination with partner agencies

Step 2: Identification of non-discretionary programs and projects.

This step identifies non-discretionary programs and projects that must be budgeted for completion. Criteria for these items are as follows (not listed in any priority order):

- Mandated, with serious consequences for failing to meet the mandate (e.g. debt service, judgment and claims payments, Metro “Ride-Free Zone” payment, federal or state law mandates)
- Essential for the Department to function on a daily basis (e.g. accounting, payroll, human resources, facility rental, vehicles and equipment)
- Reimbursable services to other City departments or outside agencies (e.g. street use permitting, repairing utility cuts)
- Restricted funding services (e.g. support for Sound Transit, Monorail, Metro, Alaskan Way Viaduct)
- Services that generate revenue for General Subfund (e.g. parking)
- Currently in construction (stopping these projects would be more costly than completing them)
- Urgent safety or emergency need (e.g. landslide, sinkhole)

Step 3: Prioritization of Discretionary Projects

The projects remaining after Step 2 are then ranked based on a 100 point scoring system. This prioritization process evaluates each project based on its merits. Following are the criteria applied to this evaluation (not listed in any priority order):

- Safety
- Preservation and maintenance of infrastructure
- Cost effectiveness or cost avoidance
- Mobility improvement
- Economic development
- Comprehensive Plan/Urban Village land use strategy
- Improving the Environment

Step 4: Ordering Projects for Implementation

Once projects have been grouped into priority categories, they are evaluated to determine their readiness for funding and implementation. For example, even though a project may be a high priority, other circumstances may determine that the project is not ready for funding and implementation. Four criteria are used to make this determination (not listed in any priority order):

- Funding availability
- Interagency coordination
- Geographic balance
- Constituent balance

SDOT staff evaluate the results of steps 3 and 4 together to identify projects for which funding will be sought through grants, appropriations or other sources. Funded projects are incorporated into the CIP.

Anticipated Operating Expenses Associated with Capital Facilities Projects

In some projects, the Department has identified operations and maintenance costs of zero, or has not calculated a number (N/C). In these cases, the cost impacts of the project are either insignificant or are offset by cost savings realized by other projects. Projects that do identify operations and maintenance costs, such as the Burke Gilman Trail Extension and Lake Union Ship Canal Trail projects, have the costs built into the Department's operating budget.