



Puget Sound Regional Council

2024 FHWA REGIONAL COMPETITION: PROJECT SPONSOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

AGENCY: Seattle

PROJECT: Aurora Ave Transit Corridor and Safety Upgrades

Question #1: Since the identified scope is more a menu of possibilities than confirmed elements, the scoring team needs additional detail to understand the outcomes of the specific project for which funding is being requested, beyond the general results that can result from the program type. With this in mind, please describe specific outcomes intended to result from this project, and how the different scope options would help achieve those outcomes. If possible, please also provide information about how the specific scope elements and locations will be determined, and/or the basis for removing potential elements from consideration.

Answer #1: At the time of application, we are in the Planning phase and recently released several draft conceptual design alternatives for public feedback. Each of the draft concepts aim to address the operational deficiencies along the corridor, including pedestrian safety concerns, slow and unreliable bus operations, and other issues we described in our application. Common across all the draft concepts are new sidewalks where there are none or improved sidewalks where deficient, new signalized pedestrian crossing opportunities at least at every bus stop pair, better spaces for boarding and deboarding buses, dedicated transit lanes, and improved street lighting. Our design alternatives can be viewed [here](#); please note that the segment identified for this grant is Segment 4.

The targeted outcome of the project to improve safety, especially for the most vulnerable people using the street, and enhance transit reliability and access. We acknowledge the uncertainty in the scope and the difficulty of quantifying the specific benefits, but we would note all the conceptual design alternatives provides *substantial benefit for all modes* and each one will also provide *exceptional benefits for some combination of modes* – although it's premature to confirm which modes will benefit the most. For example, buses would receive (at a minimum) upgraded transit signal priority, stop consolidation, better bus zones to board and deboard passengers, new signs and markings to increase compliance with transit-only lanes, etc. In the most transit-focused alternative, buses would receive new center-running lanes that optimize travel time and reliability by minimizing interactions with general-purpose traffic, and even provide the

possibility of a future conversion from bus to light rail. Cyclists would see (at a minimum) wide and well-lit sidewalks buffered by planter strips in place of existing shoulders that are heavily compromised by parking, ponding, and other obstacles.

We are currently scoping our next phase of planning, which will include additional operational analysis, community and stakeholder engagement, agency coordination, preliminary design and cost estimating, and environmental review to identify a preferred design alternative. An alternatives analysis process will inform design decisions and will consider several criteria directly related to the project purpose and need, which could include safety, accessibility, equity, street operations, transit mobility, city and agency partner plan alignment, business access, property impacts, constructability, climate response, etc. We plan to conclude the Planning phase of the project by the end of 2026 and initiate the Design phase in 2027.

Question #2: During the presentation you mentioned removal of a bicycle element that had been noted in the application. Please provide additional information on this element and what will, and will not, be included in the scope.

Answer #2: We recognize the federal standard, and the practical necessity, to provide safe and welcoming space for people biking on Aurora Ave N. However, as we have not yet identified a preferred alternative, there is not yet a defined scope for this project and the bicycle facility type has yet to be determined.

Through our public engagement, we have heard that some members of the community want to see a dedicated bike facility on the corridor. In the draft concepts we released in March, which were meant to reflect community feedback, one option in each segment includes a buffered bicycle lane in both directions on the study corridor. However, all of the draft concepts would be a significant upgrade from existing conditions, providing a much safer and more welcoming environment for people on bikes with wider, buffered sidewalk, improved lighting, and safer street crossings.

Further analysis is required to determine the project scope and design specifics. In our next Planning phase, we will work through our Complete Streets review (both from the City and State perspective) to inform project scope and facility design for each segment of the corridor. In our alternatives analysis, we will also consider the presence and accessibility of parallel bike facilities by segment. In some areas, alternative north-south bike routes could provide connectivity for longer cycling trips with dedicated east-west bicycle connections and improved sidewalks on Aurora Ave N providing safe and direct access to the businesses and bus stops along the corridor. As we have not yet made this determination, we presume that our ratings will need to be based on the shared sidewalk alternative or a thoughtful and conservative averaging of the potential design options.