

RapidRide J Line
Seattle, Washington
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2021)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 5.2 Miles, 17 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$120.55 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$60.13 Million (49.9%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2026):	\$13.90 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2019):	14,700 Daily Linked Trips 4,469,100 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium-High
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) proposes to implement corridor-based bus rapid transit (BRT) connecting the University District neighborhood to downtown Seattle. The project is part of Seattle’s growing RapidRide BRT system, and features real-time arrival information, off-board fare collection, 2.3 miles of exclusive BRT lanes, and transit signal priority. King County Metro is expected to operate the service using existing repurposed vehicles branded for the RapidRide route. During weekdays, service is planned to operate every 6 minutes during peak periods and every 10 minutes during off-peak and evening periods. On weekends, service is planned to operate every 10 to 15 minutes at most times. The service is planned to operate 24 hours each day during weekdays and weekends.

Project Purpose: The corridor includes major destinations including the University of Washington, South Lake Union, Seattle’s central business district, and the International District. The Project provides intermodal connections to light rail, monorail, commuter rail, Washington State Ferries, and the Seattle Streetcar. SDOT expects the project to significantly improve transit service and support Seattle’s Urban Village Strategy for mixed-use, transit-oriented development in the corridor.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: The locally preferred alternative was adopted into the region’s fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in June 2015, and formally adopted by SDOT in July 2017. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in September 2017. SDOT anticipates completion of the environmental review process in early 2022, receipt of a construction grant agreement in late 2022, and the start of revenue service in September 2026.

Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2019): SDOT and King County Metro significantly revised the project because of decreased capital and operating funds caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project corridor is 5.2 miles in length versus the previous 6.1 miles with a new northern terminus at the University District Link station, instead of the Roosevelt Link station. As a result of this change, the project name has been revised from the

Roosevelt BRT to the RapidRide J Line. SDOT updated the project design and its construction inflation rate assumptions based on factors such as regional market conditions and COVID-19 impacts. The cost increased from \$90.21 million to \$120.55 million. The amount of CIG funding being requested increased from \$45.00 million to \$60.13 million, with the CIG share remaining at 49.9 percent.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG	\$60.13	49.9%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Program)	\$4.03	3.3%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program)	\$4.00	3.3%
State:		
State Regional Mobility Grant Program	\$6.00	5.0%
Local:		
Levy to Move Seattle Property Tax Revenues	\$39.56	32.8%
City Revenues (Inter-departmental and interlocal funding agreements)	\$6.83	5.7%
Total:	\$120.55	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: High

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- The average population density within one-half mile of station areas of 17,700 persons per square mile which corresponds to a High rating on FTA benchmarks. Total employment in the station areas is 267,900, which corresponds to a High rating. On-street parking in the central business district costs over \$30 per day, which corresponds to a High rating. The proportion of LBAR housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in King County is 3.11, which corresponds to a High rating.
- Downtown Seattle and the adjacent South Lake Union neighborhood are characterized by mid-rise and high-rise mixed-use office, residential, hotel, and institutional buildings. Along major arterials elsewhere in the corridor, commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family residential uses predominate. Neighborhoods closer to downtown consist of mainly low- and mid-rise multi-family housing, while neighborhoods farther from downtown consist of small-lot single-family housing. The University of Washington campus also partly falls within the corridor.
- The corridor is highly walkable, with pedestrian facilities and a compact street grid throughout, although Interstate 5 serves as a barrier to pedestrian passage in some areas.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-High

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Seattle’s comprehensive plan directs growth into identified Urban Centers and Urban Villages, and the corridor is entirely within three Urban Center and two Urban Village areas. Medium-high densities are targeted for Urban Centers and medium-high and medium densities are targeted for Residential Urban Villages. Seattle’s neighborhood plans encourage multifamily and mixed-use development adjacent to transit service while preserving single-family neighborhoods.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Zoning is generally transit-supportive. The commercial and multi-family residential zones found along major streets allow mixed uses and medium-high to high density development. Neighborhoods in the north part of the corridor are zoned for medium-low residential densities. Permitted densities are higher in transit station areas. Minimum parking requirements are waived in much of the corridor, and parking maximums are also in effect.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Regional and local government agencies have conducted transit-supportive planning and outreach for some time, mostly around the region’s existing and planned light rail system. Seattle provides density bonuses for affordable housing and participating in a transfer of development rights program. Major developments in Washington are subject to state environmental review, and Seattle has made use of a new provision that allows a single review for an entire plan area rather than reviews of individual developments.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: High

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* In 2020 and the first half of 2021, 131 projects were newly approved or completed within one-half mile of the alignment, including 22 commercial development projects, nine mixed-use developments, and over 7,100 residential units.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Over 16 million square feet of redevelopable land is located within a half mile of the project alignment. The city estimates that these parcels could accommodate over 65,000 residential units and approximately 20 million square feet of commercial development.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium

- Seattle has quantified its citywide affordable housing needs, and the comprehensive plan includes housing production targets by income category. Tools to expand affordable housing include: density bonuses; transfers of development rights; proceeds from a property tax levy to support housing affordable to low-income households; a property tax exemption for affordable housing set-asides; and affordable housing requirements in some neighborhoods. Two examples were provided of developments in the past decade in the corridor incorporating affordability-restricted housing; no examples were provided of proposed projects with an affordability component.

