Briefing Memo

Date: 4/17/2026

To: Mayor Katie Wilson

From: Angela Brady, P.E., Acting SDOT Director

Subject: Response to Executive Order 2026-01, Accelerating Transit on Denny Way

PURPOSE

SDOT is excited to present our response to Mayor's Executive Order (EO) 2026-01, directing SDOT to develop a plan for transit reliability improvements for Metro's Route 8 on Denny Way along with recommendations for additional corridors for transit priority investments.

SUMMARY

SDOT recommends a phased implementation approach along Denny Way, with completion by Fall 2026. The scope, illustrated in Appendix A, includes an eastbound bus lane between Queen Anne Avenue N and 2nd Avenue and between 5th Avenue and Stewart Street and associated operational improvements to align with King County Metro's fall service change on August 29. Implementation of project phases are scheduled to comply with FIFA construction moratorium periods.

Phase 1: West (May 2026)

- Install a southbound bus-only left turn lane on Queen Anne Avenue N onto Denny Way and an eastbound business access and transit (BAT) lane on Denny Way between Queen Anne Avenue N and 2nd Avenue.

Phase 2: East (August 2026)

- Establish an eastbound BAT lane between 5th Avenue and Stewart Street.
- Seattle Transit Measure (STM) invests in Route 8 service, to improve service to every 12 minutes during midday, seven days a week. Peak period service already operates at this level.

Monitoring and Evaluation (March 2026- June 2027)

- September–December 2026: Monitor transit travel times, intersection performance, traffic diversion, and safety metrics.
- January–June 2027: Modify operations as needed based on performance data and stakeholder feedback.

Supporting project activities are included in the attachments.

BACKGROUND

Budget

- The $4M budget for design and construction of both phases, the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, and monitoring and evaluation is from the 2024 Transportation

Levy (Category: Transit Improvements and Access to Light Rail; East-West South Lake Union Transit Connections)

- Seattle Transit Measure (STM) funding will support transit frequency improvements on Route 8 for Fall 2026, expected to be an increase of 2,000 – 3,000 service hours with King County Metro's Fall 2026 service change.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPTIONS

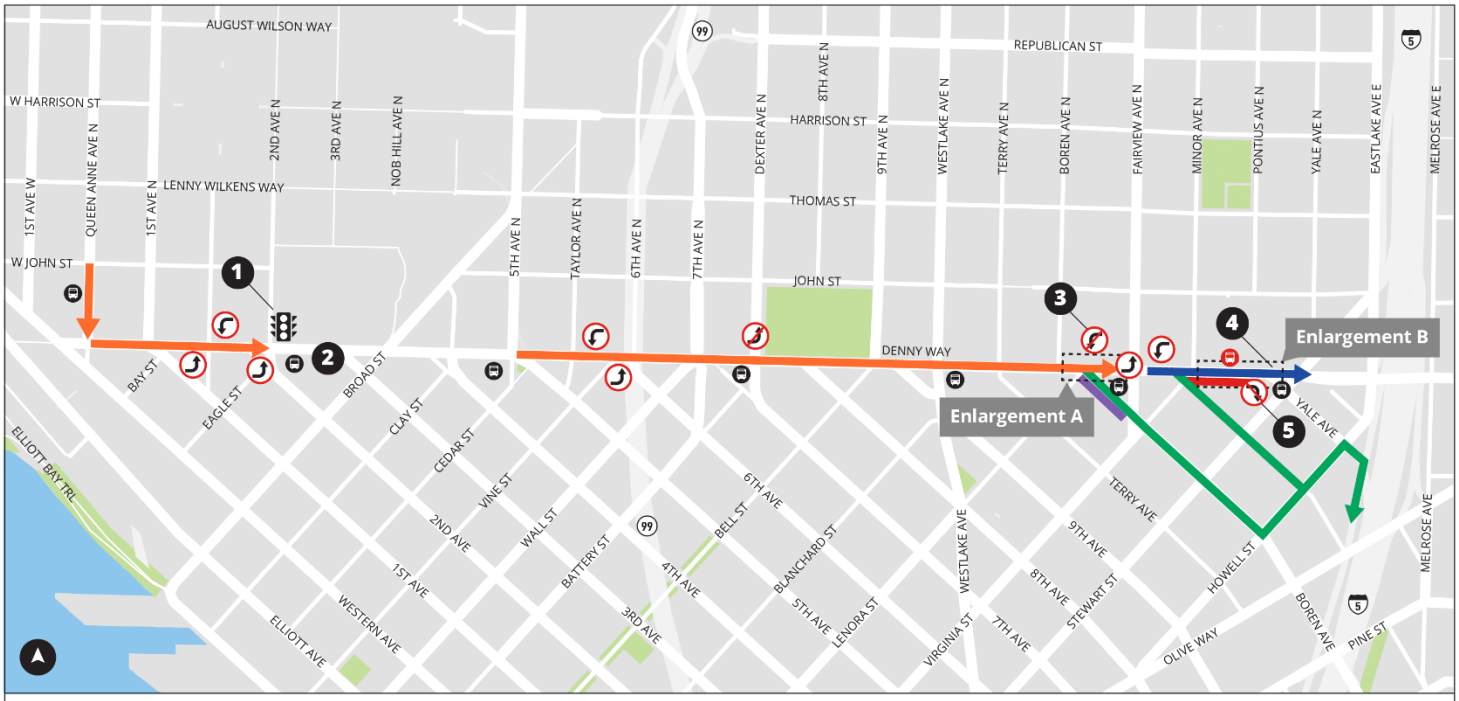
Additional Transit Corridors

SDOT developed recommendations for additional transit corridors, included in Appendix C, where transit priority investments can deliver high impact benefits for riders and the city. SDOT proposes to advance 1-2 corridors per year through the Levy-funded Transit Spot Improvement Program. There may be opportunities to expand these investments depending on the final elements included in an STM renewal package.

APPENDIX

- Appendix A – Denny Way Bus Lane: Proposed Scope of Work and Enlargements
- Appendix B - Denny Bus Lane Supporting Activities
- Appendix C – Additional Transit Corridor Investments

Appendix A – Denny Way Bus Lane: Proposed Scope of Work and Enlargements

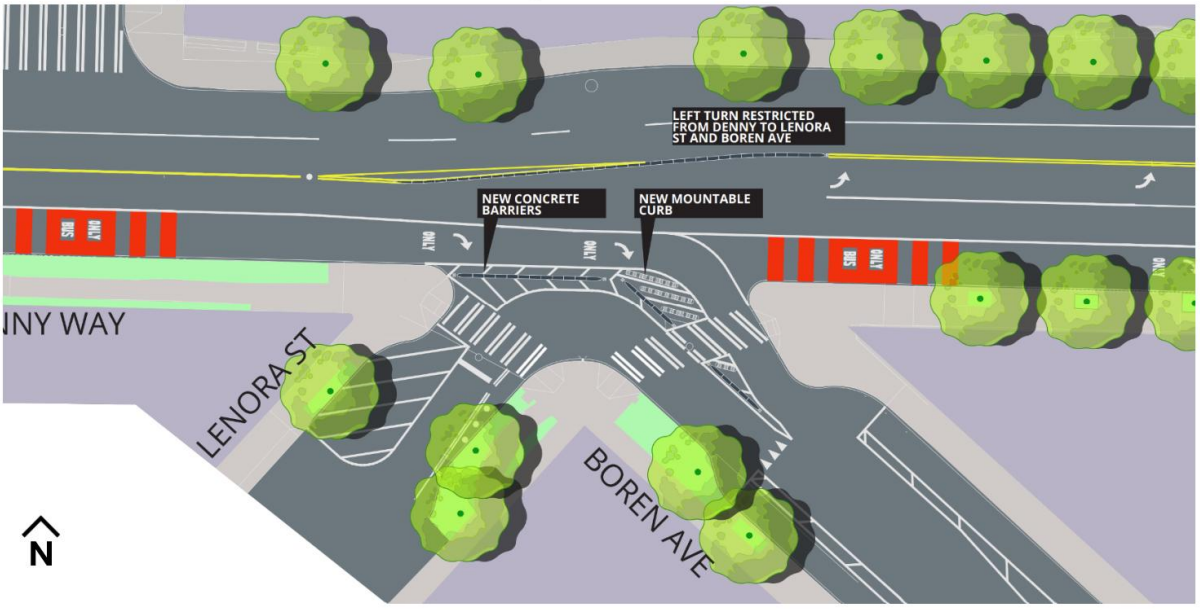


Denny Way Bus Lane: Scope of Work

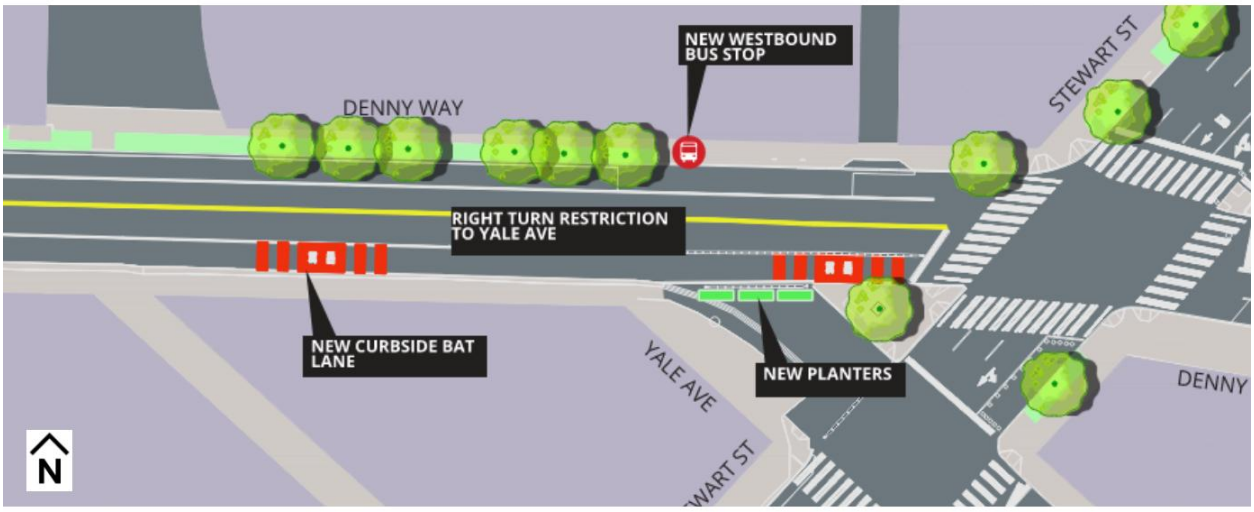
- New business access and transit lane (eastbound)
- Existing bus lane (eastbound)
- Turn lane removal (eastbound) and travel lane addition (westbound)
- On-street parking removal
- Existing Rt 8 stop (eastbound)
- New Rt 8 stop (westbound)
- New bus queue jump signal (eastbound)
- New turn restriction
- Left turns allowed
- New I-5 local access updates

1. Add EB queue jump at 2nd Ave
2. Transition segment from 5-lane to 4-lane cross section; 30% to 40% of EB vehicles turn right at 5th Ave, allowing for ideal location to end GP lane; not precluded from adding bus lane in future
3. Restrict WB left onto both SB Lenora and Boren
4. Reconfigure EB bus lane to be curb side between Fairview and Stewart, allows for two WB GP lanes
5. Restrict EB right onto Yale and Stewart

Enlargement A: Denny/Boren/Lenora Intersection



Enlargement B: Minor Ave to Stewart St



Appendix B- Denny Bus Lane Supporting Activities

- **King County Metro Service Coordination -** The implementation schedule aligns with King County Metro's Fall 2026 service change, enabling STM-funded Route 8 service increases, noted above, to coincide with Denny Way infrastructure improvements.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan -** SDOT will implement before-and-after monitoring, including, transit travel time and reliability for Route 8, impacts to intersecting north–south bus service, and general-purpose traffic operations. Baseline data will be collected prior to installation, with regular reporting during the first six months post-implementation. Findings will inform potential design modifications, such as signal and channelization adjustments.
- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM) –** A significant reduction in eastbound PM peak general traffic is necessary to maintain operations on Denny Way. We anticipate this reduction to occur through people using alternative routes to I-5 and shifting to other modes of transportation, supported by an SDOT TDM campaign. Near-term actions will focus on mode shift within the South Lake Union neighborhood, including deployment of a multimedia campaign. Longer-term actions will focus on mode shift along the Denny corridor and developing a corridor-specific behavior change campaign.
- **Communications and Community Engagement -** SDOT will conduct community outreach during design and implementation, including stakeholder briefings with neighborhood groups, freight representatives, and businesses; early notification of channelization modifications, parking changes and turn restrictions; and reporting back to neighborhood groups of monitoring results and performance metrics.

Appendix C – Additional Transit Corridor Investments

In response to Executive Order 2026-01, SDOT prepared a list of potential corridors (see table below) where transit investment can deliver high impact benefits for riders and the city overall.

These corridors were selected because they rank in the top 15% of the network for priority locations to address delay and unreliability in the system, when also considering ridership, frequency, and equity, and after screening out segments already addressed by the Move Seattle Levy, 2024 Transportation Levy projects, or individual transit spot improvement projects. Delay scores were either significantly above the Seattle Transportation Plan target of being within 20% of free-flow travel time or were very unreliable. By focusing transit performance improvements on these corridors, SDOT expects to deliver benefit for riders across the transit network.

Potential Transit Corridors				
Corridor*	**Extents**	**Approximate Distance**	**Routes**	**Daily Ridership**
24th Ave E Bus Lane	Boyer Ave E to E Roanoke St	0.56 miles	Rt 48, 43	5,166
Lenora St /Blanchard St	3rd Ave to Westlake Ave	0.66 miles	Rt 40, 62, C Line	23,419
S Jackson St	1st Ave to 5th Ave	0.3 miles	First Hill Streetcar and 36, 7, 62	4,370
Westlake Ave	Stewart St to Valley St	0.86 miles	C Line, Rt 40, SLU Streetcar	17,316
25th Ave NE	NE 44th St to NE 55th St	0.55 miles	372; future 72	7,760**
NE 45th St	Montlake Blvd NE to Sand Point Way NE	0.5 miles	31, 32, 45, 65, 67, 75	23,429
W Nickerson St	3rd Ave W to Fremont Bridge	0.62 miles	31, 32	4,837
5th Ave NE	NE 103rd St to NE Northgate Way	0.37 miles	61, 67, 75, 322, 348	14,033
Route 50	West Seattle, SODO, Southeast Seattle	TBD	50	2,880

*Additional corridors may be identified in the future, with updated performance data.

**Ridership for this corridor will likely increase when the 72 begins operating, expected in 2026.

These corridors would supplement recent and planned SDOT Levy investments on major corridors throughout the city. The 2024 Transportation Levy includes $115M for Transit Improvements and Access

to Light Rail, including the following transit corridor projects: Rainier Ave S, S Henderson St, Beacon Ave S, N 130th St, S Graham St, Harrison St, and Denny Way.

For the corridors in the table above, SDOT will focus on reducing travel time and improving reliability by making a series of transit performance improvements that may include bus lanes, curb bulbs, queue jumps, signal timing modifications, and/or stop improvements. SDOT will utilize the Transit Spot Improvement Program, allocating up to $1.5M/year of Levy funding to improve these corridors. The program could advance 1-2 corridors per year for planning and design, with implementation likely the following year.

Below outlines SDOT's process for advancing these transit corridor projects:

- Identify corridor locations: Develop, review, and confirm potential transit corridor list and develop timeline for delivery.
- Conduct feasibility study and planning for each corridor: Planning includes review of existing conditions and working to identify interventions for design. Types of interventions may include bus only lanes, transit queue jumps, in-lane bus stops, signal modifications, and more. Specifics will be determined in the planning, preliminary design, and cost estimation process before project approval.
- Design: Once the concept is approved, SDOT will advance the project through design milestones and project cost estimating.
- Construction: Delivery of improvements.
- Monitoring: After installation, SDOT will monitor transit performance, including transit travel time and reliability, and use evaluation outcomes to inform prioritization of future investments.

These projects are a new scale of transit corridor investments that are smaller in size and cost than the 2024 Levy transit corridors noted above (i.e. Rainier, Henderson, etc.), yet bigger than typical transit spot improvement projects (e.g., curb extensions, bus stop improvements, queue jumps). The intended outcome of this work is implementing longer series of transit improvements, such as segments of bus-only lanes and/or a series of signal modifications to improve transit travel time.

Below are examples of different project sizes, cost, scope, and outcomes for comparison purposes.

Rainier Ave Bus Lane – The Rainier Ave Bus Lane project installed a north-bound bus only lane between S Walden St. and S Grand St. (1.15 miles) and saw 11-17% transit travel time savings throughout the day. This work was contractor delivered with a total project cost of approximately $5.8M, which is about 3.5 times the budget of proposed projects listed in the table above. In addition to bus lanes, the project included new traffic signals, transit queue jumps, pavement work, sidewalk replacement, and storm drainage work.

Aurora Ave 24/7 Bus Lanes - This project was implemented as part of Revive I-5 to preserve transit lanes while traffic was expected to increase due to I-5 construction. The Aurora bus lane project converted 4.1 miles of time restricted northbound bus lanes to 24 hours/7 days week between N 38th and N 115th St. Work was delivered by SDOT crews which included signage, outreach, enforcement with a cost of approximately $400K. As a result, transit travel times stayed consistent during a time when traffic congestion worsened due to Revive I-5 impacts.

Aurora Ave N Northbound BAT Lane – SDOT converted 0.6 miles of the northbound curb lane on Aurora Ave N between Prospect St. and Lynn St. to a Business Access and Transit (BAT) lane with red bus lane marking and signs. Work was delivered by SDOT crews and cost approximately $1.2M. The project extended transit priority on Aurora Ave, supporting one of the highest transit ridership corridors in the city. This intervention reinforced a high-performing transit corridor to mitigate against future traffic congestion and preserve efficient transit throughput.