Developing the Next Frontier

Capitalizing on Bus Rapid Transit to Build Community

Urban Land Institute

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Seattle

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Urban Land Institute

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ULI Seattle, a district council of the Urban Land Institute, is the preeminent real estate forum in the Puget Sound region, facilitating the open exchange of ideas, information, and experiences among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers. ULI Seattle's mission is to

- Build a regional vision of the Puget Sound area that embraces and acts upon quality growth principles;
- Encourage collaboration among all domains—public and private—of the real estate industry; and
- Build consensus among industry and public leaders who influence land use, transportation, environmental, and economic development policies.

ULI/Curtis Regional Infrastructure Project

Supported by ULI trustee James J. Curtis, the ULI/Curtis Regional Infrastructure Project is a three-year initiative launched with the goal of better linking infrastructure, land use, and sustainability at the regional level. The Curtis Project emphasizes developing leadership and models of best practices. Selected by a competitive process and led by ULI's Infrastructure Initiative, participants include ULI district councils in Chicago, Seattle, Florida, and Minnesota.

Contents

Executive Summary

By 2013, King County Metro Transit's bus rapid transit (BRT) service, known as RapidRide, will be expanding to six lines covering 64 miles of high-use corridors. The Bus Rapid Transit and Land Use Initiative is the product of a partnership between ULI Seattle, King County Metro Transit, the city of Seattle, the city of Shoreline, and the ULI/Curtis Regional Infrastructure Project. The partnership formed a team of ULI members and transit professionals to analyze and make recommendations about connecting RapidRide and land use opportunities. The team developed case studies of similar BRT service in other cities and analyzed three station areas in Seattle and Shoreline.

From the perspectives of multimodal corridors, neighborhood design, housing, jobs/workers, marketing, and stakeholders, the team developed specific recommendations for RapidRide and initiative partners, as well as recommendations for each station area. Three overarching themes emerged:

- Focus on corridors;
- Develop champions;
- Promote community value.

These themes can be widely applied to BRT on commercial arterials. This final report introduces RapidRide, documents the case studies, and presents the team's recommendations.

BRT in King County: RapidRide

Bus rapid transit comes in many different varieties. King County's RapidRide is a type of "arterial" BRT. Arterial BRT works by providing *convenient* and *priority access* to all that is available—jobs, shopping, services, housing, and friends—in the corridor.

RapidRide deploys a set of infrastructure investments and technologies to improve the speed and reliability of trips:

- Running ways in "business access transit" (BAT) lanes;
- Transit-signal-priority technologies;
- Real-time arrival information at stations;
- Low-floor, three-door buses;
- Boarding areas about every half-mile.

RapidRide will be highly visible in the corridors. Full-featured stations and enhanced stops, including lighted signs and shelters, make up over two-thirds of the system's boarding areas. Distinctive branding based on a red, black, and yellow design scheme marks the stations, stops, and buses.

Frequent service will also boost RapidRide's visibility in the corridors. The target frequency is every ten minutes, and the target service span is 18 to 24 hours a day and on weekends. Initial service will not reach the target levels but will be an improvement over existing service.

BRT in Kansas City, the Twin Cities, and Cleveland

Because BRT is so new in the United States, this report documents brief case studies on the experience of systems similar to King County Metro Transit in Kansas City, the Twin Cities, and Cleveland. Selected conclusions include the following:

- Arterial BRT can be an important economic and community development tool.
- Project partners and champions drawn from a diverse group of public and private stakeholders, including the real estate community, are essential.
- Arterial BRT has the potential to become an *organizing catalyst* that helps focus market demand for higher-intensity development.
- When stations and stops are spaced at a half-mile or less, the corridor—not just an individual station area—becomes the economic development unit.
- Encouraging transit use makes these arterials multimodal "complete streets" in function, even when not in form. The goal should be a complete street in both form and function.
- Branding for arterial BRT can happen at three levels: the corridor, the transit line, and the neighborhood or business district, providing numerous opportunities for collaboration between the transit agency and community members.

Recommendations

This report provides recommendations that address the transit system, corridor development, marketing, and stakeholder involvement. In addition, it examines housing opportunities, neighborhood design, and corridor development in the vicinity of three planned stations:

- 15th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street in Ballard (city of Seattle) on the D Line;
- North 130th Street and Aurora Avenue North in Broadview/Bitter Lake (city of Seattle) on the E Line;
- North 192nd Street and Aurora Avenue North near Echo Lake (city of Shoreline) on the E Line.

The three stations represent a range of development conditions typical of arterial corridors in the Puget Sound region.

To realize RapidRide's potential for both King County Metro Transit and the neighborhoods and cities that the system serves, the report recommends three significant shifts in focus:

- **Corridors instead of stations.** RapidRide can become a powerful catalytic mechanism that unifies entire arterial corridors of diverse communities and land uses.
- **Champions instead of "necessary" stakeholders.** A broad base of support can be built by seeking out and cultivating place-based advocates who take ownership of the community agenda as well as the promise of RapidRide.
- **Community value in addition to transportation value.** As it brings in new transit users and improves the transit experience, RapidRide presents an opportunity for establishing and extending neighborhood identity and branding over time. It can be the backbone of community development and green infrastructure in the corridor and for the neighborhoods.

Introduction

The Puget Sound region is putting in place an ambitious vision for a high-quality, regionally integrated transit system. In addition to light rail, commuter rail, streetcars, and buses running express and traditional routes, a network of bus rapid transit (BRT) lines are opening or being planned. Community Transit in Snohomish County opened the Swift Bus Rapid Transit line in November 2009. King County Metro Transit is developing a BRT network under the name "RapidRide." The first RapidRide line, the A Line, began service in October 2010; the B, C, D, E, and F lines will come into service by 2013.

In January 2011, King County Metro Transit, the city of Seattle, and the city of Shoreline joined ULI Seattle and the ULI/Curtis Regional Infrastructure Project in the Bus Rapid Transit and Land Use Initiative, designed to analyze and make recommendations about land use opportunities in the vicinity of three selected stations along the planned RapidRide D and E Lines. As part of the initiative, brief case studies were developed about BRT in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota), Kansas City (Missouri), and Cleveland (Ohio). The case studies informed the site analysis team, which assembled March 22 to 24, 2011, to develop specific recommendations. The case studies and the station area recommendations, taken together, are part of a larger effort to begin to document and develop best practices aimed at integrating BRT and land use in the Puget Sound region.

The project partners selected three stations for analysis, representing a range of development conditions:

- Ballard—D Line, 15th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street (city of Seattle)
- Bitter Lake—E Line, North 130th Street and Aurora Avenue North in Broadview/Bitter Lake (city of Seattle)
- Echo Lake—E Line, North 192nd Street and Aurora Avenue North (city of Shoreline)

To focus the scope of the work, the project partners agreed on a set of analysis questions and parameters. The analysis asked what can be done within a half-mile of the three selected RapidRide stations in the next five years to address the following:

- **Neighborhood design.** How can access to the station areas be improved through neighborhood design?
- **Transition corridors.** How can the suburban-scale, automobile-dominant urban arterials be transformed into modern, multimodal, multiuse corridors?
- **Range of housing.** How can the range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, be expanded?
- **Development opportunities and jobs.** How can opportunities for new development and adaptive use—with a special emphasis on opportunities that generate a mix of jobs—be taken advantage of?
- **Marketing.** How can RapidRide be marketed to target landowners, business owners, developers, and residents?
- **Stakeholder institutions.** How can support be built among stakeholder institutions outside government?

This report documents the case studies, the station area analyses, and related recommendations. Section 1 introduces the reader to BRT and RapidRide. Section 2 presents the case studies on the Cedar Avenue Transitway in the Twin Cities, the MAX BRT service in Kansas City, and the HealthLine in Cleveland. It also includes insights on stakeholder involvement with Sound Transit's Link light rail. Section 3 presents the team's

RapidRide system map.

recommendations as they apply to the transit system and across the region, including recommendations for corridors, marketing, and stakeholder institutions. Section 4 offers more detailed recommendations for each of the three station areas. Section 5 summarizes the main takeaways: focus on corridors, develop champions, and promote community value. Quoted material is drawn from conversations that took place during the site analysis process among team members and during interviews.

1 Bus Rapid Transit and RapidRide

Bus rapid transit is a relatively new concept in the United States and in the Puget Sound region. To understand BRT's relationship to land use and economic development, it is important to start with an explanation of BRT and an exploration of the type of BRT—arterial BRT—that best characterizes King County's growing RapidRide network.

BRT Defined

"Bus rapid transit," rather than referring to a type of bus, is an umbrella term encompassing a set of technologies and service innovations that improve bus service along selected routes, lines, or corridors. Within a metropolitan region, BRT is typically associated with trips of medium length or longer because it is on these longer trips that the "rapid" aspect becomes important—where saving time helps bus service compete with automobile transport. Depending on how they are deployed, BRT's technology and service innovations may also attract additional riders for short trips.

> "How do you change and use the amenities of transit to really attract a new generation?"

BRT is best described as a movement involving many people applying creativity and innovation to bus service. Therefore, like ice cream, BRT comes in many flavors, and someone is always coming up with something new to add. The National Bus Rapid Transit Institute, in its 2009 handbook *Characteristics of Bus Rapid Transit for Decision-Making*, identifies the following seven elements undergoing innovation as part of the continuing development of BRT:

- Running ways or corridors;
- Stations;
- Vehicles;
- Fare collection;
- Transit-signal-priority technologies;
- Service and operations;
- Branding.

Each element has its own set of alternatives and options, definitely giving BRT more than 31 flavors!

Even transit experts can find all this variability confusing. Sorting or categorizing types of BRT can help provide some clarity. One popular categorization distinguishes between BRT that is built to operate single lines—like light rail, only with buses—and BRT that uses busways or transitways for multiple types of bus service. More appropriate to the Puget Sound region is a categorization by type of corridor: BRT that operates completely within its own corridors versus BRT that uses corridors built for automobiles. The BRT in auto corridors can be further divided into BRT that runs in expressway (such as interstate highway) corridors, also known as "highway BRT," and BRT that runs on arterial corridors.

King County's RapidRide service along the D and E Lines is arterial BRT. Whereas highway BRT works by providing a speedy trip to a handful of significant destinations, arterial BRT works by providing *convenient* and *priority access* to all that is available—jobs, shopping, services, housing, and friends—in the corridor.

Arterial corridors typically have high traffic volumes, but traffic movement is periodically interrupted by intersections and driveways. Despite the high vehicle traffic volumes, pedestrians and bicyclists also use arterial corridors. From the land use perspective, if the arterial corridor follows the typical American pattern, commercial

development lines the corridor. Apartments may be on the corridor, but they are more likely to start one block back from it, where they form neighborhoods with other residential types and neighborhood uses (elementary schools, community centers, corner retail). Corridors chosen for arterial BRT also typically link to major activity centers (downtown, cultural centers, major employers, hospital complexes, educational campuses, etc.).

Some transit experts argue that the term "BRT" should be reserved only for service types in which the bus runs in its own lane, free from interference from other vehicles for most or all its route. Under this restricted definition, King County's RapidRide would not make the cut, even though it will definitely improve bus service in the selected corridors. This restrictive definition also ignores an important selling point for developing BRT: that lines, systems, and corridor improvements can be implemented incrementally. After the initial investment, additional investments spread over time can continue to make improvements to the corridor and to the service.

From the perspective of both the user and land development, the innovations in BRT do not change certain fundamentals about all bus service. Speed is not the only important consideration. A safe and pleasant rider experience on the bus and at the stations, frequent and reliable service, and generous hours of operation, including nights and weekends, also have much to do with whether BRT service attracts and retains additional riders.

BRT in King County: RapidRide

King County's RapidRide is an arterial BRT system planned to consist of six lines, lettered A through F. For the most part, the RapidRide lines run in established and clearly identifiable corridors, with little meandering. The A Line opened in October 2010. The D and E Lines, the focus of this report, are scheduled to open in 2012 and 2013.

Metro Transit selected 64 miles of high-use corridors for conversion to RapidRide. For the six lines, existing ridership exceeded 10 million trips a year in 2009; five years after the conversion to RapidRide, ridership is projected to increase by 50 percent.

Running Way. RapidRide buses share the roadway with passenger vehicles and trucks, but King County is implementing a series of improvements to shorten travel times. On the D and E Lines, buses will operate in "business access transit" (BAT) lanes that allow motorists to make right turns at intersections and into driveways. As part of the initial implementation, transit-priority lanes and other roadway and intersection improvements will be constructed. Transit-signal-priority technology that adjusts stoplights to favor bus service is also planned for RapidRide corridors.

Stop Spacing. RapidRide buses will stop to pick up and drop off passengers every half-mile, on average. In some places, stops may be as close as every quarter-mile. Such close spacing of stops is not unusual for arterial BRT, especially arterial BRT that serves commercial corridors.

The RapidRide A Line station at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Frequency. The target frequency for RapidRide service is every ten minutes or better all day in both directions, and the target span for operating hours is 18 to 24 hours, seven days a week. Although the initial budget does not include target frequency and span, service will at least match what is currently provided in the corridor, with some increased frequency or expanded service hours. Initially, Metro Transit is anticipating ten-minute frequency only during the weekday peak, with 15-minute frequency during off-peak times and on weekends. Late-night service will be operated less frequently.

Buses. RapidRide uses low-floor buses with three doors and 48 seats. On crowded buses, this design enables faster boarding and disembarking, leading to meaningful time savings. A bike rack is mounted on the front of bus. The buses are also equipped with security cameras and free WiFi.

Stations. RapidRide is designed to have three levels of rider boarding areas: stations, enhanced stops, and basic stops. Even the basic stops will have at least a bench and a special RapidRide marker. Systemwide, more than two-thirds of the boarding areas will be stations or enhanced stops. Enhanced stops have a shelter, exterior lighting, benches, a bike rack, and trash receptacles. Stations have a larger shelter with interior lighting, in addition to the benches, exterior lighting, bike racks, and trash receptacles. Station roofs also sport lighted RapidRide signs that are visible along the corridors at night. Wayfinding signage focuses on the RapidRide route; maps outline major cross streets but do not provide guides to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Real-Time Information. Stations also have real-time information signs. These signs display the number of minutes, in countdown form, until the arrival of the next two buses.

Fare Collection. Stations along the operating A Line also have ORCA (electronic fare card) readers. Metro Transit is test piloting encouraging riders with ORCA cards to pay their fare before boarding the bus. This enables riders with ORCA cards and paper transfers to board by any of the three doors but requires periodic fare inspections. The presence of fare inspectors, however, also provides another layer of security. Metro Transit is still examining whether to continue the pay-before-you-board option for the other RapidRide lines.

Branding. RapidRide buses and station and stop infrastructure are branded with a red, black, and yellow color scheme that is sharply distinguished from the blue and yellow that defines the other King County–provided bus service.

Budget. The budget to initiate RapidRide service is $215 million (2010–2011 figures). Of this total, $50 million is for corridor and roadway improvements, $28 million for passenger facilities, and $7 million for the real-time information signs. The majority of the budget is the $128 million for new vehicles. The limited $50 million for corridor and roadway improvements does not include other potential upgrades to the corridors such as improving pedestrian and bicycle access within the quarter- to half-mile service areas around stations and stops.

RapidRide D Line. The Northwest Market Street station selected for further analysis is located along the RapidRide D Line. The D Line will run mostly along 15th Avenue Northwest between Ballard, Uptown, and downtown Seattle for eight miles of service. Annual transit ridership in the corridor was over 2 million trips in 2009, and with RapidRide, ridership is projected to increase by 50 percent within five years. Outside downtown, the D Line will consist of 40 stations or stops, of which three-quarters will be full stations or enhanced stops. Corridor and service improvements are projected to speed travel by ten minutes in each direction, for a time savings of up to 30 percent. Initially, buses will run every ten minutes during peak hours and every 15 minutes or better during off-peak hours. For most of the weekend, buses will run every 15 minutes. Initiating service is estimated to cost $44.3 million; D Line service is scheduled to begin in September 2012.

RapidRide E Line. The RapidRide E Line, which will run for 13 miles from North 200th Street in Shoreline to downtown Seattle—mostly along Aurora Avenue North (State Highway 99)—will host the other two station areas selected for further analysis, at North 130th Street and North 192nd Street. Annual transit ridership in the corridor was nearly 3 million trips in 2009, and with RapidRide, ridership is projected to increase by 50 percent within five years. Outside downtown Seattle, the E Line will consist of 51 stations and stops, of which 90 percent will be full stations or enhanced stops. Corridor and service improvements are projected to speed travel by eight minutes in each direction, for a time savings of about 20 percent. Initially, buses will run every ten minutes during peak hours and every 15 minutes or better during off-peak hours. For most of the weekend, buses will run every 15 minutes. Initiating service is estimated to cost $45.5 million; E Line service is scheduled to begin in September 2013.

Conclusion

The station infrastructure, running way improvements, and high ridership associated with King County's RapidRide lines have the potential to reinforce land uses along the host corridors. RapidRide promises travel-time savings and frequent and reliable service that both encourage medium-length and longer trips and foster short hops within the corridor. By running in corridors with high levels of commercial activity, RapidRide promotes access to jobs and to workers and supports meeting basic consumer needs without a car. Because stations and stops are spaced about every half-mile, the corridor itself, including adjacent neighborhoods, replaces the station area as the field for development. The station and stop spacing and the corridor dynamic also stress the importance of ensuring pedestrian connections, both into the neighborhoods to access residential uses and up and down the corridor to access commercial uses.

2 BRT in Kansas City, the Twin Cities, and Cleveland

Because BRT is so new in the United States, and in King County and the Puget Sound region, the BRT and Land Use Initiative developed brief case studies on the experience of other metropolitan regions in the United States with similar systems. Like the Puget Sound region, the three metropolitan areas—Kansas City, the Twin Cities, and Cleveland—include arterial BRT among their menu of transit services. Like RapidRide, the BRT lines in the case studies reinforce existing high-traffic and important metropolitan corridors. RapidRide may also take lessons from the experience of implementing light rail in the Puget Sound region.

Kansas City: Main Street MAX and Troost Avenue MAX

Bus rapid transit in Kansas City goes by the name of MAX, for Metro Area Express. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) opened its first MAX line, the Main Street MAX, in July 2005. An instant success, MAX saw ridership in the corridor increase by more than 50 percent, and the Federal Transit Administration recognized MAX as a model BRT line. In early 2011, KCATA opened its second MAX line, the Troost Avenue MAX. This line is part of a strategy to revitalize the Troost Avenue corridor and to contribute to Kansas City's nationally recognized sustainable community development initiative, the Green Impact Zone. Kansas City does not currently have any rail-based transit service.

Main Street MAX station at night.

The two MAX lines operate in urban arterials in mixed traffic with peak-hour bus lanes, with stations typically spaced every quarter- to half-mile. Corridor improvements coordinated with the launch of MAX service included pedestrian and bicycle connections to the stations.

Service extends to 20 hours a day on weekdays. On the Main Street MAX, buses arrive every ten minutes or less during peak periods and every 15 minutes during off-peak periods and on Saturdays, with less frequent service in the early morning and night and on Sundays. On the Troost Avenue MAX, buses arrive every ten minutes throughout the day, with less frequent service in the early morning and night. For most of Saturday and Sunday, the Troost Avenue MAX service is every 30 minutes.

Stations serving the MAX lines are designed to be local landmarks and to promote transit's presence in the communities. MAX stations include features similar to the RapidRide stations: real-time bus arrival signs, benches, shelters, lighting, and branded markers identifying MAX service. The special MAX markers are lit at night and designed to be seen from two blocks away. As part of the branding, stations are named for nearby activity generators or prominent sites, such as the convention center, in addition to giving the nearest

cross street. As gateways to the neighborhoods, they include wayfinding maps identifying local attractions. Several Troost Avenue MAX stations also incorporate art—large sculptures or visual art installations that reinforce the station's landmark status and connect with the local neighborhoods.

The MAX lines connect major activity centers on routes that were already high-use transit lines. The Main Street MAX connects to 200,000 jobs and serves major civic and cultural attractions. Stations at the ends of the line include park-and-ride lots. Because the Main Street MAX corridor is already a well-developed commercial corridor, the effect on land use has been limited to coordination with community improvement districts and installation of streetscape improvements to match the MAX design elements.

Although the Troost Avenue MAX just recently opened, it has already shown how BRT can play an important role in redevelopment. The Troost Avenue MAX is the spine of the KCATA bus network, connecting with more than 20 other routes. It also serves a diverse demographic population, including many transit-dependent riders. The Troost Avenue MAX project is one part of the comprehensive and coordinated neighborhood revitalization initiative called the Green Impact Zone. Development projects that have incorporated MAX service and oriented to the corridor include an expansion of the University of Missouri–Kansas City Medical School and a joint development that combines a transit center and a YMCA daycare center. A Troost Avenue MAX station and its station-area sculpture are incorporated into the revitalization of a block of 1920s-era commercial storefronts. MAX stations are also planned to be integrated into a potential 13.5-acre redevelopment project for seniors' housing and commercial use tied

Troost Avenue MAX stations.

to the Brookside Medical Center, as well as a commercial, mixed-use development combined with a parking garage at Rockhurst University.

Twin Cities: the Cedar Avenue Transitway

Two types of bus rapid transit opened in the Twin Cities metropolitan region in 2009. The Interstate 35W South BRT service runs in the median of the expressway, providing faster access to suburban employers and schools and to downtown and the University of Minnesota. The Cedar Avenue Transitway travels for 16 miles along the shoulders of an increasingly congested commercial avenue, connecting the suburbs along its route to jobs

Station with park-and-ride facility along the Cedar Avenue Transitway.

at the Mall of America and in downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. Like the Puget Sound region, the Twin Cities is expanding its light-rail network, meaning that from the regional perspective, BRT corridors may be competing with areas served by other types of high-end transit service.

Of the metropolitan region's two BRT routes, the Cedar Avenue Transitway in Dakota County is most similar to RapidRide. Cedar Avenue is a heavily traveled suburban arterial that intersects with cross streets and access roads serving commercial development. Buses run on the shoulders and share lanes with other vehicles making right turns. The BRT service, in contrast with RapidRide, is not a single bus line, but a transitway (hence the name). The transitway will be open to a range of bus services, from express buses traveling to the region's major job centers to local buses on station-to-station routes.

Cedar Avenue in Dakota County.

The transitway stations and service are being added incrementally: service started in 2009 with only a few stations providing express bus service; station-to-station service is planned for 2012. The station-to-station service is envisioned to offer buses as frequently as every ten minutes, similar to the frequency anticipated for RapidRide. The suburban nature of the corridor and the limited local transit network have made the provision of park-and-ride facilities that meet demand at the stations both a high priority and an important early signifier of success.

Dakota County also chose to make the stations the recipients of significant capital investment. Stations, which are enclosed buildings with distinctive architectural elements and lighting, include amenities such as waiting areas with restrooms and individual seats rather than benches, in addition to the real-time arrival information that is a common feature at BRT stations. Stations also have wayfinding signs and bicycle lockers. The stations are showpieces, creating new landmarks that are highly visible to both transit users and passing vehicles.

The local business community, an early skeptic about BRT, has become one of the Cedar Avenue Transitway's champions. Early concerns that expanding transit service would disrupt customer access and the attractiveness of the area for business were alleviated by attention to communication and coordination. Members of the business community, as represented by the local

chamber of commerce, became excited by the new opportunities the transitway presented and began to see it as a true community asset.

The transitway and stations are being incorporated into development and redevelopment plans for areas near the stations. The plans seek to make the stations gateways to the surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas, using them as a tool to attract development and business, including higher-intensity uses than in the past. End plans for the corridor connect the stations with a continuous network of walkways and trails and pay special attention to pedestrian crossings.

Cleveland: the Euclid Corridor and the HealthLine

Although Cleveland has an urban rail transit network that dates to the early 20th century, its new BRT line, which opened in 2008, is attracting the most interest. The 6.8-mile HealthLine runs on Euclid Avenue, a historically important corridor that connects downtown to the university and hospital districts that are some of the main engines of the metropolitan region's economy. Since the project's inception, promoting economic development and enhancing quality of life have joined improving transit service as explicit goals for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

As part of the construction of the BRT infrastructure, the numerous project partners—which include federal, state, and local governments and the private sector—leveraged their resources to reconstruct Euclid Avenue as a model "complete street." In addition to the BRT infrastructure, the $200 million investment covered new curbs and road pavement, sidewalks and bicycle lanes, streetlights, utilities, and landscaping, including extensive planting of new street trees. Parking was reintegrated into the street, and more than $2 million was invested in public art.

For most of its route, the HealthLine uses exclusive lanes in the median of the street. Buses run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During peak weekday periods, buses arrive at stations as frequently as every four minutes; they arrive every ten minutes during most of the rest of the day and evening and every 15 minutes on weekends. Like the other BRT systems examined for this report, the architecturally distinctive stations include shelters, lighting, and real-time arrival information. After two years, HealthLine ridership is 54 percent higher than ridership on the previous bus route in the corridor.

Branding and other identity markers were developed for the corridor, the transit service, and the adjacent neighborhoods and districts. Although the branding or identity markers need to relate to each other, there is also much to be gained by developing separate branding niches. Separate branding, for example, allows the HealthLine to be one element of a revitalized Euclid Avenue and at the same time advertise the access it provides to Cleveland's renowned health facilities. In a

HealthLine station along the Euclid Avenue corridor.

HealthLine station at night.

similar way, stations are part of the transit system while also serving as gateways to adjacent neighborhoods. Developing the branding and identity markers also provides the opportunity to work with diverse groups of stakeholders, some of whom may bring their own resources to the table. The Cleveland Clinic and the University Hospital, for example, bought the naming rights to the line for $6.25 million.

Since the initial stages of planning for the HealthLine, the public and private sectors have built or planned $4.7 billion in real estate developments within walking distance of Euclid Avenue. BRT became an organizing catalyst to bring people to the table and to spark new thinking about the Euclid Avenue corridor. A wide range of public and private stakeholders, including strong community development corporations and institutional property owners, rallied around the corridor and began to reorient not only their thinking but also their buildings to embrace Euclid Avenue. Real estate activity includes rehabilitation of historic buildings for reuse as residential lofts and office space, new residential construction, and new construction at the hospitals, universities, and museums.

Sound Transit and Link Light Rail

The experience of Sound Transit and Link Light Rail in the Puget Sound region may also offer some lessons for RapidRide. The analysis for this report looked specifically at community organizing and business sector engagement around the Capitol Hill light-rail station, now under construction. The local community council, the chamber of commerce, and the city of Seattle's Department of Planning and Development, Office of Economic Development, and Office of Housing were important partners in creating a development vision that uses the light-rail station as a catalyst. They provide the critical institutional support for an ongoing organizational effort to promote and implement the vision. In other words, they have become champions, not solely for light rail, but also for making sure that light rail is an asset to the community and helps it achieve the vision.

Conclusions

Although the arterial BRT systems examined in the three case studies are relatively new and only similar to RapidRide, not identical, the case studies reveal some important considerations:

- BRT can be an important economic and community development tool.
- Project partners and champions drawn from a diverse group of public and private stakeholders are essential; BRT will not have much punch as an economic and community development tool if the transit agency acts alone.
- Arterial BRT will not be a silver bullet that sparks development on its own; BRT is better thought of as a potential *organizing catalyst* that can help focus market demand for higher-intensity development.

- The business and real estate community, as well as major anchor institutions such as hospitals and education providers, can get excited about BRT as a community asset to support and exploit, but they need to be courted by the transit agency or another corridor champion.
- For arterial BRT, especially when the stations are relatively close together, the corridor—not just an individual station area—is the economic development unit. In long corridors, using corridor segments to define separate economic development districts may also make sense.
- Arterial BRT and its infrastructure will be visible from the street and the thousands of vehicles passing through the corridor each day. It thus offers opportunities to develop or sustain a positive identity for the corridor and to function as a gateway to neighborhoods.
- That arterial BRT coexists with motor vehicles in corridors with high levels of traffic underscores the importance of high-quality pedestrian and bicycle connections to the stations and *throughout the corridor.* Encouraging transit use makes these arterials complete streets in function, even when not in form. The goal should be a complete street in both form and function.
- Branding for arterial BRT can go beyond the transit elements and infrastructure. Branding and other identity reinforcement can also happen at the corridor level and for adjacent neighborhoods or business districts, providing opportunities for collaboration between the transit agency and community members. Strategies include introducing meaningful naming, signs and wayfinding, and public art, as well as coordinating stations with the adjacent development.

> "Get to the vision, get to the neighborhoods, get to the community, get going."

3 Recommendations: Transit, Corridors, Marketing, and Stakeholder Institutions

In the process of analyzing the station areas, the site team developed many recommendations that apply across the transit network and the region.

Transit System

The following recommendations apply to RapidRide and its context in the region, drawing on successful experiences from the BRT case studies:

Develop branding that works in the regional context and at the corridor level. Successful branding leverages investments in RapidRide and accelerates ridership by raising expectations of permanence and reliability as well as performance (see Marketing section).

Reach out from the corridor. Maximize connections between RapidRide and crosstown and connecting routes and services.

Think seamless transit. All modes will benefit from the perception and reality of coordinated services. RapidRide will benefit from rider confidence in the ability to reach desired destinations by transferring from one system to another.

Find partners and harness technology. "Is there an app for that?" Tap into emerging "smart mobility" networks by creating an application such as OneBusAway or finding other ways that commercial software and social networking sites can enhance the RapidRide experience and promote greater seamlessness for regional transit.

Provide real-time travel information. RapidRide is designed to have real-time bus arrival information at stations; electronic readerboards can also be a cost-effective way to provide travel time to key destinations. Messaging can be expanded to include neighborhood information and create more synergies between the system and station areas.

Create surprises. Community events, temporary artworks, and various low-cost ephemera promote interest in the system and pride in the community.

Shout your story. RapidRide should be seen as an important key to a connected and evolving region with strong environmental values. This message should be tailored and enthusiastically repeated at every opportunity.

Corridor Development

These recommendations address the emerging priorities of a multimodal transit corridor that is safe and attractive for pedestrians:

Identify strategic development nodes. Through the work of neighborhood groups, business organizations, and private developers, BRT can further the goals of the communities it serves, bringing opportunities to transform underused sites into attractions and landmarks. Stations should tie in with the communities they serve, spurring development at multiple points along the entire corridor.

Integrate stations into the public realm. Similar to rail corridors, RapidRide stations and stops create important opportunities for active open space. Ideally, major RapidRide stations are public squares, allowing for private commercial activities that add to the pedestrian realm rather than detract from it.

Use stations to anchor pedestrian zones. Virtually all transit riders begin and end their trip as pedestrians. Stations should tie in with walkways, sidewalk networks, trails, and enhanced streetscapes through a master streetscape or pedestrian plan.

Create a unifying streetscape master plan. Neighborhood vitality and identity can be enhanced through a coordinated design program of lighting, expanded sidewalks, paving, trails, and wayfinding.

Wrap corners with open space at intersecting bus lines. Where local bus service intersects with BRT service, competition for station space may become an opportunity to connect stops through a lively and unified open space on the corner, with hardscape design, artwork, pedestrian amenities, and retail.

Bring in history and culture. RapidRide stations should tie into the history, culture, and sights of the nearest neighborhood center through signage, landscaping, street vending, artworks, or other means.

Use codes and zoning effectively. Innovative tools such as transit overlays, form-based codes, and incentive zoning can guide the transition from an entirely automobile-dependent suburban strip to a multimodal corridor. Zoning for RapidRide corridors should proactively seek to bring pedestrian-friendly uses to the street edge; encourage development of transit-oriented, mixed-use projects; and incentivize gradual and incremental redevelopment of parking lots.

Marketing

These observations and recommendations point to challenges as well as opportunities in winning supporters and riders for RapidRide.

Observations

RapidRide has achieved impressive momentum since beginning service in fall 2010. During the first four months of operation, ridership was up 25 percent on the Pacific Highway South corridor, and customer satisfaction increased by over 30 percentage points. Customers are embracing the increased frequency of buses and the unique RapidRide experience. Interviews show a strong baseline recognition of BRT and RapidRide.

Some businesses and other nonrider stakeholders do not understand or appreciate the value and vision of RapidRide. Messaging on BRT and RapidRide is fractured and not focused on individual stakeholders and specific stakeholder groups.

> "One of the things about a corridor is that it is so legible it is almost mindless."

Regional transit systems seem to suffer from "brand clutter." Although RapidRide buses are well differentiated from local Metro buses, regional transit systems present an overlapping and uncoordinated set of messages, inviting perceived lack of coordination between different transit providers and systems. This can have the effect of confusing potential customers instead of creating synergies in public recognition, support, and ridership. RapidRide stations and stops are branded but are still not distinct enough from local bus stops.

Recommendations

Prepare to scale up the message on RapidRide. The message is not only about the experience of the ride—it is about place making, community, economic development, and environmental values. Branding and marketing RapidRide is a three-part, integrated strategy for the BRT system as a whole, for the corridors, and for the neighborhoods.

Mirror the three-part strategy for branding in marketing and outreach efforts. Corridor recognition offers a deliberate departure from the self-perpetuating grip of decaying, highway-style strip development. The strategy should work for the regional system and also give a higher profile to local communities in the region.

Expect branding to be a fluid and ongoing process that needs regular attention and flexibility. Properly understood, branding need not be an onerous, one-time effort. Identity and branding can be applied incrementally and adjusted to respond to new market information in a growing system.

Enhance and amplify station branding for recognizability. To raise a "stop" to the level of "station," messages must be bold and consistent, especially when stations are arrayed along a corridor that originated as a highway. Scale and shape are important, as are color, pattern, and logo.

Name significant stations—Ballard, Bitter Lake, Echo Lake. This is a single strategy

"Think of marketing light rail and RapidRide together. Think in terms of major corridors."

yielding multiple branding benefits for corridors and neighborhoods.

Emulate the permanent feel and brand recognition of light rail. This effort builds rider confidence and community recognition for RapidRide while capitalizing on the presence of light rail in the larger regional context.

Consider a regional, transitwide branding effort. Pooling and coordinating efforts is a powerful way to leverage investments in various transit projects and efforts to connect them into a more seamless system. Incentives may include exponential increases in ridership, as well as boosts to affordability and pedestrian-oriented development in far-flung neighborhoods and communities.

Stakeholder Institutions

These observations and recommendations frame strategies for engaging communities and gaining champions for RapidRide.

Observations

If RapidRide starts service before community members engage the larger issues of the communities it is to serve, a huge opportunity is missed. While the E Line corridor in Shoreline has already seen improvements because of strong local support, there are no clear local champions for the other corridors that will host lines.

The potential synergies are currently underrated. Other startup systems have shown that there is much to be won by appealing to community groups and to individual civic-minded leaders about the value of their neighborhoods and the positive transformational potential of RapidRide. That includes not only curbs and sidewalks and more pedestrian infrastructure, but also fitness, environmental responsibility, economic vitality, and housing choices.

Recommendations

Form effective partnerships with stakeholder groups in each community. It is important to reframe the relationship from the process-oriented view of stakeholders as "affected groups and individuals" to the more positive expectation of stakeholders as "partners with resources." Partners can be involved at every stage, from initial outreach to planning to opening. These organizations can be cosponsors for implementation planning and financial workshops. The list of these potential stakeholder groups covers a wide range of types:

- Neighborhood associations;
- Local chambers of commerce;
- Environmental activists;
- Special interests such as bicycling groups;
- Schools, parent groups, and students;
- Major employers;
- Small businesses;
- Social service providers;
- Landowners;
- Historic societies and similar groups;
- Health care providers;
- Senior services;
- Foundations;
- Developers who are active in the market;
- Real estate investors;
- City of Seattle Office of Economic Development;
- City of Seattle Office of Housing;
- City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment;
- City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development;
- City of Shoreline Office of Economic Development;
- Washington Department of Transportation (on Aurora Avenue North);
- Professional groups.

Search among stakeholder groups for individual champions of RapidRide and development around stations. A champion can win support for RapidRide at any or all levels—station, corridor, and system. Both public and private sectors should be cultivated. Effective champions have emerged as friends to both. Those who previously opposed transit projects can be very effective.

Tap local experience with champions for transit and corridors. Models include Capitol Hill for light rail and West Seattle for RapidRide. A mentoring program involving advocates in those locations and those who have partnered with them should be considered.

Hone messaging to reach different stakeholders appropriately. This could involve the following efforts:

- Reaching out individually to large employers within a half-mile of stations, and their employees.
- Mounting a roadshow for professional and commercial interest groups like the Urban Land Institute, the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, the Building Owners and Managers Association International, the Downtown Seattle Association, and local chambers of commerce.
- Leveraging existing efforts to promote RapidRide by tailoring them to fit the audience, perhaps based on a media kit and presentation materials that cover key concepts.

4 Station Area Recommendations

Each RapidRide station and corridor presents a set of opportunities that can guide development and help the adjoining community realize a desired future. It is assumed that this future includes expanded opportunity and economic development, increased livability, and the evolution of vibrant, recognizable places.

Ballard

The future D Line station at 15th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street has the potential to connect to the heart of Ballard along the major crosstown corridor of Northwest Market Street. The center of Ballard, a destination just three blocks west of the intersection, is a distinctive pedestrian environment with historic storefronts, angled intersections, street trees, and artwork. Yet 15th Avenue Northwest is primarily an automobile-oriented corridor. The four corners of the intersection contain a filling station, a supermarket parking lot, strip commercial development, and a potentially important vacant parcel that still holds the concrete pad from a former Denny's restaurant.

> "Bring the energy to the east, to the intersection."

Recommendations for the Ballard station emphasize leveraging the liveliness and appeal of the neighborhood center by extending it to the almost entirely car-oriented corridor along 15th Avenue Northwest.

Neighborhood and Corridor

Name the station "Ballard Station." Currently lacking any identity, the intersection could become an extension of the urban village, even as it brings the convenience of nearby transit to the center of the neighborhood.

Enhance wayfinding to nearby destinations. Through well-designed, sensitive signage, the RapidRide station will become a real gateway, providing added value to visitors who enter the neighborhood through the transit system.

Design an easy pedestrian transition between RapidRide and local bus service. The intersection presents a perfect opportunity to wrap two corners with a modest amount of open space, connecting stops and proclaiming the permanence and reliability of RapidRide.

Create a public realm plan around the station. This effort might address the desired features of the streetscape, some potential public space locations and characteristics, and a design vocabulary for pedestrian accommodations such as crosswalks and seating.

Enhance pedestrian and bicycle links along Northwest Market Street. There is already a steady flow of pedestrians along the sidewalks in the thriving retail core of Ballard, and bicycles are also visible. Plantings, bike racks, and strategic opportunities for small businesses could draw this traffic out toward the transit corridor along 15th Avenue Northwest.

Distinguish the intersection as a pedestrian node. This overall recommendation gives new status to pedestrians and bicycles, and sets up expectations for accommodation from motorists and for service from transit. It also sets the stage for all future improvements at the intersection, from paving materials to street furnishings.

Take steps to buffer traffic noise and deliberately quiet the intersection. Begin a major tree planting program along both streets. Consider slimming the traffic lanes through a "road diet" along 15th Avenue Northwest, specifically adding on-street parking.

Ballard and the intersection of 15th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street.

Promote a landmark structure near the intersection. Iconic art or architecture could establish the public realm and extend the character of downtown Ballard.

Seek private development partners for a corner site. Privately provided public space should be integrated with the RapidRide station.

> "It takes about 200 percent [of median income] to buy. What about 120 percent?"

Housing and Development

Use incentives to increase density around the transit corridor. Create incentives to enhance affordability and provide greater density. Consider specifying a richer array of extraordinary features—including a greater degree of affordability, more parks, and more neighborhood retail—that would be required before relaxing the current height limit to allow the building of *true* towers. Calibrate incentives for building in a transit-served district, such as doubling the normal increase in height or floor/area ratio in return for substantial streetscape improvements that directly enhance the station area.

Promote housing goals to developers and the community. Housing must be a true incentive to developers—that is, returns for increased floor/area ratio must exceed the cost of providing housing. Win support for housing by emphasizing to the community that projects serve existing, nearby employment centers.

Encourage a fine-grained urban environment along with new development. Set up incentives for small business startups, neighborhood businesses, and live/work opportunities along Northwest Market Street or in mews at the rear of large developments.

Assemble marketing tools for developers that will encourage transit-oriented development. The proximity of RapidRide can enhance sales and rental value, and also relieve pressure for parking space. Promote new ways to gauge value and affordability based on the combined cost of transportation and housing in a given location (for example, 45 percent of household income for housing plus transportation, instead of 35 percent for housing alone).

Bitter Lake

A RapidRide E Line station at North 130th Street and Aurora Avenue North will serve the Broadview–Bitter Lake neighborhoods. This part of the Aurora Avenue North corridor lies near the northernmost limits of the city of Seattle. It is close to an important segment of Linden Avenue North, a much quieter street to the west that has been the focus of redevelopment as the center of the Bitter Lake neighborhood. A large multifamily housing development now faces Linden Avenue North just west of Aurora Avenue North, and the busy Bitter Lake Community Center adjoins parkland and the lakeshore on the opposite side of Linden Avenue North.

Much of Aurora Avenue North, Linden Avenue North, and the surrounding neighborhood streets lack the most basic pedestrian amenities—curbs and sidewalks. There is a clear need to make pedestrian connections between the community's center, with its rapidly increasing number of housing units, and the RapidRide station. These changes will require a sharp increase in investment in infrastructure around this section of Aurora Avenue North.

Community support for these kinds of investments is high but may be tempered by neighborhood insularity and conflicted attitudes about new ties to Aurora Avenue North. For pedestrians at and near the RapidRide stations and stops, basic safety crossing the street is of paramount importance.

Recommendations for Bitter Lake hinge on making connections to Linden Avenue North, to new residential development on cross streets to the east and west, and to neighborhoods to the east and west of Aurora Avenue North. Creating a safe and inviting corridor for RapidRide will require pedestrian-friendly interventions along the Aurora Avenue North corridor just south of the Seattle city limit.

Neighborhood and Corridor

Focus station siting and planning on North 130th Street. Currently lacking any identity other than the underused pedestrian bridge, the intersection and station could become Bitter Lake Station, the gateway to the community, bringing the convenience of nearby transit to the center of the neighborhood.

Enhance wayfinding to nearby destinations. Well-designed, sensitive signage will add value

Aurora Avenue North and the nearby Bitter Lake neighborhood.

"Don't dilute 130th for the sake of 135th."

to RapidRide stations, providing access to the Bitter Lake Community Center, the park, and the Interurban Trail.

Improve pedestrian access. Bring resources from all public agencies for complete streets, and give this effort urgency and priority. There is a pedestrian route to build upon along North 130th Street from Linden Avenue North to Aurora Avenue North, but it needs to be extended to the south side of the street and improved. Planning should extend to adjacent neighborhoods to the east, including Haller Lake and the area around Ingraham High School.

Create a public realm plan around the station. This plan might address the desired features of the streetscape, some potential public space locations and characteristics, and a vocabulary for pedestrian accommodations such as crosswalks and seating. It should include interim place-making measures and transit enhancements. Food carts and public events might be accommodated on unused parking areas. Increased police presence might be desirable.

"People like big-box stuff, but they still really need neighborhood attractions."

Distinguish the station intersection as a pedestrian node. This overall recommendation gives new status to pedestrians and bicycles, and sets up expectations for accommodation from motorists and service from transit. It also sets the stage for all future improvements at the intersection, from paving materials to street furnishings.

Consider preserving the pedestrian bridge at North 130th Street. Accompanied by at-grade, Americans with Disabilities Act–compliant crossings, the bridge could continue to function as a pedestrian overpass. In addition to its functional preservation, it might be preserved as a landmark or gateway, or even enhanced as public art.

Encourage green infrastructure. Establish incentives for landscaping and low-impact storm improvements in large parking lots, similar to what has been done at the Northgate Transit Center. While recognizing the value of the existing big-box stores and the goods and services they provide to the community, the overall visual appearance can be enhanced with green walls and other plantings, which also improve water quality.

Create access for adjacent neighborhoods through interim parking. The shopping centers and other underused sites may be a source of surplus space for a park-and-ride pilot project. Explore surface parking options with minimal structured parking. Parking can be a land banking strategy for owners and developers.

Housing and Development

Use incentives to increase density around the transit corridor. Incentives for redevelopment and housing affordability could include greater density, increased floor/area ratio, reduced parking requirements, tax exemptions, quicker entitlements, or reduced mitigation fees.

Raise neighborhood awareness of underused land and the transformational potential of new uses. Focus redevelopment on existing parking lots, including lots associated with strip malls and formerly used for car sales. Allow temporary adaptive use in vacant buildings, such as a festival market. With stakeholder support, promote redevelopment of incompatible uses, such as the wrecking yard.

Create incentives to bring structures along Aurora Avenue North closer to the street. Consider zoning strategies for reclaiming parking space and closing the distance between the built environment and the pedestrian realm along the corridor, perhaps including shared parking and shared signage space along the thoroughfare. Explore models for incorporating partially enclosed surface parking with mixed-use, street-oriented development. Mid-rise residential uses may work on some sites, but to ensure neighborhood quality of life, residents must be buffered from commercial activities.

Jump-start development with subsidized, below-market housing. Do not wait for lenders' acceptance and developers' interest in parcels near Aurora Avenue North. Plan to invest public housing money or subsidies in exemplary projects that change the urban equation along the corridor near the station.

Look at a variety of residential choices from townhouses to mid-rise buildings.

Create distinctive, appealing, livable, neighborhoods with community amenities such as gardens and pocket parks to soften the massing of new multifamily housing.

Leverage transit investments for nearby development. Cluster uses and services to create a true hub or heart and enable transit users to make the most of each trip to the stations or neighborhood.

Market RapidRide to big-box retailers. Engage retailers as major stakeholders in the neighborhood who support green values and good community relations. Cite the advantages of RapidRide and the stations in bringing additional traffic, neighborhood appeal, and opportunities for transit use by employees.

Look at surplusing and alternative uses of city-owned land. The existing city-owned parcels in the neighborhood could create unique opportunities for jump-starting the desired development along the avenue. By selling the potentially incompatible parcels and moving uses such as the waste disposal site, the city could leverage these assets to focus on more important or significant parcels nearer the stations. Consider public/private land swaps.

Echo Lake

A RapidRide E Line station is planned for North 192nd Street and Aurora Avenue North, in the city of Shoreline at the current site of the Shoreline park-and-ride lot. The E Line is planned to terminate at the Aurora Village Transit Center, a half-mile north of the North 192nd Street station. The transit center is also the southern terminus of Swift, the arterial BRT service provided by Community Transit in Snohomish County. At the transit center, RapidRide and Swift will share a boarding island, and frequent service will enable timely transfers.

The city of Shoreline and its partners have completed an impressive slate of improvements along the Aurora Avenue North corridor from North 165th to 205th Street, including widened sidewalks, better business access through business access transit lanes, planting strips, and linear green spaces. The result is a bold departure from a corridor environment that was fundamentally hostile to pedestrians to one that, although still dominated by cars, is safe for pedestrians and even inviting. Funded largely by grants, these improvements have earned support from a majority of corridor businesses, some of which ceded land in return for the benefits of improved frontage.

> "You have something that retailers already want—30,000 trips a day. That's 20 million impressions."

New initiatives and public and private investments should leverage current progress along the corridor and define a network of commercial and mixed-use development that is pedestrian friendly, attractive to developers, and inviting to prospective residents and business owners.

Neighborhood and Corridor Development

Explore overall potential for regional coordination between transit agencies. Aurora Avenue North in Shoreline could benefit from frequent and overlapping service provided by two separate yet integrated BRT lines—the RapidRide E Line from the south and the Community Transit Swift BRT route from the north. Involve transit agency stakeholders and community partners in transit development for this node, and create a process for stakeholder alignment between the two transit agencies and the city of Shoreline before RapidRide starts service in 2013.

Commission a feasibility study for partially consolidating transit center functions on the North 192nd Street park-and-ride site or an alternative site. Such a consolidation could strengthen the North 192nd Street node by adding transit transfers at this location, improving transit service efficiency, and increasing the potential for transit-oriented development. Ideally, through this study a preferred regional strategy for the transit center would be identified and supported by the transit agencies, the city of Shoreline, and stakeholders. The collaborative support of the study partners would be advantageous in securing federal funding for the preferred regional facility. The study should do the following:

- Assess the transit operating requirements and capital costs associated with a new transit center.
- Determine the Federal Transit Administration's "useful life" financial conditions as they apply to the Aurora Village Transit Center.
- Identify the operating costs required in order to shift route alignments and service to the new transit center.

Shoreline corridor improvements, Echo Lake, and the Aurora Village Transit Center.

- Quantify ridership impacts and projections of the new transit center.
- Assess the feasibility of joint-use development opportunities for the proposed sites.

Analyze expansion of commercial zoning to the east, toward Echo Lake. Current boundaries limit development flexibility and the potential for significant transit-oriented development.

Explore relationships with existing neighborhoods (Echo Lake, Hillwood). Expand pedestrian access from the adjoining neighborhoods to the corridor.

Create an identity or brand for the entire corridor. The intensity of BRT, including RapidRide and Swift proximity and connections, could bring about high recognition of the corridor locally and regionally.

Housing and Development

Consider a dialogue with big-box partners about partial redevelopment of the land near the Aurora Village Transit Center. There may be ready support for a richer pedestrian environment there.

Cultivate opportunities for adding amenities on private commercial land, and linking them with the right-of-way and other existing public assets.

- Sky Nursery: Add a restaurant or other components with indoor/outdoor seating.
- Echo Lake: Add more public view and shore access near the Interurban Trail, and reorient the park at the northeast corner of the lake, which faces Aurora Village instead of the corridor.
- Interurban Trail: Improve wayfinding for pedestrian and bike connections between transit, corridor, and trail—especially at the open space at the south end of the lake.

Institute appropriate design guidelines. These guidelines could encourage more transparent, pedestrian-friendly street frontage in and around Echo Lake Village and other commercial and mixed-use areas.

Assess the market response to recent multifamily developments along Aurora Avenue North, such as Echo Lake Village. Data about rental rates, vacancies, demographics, and parking utilization can be used to inform evolving zoning policies and infrastructure funding, and to frame appeals to potential developers.

Encourage new multifamily housing development near existing multifamily projects. Consider a diversity of housing types with lower parking ratios that incorporate open space and ground-floor retail or professional services. To encourage development, extend multifamily tax incentives to these areas.

Market housing opportunities to qualified developers. Target those who have a solid track record and can boost lender confidence. Highlight the location and the fact that the corridor is close to job centers in both Snohomish and King counties and to seniors who may be aging in place. The location may have limited appeal to students.

Expect job development along the corridor to hinge on community-oriented retail and neighborhood services. Professional services and medical offices will be a smaller market.

Capitalize on density incentives already in place. These incentives should encourage redevelopment of important existing or older sites in the multiuse zone.

For the park-and-ride site, test feasibility for shared uses. Consider splitting the site into north and south sections if residential development is considered.

Consider the expansion potential for a transit center across Aurora Avenue North. Determine whether the site to the east of the park-and-ride and across Aurora Avenue North is a viable alternative location for the transit center. Given the power lines and shared public uses, transit may be the highest and best use, and there are fewer constraints regarding grade changes.

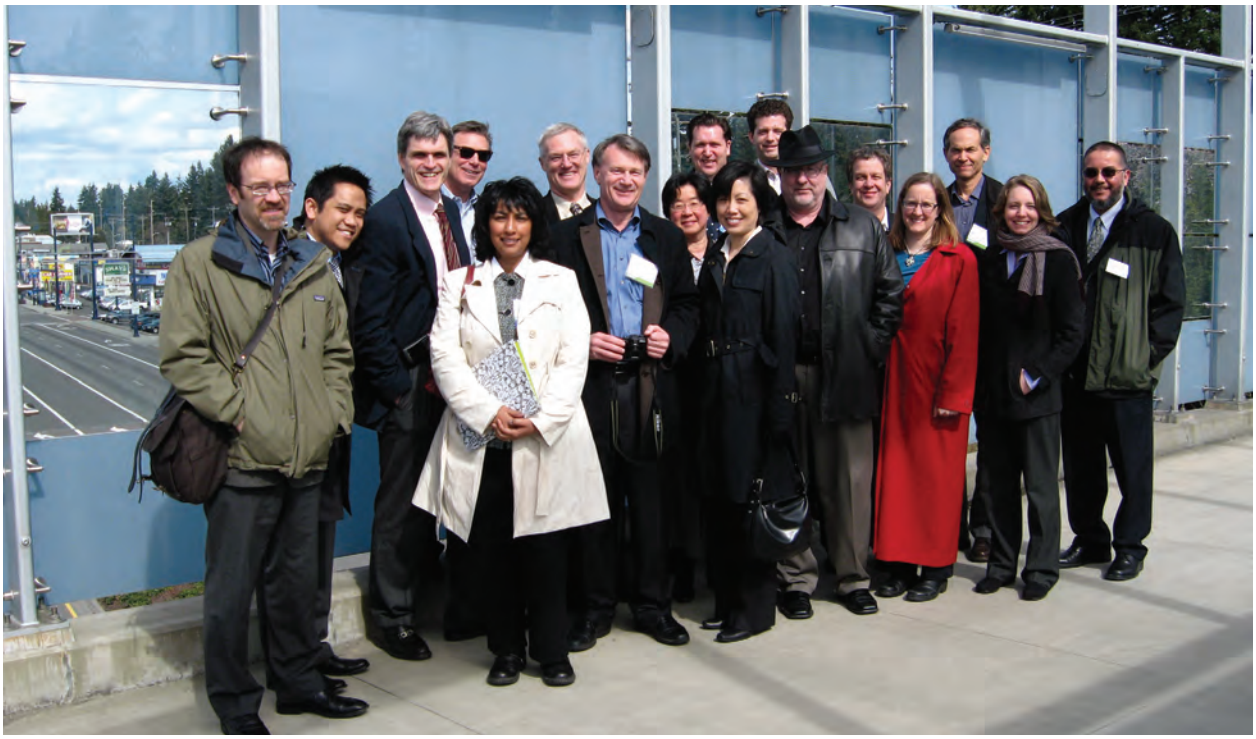
5 Summary

In all station areas, the arrival of RapidRide has the potential to move communities closer to density and livability goals while bringing access to convenient and faster transit service. The key to realizing this potential, especially in times of scarce and uncertain resources, lies in three important shifts of focus:

> "Corridor branding can lift older automobile-oriented areas out of the anonymity of Nowhere, U.S.A."

Corridors instead of stations. RapidRide can become a powerful catalytic mechanism that unifies entire arterial corridors of diverse communities and land uses. In each of the three future station areas, the arrival of RapidRide will be accompanied by a number of changes that begin to transform a suburban-style arterial lined with parking lots and strip development into an urbanized, multimodal corridor that respects and accommodates pedestrians and encourages new businesses and employers to thrive. Cross-street connections become an important part of the system, and planning for stations involves the entire intersection. BRT is not just for commuting and long trips, but also for short trips along the corridor, to bars and restaurants and shopping.

Champions instead of "necessary" stakeholders. To achieve a high level of ridership, harness the power of the system, and leverage the public investment, it is important to seek out and cultivate



The site analysis team and project partners.

place-based advocates who can "own" the community agenda as well as the promise of RapidRide. The effort can be used to identify synergies between the regional transportation goals of RapidRide and the values and agendas of community groups, business organizations, major employers, activists, institutions, and government agencies.

Community value in addition to transportation value. Promotion of RapidRide to transit riders and potential transit riders is important to the success of the system. But powerful neighborhood, business, and nonrider support for RapidRide can be tapped if the system is seen as part of a shift to a more healthful, beautiful, and human-scale urban environment.

RapidRide presents an opportunity for establishing and extending neighborhood identity and branding and has the potential to become the backbone of green infrastructure in emerging neighborhoods.

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