DRAFT

Modal Integration Policy Framework Executive Summary

January 22, 2021

Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the *Modal Integration Policy Framework Report* is to develop policy guidance and identify next steps for how to best integrate our modal master plan networks (Transit Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, Freight Master Plan, and Bicycle Master Plan). Our policy focus is on locations where street rights-of-way (ROW) are too narrow to accommodate essential street functions, particularly our priority modal networks.

Our desired outcomes for the Modal Integration Policy Framework and its implementation include:

- Determine how to accommodate modal networks where ROW space is deficient at the planning and concept design stages, rather than later within project design and delivery stages
- Optimize ROW allocation based on a policy framework that balances network function, land use development patterns, and local context
- Formalize a consistent and transparent approach for translating our plans and policies into project decisions and share our approach within our outreach efforts

The proposed policy framework and project development tools are intended to strengthen Seattle's current modal master plans by addressing conflicts earlier in the project development process, by examining trade-offs in constrained spaces, and by developing clear guidance that is rooted in broader city policies and values.

Existing Policy Framework

The Modal Integration Policy Framework builds on Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, a 20-year vision and road map for Seattle's future. This plan defines our City's core values around race and social equity; environmental stewardship; community; and economic opportunity and security. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan articulates a long-range growth strategy to focus growth within urban centers and villages, and it contains our foundational citywide transportation goals and policies, including policies on how we use street space. Many policies are designed to promote multi-modal transportation options and uses other than driving alone.

The City's Complete Street Ordinance directs SDOT to design, operate, and maintain Seattle's streets to promote safe and convenient access and travel for all users. We are also guided by Seattle's Climate Action Plan, which identifies transportation as the City's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and establishes targets for shifting travel patterns away from fossil fuels.

Seattle's Bicycle Master Plan (2014), Transit Master Plan (2012; amended 2016), Freight Master Plan (2016), and Pedestrian Master Plan (2017) expand on Comprehensive Plan goals and policies to advance use of these modes. They also identify priority networks to guide investment decisions. Even with a large policy foundation, we lack comprehensive policy guidance for how accommodate these networks in places where the ROW is too narrow for all desired modes and uses.

Approach

To best understand the scope of challenges to integrating our modal plan networks, we conducted a technical analysis of where the modal plan recommendations could not be accommodated. Based on design dimensions established in Streets Illustrated (Seattle's ROW Improvements Manual), we identified where the right-of-way is "deficient." We separately assessed spatial deficiencies within the curb-to-curb area, as well as pedestrian realm deficiencies in the area between the curb line and property line. We

also interviewed City staff and reviewed recent or ongoing projects within the project development phase (0-30% design).

We shared and discussed key findings, draft policy recommendations and implementing actions with the Policy & Operations Advisory Group (POAG)—a group of representatives from City commissions, boards, the Transportation Equity Workgroup, and other advisory groups that we convened to serve as a sounding board for our modal integration efforts. In parallel, we worked with a staff Core Team (a group of subject matter experts within the Seattle Department of Transportation) to do the same.

Findings

Key findings presented here describe the complexity of potential solutions for modal integration and the factors we considered in the development of the draft policy framework and next steps. Our findings are grouped into the following three themes.

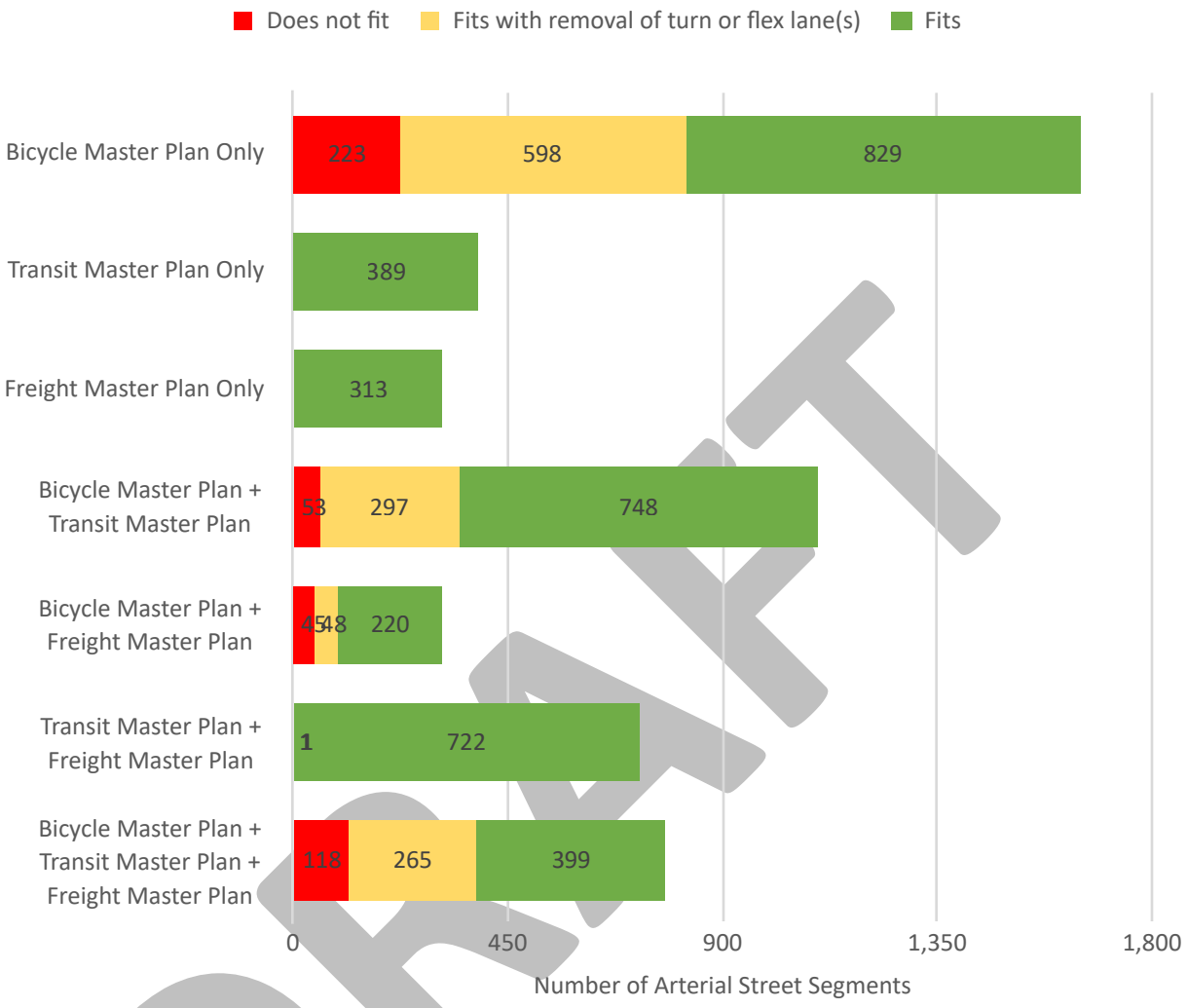
Existing Right-of-Way Deficiencies on Planned Modal Networks

Our modal master plans' priority networks sometimes require more street space than is available. Of Seattle's arterial street network, there are 5,269 street segments (defined as the length of street between intersections) designated as part of a planned modal network that are intended to fit between the curb-to-curb (Bicycle Master Plan, Transit Master Plan, and/or Freight Master Plan). Based on our analysis, we found that **streets are largely able to accommodate the modal networks** in the existing curb-to-curb dimension, even where modal networks overlap (illustrated by the green and yellow areas in Figure 1). As illustrated by the red areas in Figure 1, only 8% (440) of these street segments have right-of-way widths that are too narrow to accommodate designated modal plan networks. Of the 440 arterial street segments with deficient curb-to-curb widths, all but one includes a planned bike facility, making the Bicycle Master Plan network the most challenging modal network to build out.

When implementing the bicycle, transit, and freight modal networks (those within the curb-to-curb space), we found that **modal plan networks will frequently impact other essential functions, such as access and loading, that take place in the flex zone**, illustrated by the yellow areas in Figure 1. A majority of arterial street segments have ROW widths sufficient to accommodate priority modal networks, and still maintain 1 or more flex zones; however, many segments do not. Through our conversations, we heard resoundingly that access functions are still essential for all land uses and, in some cases, should be prioritized in right-of-way allocation decisions, and should be evaluated more consistently within concept design processes. While these segments are not "deficient," they often present challenges within the design and outreach processes.

In addition, we analyzed the pedestrian realm of our arterial street network to understand spatial right-of-way deficiencies beyond the roadway. We identified 424 street segments that are substantially deficient to meet sidewalk infrastructure needs (defined as more than 3 feet short). We heard from POAG members that **pedestrian safety, access, and convenience are key priorities for consideration in right-of-way allocation that could impact curb-to-curb priorities.** Remedies to provide the needed right-of-way are limited to moving the curb line or acquiring additional right-of-way, which can be difficult in our more urbanized areas.

Figure 1: Ability for Arterial Street Segments to Accommodate Modal Networks Based on Designated Network(s)



Values to Guide Right-of-Way Allocation Policy

City and SDOT values should be a key driver for how right-of-way space is allocated, including **directly connecting right-of-way allocation policies to actions needed to meet Seattle's climate goals** and **improving modal planning processes and right-of-way allocation decisions to advance racial equity.** Without a clear priority for right-of-way decisions based on desired mode shift outcomes, POAG members expressed concern that sustainable modes (e.g., walking, biking, transit) may lose out over personal vehicles when there is constrained right-of-way. Our racial equity analysis relied on the processes completed for each modal plan and leaves gaps in an authentic understanding of comprehensive community mobility needs—particularly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan growth strategies call for denser development and investment in urban centers and urban villages. These locations are regional draws and are places where people work, live, learn, and play. **Most of the deficient street segments are located on arterials that are provide direct connections between our urban centers and urban villages.**

Considerations for Future Modal Planning

We were not able to directly address all findings in our Modal Integration Policy Framework, and those we could not address can serve as considerations for future modal planning. For example, we intend to explore **aligning the Modal Integration Policy Framework with signal operations to further advance modal integration** and facilitate priority movement for modes.

Across the board, we heard enthusiasm for **thinking creatively about the future of modal planning to address shortcomings outlined through this process.** POAG members expressed support for a new approach to planning transportation networks that steers away from separate modal planning towards holistically addressing mobility needs.

While some of the findings we uncovered can be addressed through the immediate next steps of developing the Modal Integration Policy Framework, there are also findings that lend themselves to larger solutions, which are discussed in "Next Steps."

DRAFT Policy Framework to Support Modal Integration

The draft Modal Integration Policy Framework provides guidance on how to support integration of our 4 modal plan priority networks and, when necessary, how to prioritize modes where there is deficient right-of-way to accommodate all planned network improvements. The framework includes 3 geographic policy priorities based on whether the deficient street segment is located within an urban center or urban village, within a manufacturing/industrial center (MIC), or elsewhere in the city. It also includes Critical Bicycle Connections, a citywide strategy for identifying segments within the bicycle network that have few alternatives to be relocated and are critical to network integrity. Note that several forthcoming policy initiatives referenced below are discussed in more detail in the Next Steps section.

Within Urban Centers and Urban Villages

Goal: Provide clarity regarding where pedestrians shall be prioritized through the physical and operational design of streets, sidewalks, and signals in urban centers and urban villages.

Draft Policies:

- Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalk width, planting strip, curb radii) when there are competing uses for limited ROW within urban centers and urban villages to meet Streets Illustrated design standards.
- Optimize pedestrian design standards on Green Streets and favor shared street design instead of rigid spatial delineation of modes.
- Protect flex zones where sidewalk width is deficient (at least 3-feet too narrow) to ensure our ability to expand the sidewalk zone.

Between Urban Centers and Urban Villages

Goal: Outside of urban centers, urban villages, and manufacturing/industrial centers (MICs), ensure the right-of-way is prioritized for transit travel time and reliability while designing for safety and meeting design standards for freight, and people walking and biking.

Draft Policies:

- When there is insufficient ROW to accommodate all modal plan priorities:

    - Prioritize transit travel time and reliability outside of urban centers, urban villages, and the MICs.
    - Prioritize right-of-way allocation for transit-serving features including dedicated transit lanes (where policy thresholds are met) and traffic signal queue jumps.
- Apply the forthcoming transit lane policy to the right-of-way deficiency analysis assumptions to ensure future transit-only lanes are factored into the curb-to-curb cross section.
- On arterials between urban centers and urban villages with a Critical Bicycle Connection, prioritize right-of-way space for standard bicycle facilities, consistent with Streets Illustrated.

In Manufacturing/Industrial Centers

Goal: Within the MICs, ensure right-of-way is prioritized for safe and reliable freight mobility and operations while ensuring safety and meeting design standards for transit, and people walking and biking.

Draft Policies:

- When there is insufficient ROW to accommodate all modal plan priorities within the MIC:
    - Prioritize freight and urban goods reliability within the MICs by ensuring that Streets Illustrated freight design standards are met on the freight network.
    - Prioritize right-of-way allocation for freight reliability by implementing freight-only lanes, where forthcoming policy thresholds are met.
    - Consider implementing shared freight and transit lanes along busy transit routes and major truck streets to jointly prioritize freight and transit travel time and reliability.
- Where freight routes share a street with a bicycle route, facilities for trucks and bikes should be clearly separated and comply with width and materials standards, consistent with Streets Illustrated.
- On streets within MICs with a Critical Bicycle Connection, prioritize right-of-way space for standard bicycle facilities, consistent with Streets Illustrated.

At Critical Connections in the Bicycle Network

Goal: Ensure that right-of-way is prioritized for critical connectivity to fulfill the goals and intent of the Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) along routes where there is no analogous all ages and abilities alternate route within the corridor.

Draft Policies:

- Designate bicycle priority segments that are critical for bicycle connectivity for use as a Project Development tool for corridor projects until the network map is formally updated.
- Where a right-of-way deficiency exists along mapped critical bicycle connections, prioritize bicycle infrastructure to meet design standards in right-of-way.
- In urban centers and urban villages, critical bike connections share priority with pedestrian infrastructure. Where right-of-way is deficient, consider creative design approaches such as shared street design, restrictions to vehicle movement, or one-way travel.

Next Steps

The findings and policy framework serve as the basis for our recommended next steps. Beyond review and finalization of the Modal Integration Policy Framework, there are 3 key next steps to operationalize the policy and advance modal integration more broadly.

Complete Additional Policies for Right-of-Way Allocation and Prioritization

We will create complementary policies that build upon the Modal Integration Policy Framework. We will affirm where pedestrian infrastructure should be prioritized in urban centers and urban villages by creating a **pedestrian priority network** to inform future large capital investments in the public realm that encompasses existing green streets, pedestrianized streets, greenways and new pedestrian priority streets. We will prepare a **transit lane policy** that provides key guidance for where and when right-of-way allocation should be dedicated for moving transit and business access and transit (BAT) lanes. We will also prepare a **freight lane policy** to establish criteria for the selection and prioritization of freight lanes and freight and transit (FAT) lanes.

Prepare Project Development Tools

Project development tools will provide resources for planners and project developers who are weighing modal tradeoffs. We will develop a **modal plan constraint map** which highlights the deficiency analysis and can be used as an in-house tool for project planning and development. We will develop **outreach tools and storytelling materials** that connect to the Comprehensive and Modal Plan policies to support community conversations on individual projects. We will complete a **curb space priority policy** and **flex zone/curbside change guidance** that will be integrated into existing project development tools and the City's Comprehensive Plan. We will develop **clear criteria of when to use vehicle level-of-service (LOS)** as a tool for measuring mobility through a corridor and explore multi-modal alternatives to the traditional LOS measure. We will develop **a critical bicycle connections map** for internal guidance that supports the intent and integrity of the current Bicycle Master Plan network and affirms where bicycle infrastructure should not be compromised or moved off corridor.

Integrate Our Modal Plans into a Citywide Transportation Plan

An integrated citywide transportation plan will allow us to further the work of the Modal Integration Policy Framework by more fully integrating the modal plan networks. First and foremost is the opportunity to engage the community in a discussion about their mobility needs and aspirations for their streets in a way that cuts across all modes and uses of the right-of-way. We believe a broad-based outreach process, especially one that centers Black, Indigenous, and people of color residents and businesses, is essential to shape our policies and investments towards creating a more equitable transportation system. In addition to an equity focus, there is also an opportunity to center Seattle Department of Transportation core values of safety, sustainability, mobility, livability, and excellence.

In 2021, Seattle will launch a major update to the Comprehensive Plan for adoption in 2024. We have an opportunity to work closely from a land use – transportation perspective to integrate the two planning activities. This can include joint outreach activities and coordinated policy and projects. Reinforcing this schedule is the Levy to Move Seattle, which currently expires in 2024. A citywide transportation plan can help guide the City towards a decision on a renewal and potential program and project investments.