



## Route 40



# Route 40 Transit Plus Multimodal Corridor

*Making bus trips faster, more reliable, and improving safety*

## FAQ

### Background

The Route 40 corridor is 13.5 miles long and passes through the neighborhoods of Northgate, Crown Hill, Loyal Heights, Ballard, Fremont, Westlake, South Lake Union, Downtown Seattle, and Pioneer Square. With three million annual rides prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Route 40 had the third highest number of annual rides of all King County Metro's bus routes. Ridership on Route 40 remains one of Metro's top highest ridership routes, with an average of about 7,700 boardings each weekday. The Route 40 is currently scheduled to arrive every 10 minutes or sooner for most of the day, but buses on this route can be slow and unreliable. On average, the Route 40 is late approximately 20% of the time. At busier times of the day, it can be late up to 35% of the time.

*This FAQ provides responses to questions the project team has received throughout the planning and design phases.*

### What is King County Metro doing to enhance safety for transit riders?

In January 2021, Metro launched the Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement (SaFE) Reform initiative. The initiative creates a new vision for Metro's safety and security functions and addresses the negative impact of policies on customers and employees.

The number of transit security officers has doubled to 155 and services expanded to cover more routes and transit hubs 24/7. Officers aim to respond quickly and promote compliance with the Code of Conduct. If necessary, riders who violate the Code of Conduct may be asked to leave the bus to ensure the safety of the operator and other passengers.

Progress is being made. Compared to 2022, in 2023 there was a 40% decrease of drug use incidents on Route 40, as well as a 70% decrease in overall reported incidents on Fremont Ave N and N 34th St. Work continues on other measures such as addressing physical conditions at bus stops and collaborating with law enforcement partners. Rider feedback is especially valuable and is used to inform efforts. If you have any feedback or need assistance, reach out online at [kingcounty.gov/metro/ride](https://kingcounty.gov/metro/ride) or by calling 206-553-3000. In case of an emergency, call or text 9-1-1.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

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**GET INVOLVED:** SDOT and Metro are committed to keeping you informed throughout the project. Learn more about this project and sign up for email updates at [www.seattle.gov/transportation/Route40](https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/Route40)



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### What does ridership look like today?

Ridership on Route 40 has steadily increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it shows no signs of slowing down. As of October 2023, the average number of people riding on weekdays has gone up to nearly 7,700 – an increase of 1,100 more riders compared to a year ago. A survey conducted in spring 2023 showed most riders use transit not just for commuting, but also for running errands and leisure activities, indicating that there is still a demand for investments in transit. By making improvements along this route, which is also used by routes 17, 31, 32, 44, and 62, we can make public transportation more reliable, improve access to bus stops and nearby communities, reduce transit travel times, and make taking the bus a better transportation choice for everyone. By investing in this project, we can keep ridership high and make the switch from driving alone to taking the bus a more practical option.

You can view the ridership trends on [King County Metro's Rider Dashboard](#) and learn more about how people use transit in Appendix B of our [Summer 2023 outreach summary](#).

### How will traffic, congestion, and travel times change for travelers along the corridor?

We understand that there are worries about traffic congestion, accessing businesses and residential areas along the route, and the perceived limited benefits of the pilot program on Westlake Ave N, which includes business access and transit lanes (BAT lanes) and freight-and-bus only lanes (FAB lanes). As part of our environmental review in spring 2023, we submitted a *Transportation Technical Report* that examines the changes to travel times for general traffic and transit. The report includes a traffic analysis using Synchro – a software program that assesses traffic operations – for the morning and evening peak hours at 20 intersections. The analysis measures traffic impacts in terms of Intersection Level-of-Service (LOS), which is a letter grade based on the amount of delay in seconds. The report provides information on the existing and the projected LOS if the project is built. Here is a summary of the results and consideration of the concerns we've heard.

### Traveling along Westlake Ave N

The main goal of the project is to make Route 40 more reliable. Along Westlake Ave N, our models show that during busy times, travel times for Route 40 are 58% faster with the proposed FAB lanes and signal changes. These time savings will improve reliability and help people get where they need to go. Freight also benefits from reliable travel times since they will mostly use the same lanes as the bus.

Our analysis shows that general traffic won't be affected much during peak hours because the capacity of Westlake Ave N is limited by the south end of the corridor at Mercer St, which is outside of the project's focus area. We are also improving signal timing on Westlake Ave N to keep traffic flowing smoothly. Queue lengths may increase at signalized intersections and when the Fremont Bridge is up, but overall travel times will be similar to current conditions. The Fremont Bridge will continue to have four general traffic lanes. Traffic congestion and queuing that occurs as a result of peak period traffic demand heading to and from Mercer St and I-5 is expected to remain. Pedestrians and people biking can continue to travel along and cross Westlake Ave as usual while also benefiting from a new pedestrian signal at Halladay St.



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### *Traveling around Fremont*

To provide a new northbound protected bike lane and help reduce crowding at bus stops while maintaining an important transfer opportunity between bus routes, the existing northbound bus stop on Fremont Ave N will close and be replaced by two new bus zones nearby: one on N 35th St just east of Fremont Ave N (served by Routes 31, 32, and 62) and one on Fremont Pl N just west of Fremont Ave N (served by Route 40). Additionally, a new southbound BAT lane will be installed on N 36th St between 1st Ave NW and Fremont Ave N with a two-way left-turn lane provided on N 36th St between 1st Ave NW and Phinney Ave N. Parking will not be removed for this BAT lane.

Some Fremont business owners asked us to consider moving the new stop at Fremont Pl N farther west to Evanston Ave N, so we conducted the *Fremont Neighborhood Traffic Analysis* to review their request. The purpose of the analysis was to compare the bus travel time differences between the proposed Fremont Pl N bus stop (Option 3B) and a bus stop closer to Evanston Ave N (Option 3C). The analysis showed that the location on Fremont Pl N performed better in all traffic metrics compared to Evanston Ave N. We also considered the transfer experience for bus riders. Moving the stop to the requested location at Evanston Ave N resulted in a worse transfer experience due to the distance people would need to walk or roll to the bus stop when transferring between bus routes, an important consideration for those with disabilities. You can read the full results of the traffic analysis by visiting the Project Materials section on our [website](#).

With the addition of the southbound BAT lane, signal timing in the corridor will be adjusted to account for the new roadway configuration. People driving may experience longer queues at intersections. However, similar lane adjustments elsewhere have been shown to improve speed limit compliance, reduce collisions, and have limited changes to vehicle travel times.

### *Travel around Ballard*

The final design makes it more comfortable for people walking or rolling along the corridor and helps keep buses maintain their frequency and reliability. The improvements in Ballard include calming speeds on Leary Ave NW by reducing the number of travel lanes, adding a new traffic signal at 20th Ave NW and Leary Ave NW, an upgraded pedestrian crossing on Leary Ave NW north of 20th Ave NW, and northbound BAT lanes.

Going from two lanes in each direction to one along Leary Ave NW and installing a two-way left-turn lane in the center encourages people to drive at the posted speed limit, reduces weaving, and limits delays resulting from crashes. Similar changes were made on W Nickerson St, which is a similar street that has higher volumes (19,000 to 23,000 average weekday daily traffic compared to 10,000 to 13,000 on Leary Ave NW). These changes were successful without increasing congestion on W Nickerson St or neighboring streets.

Our traffic analysis shows that constructing the Route 40 project results in a 14-17% bus travel time savings in Ballard, contributing to a 5-10% overall transit travel time reduction for the entire route. The biggest time savings come from the bus-only lanes throughout the project corridor.



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We also compared the Level-of-Service for Build and No Build options and learned that most intersections perform similarly. The tables below show anticipated LOS at the studied signalized intersections, all way stop control (AWSC) intersections, and two-way stop control (TWSC) intersections.

### AM Peak Hour Intersection LOS Change between No Build and Build Options (2040)

Intersection	Traffic Control	Delay (sec/veh)		Level of Service						
		No Build	Build	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Leary Way NW / NW 39th St	Signal	16	19		•					
NW Leary Way / 14th Ave NW	Signal	13	13*		•					
NW Leary Way / 15th Ave NW NB	Signal	15	15*		•					
NW Leary Way / 15th Ave NW SB	Signal	10	10*		•					
NW Leary Way / NW Dock Pl	Two-Way Stop Control	23	40						→	
NW Leary Way / 20th Ave NW	All Way Stop Control (No Build); Signal (Build)	10	11		•					
NW Leary Way / NW Market S / 22nd Ave NW	Signal	33	32			•				
NW Market S / 24th Ave NW	Signal	34	34			•				
NW 85th St / 15th Ave NW	Signal	54	52					•		

### PM Peak Hour Intersection LOS Change between No Build and Build Options (2040)

Intersection	Traffic Control	Delay (sec/veh)		Level of Service						
		No Build	Build	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Leary Way NW / NW 39th St	Signal	41	41					•		
NW Leary Way / 14th Ave NW	Signal	10	10*		•					
NW Leary Way / 15th Ave NW NB	Signal	28	28*			•				
NW Leary Way / 15th Ave NW SB	Signal	14	14*		•					
NW Leary Way / NW Dock Pl	Two-Way Stop Control	41	55							→
NW Leary Way / 20th Ave NW	All Way Stop Control (No Build); Signal (Build)	24	12						←	
NW Leary Way / NW Market S / 22nd Ave NW	Signal	38	38					•		
NW Market S / 24th Ave NW	Signal	41	41					•		

One exception is the AM peak hour at the two-way stop at Leary Ave NW and NW Dock Pl. It operates at a lower level of service (LOS E) in the Build Option compared to LOS C in the No Build Option. This is because changing the number of lanes on Leary Ave NW to one through-lane in each direction makes it harder for people stopped at NW Dock Pl to find a gap to proceed onto Leary Ave NW. The travel times for vehicles on Leary Ave NW would be similar to current conditions. The other exception for LOS change is at Leary Ave NW and 20th Ave NW, which improves in the PM peak hour due to a new traffic signal being installed at this intersection.



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### How has community feedback been incorporated into the project?

Here is a summary of how we are integrating feedback:

- ▶ Offered to collaborate with Fremont business and property owners on designing a new bus stop at Fremont Pl N.
- ▶ Maintained the number of loading zones in each neighborhood and added new loading zones in Westlake and Fremont to support commercial loading for businesses and customers.
- ▶ Piloting Freight and Bus Lanes on Westlake Ave N to allow freight trucks weighing over 26,000 lbs. (13 tons) to use bus lanes 24/7, supporting freight movement on this Major Truck Street. We will actively seek opportunities for community feedback on how the FAB lane is performing once the pilot begins.
- ▶ Conducted traffic analyses during the early planning and design phases, including an additional analysis in the Fremont neighborhood to address a request raised by business owners. Detailed information and results can be found on [our website](#) in the *Transportation Technical Report* and the *Fremont Neighborhood Traffic Analysis*.
- ▶ Followed the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process. The project received a [Determination of Non-Significance](#) in Spring 2023, confirming that the project will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment.
- ▶ Adjusted the northern extent of the northbound Westlake FAB lane to better account for traffic queueing blockages during Fremont Bridge openings

We hope these actions demonstrate our commitment to addressing public concerns and improving the project based on the feedback received.

### Our commitment to Seattle voters

The Route 40 project, along with RapidRide J in Eastlake and RapidRide G on Madison St, is recognized as a top priority by state and federal agencies. The recognition has resulted in Seattle receiving millions of dollars in transit grants to support the construction of these projects, acknowledging their value in enhancing bus ridership.

We take our commitment to delivering the Route 40 project seriously, as it is an integral part of the [Levy to Move Seattle](#) and the development of a transit network to serve Seattle now and into the future. Meeting the funding obligations and deadlines ensures the continued success of supplementing Seattle's transportation budget and maximizing the use of local funds. By complying with the grant requirements, we can continue to work toward our values of equitable mobility and sustainability.

While our traffic analysis indicates minimal impacts along the project route, we remain dedicated to observing traffic patterns after the project is completed and keeping the community informed and engaged by sharing our findings.

It's important to note that the Route 40 design does not hinder potential changes on Leary Ave NW that may arise from other SDOT projects under study.

To ensure transparency, we have published outreach summaries after each design phase to ensure that the project's design reflects the feedback received whenever possible, while still meeting our goal of improving reliability for Route 40. Feedback from businesses and organizations along the project area has also been compiled in the publicly shared [Business and Neighborhood Organization Feedback Summary](#) from November 2023.