



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

NEWS

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City of Seattle



**King County
METRO**

FOR RELEASE

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Aurora Avenue/SR 99 North in Seattle is Third Worst High-Accident Corridor in the State

SEATTLE— Aurora Avenue/State Route 99 North in Seattle ranks third among all high-accident corridors in the state, which prompted a transportation study to make recommendations to improve Aurora Avenue. Recent study data (1999-2001) show there were more than 1,500 accidents in an eight-mile stretch of Aurora Avenue/SR 99 -- 61 were either fatal or disabling. Pedestrian and bicycle accidents totaled 72, including four of the eight fatalities in the corridor.

To address the high number of accidents and traffic congestion that plague the corridor, the Washington State Department of Transportation, the City of Seattle and King County are conducting the SR 99 North Corridor Study. The SR 99 North study area connects to the Alaskan Way Viaduct in downtown Seattle and extends north to the city of Shoreline – from the north end of the Battery Street Tunnel to North 145th Street, respectively. An important north-south highway for the Puget Sound region, SR 99 frequently serves as an alternate route for Interstate 5. It is also an urban corridor with a diverse mix of commercial and residential growth occurring.

“There are actions we can take to improve safety for people who live, do business, shop and travel in this highway corridor,” said Nytasha Sowers, WSDOT Project Manager. “We are actively seeking input from the public to help develop the final recommendation for improving Aurora Avenue.”

The study team has been meeting with businesses and residents to develop preliminary recommendations to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians and transit riders on Aurora Avenue. The preliminary recommendation includes a long-term plan with near-term actions to: improve traffic flow; increase the reliability of transit service; add safety improvements; and address community and business interests. Among the highlights of the preliminary recommendation (next page) are: an innovation to add a median barrier and wider lanes to the Aurora Bridge with suspended sidewalks from the bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists; more sidewalks and bus shelters along the corridor; parking restrictions in key areas to improve traffic flow, and designated bus and business-access lanes in strategic locations.

A final open house is scheduled for Oct. 24 to gather more input from the public on the preliminary recommendation.

(more)

Preliminary recommendation highlights:

Safety Recommendations:

- **Aurora Bridge Improvement:** Add a center median barrier and provide wider travel lanes on the Aurora Bridge to reduce the number of accidents occurring on the bridge. Due to space and weight constraints, the center barrier and wider travel lanes would require relocating the bridge's sidewalks beneath the bridge deck.
- **Median Treatments and Left-turn Lanes:** At key accident hot spots, add left-turn restrictions or raised medians with pockets for turning left to reduce accidents and increase safety for pedestrians trying to cross Aurora. These medians would be lower and wider than the concrete Jersey barrier proposed for the bridge.
- **Other Improvements:** Add more sidewalks, crossing improvements, bus shelters and lighting.

Traffic Flow and Transit Speed and Reliability Recommendations:

- *Northbound:* Provide three wider travel lanes from the Aurora Bridge to the Woodland Park Zoo -- North 38th Street to North 50th Street.
- *Southbound:* Build a bus lane -- business access and transit (BAT) lane -- on the current roadway shoulder from North 145th to North 110th Streets. This improvement would provide an extra lane for buses and right-turning traffic, improving traffic flow in the other two lanes.
- *Southbound:* Provide three general-purpose travel lanes during the p.m. peak period from North 110th Street to North 72nd Street by adding p.m. peak parking restrictions.
- *Southbound:* Provide an a.m. peak period bus lane -- business access and transit (BAT) lane -- from North 62nd Street to North 38th Street by adding a.m. peak parking restrictions.

The highlights above are just a few of the proposed preliminary recommendations for Seattle's SR 99/Aurora corridor. For a complete list, please contact us or visit our web site. The final recommendation is scheduled to be complete in December, when it will be incorporated into a *Route Development Plan* for the SR 99 North corridor. Additionally, WSDOT and the city of Seattle may be implementing some near-term improvements should funding become available.

Speakers are available to present the proposed improvements to groups that are interested. Many community councils have already scheduled presentations, and the public is encouraged to check with their neighborhood councils. To be put on the mailing list or schedule a speaker, please contact Shepherd at (206) 464-5878.

Media fact sheet available upon request.

More information about this study is online, please visit the SR 99 North study website at:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr99>

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For updated information on other Department of Transportation traffic revisions in the Puget Sound area, call the Commuter Information Line at DOT-HIWY (206-368-4499). The Commuter Information Line

may also be reached toll free in Washington at 1-800-695-ROAD (7623). TTY users can call 1-800-833-6388 and ask for (206) 515-3683.