6. MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Mobility and access for the Central Waterfront, begins with an essential premise that good design requires an equal emphasis on both place and function. That is, the waterfront must be a great place for all the people of the region and it must function effectively for the movement of people and goods, and for the servicing of the wide array of uses along the waterfront.

The mobility and access strategy seeks to connect the central waterfront with people and places throughout the city and region using a wide range of transportation options. The waterfront will be easier to get to and to experience along its full length.

Alaskan Way will accommodate vehicular and freight traffic and provide needed areas for parking and loading. It will feature frequent and easy to use transit service and include safe and functional bicycle facilities and strong pedestrian connections. The needs of each mode of transportation will be balanced to create a great urban place and experience for all to enjoy.

Pedestrians

Creating a safe and inviting place for pedestrians is an essential goal of the central waterfront design process. While cars, freight, bicycles and other users are important parts of the whole, the design starts with the needs of pedestrians, both along the corridor and connecting to it. The pedestrian design for the waterfront features a generously scaled promenade which will allow pedestrians to stroll near the water or to find a tranquil spot to sit and enjoy the views. Alaskan Way will be punctuated with pleasant, safe and convenient crossings at every east-west street. Key east-west connections will be enhanced with elevators and escalators to make it easier to enjoy waterfront and other downtown attractions in a single trip and to provide better connections to transit and parking.

The Promenade is envisioned as a pedestrian-scaled corridor along the water, framed with tideline planting areas, generous seating and strategically located canopies, and wide enough to comfortably accommodate a diverse set of users. In addition, generous sidewalks on both sides of Alaskan Way will provide a high quality pedestrian environment to support anticipated activities and uses.

To connect the waterfront to the Center City, east-west connections will be enhanced to encourage pedestrian use and activity. A major new feature will be the Overlook Walk, a graceful path traversing the slope between the Pike Place Market and the Aquarium. The Overlook Walk will provide spectacular viewpoints of Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains, and will include diverse landscape, play areas for children, and shops and cafes sited along the gently sloping, fully accessible walk. Elevators and escalators will be incorporated into the Overlook Walk to provide additional accessibility options.

Elevators and escalators will be provided at Union and Seneca Streets to greatly improve connectivity between 1st Avenue and the waterfront. The Marion Street pedestrian bridge will be replaced with a wider, more attractive structure that will provide easy connections between Colman Dock and First Avenue.
MOBILITY AND ACCESS

BICYCLES

An important City goal is to increase the rate of cycling among residents; the waterfront provides views, atmosphere and opportunities for activities that make it a location that can appeal to casual recreational cyclists as well as faster moving riders. To appeal to the broadest group of users – which includes families and people who currently aren’t comfortable biking in an urban environment – it is necessary to provide a design that includes some type of buffer, or separation between the street and bike facility.

The central waterfront design includes dedicated north-south bike facilities that will link seamlessly to the City’s broader bicycle network. The proposed bike path will connect with the Elliott Bay Trail to the north and south, and provides a buffered facility that can be enjoyed by a wide segment of riders. This may be supplemented by the addition of sharrows or in-street bike lanes for the more confident enthusiasts and commuters. Programs for bike sharing, rental, servicing and parking will also be integrated into the waterfront design to increase interest and opportunity for cycling along the waterfront.

BIKE RENTALS, RACKS AND BOLLARDS
MOBILITY AND ACCESS

TRANSIT

The Waterfront Seattle project area will be easily accessible to people from all over Seattle and the Puget Sound area using existing transit options and with planned transit improvements by King County Metro and other agencies. Today, 3rd Avenue is a major transit spine, with both surface transit, and the downtown transit tunnel, for bus and light rail connections. A key proposal of this mobility and access plan is the addition of streetcar or trolley bus service on 1st Avenue. The new First Avenue transit service will be frequent and easy to use, and easily accessible from the waterfront with the improved east-west pedestrian connections proposed. Other transit improvements serving the waterfront include the Madison rapid trolley bus route connecting Colman Dock to First Hill and beyond, and the new First Hill streetcar line which will terminate near 1st and Jackson.

Frequent Rapidride buses serving West Seattle and Ballard will access Downtown using Alaskan Way and either Columbia or Main Streets. To provide convenient local access along the waterfront, frequent, easy to use transit will run along Alaskan Way from the Sculpture Park to Pioneer Square. This transit will operate in the street and may be a streetcar, trolley bus or smaller transit vehicle. This transit mode needs to be focused on movement of people along the waterfront; characteristics could include high frequency operations, low floor vehicles, and a character distinctly of and for the waterfront in its design.

Colman Dock is one of three important intermodal transit hubs in the downtown serving over 4 million walk-on ferry passengers each year. Washington State Ferries plans to replace much of the dock structure and the passenger terminal building between 2015 and 2020. Both the larger vehicle ferries and passenger-only ferries will continue to arrive and depart from Colman Dock. Safe, pleasant and convenient pedestrian access from Colman Dock to nearby transit service on 1st Avenue, Alaskan Way and Madison, Marion and Columbia Streets is provided through new sidewalks, crosswalks and a wider Marion Street pedestrian bridge. Passenger drop off, taxis and future bike share programs would be accommodated adjacent to the dock on the west side of Alaskan Way.
MOBILITY AND ACCESS

STREET DESIGN

Alaskan Way and Elliott Way
The new Alaskan Way is configured to support multiple vehicular needs, including cars, regional transit, local circulator transit, freight, and more. The street changes in character from south to north, including two general purpose lanes in each direction, with left turn pockets where required, and with added “flex” lanes to support functions such as ferry queuing and transit priority routes in the section south of Columbia Street. The street is designed to function as a typical downtown street with a 30 mph speed limit and signalized intersections for vehicles and/or pedestrians at every block. Along the length of the new Alaskan Way and Elliott Way, there is great attention to the detail of crossings, sidewalks and bike paths to ensure that the street functions well for all.

Regional Traffic and Freight
The new Alaskan Way will serve as an important route for regional traffic and freight. The corridor will provide a functional and reliable street connection from the SR99 stadium area ramps to Northwest Seattle as well as access to downtown from Southwest Seattle via the stadium ramps. Alaskan Way will also provide efficient access to and from the Colman Dock ferry terminal while accommodating both through and local freight connections.

Local Access and Parking
A broad array of businesses and institutions line both sides of Alaskan Way, and all of these entities require vehicular access for deliveries, service and parking. The design of the waterfront must accommodate all of these needs.
Vehicles must be able to access the piers from Alaskan Way. Vehicles will travel across a bike path, and through the promenade area to access their destination. This connection will be carefully designed to balance the needs for function, safety and aesthetics.

Access on the east side of Alaskan Way will be similar to other city arterials. Unlike the west side, where the piers are considerably removed from the street, in this area, building entrances are relatively close to the parking/loading lanes on the east side of the new Alaskan Way.

Historically, people accessing the waterfront by car have either parked beneath the Alaskan Way Viaduct, or parked in nearby parking lots and garages. With the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct – and the parking below – the central waterfront design will employ a number of strategies to address this change in parking conditions. Parking availability will remain an important factor for attracting and retaining businesses along the waterfront, and ensuring visitors from throughout the region can enjoy waterfront attractions.

The new Alaskan Way will include short-term on-street parking, passenger loading zones and truck loading zones on each block. However, while parking along the new Alaskan Way will be convenient for waterfront businesses and activities, there will be fewer spaces than previously available under the viaduct. To mitigate this reduction and accommodate the anticipated increase in the number of people experiencing the waterfront, additional strategies are being explored in conjunction with the mitigation of parking impacts associated with the construction of the tunnel by WSDOT. Key strategies include:

- Partnering with private developers to build a mixed use project that includes new short term parking
- Better utilization of existing parking near the waterfront using real time information (signs showing parking availability, smart phone apps) revising on-street parking policies to optimize parking occupancy and turnover partnering with private parking facilities to provide more short-term parking for waterfront visitors