

II. SODO

The name, “The SODO Trail,” promises more than the trail itself delivers. No sign announces where the trail begins on Royal Brougham Way just east of CenturyLink Stadium. It extends south along the Sound Transit light rail tracks for one mile to Forest Street. There, it comes to an end in a parking lot next to a large industrial building and a rusty cargo container that doesn’t look like it has moved in months – maybe years.

A sign on Forest Street identifies that the SODO Trail is near, but it offers no directions where cyclists might go next from there.

And so it goes in SODO, where the urban bike trails that emerge from south downtown Seattle enter an industrial zone with few alternatives for cyclists who prefer to not compete with 18-wheelers.

SODO is home to world-class sports stadiums and world corporate headquarters for Starbucks Coffee Company but, as homes go, nobody actually lives there.

According to data from SODO companies that are required to track employee commutes by the state Commute Trip Reduction law:

- Employees for the firms commute, on average, more than 18 miles each way, compared to the Seattle-wide average of 15 miles.
- Bicycle commuting in SODO grew from less than 1% of commuters to 1.8% from 1993 to 2007. That’s not far off the citywide average of 2%, but it’s significantly below the 3.4% rate for north Seattle.

The Cascade Bicycle Club surveyed cyclists who ride to and through SODO. Ninety responded and listed the following challenges:

- Lack of safe, connected bike routes from north-to-south, and east-to-west;
- Lack of signs;
- Poor pavement quality on side streets;
- “Orphan” railroad tracks that can trip cyclists;
- Long wait times at railroad crossings, and
- High traffic volumes and speeds on main arterials.



Beginning of Trail



End of Trail

Those outcomes are pretty good for commute trip reduction and they reflect that the northern part of SODO is well served by light rail and fairly frequent bus service, with a corporate commitment at Starbucks to encouraging commute alternatives.

Different outcomes emerged in interviews with the small employers that dominate the SODO business mix. Among 20 business owners and managers who were interviewed for this report, most said the vast majority of their employees drive alone to work every day because of convenience, work hours, or lack of viable commute alternatives.

And, the available alternatives for cyclists aren't that good.

Bike lanes are available along the Alaskan Way surface road to the west that leads to the West Seattle Swing Bridge beneath the Spokane Street Viaduct, and the trail network on the west side of the Duwamish River. But the Alaskan Way bike lanes are in poor condition, prompting cyclists to ride in the vehicle traffic lanes that are used by hundreds of trucks every day that carry containers to and from the marine cargo terminals along the east Duwamish Waterway.

First Avenue South is marked with sharrows and is designated on city maps as the primary north-south bike route through SODO. But many cyclists avoid that route in favor of adjacent side streets, Occidental and Utah. Those streets have far less traffic, but they are in poor condition and do not go all the way through SODO.

The issue of SODO bicycle access sparked some of the largest disagreements among members of the multi-modal research group that produced this report, in part echoing objections raised in the SODO-area business community to aspects of the Seattle Bicycle Master Plan. But the bicycle access issue also produced one of the best ideas brought forward through the reporting process.

Airport Way, which veers to the southeast across the south edge of downtown and the International District, might an alternative through route for cyclists that could connect with the Myrtle Edwards Trail from the north, and extend all the way south through SODO, Georgetown, and along King County International Airport to connect in Tukwila with the Green River Trail, which provides good riding conditions all the way into south King County.

Many details would need to be resolved, but if the issues can be worked out, that would be a SODO Trail worthy of the name.

The SODO Trail itself could also be improved if it was linked to the Busway to provide a connected route down to Spokane Street where it could connect to a new multi-use path that will create a new east-west corridor when the Spokane Street construction project is complete.

Completion of the long-delayed Lander Street Overpass could also support bicycle and pedestrian mobility in SODO.

Barriers

The multi-modal group agreed about the following barriers to safe pedestrian and bicycle travel in SODO.

BIKE ROUTES

Location	Barriers/Issues with Connectivity	Image
Alaskan Way S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy freight traffic, safety concerns along pedestrian pathway • Unsafe intersection crossings • Separated trail does exist, though heavy traffic and congestion will continue through Viaduct deconstruction 	
Utah Ave S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor pavement quality • Haphazard parking arrangements • Unsafe (uncontrolled) crossings at intersections • Abandoned railroad tracks 	
Colorado Ave S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor pavement quality • Lack of connectivity • Freight movement 	
1st Ave S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High speed/volume traffic • Sharrows instill false sense of security • Poor pavement quality north of Stadiums (through Pioneer Square) 	
Occidental Ave S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor pavement quality • Lack of connectivity 	

<p>E3 Busway</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bikes prohibited (transit only) 	
<p>SODO trail / E3 Busway trail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of connectivity • Isolated trail • Lacks complete way-finding directing cyclists to the trail (a couple signs exist) 	
<p>6th Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor pavement quality • Broken glass • A key route if exiting the SODO trail • Haphazard parking arrangement and transient parking 	
<p>Edgar Martinez Dr</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult crossing to access Pyramid Alehouse “cut-through lot,” which is used primarily by bicycle commuters headed to the Starbucks Headquarters. 	
<p>Royal Brougham Way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle lane (which runs from Alaskan Way to 4th Ave S) terminates at 4th Ave S without connections to light rail, downtown routes, lacks signage 	
<p>S Holgate St</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bicycle facilities • Train track crossings • Poor pavement quality • Heavy truck use 	
<p>S Lander St</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR crossings • Lack of dedicated space for bicyclists 	

<p>S Hanford St</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train track crossings • Poor pavement quality • High truck volumes 	
<p>S Spokane St</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bicycle facility currently, but multi-use path under construction • Unsafe crossing from West Seattle Bridge Trail • Key east-west route 	

INTERSECTIONS/CROSSINGS

<p>Location</p>	<p>Barrier/Issues SPECIFIC INTERSECTIONS WHERE BICYCLE TRAFFIC MAY CONFLICT WITH VEHICULAR TRAFFIC</p>	<p>Image</p>
<p>S Royal Brougham Way & Pyramid Ale House parking lot</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuters cut through Pyramid parking lot to avoid using Royal Brougham Way & 1st Ave S 	
<p>S Atlantic St & Alaskan Way S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angled RR track crossing, trucks line up through intersection 	
<p>S Atlantic St and Utah Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult crossing to continue along Utah Ave S • High truck volumes along S Atlantic St 	

<p>S Spokane St & 6th Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex intersection (freeway on-ramp) – no bicycle facilities or signage 	
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PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

Location	Barrier/Gaps	Image
<p>S Holgate St at 4th Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At S Holgate St, east of 4th Ave S there is no sidewalk on south side of street. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the south side of S Holgate St, east of light rail tracks, the sidewalk discontinues east of the light rail tracks. • Poor sidewalk condition with uneven gravel and potholes. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the railroad track crossing at S Holgate St, west of 4th Ave S, there is no sidewalk on south side of S Holgate St. The north side of the street is better, but crossing is still dangerous. • There is insufficient room for pedestrians to pass through crossing. • Area provides no barrier to stop pedestrians on the east side of the tracks. 	

<p>S Holgate St, at 6th Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the south side of S Holgate St no signalized crosswalk at the intersection in either direction. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the north side of S Holgate St the sidewalk quality is better and used more by pedestrians than the south side. Lack of signalization to cross at 6th Ave S. 	
<p>S Holgate St at Airport Way / Beacon Hill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the south side of S Holgate St there is no sidewalk to continue eastbound. Pedestrian path ends and a pedestrian would have to walk into traffic to cross the railroad tracks, creating a dangerous walking condition. 	
<p>S Lander St at Occidental Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At S Lander St east of Occidental Ave S there are minor safety concerns at railroad tracks, which include no clearly defined path or paint marking to indicate the best place for pedestrians to cross. 	

<p>S Spokane St at 1st Ave S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the west side of 1st Ave S, south side of S Spokane St, the sidewalk condition is fair. • RR track crossing at 2nd Ave S is signalized but could pose danger to blind and mobility impaired people. 	
<p>S Spokane St between 4th Ave S and 5th Ave S / Busway</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the south side of S Spokane St there is no access to transit as the bus stop is closed. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North of S Spokane St, there is poor access to transit. • Lack of a sidewalk does not allow pedestrians to access transit safely. • The current bus stops are “islands” amidst ongoing construction and gaps in the pedestrian network. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction projects cause gaps in the pedestrian network. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of crosswalks to access transit stops safely. 	

<p>S Royal Brougham Way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Layout is confusing and in need of signage. This is particularly true on non-event days, when there are no crowd cues to follow. 	
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RECOMMENDATIONS

The multi-modal group agreed to the following recommendations for safe pedestrian and bicycle travel in SODO. Leading recommendations are referenced on a map in Appendix A.

LOCATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	LOCATION
<p>Alaskan Way Surface Road See # 1 on map for SODO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitate bike paths along Alaskan Way S between CBD and S Spokane Consider multi-directional path on east side of road away from west side turning conflicts Continue use of existing 1st Ave S bike sharrows already designated for N-S travel Provide sharrows on both sides of Airport Way S where right of way allows from S Spokane to S Royal Brougham Way 	 <p><i>Alaskan Way Multi-Use Trail</i></p>
<p>SODO Trail #2 on map</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete SODO separated multi-use trail south from S Forest St to S Spokane St within Busway / City Light right-f-way 	 <p><i>Busway – 5th Ave S</i></p>
<p>S Spokane Street surface road #4 on map</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the multi-use path planned for in the S Spokane St Widening Project to connect with alley needed for E-W linkage between the Lower Spokane Bridge bike/pedestrian facilities and the SODO Trail Connect with Airport Way S to ensure connectivity 	 <p><i>Upper Bridge is West Seattle Freeway while the lower deck carries local car traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists</i></p>

<p>S Lander Street Overpass & Signage #5 on map</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities into the S Lander St Grade Separation Project • Improve signage along these non-arterials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Colorado Ave S ○ Utah Ave S ○ S Occidental St ○ 3rd Ave S 	 <p><i>1st Ave S and S Lander northbound</i></p>
<p>MTS trail to SODO #6 on map</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete planned extension of Mountains-to-Sound Trail in to northern SODO at S Royal Brougham Way and 4th Ave S 	 <p><i>Aerial Shot of Mountains-to-Sound Trail through Beacon Hill to SODO</i></p>
<p>Bike from Beacon Hill to SODO #7 on map</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create access to SODO from Beacon Hill for connecting with the proposed Chief Sealth Trail continuation. • Work to assure there is appropriate access from the east into the SODO area and tying into the SODO Trail. 	<p><i>Mountains-to-Sound trailhead at S Holgate St</i></p> 

<p>Parking Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review City of Seattle’s existing parking management goal to enhance retail activity in commercial districts. It is not as applicable in the SODO Industrial Area. • Encourage City of Seattle to examine and implement managed parking on congested non-arterial roadways within SODO area, specifically around identified pedestrian and bicycle corridors. • Areas most critically needing attention include these non-arterials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Colorado Ave S ○ Utah Ave S ○ S Occidental St ○ 3rd Ave S 	
<p>Safety & Management</p>	<p>IMPROVED SAFETY AND EDUCATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public marketing / education program needed to inform event goers of non-motorized access to events. • Safety education for vehicles / bikes / pedestrians at 1st Ave S / 4th Ave S • Pedestrian safety enhancements to RR crossing areas between 1st Ave S and 4th Ave S, at S Occidental St • Monitor / enforce loitering and drug activity at the Shell station at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4th Ave S at S Lander St ○ S Occidental S behind the Bank of America building ○ 3rd Ave S between S Holgate and S Lander St 	
<p>Lighting</p>	<p>IMPROVED LIGHTING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install properly scaled lighting along major arterials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1st Ave S ○ 4th Ave S ○ S Lander St between 1st Ave S and the railroad tracks • Improved lighting at Busway during winter peak hours: 6:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m., M-F, and 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., M-F. 	 <p><i>Improved lighting facilitates safety</i></p>

<p>Signage</p>	<p>IMPROVE WAYFINDING/ON-THE-GROUND SIGNAGE. Key Locations Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-arterials needed to “push” pedestrians to existing facilities to provide safe N-S travel, particularly for stadium attendees at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1st Ave S ○ 4th Ave S • Additional signage at these non-arterials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Colorado Ave S ○ Utah Ave S ○ S Occidental St ○ 3rd Ave S • Alaskan Trail across Royal Brougham Way / SR 519 • Bike lanes and pedestrian facilities connecting the stadiums with the SODO Trail along the 5th Ave S Busway • Include all access points of SODO Trail (not just at beginning and end of route). 	
<p>Sidewalks/ Crosswalks</p>	<p>SIDEWALK/CROSSWALK IMPROVEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve signalization to ensure crosswalks provide enough time for crossing at critical connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1st Ave S and S Lander St ○ 1st Ave S and S Stacy St ○ 4th Ave S and S Lander St ○ 4th Ave S and S Holgate St 	 <p><i>At S Holgate St east of 4th Ave S there is no sidewalk on the south side of the street</i></p>

Non-motorized Commute Network through the Duwamish M&I Center SODO Recommendations



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