RESOLUTION NO. 2026-07

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON ADOPTING THE RAPID TRANSIT LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

WHEREAS, The 2025 Bellingham Plan includes by reference a Multimodal Transportation Plan that states that the City will work to provide safe, well-connected, and sustainable mobility options for all users, increase infrastructure for bicycles, pedestrian, and non-single occupancy vehicle modes of transportation including transit; and reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles, and

WHEREAS, the Multimodal Transportation Plan also establishes a Complete Networks approach which is focused on making improvements to complete modal transportation networks, as well as a Modal Hierarchy that identifies transit as the highest motorized priority and places a priority emphasis on transit for certain corridors; and

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2020, 82% of Bellingham voters approved Proposition 2020-14 which continues and extends the 0.2% sales and use tax that invests in street repaving, nonmotorized transportation, and public transportation and climate action; and

WHEREAS, the City is updating its Comprehensive Plan, six-year Transportation Improvement Program, and working with regional partners on an ongoing basis, so updated information is critical to informing these efforts; and

WHEREAS, to study the opportunity for rapid transit in Bellingham Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) hired, through a competitive process, a highly qualified consultant team led by Transpo Group USA, Inc. in partnership with KPFF; and

WHEREAS, City staff participated in full partnership with WTA staff during development of the Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative report was presented at the May 23, 2025 Public Works and Natural Resources Council Committee meeting; and

WHEREAS, community input was gathered through the Engage WTA platform, using surveys, web maps, as well as in person tabling events, and

WHEREAS, the consultant team evaluated current conditions, performed technical analysis, network prioritization, project identification and development, and project cost estimating; and

WHEREAS, many of the treatments identified in the Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative involve improvement of City owned assets; and

WHEREAS, the Transportation Commission endorsed Council adoption of the Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative, and

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WHEREAS, the WTA Board of Directors unanimously adopted the of the Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative at their April 2, 2026 meeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM THAT:

1. The Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative (dated March 2026), a copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit A, is hereby adopted.

2. Implementation of the Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative shall begin immediately by integrating the plan into updates to the City's six-year transportation improvement program multimodal transportation plan and comprehensive plan.

PASSED by the Council this 27th day of April, 2026.

Council President

APPROVED by me this 15th day of May, 2026.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Finance Director

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

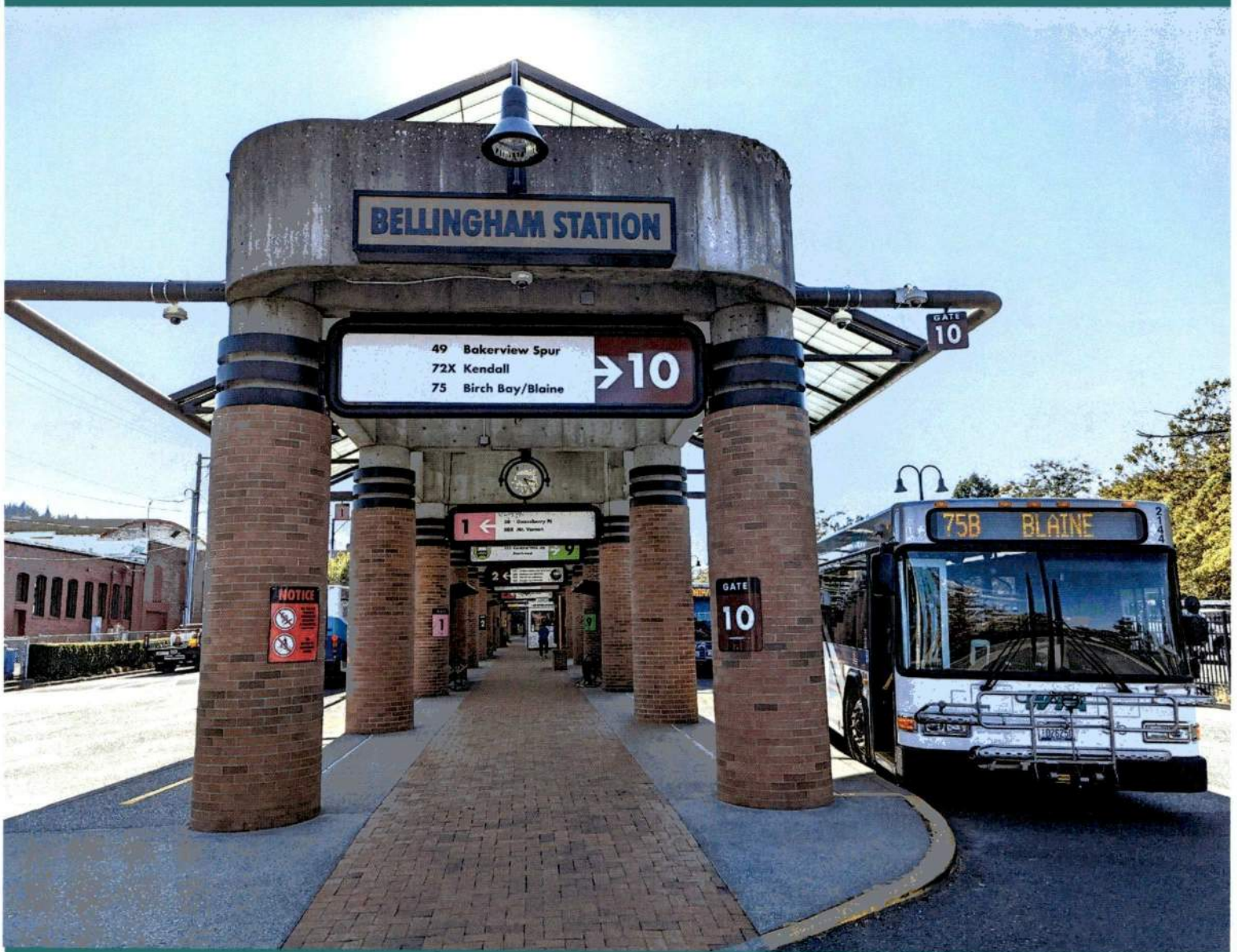
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WTA

RAPID TRANSIT

Final Locally Preferred Alternative



April 2026

RAPID TRANSIT
Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)
April 2026

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The Whatcom Transportation Authority provides services and employment on a non-discriminatory basis, and complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. WTA also complies with the State of Washington Freedom from discrimination—Declaration of civil rights, RCW 49.60.030 To read these policies visit: http://www.ridewta.com/business/about-wta/non-discrimination and http://www.ridewta.com/getting-around/accessibility/ada

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Glossary

Bus bunching	When a bus is not able to stay on schedule and falls behind, other buses catch up; the delay of the first bus is exacerbated as that bus, running late, ends up picking up passengers that would have caught a later bus.
Business access lane	Travel lane that would be exclusive to transit except to allow access to adjacent businesses.
Bus stop balancing	Process of optimizing the spacing between bus stops through consolidating, relocating, eliminating, and implementing new stops.
Headway	The time between vehicles serving a bus stop or transit center.
Inbound	Path that the bus travels as it heads towards Bellingham Station in downtown.
Off-board	Refers to activity occurring outside of the bus.
On-board	Refers to activity occurring on the bus.
Outbound	Path that the bus travels as it heads away from Bellingham Station.
Queue jump	Type of roadway geometry designed to give preference to buses at an intersection, which typically consists of an additional travel lane on the approach to a signalized intersection that is restricted to buses only. The lane allows buses to bypass vehicle traffic and merge into the general travel lanes ahead of other vehicles.
Real-time information	Refers to sharing real-time bus arrival times with passengers at a bus stop.
Run time or running time	The time it takes a bus to make one trip of a route.
Stop balancing	Consolidating and relocating bus stops to achieve more consistent and efficient spacing between stops.
Stop spacing	The distance between bus stops.
Travel time	The time it takes for a bus to make one round trip on a specific route.

1. Executive Summary

The Rapid Transit project and development of this Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is a collaboration between WTA and the City of Bellingham. The LPA identifies speed and reliability improvements that support WTA's goal of providing increased frequency (10-minute frequency) along the Go Lines. These improvements are presented as short- or long-term improvements. Short-term improvements may cost between $3.9M and $19.3M per Go Line. Long-term improvements are estimated to cost between $5.2M and $28.8M per Go Line. Figure 1 illustrates the improvements identified as part of the LPA.

Implementing the LPA improvements will require prioritizing projects, identifying funding sources, and collaborating with other agencies and private developers to realize best value projects that are the most feasible given the limited resources of WTA and the City. As part of this process, WTA and the City will be entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to streamline implementation and are committed to working together to identify funding opportunities.

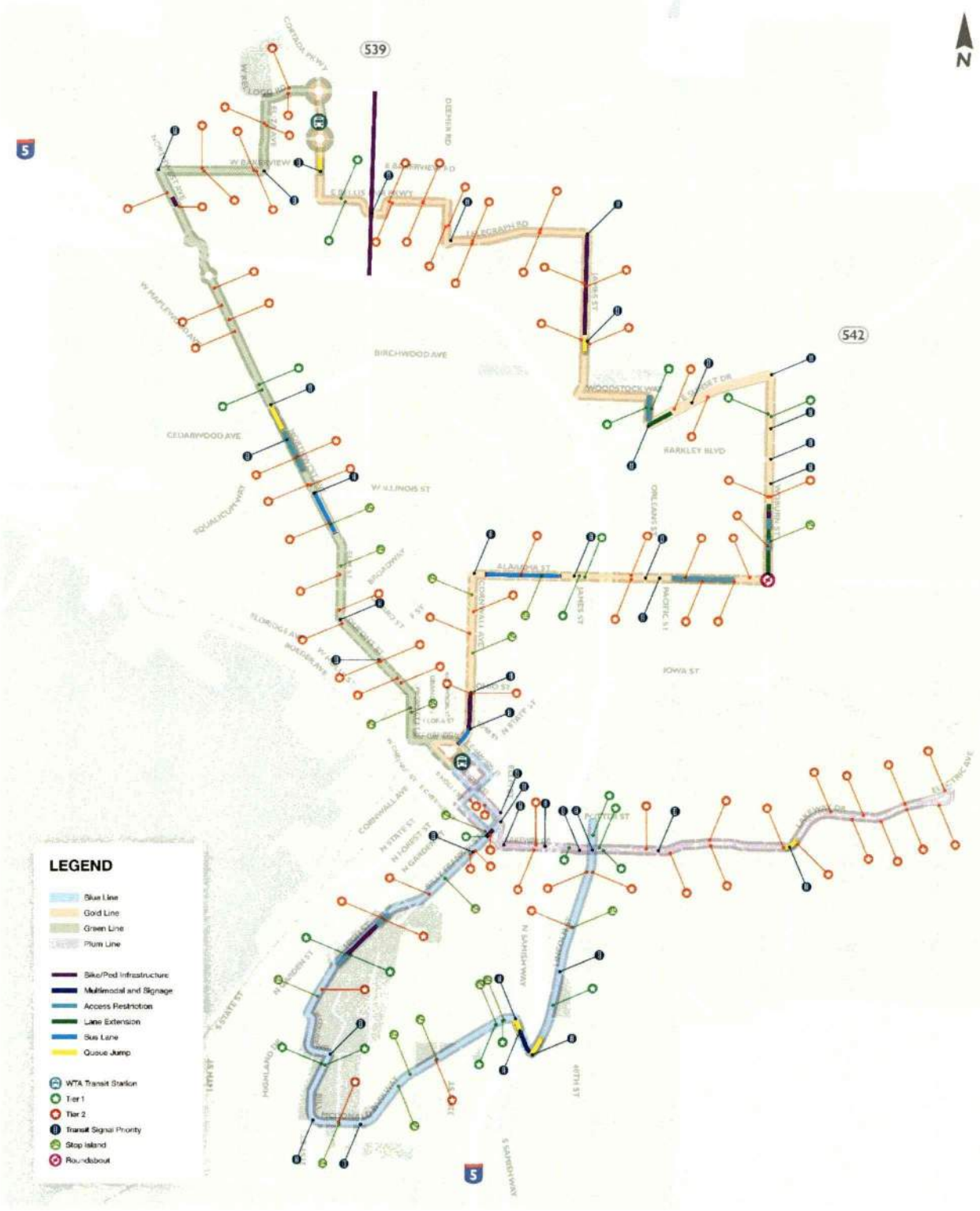


Figure 1. Go Line LPA Recommended Infrastructure & Signal Changes

2. WTA Rapid Transit Project Overview

WTA, in partnership with the City of Bellingham, has been exploring opportunities to enhance existing transit services along high frequency routes by implementing speed and reliability improvements alongside changes that support further frequency enhancements. This Rapid Transit project has focused on WTA's high frequency network made up of four (4) transit lines operating within Bellingham city limits. These Go Lines were created to serve the community's most significant destinations, including Downtown, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Cordata, Barkley Village, Sunset Square, Northwest Avenue, and the Lakeway commercial area. By operating on key community corridors, the Go Lines serve the greatest concentrations of WTA's designated priority populations and carry the vast majority of system riders.

Figure 2 provides a timeline of the efforts that have been completed for the Rapid Transit project. The Rapid Transit project began with an initial Rapid Transit Feasibility Study in 2023, the adoption of a Preliminary Locally Preferred Alternative (see Appendix A – Preliminary LPA) in early 2025 after the completion of early Phase 2 efforts in 2024, and the development of this Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in late 2025. Development of this LPA built on the previous efforts as well as two workshops conducted with key stakeholders in June and October of 2025 (see Appendix B – Stakeholder Workshops). A Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) refers to the transit project option that is considered the best choice by a local community and/or governing body after evaluating various alternatives. The LPA represents the preferred project based on local needs, resources, and input during the planning process. When comparing alternatives, the preferred LPA is the best option for addressing the purpose and need for the project. The LPA is a general description of the transit location, improvements, and service plan. LPA design specifics and the definition of additional elements of the project will be refined during subsequent engineering and planning efforts.

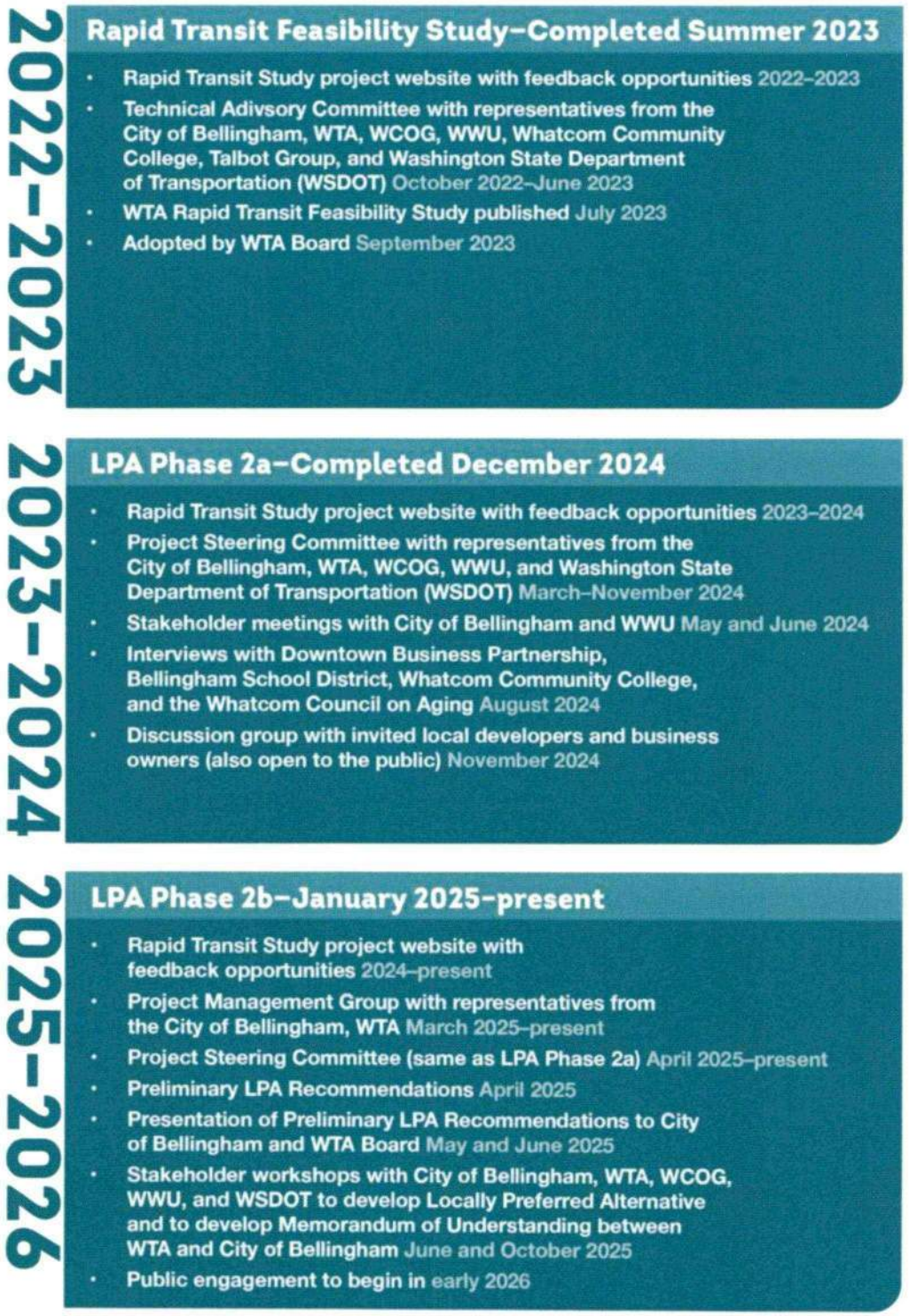


Figure 2. Timeline of Rapid Transit Study Efforts

The goals and objectives in Figure 3 were developed as part of the 2023 Feasibility Study. The measures were used to assess how well the alternatives meet the goals and objectives as well as provide a comparison of the alternatives. These goals, objectives, and measures continue to be relevant for the LPA.

Goal	Objective	Measure
Improve safety and comfort for bus nders, pedestnans, and bicyclists along corridor	• Meet all ADA requirements for stop/station locations • Improve accessibility along the corndor specifically targeting to/from transit • Enhance stops along the corridor for nder comfort and ease of use • Reduce conflicts between buses and other modes along the corridor	• Reduce transit conflicts with other modes • Pedestnan access
Provide for more efficient transit operation along the proposed rapid transit corndor	• Reduce bus dwell time at stops • Maintain or improve on-time performance for transit • Optimize the bus travel route to minimize delays related to congestion • Provide bus treatments to enhance efficiency (e g , queue jumps, transit signal pnority, bus stop islands)	• Increase transit speed and reduce running time
Use transit to increase access to higher density land uses and activity opportunities along the corridor	• Increase ease of transit use to and from key land uses and specifically those with higher activity such as grocery stores, malls, medical facilities etc • Consider existing and future land use patterns in the placement of transit stops • Ensure partner agencies have coordinated plans that consider transit accessibility in future corridor improvements and redevelopment of parcels • Ensure that land use regulations along the comdor reflect/supports/ requires transit-oriented communities	• Increase ndership • Presence of transit supportive land use • Development of streetscape designed for non-motorized use

Source: Whatcom Transportation Authority Rapid Transit Study – Feasibility, November 2023

Figure 3. Rapid Transit Feasibility Study Goals, Objectives, and Measures

3. Enhanced Go Lines

3.1 Purpose and Need

Bus delays are a significant issue on all Go Lines at certain times of the day. Bus delays are worsening due to increased congestion from traffic growth both inside and outside the city. This bus delay increases the cost for WTA to maintain scheduled frequencies. Highly variable bus arrivals also reduce the reliability of service and cause riders to miss transfers or avoid using WTA service. Mid-route bus transfers are also difficult, because 15-minute headways limit route connections. Ultimately, bus delays, difficult transfers, and overall poor rider experience can cause rider frustration, resulting in reduced ridership and more driving. Figure 4 illustrates the on-time performance for the weekday PM peak hour in June 2025 and shows the percentage of bus trips that are late during that period.



Figure 4. On-Time Performance for Weekday PM Peak Hour June 2025

In 2018, WTA increased the number of buses on the Green and Gold Go Lines to address slower run times and delay caused by congestion. However, it is not financially sustainable to continually increase the number of buses, and the usefulness of extra buses is limited when all vehicles are delayed, causing bus bunching. Bus bunching occurs when, as a bus cannot stay on schedule and falls behind, other buses catch up.

The Whatcom Council of Governments' (WCOG) travel demand model for the year 2045 estimates future travel based on an anticipated increase of approximately 30% in households and 43% in employment, compared to 2023 conditions. These population and employment forecasts are developed collaboratively by all Whatcom County local governments and informed by projections from the Washington State Office of Financial Management and analyses of land use patterns. WCOG's model uses these agreed-upon forecasts to estimate resulting travel demand for both base and future years. This growth is expected to increase congestion along arterials and at intersections during peak hours, including on all Go Line corridors.

Transit signal priority (TSP) exists at many signals along Go Lines routes, but there is no evidence that the current TSP configuration reduces bus travel times (see Transit Signal Priority and Signal Coordination for more information). In addition to impacts from intersections, the transit service is also constrained by limited right-of-way. The arterial and collector streets outside of the downtown area do not provide many options for dedicated running ways. In some areas, there are pinch points or hotspots that further hamper efficient movement.

The City of Bellingham is committed to strong support for land use development that fosters frequent transit service. This commitment has been reflected in adoption of policies prioritizing transit and transit-oriented development. Development is rapidly occurring in Bellingham's designated Urban Villages, located along key transit corridors. The City's seven Urban Villages (see Figure 5) comprise less than 4% of the city's land area but are expected to accommodate 30% of future population growth.

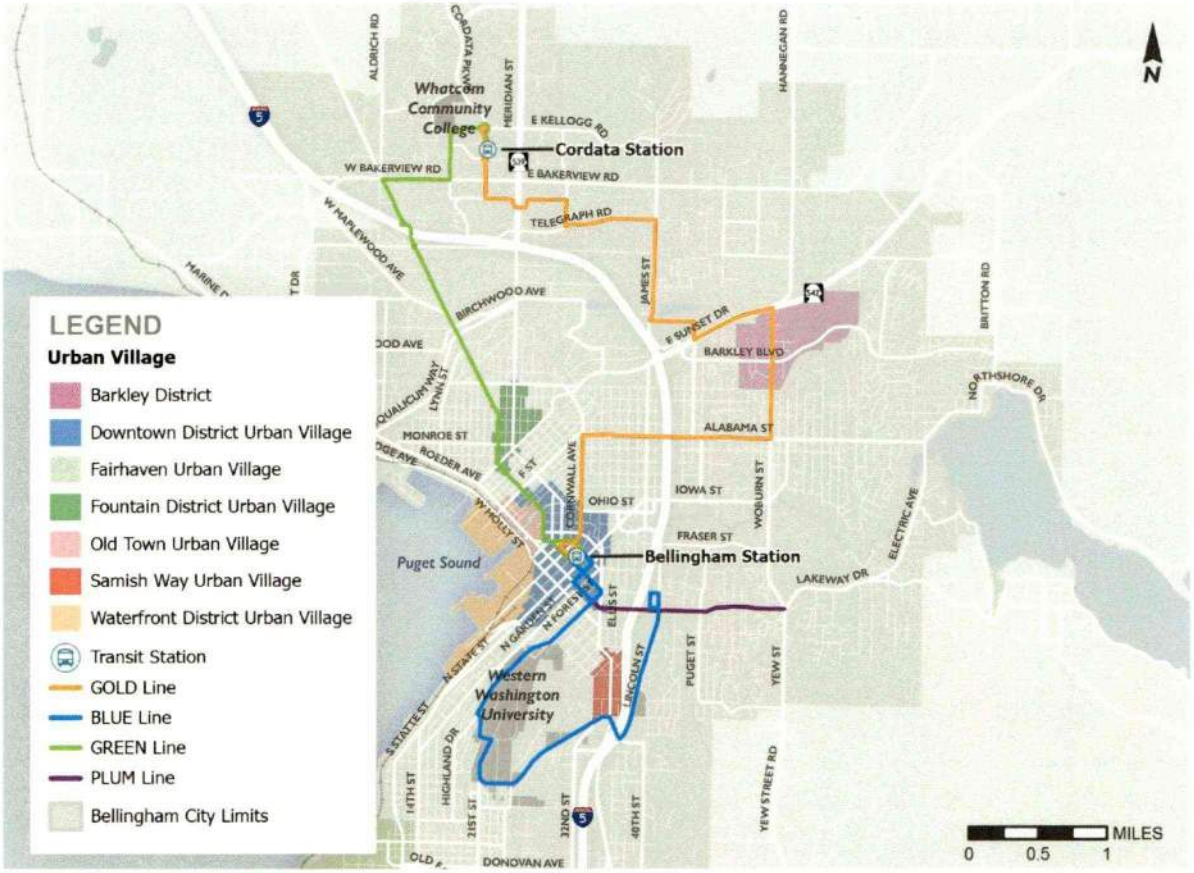


Figure 5. Existing Urban Villages

While Bellingham is experiencing densification, much of the existing development pattern outside of the Urban Villages has been low-density single-family residential or auto-oriented commercial development. Several elements of the recently updated Comprehensive Plan, including the Transportation chapter (along with the accompanying Multimodal Transportation Plan) and the Land Use, Urban Design, and Housing chapter, include goals and policies supporting transit-oriented development (TOD) and increased mixed-use development intensity along transit corridors. The Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, adopted in December 2025, continues strong support for TOD and increased density. The Plan includes a TOD corridor growth concept, which could accommodate approximately 1,275 additional housing units and 640 additional jobs along key high frequency corridors. The Plan provides a reprioritization of the modal hierarchy, prioritizing transit travel over bicycle travel in transit corridors. The City passed an interim ordinance to allow more infill housing and density throughout most of the community, as well as removing parking minimums citywide. Both policies are transit friendly.

The City has also invested substantially in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to support access to transit (opportunity), but there are still many areas where improvements are needed to provide dedicated pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit stops, which limits access and ridership potential (challenge).

The overall intent of this project is to improve speed and reliability of transit along key corridors in Bellingham, which will enable WTA to increase bus frequency to 10 minutes. Ten-minute frequency will make transit a viable travel mode for even more of the community and help reduce dependency on single-occupancy private vehicle travel.

4. Locally Preferred Alternative

This section describes solutions that were identified through performance analysis and the activities shown in Figure 2. Solutions range from those that are relatively low effort to those that are complicated and have a high level of effort, and from those that will address the highest priority existing performance challenges to those that will help prevent future performance deterioration. Solutions are presented first for the whole Go Line network and then for each individual Go Line. Features of the Enhanced Go Lines include:

- Increased Frequency
- Transit Spot Improvements
- Advanced Transit Signal Priority
- Enhanced Bus Stops
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure Changes
- Transit Supportive Land Uses

Strategies included in the Locally Preferred Alternative include those for which WTA, the City of Bellingham, or both, have responsibility and authority. As described in the sections that follow, solutions in the LPA support WTA's ability to maintain the reliability and current frequency of Go Lines and to introduce higher frequencies (10-minute headways) in the future.

4.1 Network

In addition to solutions at a corridor, stop, and intersection level, this LPA includes network-wide solutions to improve transit performance. Solutions include infrastructure and technology changes, in addition to WTA operating changes and City of Bellingham policy and planning changes. Recommended treatments include those that WTA can act on in the short-term and those that will require more extensive analysis and planning and/or that require changes that are likely to take place over an extended time period. Figure 6 represents the locations of the infrastructure and technology changes recommended in this LPA.

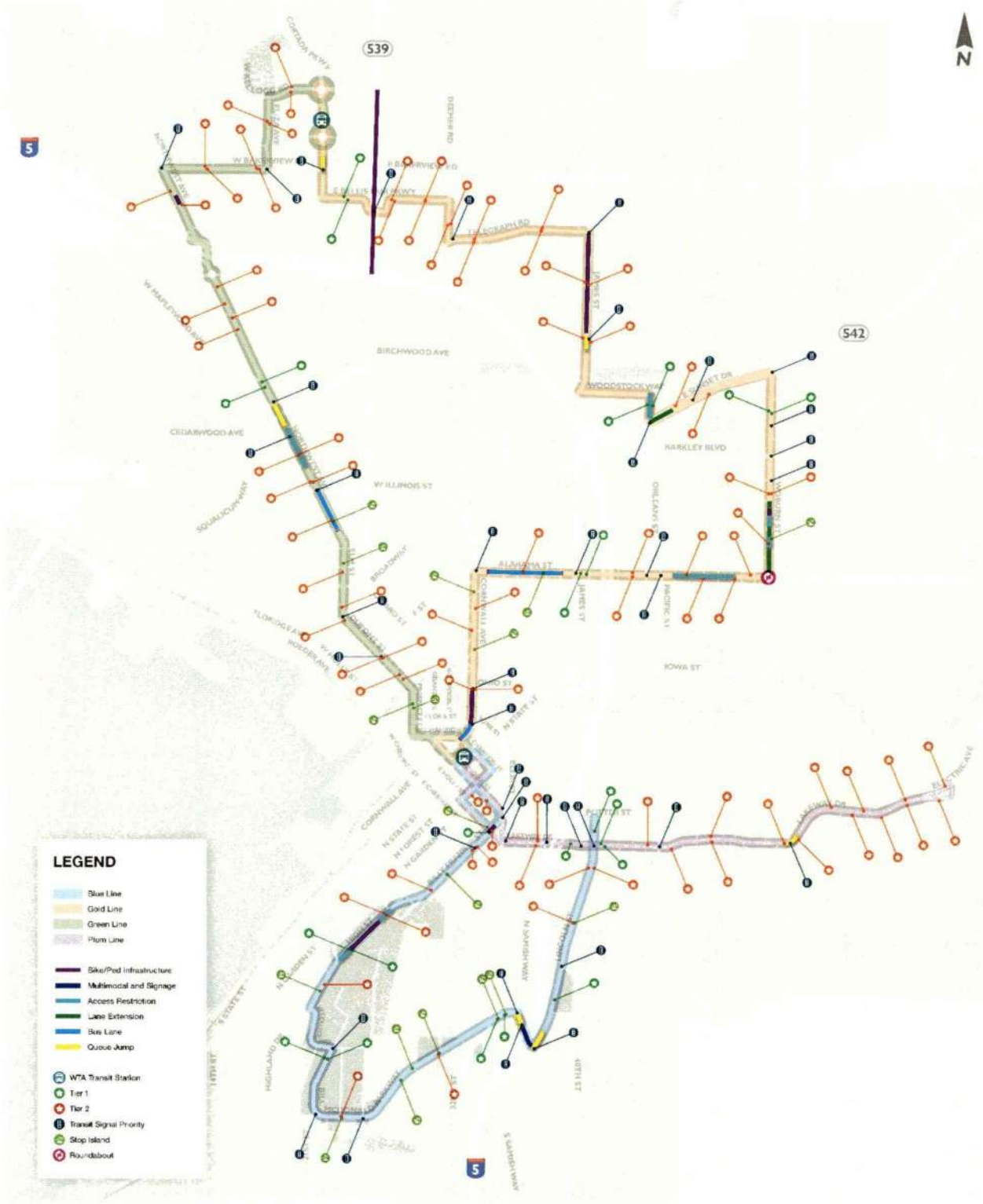


Figure 6. Go Line LPA Recommended Infrastructure & Signal Changes

4.1.1 WTA Service & Operations

WTA can undertake service maintenance and enhancement strategies, outside of any changes to broader local policy and infrastructure, to maintain and improve the frequency of the Go Lines. Service maintenance and enhancement strategies implemented by WTA can only improve transit service to a certain point, so these must be coupled with infrastructure improvements to achieve the overall goal of 10-minute frequences. WTA is committed to implementing more frequent service once treatments have achieved a travel time savings of 5 to 10 minutes (in other words, buses can travel the route 5-10 minutes faster) and/or when on-time performance is being met during the peak periods.

Service Maintenance

WTA has already begun and will continue to implement bus stop balancing to reduce running time for each route. Specific bus stop recommendations are included by line, and WTA will continue to monitor and evaluate other opportunities in the future. Bus stops identified in this study for potential elimination or consolidation are considered preliminary and are based on an initial review by WTA of stop spacing. Prior to eliminating or consolidating specific stops, WTA will review the potential impacts of the changes and consider other factors such as ridership, accessibility, etc.

Bus Stop Balancing Example

WTA is proposing to eliminate the inbound and outbound stops on the Green Go Line at Northwest Ave and Connecticut, as they are close to other stops along the line.

To support bus stop balancing, the LPA recommends that WTA update their Bus Stop Design Guidelines stop spacing for Enhanced Go Lines. The current August 2022 Bus Stop Design Guidelines provide stop spacing guidance for urban and rural conditions. The guidelines also note that deciding on the distance between stops should consider presence of pedestrian facilities, trip generators, route frequency, and the ability for the bus to safely stop. For Enhanced Go Lines the LPA recommends that WTA strive for a spacing of ¼ to ½ mile between bus stops. In addition, along with elements already noted in the guidelines, WTA should evaluate stop ridership to understand if routes are local serving and the impact that increasing stop spacing could have on ridership.

WTA is currently investing in new technology to improve the boarding process as part of recently approved fare increases. By fall 2026, WTA will have completed the installation of new contactless multimedia ticket readers on buses, improving reading performance with

the aim of quicker, easier boardings. The readers will also enable credit card payments directly on the devices.

WTA is exploring ways to reduce the time a bus waits at a stop during passenger boarding and fare payment. Solutions under examination include all-door boarding and off-board fare collection. Initial review has shown that off-board fare collection may not be significantly advantageous to the boarding process, given increasing use of mobile ticketing and improved on-board fare readers, like the ones mentioned above. The additional capital and maintenance costs of off-board fare collection devices may also not justify their deployment.

In addition, WTA continuously monitors on-time performance of routes and stops to identify if there are schedule adjustments needed. WTA may adjust bus schedules in response to service needs.

WTA will work directly with City staff to develop transit-supportive right-of-way and stop design guidelines for the City to reference in future planning and parcel development/redevelopment.

Service Enhancements

WTA takes many factors into consideration when determining if, where, and when to adjust frequencies along the Go Lines. Increasing frequency requires WTA to have sufficient drivers and staff available and to ensure that any retiming of the routes is operationally efficient. However, if the route under consideration for increased frequency already experiences delays, adding another vehicle to the route is not likely to result in improved frequency due to bus bunching.

By implementing the recommendations in the LPA, WTA can count on more reliable travel times for Go Line buses, allowing WTA to continue to improve frequency while providing reliable service. WTA will monitor on-time performance and travel time savings as the LPA treatments are completed. As described previously, WTA is committed to implementing more frequent service once treatments have achieved a travel time savings of 5 to 10 minutes and/or when on-time performance is being met during the peak periods.

Bus Stop Enhancements

At a minimum, stops are provided with a pole containing route sign and schedule posting ("flat") and an ADA-accessible pad. Many, but not all, stops have a shelter, bench, and trash receptable. Enhanced bus stop amenities, such as real-time signage and lighting, improve the overall experience and safety of riders and improve rider confidence in the reliability of buses. There are also enhancements that improve speed and reliability by

decreasing dwell time at bus stops. All-door boarding, off-board fare collection, and level boarding are examples of enhancements that decrease dwell time for buses. This LPA recommends two levels of improvements for bus stops on enhanced Go Lines.

Tier 1 (Transit Hubs): High activity and major transfer bus stops.
These stops will have all the elements of a regular Tier 2 stop, in addition to the following:

- Real-time bus arrival signage
- Wayfinding information
- Public art and placemaking
- A second shelter and bench
- Mobility elements tailored to the location, such as bike racks, bike lockers, parking, etc.

Tier 1 will also consider near-level or level boarding platforms as a secondary element. The ability to provide near-level or level boarding will be determined during the design phase of Tier 1 stops in coordination with the City of Bellingham. WTA will work with the City on a cost benefit analysis considering travel time savings for providing level boarding versus the cost of implementation including how it impacts ADA access to the surrounding network.

Tier 2: Most bus stops on a Go Line. Standard stop elements include:

- Bus stop sign and schedule flat
- 5X8 ADA boarding pad and rear pad, if necessary
- Shelter
- Bench
- Trash receptacle
- Bicycle rack
- Lighting

Figure 7 and Figure 8 illustrate examples of Tier 1 and 2 stops along the Gold Line. The following outlines recommended locations for Tier 1 stops along the Go Lines.

Blue Go Line

- Billy Frank Jr. at Holly St.
- Performing Arts Center and Haggard Hall (VU)
- Bill McDonald at the Rec Center
- Bill McDonald at Samish Way
- Lincoln Creek Park and Ride
- Lincoln and Potter

Gold Go Line:

- Barkley Transit Hub
- Bellis Fair Mall
- Orleans/Sunset stops
- Alabama/James stops

Green Go Line:

- Northwest at Bakerview
- Northwest at Birchwood

Plum Go Line

- Lakeway at Lincoln St
- Lakeway Dr at Fred Meyer

WTA will seek a variety of funding sources, including grant funding, to improve stops to these two levels. Stops may also be enhanced in conjunction with implementation of the various LPA treatments and through City capital construction projects.



Figure 7. Rendering of Tier 1 Hub along Gold Line



Figure 8. Example of Tier 2 Stop along Gold Line

4.1.2 City of Bellingham Infrastructure, Technology, and Policy Changes

While WTA owns and operates the buses that provide service along the Go Lines, WTA's bus stops are located largely on City of Bellingham property, the buses run on roads and through intersections owned and managed by the City of Bellingham (and in some locations, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)), bus riders access the bus stops using sidewalks and crosswalks owned and managed by the City of Bellingham (and in some locations, WSDOT), and the buses serve private and public destinations with a range of travel needs that change throughout the day and seasonally.

Infrastructure

Several recommendations along the Go Lines include infrastructure treatments in the public right-of-way. These include bus stop islands, bus lanes, extended turning lanes or pockets, and changes to bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure to reduce conflicts with transit. These solutions will be identified for specific areas along each of the Go Lines. The design and decision-making around the implementation of these treatments is a topic addressed in the LPA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and follow-through actions

are expected to occur from other planning efforts. Examples of these solutions are included here for reference but do not represent any specific planned treatment.

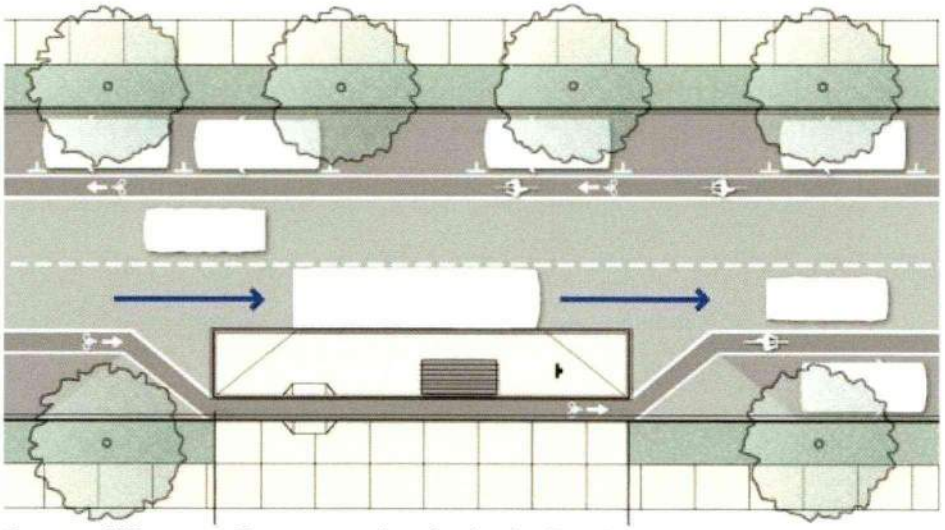
Bus Stop Island

Bus stop islands are designed to allow buses to stop "in-lane" where passengers use a crossing to reach the bus. Typically, the bus stop island separates the buses and passengers from the bike lane. This configuration eliminates conflicts between buses, cyclists, and drivers, as buses no longer need to cross bike and traffic lanes to pull in and out of the curb. Pedestrians must cross the bike lane to access the stop, so cyclists are instructed to yield to them, slowing down and stopping to allow safe passage.

Bus Stop Island Example

As part of the Rapid Transit Study, WTA has identified Holly St near Billy Frank Jr St as a potential candidate for a bus stop island treatment.

Bus stop islands remove conflicts and weaving that may occur when bikes and buses share the same space. Providing a bus stop island can improve bike operations because conflicts are reduced with buses. In addition, transit reliability and speed can be increased by reducing delay that is incurred as a result of buses needing pull in and out of the travel lane when making stops. This type of treatment may require additional right-of-way and has moderate cost.



Source: Whatcom Transportation Authority Bus Stop Design Guidelines, August 2022

Figure 9. Example of Bus Stop Island Treatment

Bus Lane

Bus lanes are travel lanes that are reserved for exclusive or prioritized use of buses. The lanes may be shared with bikes or exclusively for buses. The lanes are signed and have specific pavement markings that alert other drivers of the lane use. While the bus-only lanes are restricted, at intersections vehicles may be allowed to use these lanes for right-turns.



Source: Whatcom Transportation Authority

Figure 10. Example of Bus Lane

Bus-only lanes remove conflicts with other vehicles and allow buses to bypass traffic congestion by providing a dedicated space for buses. The reduced conflicts for buses can improve travel speeds, efficiency, and reliability. This treatment may require right-of-way and could be costly depending on the improvements required for implementation and the need for right-of-way. Bus-only lanes can cause increased delays and congestion for other vehicles, if a general-purpose lane is converted to a bus-only lane, or could result in the removal of parking if a parking area is converted to a bus-only lane. Removal of parking will require City Council action before implementation.

Extended Turning Lane or Pocket

Extending a turning lane or pocket refers to left- or right-turn lanes at intersections being lengthened to reduce the potential for turn lanes being blocked by traffic congestion, causing delay. This treatment allows buses to enter the turn lane or pocket and bypass congestion that may otherwise block the turn lane/pocket.

Extended Turning Lane Example

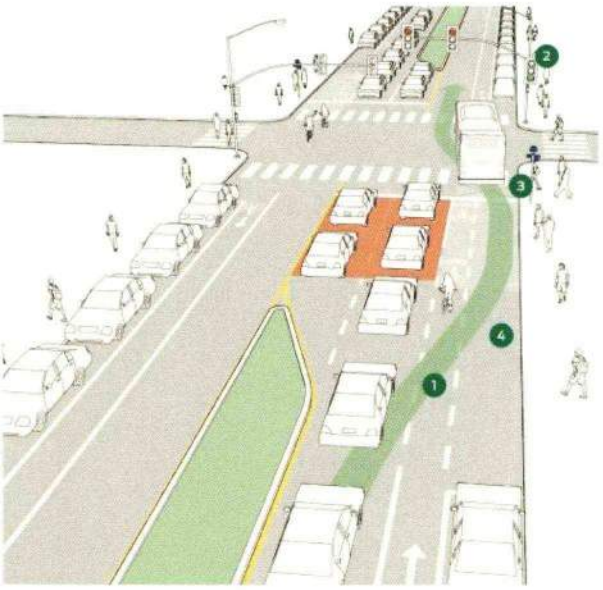
WTA is proposing an extended turning lane at Sunset and Orleans towards Cordata Station.

Extending turn lanes or pockets could require additional right-of-way, and the project cost would vary between low and high depending on the improvements required for implementation and need for right-of-way. The benefit of extending the turn lane may be

limited and will depend on how often congestion blocks buses from using these turn lanes; however, extending turn lanes would benefit both buses and other vehicles on the roadway system using these lanes.

Queue Jump Lane

A queue jump is a type of roadway geometry that provides preference to buses at intersections. This treatment provides a turn pockets at an intersection, allowing the bus to jump in front of through-traffic at the intersection using a special signal phase. Figure 11 illustrates a queue jump at an intersection. Queue jumps can improve the speed and reliability of buses by allowing them to bypass congestion.



Source: North American Cities and Transit Agencies (NACTO), 2023

Figure 11. Bus Queue Jump Lane

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure refers to the roads, paths, and sidewalks (and street crossings) that are designed for travel by people walking or biking. There are sections of the Go Lines where the buses share space with bicycle traffic, sometimes causing delays to the buses. In other areas, the location of pedestrian crossing areas creates delay for the buses. WTA and the City understand there are tradeoffs between modes as applied to the design of a multimodal street system. The City's adopted Comprehensive Plan outlines a modal hierarchy and discusses prioritizing transit in transit corridors. This LPA recommends identifying Go Lines as transit corridors and within these corridors making improvements that prioritize transit and minimize conflicts and delays between transit movements and biking and walking.

Transit Signal Priority and Signal Coordination

The City has a total of 34 signals along existing Go Lines that are preemption-capable traffic signals, with 3 along the Blue Go Line, 14 on the Gold Go Line, 4 on the Green Go Line, and 13 along other WTA transit routes. While several of the traffic signals located along the Go Lines are programmed to provide transit signal priority (TSP), the 2023 Rapid Transit Feasibility determined that the current signal technology and programming provide "preemption" not "priority" and do not provide the needed coordination to connect signals and support improved transit performance. The current TSP system requires frequent cleaning of infrared equipment and relies on equipment that is on the buses and at the traffic signals, which are reaching end of life, and most importantly, do not provide insight on how or if the TSP system is working properly.

Current Signal Technology – Preemption

There are key differences between "preemption" and "priority" that impact the overall operations of the street system. TSP (priority) allows for the extension of green time, shortening of a cycle, and, with advanced capabilities, may provide communication to hold a traffic signal in red for cross traffic, allowing a transit vehicle that is one stop away to advance through the intersection as it travels across the corridor.

Signal preemption is a form of priority that is typically used for emergency vehicles or where general traffic mixes with light rail or trams. Signal preemption immediately turns all directions red except for the direction from which the emergency vehicle is traveling. After the preempted vehicle passes, it takes time for the intersection traffic signal to recover back to normal operations, resulting in delays at the intersection and through the street system. Signal preemption is an effective strategy for emergency vehicles, because it creates the desired outcome of having the full intersection cleared for these vehicles, and the occurrence of emergencies is less frequent.

When signal preemption is used to provide priority for buses, as in the case of the signals in the city of Bellingham, it can cause unnecessary delays in the street system, as all other directions of travel are given a red light and the intersection takes time to recover to normal operations. Along high frequency routes, this can be particularly impactful, resulting in the use of the preemption many times a day, creating high delay on major and side streets.

Conversely, with transit signal priority, only the cross-direction traffic is stopped, allowing traffic to continue to flow in the opposing direction on the same street, allowing the bus to travel through without creating cumulative impacts across the whole intersection.

Transit signal priority (TSP) reduces travel times for buses by avoiding the need to stop and start at a signalized intersection. TSP makes it more likely that the light is green when a bus reaches a signalized intersection. It can either extend green times so an approaching bus can get through the intersection without stopping or shorten red times so a stopped vehicle can get moving again.

The LPA recommends, for WTA operations along city streets, the controllers be upgraded/updated to be TSP capable and that TSP be deployed at key intersections and corridors. The TSP system upgrade project recommended through this LPA will address these challenges by implementing a GPS/location-based TSP system with centralized

performance reporting capabilities, with access provided to WTA and the City. The project will include a systems engineering approach to document agency needs and system architecture of the new TSP system, a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process to select a TSP system that best meets agency needs and requirements, and implementation and validation of the TSP system once installed. The LPA recommends the project scope include the entire WTA fixed-route fleet (approximately 70 vehicles) and the four Go Line routes (assuming approximately 40 signalized intersections).

This recommendation does not preclude the continuation of preemption for emergency vehicles. Implementing TSP across the system also does not mean that it needs to be activated at all times. Further studies should be conducted to determine specific locations where TSP should be activated to ensure the most benefit to transit operations and consider the impact on general vehicle traffic. There are cases where poor operations on side streets or at all approaches at an intersection limit the ability for TSP to be effective, such that it would not be appropriate to activate the system. Traffic analysis would focus on determining the system that is appropriate based on intersection operations and the desire to provide 10-minute frequency along the Go Lines. The City and WTA can leverage WSDOT transportation systems management and operations (TSMO) steps to determine the TSP application and what equipment is needed, including if there is a need for coordination as described in the following section.

Coordinated Traffic Signals

Most agencies that are investing in signal priority use advanced controllers that can allow for coordination of traffic signals along corridors. The traffic signals are interconnected for the communication of the equipment both in the bus and at the intersections, allowing for coordinating the entire corridor for transit vehicles and general vehicles.

Current Coordination and Controllers – Master Clock

The City of Bellingham typically uses a master clock system for signal coordination along corridors. The master clock system provides a time-of-day schedule that does not change without manual adjustments. There are traffic signal controllers that allow for more advanced coordination, like adaptive signal systems, providing real-time adjustment to signal timing considering traffic flows. The City's signal controllers are currently not equipped for these advanced functions.

Coordinating traffic signals with a master clock often provides benefit-cost ratios near 20:1 compared to no coordination. However, using adaptive signals can reduce the number of times vehicles stop at traffic signals and the amount of time they wait at a red light by another 10% compared to traffic signals coordinated only by a master clock.

Implementing TSP and interconnecting traffic signals may require upgrading the traffic signal controllers. Interconnected traffic signals along corridors are recommended to provide communication that allows for transit vehicle progression through traffic signals to achieve 10-minute frequencies. Coordinating the corridor allows for better flow of both general and transit vehicles and reduces the instances where general vehicle congestion impacts transit travel times. There are areas of the Go Line routes where interconnected traffic signals may not be necessary. Corridor-wide traffic operations studies will be conducted to determine specific locations where TSP is needed and if signal controllers need to be upgraded.

As noted for the TSP application, WSDOT TSMO provides a list of steps to determine if a corridor should be coordinated; WTA and the City can use this WSDOT resource to evaluate needs. The evaluation would consider whether adaptive signals, master clock, or other coordination is most appropriate, as well as what equipment is needed for both TSP and interconnection based on the corridor characteristics.

Policy

Because successful operation of the transit services requires on-going coordination between WTA and the City of Bellingham, this LPA suggests broader policy revisions that support not just the recommendations in the LPA, but also the ability to better coordinate, identify, and implement solutions needed in the future. These needs are also reflected in the MOU that supports this LPA.

General Land Use & Street Design Approaches

Street design significantly impacts if and/or how a bus can travel along a route. Examples of elements that should be considered in the context of improving transit, and especially in the design of transit corridors, are:

- On-street parking may create delay as the bus waits for vehicles to enter or leave parking spaces; additionally, removing space for on-street parking areas could, in some instances, provide needed right-of-way for bus infrastructure like extended turn lanes, pull-outs, or bus-only travel lanes.
- Pedestrian bump-outs, often used at intersections to reduce the distance that pedestrians must travel to cross lanes of traffic, can have both positive and negative impacts. Pedestrian bump-outs can enhance pedestrian movement and access to bus stops but also reduce the width of the travel lane in a way that creates bus delay, makes right turns more difficult, and limits the ability to provide queue jumps at intersections.
- Lane width reductions below 11' in width to provide traffic calming or otherwise improve corridor safety and function for people walking and biking may impact the ability of a bus to travel through the corridor and limit the potential for future transit infrastructure like pull-outs and travel lanes.
- Turning restrictions can improve traffic safety and reduce congestion but may also eliminate the opportunity for a bus to use the corridor. Transit routing potential should be considered before new turning restrictions are implemented.
- Roundabout designs can improve traffic safety at intersections but can eliminate the opportunity for bus use of a corridor if the roundabout is not designed to accommodate the turning radius of the bus.
- Sidewalk, roadway, and intersection improvements in conjunction with land parcel development or redevelopment can enhance transit operations. Once development agreements are in place, the opportunity to implement further right-of-way changes can be costly; considering the needs of transit from the beginning is the most efficient way to address site-specific needs.
- The City will coordinate with WTA to identify bus stop and transit-supportive right-of-way design standards for adoption into the City's Development Guidelines and Improvement Standards. These standards may address bus stop amenities, ADA accessibility, and related site and street design elements. Adoption of these standards will enable the City to require private development projects along transit corridors to construct, upgrade, or contribute funding toward bus stop infrastructure and amenities.

Comprehensive Plan Integration

There are several opportunities within the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan to support effective and efficient transit. As an example, King County Metro has developed a helpful list of transit supportive elements to be included in comprehensive plans.[1] Bellingham's 2025 Comprehensive Plan was reviewed for alignment with the recommendations.

Transportation Element Recommendations

- Categorize streets that prioritize transit to improve speed and reliability and that can be included as part of a multi-modal level of service standard.
- Consider transit speed, transit reliability, and safe access to transit as factors in including and prioritizing relevant transit projects from the LPA in the Transportation Improvement Program/Capital Improvement Program.
- Update policies that prioritize improvements for people to walk, bike, and roll safely to connect to transit service to emphasize biking and rolling improvements within one-half mile and bike access improvements within three miles of transit service.
- Develop policies to accommodate additional bus layover locations to support growth in service.
- Develop policies to accommodate charging needs to support continued electrification of the bus fleet.

Land Use Element

- Once Transit Corridors have been defined, create incentives and regulations to encourage a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses within at least one-quarter mile of transit service.

Bicycle Master Plan

The City of Bellingham Bicycle Master Plan, adopted in 2024, largely mentions transit in relation to providing bicycle access to transit and bicycle parking facilities at transit stops. The City's modal hierarchy previously prioritized bicycling over transit, but the hierarchy was updated as part of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan to prioritize transit over bikes along transit corridors. The specific transit corridors have yet to be identified by the City. The Bicycle Master Plan also includes this language: "Per Policy 1.1, the City will prioritize building higher comfort bikeways that provide separation from motor vehicles and/or integrate traffic calming to reduce vehicle speeds unless it is deemed infeasible, or in conflict with other objectives such as maintaining reliable transit service and freight

[1] https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/metro/documents/about/policies/comprehensive-plan-checklist.pdf?rev=1fc8682f8bc346f18f94652a89df3dab&hash=39F14B20200DD2CB854B3B44CC292408

access." Through this LPA process, participants have identified conflicts with planned bicycle infrastructure and the Go Lines, particularly along Woburn and Northwest Avenue. The LPA recommends that the recommendations in the Bicycle Master Plan be modified to identify the Go Line transit corridors as corridors where transit infrastructure is prioritized.

Pedestrian Master Plan

The City of Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan, adopted in 2024, identifies the importance of safe pedestrian access to transit and the need for reasonably spaced, low-stress crossings near transit stops. The Go Lines in particular are highlighted. The Plan includes "Policy 3.2 Improve ADA connections to transit for people walking and rolling by aligning safe crossings with WTA transit stops and completing sidewalk gaps. Complete sidewalks on at least one side of transit corridor streets and provide safe and convenient ADA crossings and access at transit stops." Through the LPA process, it was noted transit performance could benefit from bus stop balancing if the pedestrian infrastructure was improved to support access to the stops.

4.1.3 Benefits and Costs

Implementing the network changes described would allow WTA to provide reliable 10-minute service along the Go Lines. The LPA is intended to provide transit within Bellingham that serves the existing and future community and makes travel by transit competitive with auto travel. The benefits and costs are described in more detail in Section 5. Benefits and Costs. A key benefit to making transit a competitive mode of transportation will be improvement in travel times to allow WTA to increase frequency. Travel time savings vary based on the treatments and changes implemented by WTA and the City but could result in time savings between 2 to 10 minutes per run.

The cost of implementing the LPA includes both the cost of operations to provide 10-minute frequencies and the capital cost of infrastructure improvements. Section 5. Benefits and Costs describes costs in more detail, including WTA service costs ranging between $2M to $4M and capital costs of implementing treatments in the short- and long-term.

4.1.4 Other Partner Implications

Schools

Several of the intersections where Go Lines experience travel delays are located near schools. Vehicle traffic and pedestrian activity, especially around the beginning and the end of the school day or class periods, can create significant delays. Examples of these

areas include Sehome High School at Bill McDonald and Samish or at WWU as the bus travels across the campus.

WTA buses serve WWU directly, traveling through and along the outside of campus. On High Street in particular, the bus is often delayed due to several factors. While WTA and the City of Bellingham can address many of the factors, WWU is an important partner for ensuring that High Street is used in a way that supports effective transit. One recommendation of this LPA is for WTA, the City of Bellingham, and WWU to partner to complete a multimodal study along High Street.

4.2 Blue Go Line

Factors affecting on-time performance along the Blue Go Line are especially complicated and involve multiple responsible parties. Safety and congestion along the route may improve from the recent restriping of travel lanes in the area of Samish and I-5. The operations of the Blue Go Line will benefit from the already-funded roundabout that the City of Bellingham will construct at the intersection of Lincoln and Potter.

The Blue Go Line travels outbound from the Bellingham Station towards the Bellingham Visitor's Center on Potter Street via WWU and Bill McDonald Parkway. It travels inbound in the opposite direction, heading back to the Bellingham Station.

Figure 12 shows the locations for the recommended treatments along the Blue Go Line.

Bus stop balancing (removal and relocation)

- Viking Union outbound – relocation to a new stop at the Performing Arts Center
- Bill McDonald at Campus Services inbound and outbound (removal)
- Lincoln at Maple inbound and outbound (removal)
- Lincoln St at Mobile Estates outbound (removal)
- Lincoln at Potter inbound – relocation to a new stop across street and add bus layover space
- Highland Dr at College Way and Ridgeway Kappa (inbound and outbound) – relocation to the north of Ridgeway Commons

Add bus stop island

- Holly St at Billy Frank Jr St inbound and outbound
- Billy Frank Jr St at Laurel St inbound
- Highland Dr north of Ridgeway Commons outbound
- Bill McDonald Pkwy at Buchanan Towers inbound
- Bill McDonald Pwky at Ferry Way inbound and outbound

- Bill McDonald Pwky at Birnam Wood inbound
- Bill McDonald Pwky at Samish Way inbound and outbound
- Lincoln St at Viking Circle outbound

Tier 1 transit hubs

- Billy Frank Jr. at Holly St
- Performing Arts Center and Haggard Hall (VU)
- Bill McDonald at the Rec Center
- Bill McDonald at Samish Way
- Lincoln Creek Park and Ride
- Lincoln and Potter



Figure 12. Blue Go Line LPA Recommendations

New or improved signal operations (TSP and potential corridor coordination)
Specific locations for potential TSP are listed below; however, corridor-wide operations should be evaluated along Bill McDonald and Samish to determine if upgrades should occur to provide interconnect allowing for signal communication and corridor signal coordination.

- E Magnolia St at Ellis St outbound (existing)
- Billy Frank Jr St at E Chestnut St inbound and outbound
- Bill McDonald Pkwy at W College Dr inbound and outbound
- Bill McDonald Pkwy at 21st St inbound and outbound
- Bill McDonald Pkwy at 25th St inbound and outbound
- S Samish Way at Bill McDonald Pkwy inbound and outbound
- S Samish Way at 36th St inbound and outbound
- Lincoln St at S Samish Way inbound and outbound
- Lincoln St at Maple St (existing) inbound and outbound
- Lakeway Dr at Lincoln St inbound and outbound

Bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure

- Billy Frank Jr St at Holly St outbound pedestrian bulb-out (may require parking removal)
- Conduct a multimodal analysis on High Street corridor to plan for reducing conflicts between the modes. Potential strategies identified during LPA development include:
    - Techniques to consolidate crossings
    - Alternative options to restrict general vehicle traffic; the current gates at either end of High Street restrict transit movements in addition to general vehicle traffic
    - Consider bike lanes on the uphill side, because bike traffic moves more slowly going uphill; downhill direction can use a sharrow, since bikes can keep up with automobile traffic

Access restrictions

- As part of the High St multimodal study, explore alternatives to the current gates. Alternatives may include vertical barriers, such as high-speed traffic control gates.

Lane or other significant right-of-way solutions

- Complete corridor operations study that includes analysis of signal timing and coordination, travel lanes, turn restrictions, and queue jumps. Some initial options identified include:
    - Bus-only lane and queue jump Lincoln St at S Samish Way inbound
    - Queue jump on S Samish Way between Bill McDonald Pkwy and 36th St outbound

Land use

- Revisit land use designations along the Blue Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals.

Other solutions

- Complete multimodal study to identify solutions for High Street.
- Add guide signs and/or markings for destinations to help drivers better understand the travel lane they should be in when coming to and from Samish Way and I-5. The signage will help drivers better organize and reduce weaving that occurs when drivers are in the wrong lane. Pavement markings could include the I-5 shields and/or other striping to guide drivers.

4.2.1 Blue Go Line Treatment Timelines

Because of the length of the Blue Go Line and the number of treatments proposed, treatments are presented within segments of the route. Short-term recommendations are those that are likely to be achievable with local resources or readily available grant funds, while long-term recommendations are likely to require more extensive regional, state, and/or federal resources.

Short-term recommendations (see Figure 13)

Along the full length of the Blue Go Line:

- All stop balancing changes
- TSP (as part of systemwide improvements)
- Revisit land use designations along the Blue Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals



Figure 13. Blue Go Line LPA Short-Term Recommendations

Segment A: Blue Go Line between downtown and Samish:

- Multimodal analysis on High Street corridor
  - Implement access restrictions
- Bus stop islands
  - Holly St at Billy Frank Jr
  - Billy Frank Jr at Laurel
  - Highland Dr north of Ridgeway Commons outbound
  - Bill McDonald Pkwy at Buchanan Towers inbound
  - Bill McDonald Pkwy at Samish Way inbound
  - Bill McDonald Pkwy at Ferry Way inbound and outbound
  - Bill McDonald Pwky at Birnam Wood inbound
  - Bill McDonald Pwky at Samish Way outbound
- Samish Way/I-5 guide signs and pavement markings

Segment B: Blue Go Line along Samish Way between Bill McDonald Pwky and Lincoln

- Corridor operations study

Segment C: Blue Go Line along Lincoln from Samish to Potter

- Bus stop island
    - Lincoln St at Viking Circle outbound
- Lincoln and Potter Tier 1 transit hub

Long-term recommendations (see Figure 14)

Segment A: Blue Go Line between downtown and Samish:

- Billy Frank Jr. at Holly St Tier 1 transit hub
- Billy Frank Jr St at Holly St outbound pedestrian bulb-out (may require parking removal)
- Performing Arts Center and Haggard Hall (VU) Tier 1 transit hub
- Bill McDonald at the Rec Center Tier 1 transit hub
- Bill McDonald at Samish Way Tier 1 transit hub

Segment B: Blue Go Line along Samish Way between Bill McDonald Pwky and Lincoln

- Lincoln Creek Park and Ride Tier 1 transit hub
- Improvements identified in Samish Way corridor study, such as queue jumps

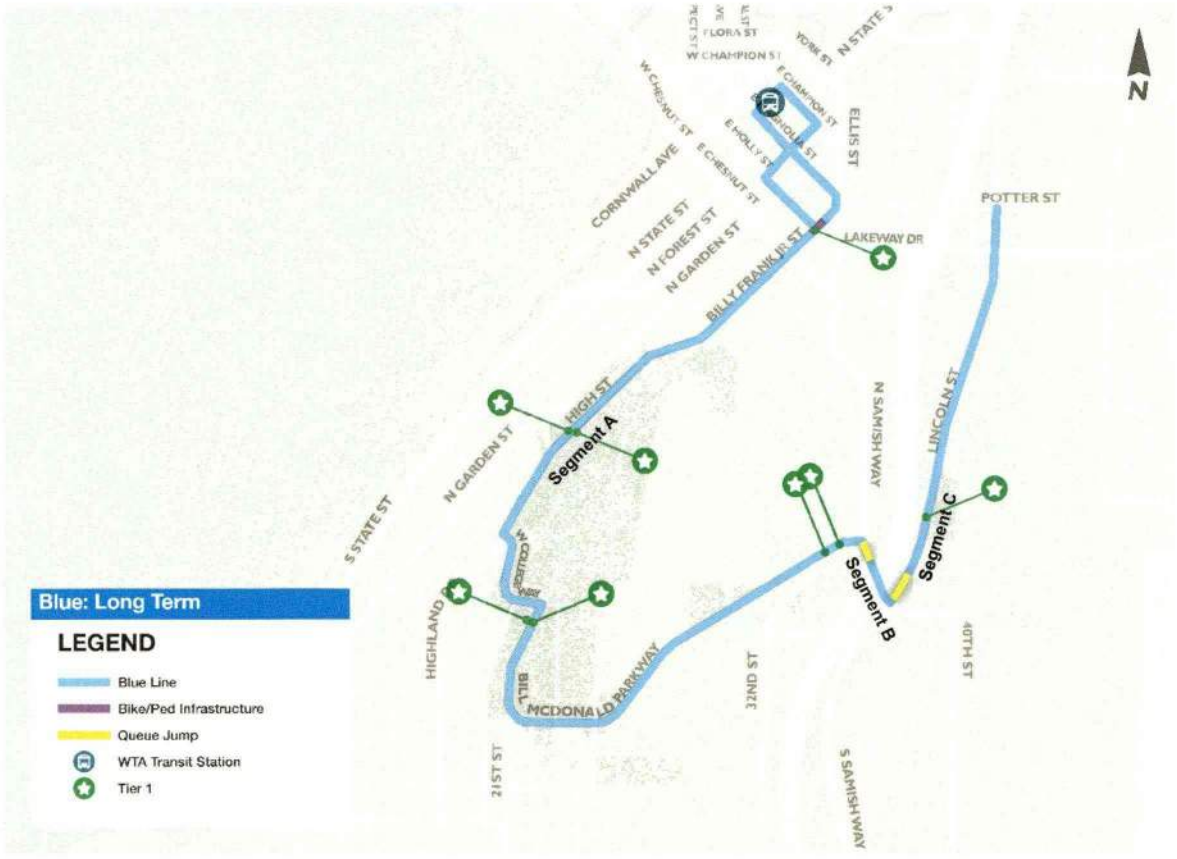


Figure 14. Blue Go Line LPA Long-Term Recommendations

4.3 Gold Go Line

The Gold Go Line travels outbound from the Bellingham Transit Center to Whatcom Community College, with service to Sunnyland Square, Barkley Village, Sunset Square, Winco, and Bellis Fair Mall along the way. It travels inbound in the opposite direction, heading back to the Bellingham Transit Center.

On-time performance on the Gold Go Line is affected, in part, by several factors: the route travels along a freight corridor, passes through rapidly developing and increasingly dense areas of Bellingham, and requires multiple turning maneuvers.

Several projects are planned or underway that will benefit the Gold Go Line. The City plans to add a multimodal trail from Telegraph to Gooding Avenue along the west side of James Street, potentially connecting a new community of riders to enhanced transit service. The intersection at Telegraph & Deemer, formerly an intersection that caused bus delay, was recently improved and is now signalized with three marked crossings. The intersection of

James & Telegraph will be updated with crossing enhancements and a bike lane extension. In addition, there is an unfunded City project, the James Street Multimodal Safety Improvements between Orchard St and Telegraph Rd (Segments 1 & 2), that will continue the multimodal trail on the west side of James Street. WSDOT is working on a complete streets project along Meridian Street (SR 539) between E Kellogg Road and the I-5 southbound ramps. The project is analyzing and retiming this section of the Meridian corridor in 2027, which will improve traffic flow at the intersection of Meridian Street and Bellis Fair Pkwy. The project will also review pedestrian and bicycle access along this section of Meridian.

- The Barkley Subarea Plan and the City's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) both identify a future Railroad Trail pedestrian bridge over Woburn Street. Barkley's Planned Action Ordinance links construction of this bridge to PM peak-hour trip thresholds. This project is currently unfunded in the City's TIP, however, once built, the pedestrian bridge will help improve transit reliability traveling in both directions on Woburn Street.

Finally, WTA is working with the Talbot Group to identify and design a transit hub just north of Rimland Drive on Woburn to better facilitate in-route transfers.

Figure 15 shows the locations for the recommended treatments along the Gold Go Line.



Figure 15. Gold Go Line LPA Recommendations

Bus stop balancing (removal and relocation)

- W Champion St at Unity Ave inbound/outbound (remove)
- Cornwall Ave at Flora St inbound (remove)
- Cornwall Ave at York St outbound (remove)
- Cornwall Ave at New St inbound (remove)
- Cornwall Ave at Virginia St outbound (remove)
- Relocate Alabama St and Dean Ave outbound to just east of the pedestrian crossing at Grant
- Alabama St at Humboldt St outbound (remove)
- outbound (new)
- Alabama St at Queen St outbound (remove)
- Consolidate Woburn St at North St outbound and Woburn St at Maryland St outbound (remove and relocate) to Woburn St at Connecticut St (add)
- Relocate Woburn St at Rimland Dr inbound stop to new transit hub north of the intersection
- Woburn St at Sunset Dr inbound (remove)
- Sunset Dr at Woburn St outbound (remove)
- Relocate James St at Sunset Pond inbound and outbound to James St at Orchard Dr
- Cordata Pkwy at Westerly Rd inbound (remove)
- Cordata Pkwy at Whatcom Community College inbound (remove)

Add bus stop islands and Tier 2 improvements

- Cornwall Ave at Kentucky outbound
- Cornwall Ave at Texas St outbound
- Woburn St at Connecticut St outbound
- Alabama St at Grant St outbound
- James St at Mcleod inbound and outbound – improve to Tier 2 level as part of the James St Multimodal Improvements Segments 1 & 2 (no stop island just Tier 2 bus stop)

Tier 1 transit hubs

- Barkley Transit Hub
- Bellis Fair Mall
- Orleans/Sunset stops
- Alabama/James stops

New or improved signal operations (TSP and potential corridor coordination)
Specific locations for potential TSP are listed below; however, corridor-wide operations should be evaluated along Cornwall, Alabama, Woburn, Sunset, and Meridian to determine if upgrades should occur to provide interconnect allowing for signal communication and corridor signal coordination.

- Cornwall Ave at York St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Cornwall Ave at Ohio St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Cornwall Ave at Alabama St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Alabama St at James St inbound and outbound (existing queue jump lane and TSP)
- Alabama St at Orleans St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Alabama St at Pacific St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Woburn St at Premier Way inbound and outbound
- Woburn St at Barkley Blvd inbound and outbound (existing)
- Woburn St at Rimland Dr inbound and outbound (existing)
- Sunset Dr at Woburn St inbound and outbound (existing)
- E Sunset Dr at Racine St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Sunset Dr at Orleans St inbound and outbound (existing)
- James St at Birchwood Dr inbound and outbound
- Telegraph Rd at James St inbound and outbound
- Deemer Rd at Telegraph Rd inbound and outbound
- Bellis Fair Pkwy at Meridian St inbound and outbound
- W Bakerview Rd at Cordata Pkwy inbound and outbound (existing)

Bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure changes

- Bike lane Cornwall Ave from York St to Ohio St (install bicycle lanes remove on-street parking)
- Grade separated crossing Woburn St & Railroad trail, as described in existing plans and required (through the Barkley Village Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)) once total development levels generated by the Barkley project reach 1,770 total PM peak-hour trips.
- James St Telegraph to Orchard Segment 1 & 2 multimodal trail consistent with City TIP
- WSDOT complete streets project along Meridian Street (SR 539) between E Kellogg Road and the I-5 southbound ramps

Access restrictions and restriping

- Left turn restriction Woburn St at E Connecticut St inbound
- Left turn restriction Woburn St at E Maryland St inbound
- Turn restrictions on Alabama from Queen to Undine
- Improve channelization for left turns northbound Orleans St into Safeway parking lot inbound and outbound and consider striping "Do Not Block" along Orleans St at driveway

Lane or other significant right-of-way solutions

- Bus lane on Alabama St between Dean Ave and Iron St outbound (peak hour outbound bus lane in center turn lane or curb lane)
- Add bus curb side loading zone on the east side of Cornwall Ave between E Champion St and York St outbound by removing parking
- Restriping of Woburn St to two through lanes in the southbound direction between Newmarket St and Alabama St as required by the Barkley Village Plan EIS once total development levels generated by the Barkley project reach 1,770 total PM peak-hour trips.
- Multimodal corridor study of Woburn St between Sunset Dr and E Illinois St to determine potential for bus-only lane during peak periods, a business access transit lane, or other bus street design improvements that could be implemented in conjunction with those identified as part of the Barkley Village Urban Plan
    - In addition, the study would assess the potential for an alternative bike corridor to Woburn St between Sunset Dr and Alabama St. Woburn St is currently identified for a separated bike lane on Woburn between Sunset Dr and Illinois St and a bike lane on Woburn between Illinois St and Texas St in the Bicycle Master Plan, but there may insufficient right-of-way for both bus and bicycle lanes.
- Lane extension Sunset Dr at Orleans St outbound (extend right turn pocket)
- Evaluate a roundabout for the Alabama St/Woburn St intersection as part of Woburn Street Multimodal Corridor Study
- Queue jump James St/Birchwood Ave/Orchard Dr intersection outbound
- Queue jump Cordata Pkwy at W Bakerview Rd intersection inbound

Land use

- Revisit land use designations along the Gold Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals

- Sunset Square, in particular, is an area along the Gold Go Line that has significant opportunity for redevelopment to host more transit-supportive land uses

Other solutions

- Complete multimodal study for Alabama Street between Dean and Iron

4.3.1 Gold Go Line Treatment Timelines

Because of the length of the Gold Go Line and the number of treatments proposed, treatments are presented within segments of the route. Short-term recommendations are those that are likely to be achievable with local resources or readily available grant funds, while long-term recommendations are likely to require more extensive regional, state, and/or federal resources.

Short-term recommendations (see Figure 16)

Along the full length of the Gold Go Line:

- All stop balancing changes
- TSP (as part of systemwide improvements)

Segment B: Gold Go Line along Alabama west of I-5 corridor

- Alabama St Dean Ave to Iron Corridor Study
- Bus lane on Alabama St between Dean Ave and Iron St outbound
- Bus island Alabama St at Grant St outbound

Segment C: Gold Go Line along Alabama (east of I-5) and Woburn up to Sunset

- Turn restrictions on Alabama from Queen to Undine
- Turn restrictions on Woburn at E Connecticut and E Maryland
- Barkley Tier 1 transit hub
- Grade separated crossing Woburn St & Railroad trail, as described in existing plans

Segment D: Gold Go Line from Sunset and Woburn to Cordata Transit Station

- Channelization improvements on Orleans St into Safeway parking lot
- Bellis Fair Mall Tier 1 transit hub
- WSDOT complete streets project along Meridian Street (SR 539) between E Kellogg Road and the I-5 southbound ramps



Figure 16. Gold Go Line LPA Short-Term Recommendations

Long-term recommendations (see Figure 17)

Segment A: Gold Go Line from Bellingham Transit Station to Alabama (along Cornwall)

- All treatments, due to upcoming City of Bellingham planning efforts
    - Bike lane Cornwall Ave from York St to Ohio St
    - Add curbside bus loading zone on Cornwall Ave between E Champion St and York St outbound

Segment C: Gold Go Line along Alabama (east of I-5) and Woburn up to Sunset

- Multimodal corridor study along Woburn to determine potential for bus-only lane during peak periods only, other treatments, and potential for alternative bike corridor
- Multimodal corridor study of bus lanes along Alabama west of James Street
- Evaluate a roundabout for the Alabama St/Woburn St intersection
- Alabama/James stops Tier 1 transit hub
- Bus Islands at Woburn St at Connecticut St outbound

Segment D: Gold Go Line from Sunset and Woburn to Cordata Transit Station

- Orleans and Sunset turn pocket extension
- Orleans/Sunset stops Tier 1 transit hub
- Queue jump at Bakerview and Cordata
- Queue jump James St/Birchwood Ave/Orchard Dr intersection outbound with relocation of stops from Sunset Ponds area to the intersection, potentially as part of the James St Multimodal Safety Improvement project segments 1 & 2 implementation
- James St Telegraph to Orchard Segment 1 & 2 multimodal trail consistent with City TIP
- James St at Mcleod inbound and outbound – improve to Tier 2 level as part of the James St Multimodal Improvements Segments 1 & 2



Figure 17. Gold Go Line LPA Long-Term Recommendations

4.4 Green Go Line

Recommended treatments along the Green Go Line include those that WTA can act on in the short-term and those that will require more extensive analysis and planning and/or that require changes that are likely to take place over an extended time period. Factors affecting on-time performance along the Green Go Line include the sections of route that travel along a freight corridor and congestion along the Northwest Avenue corridor.

The Green Go Line travels outbound from the Bellingham Station to Whatcom Community College via Dupont, Elm, Northwest, and Bakerview. It travels inbound along the same streets in the opposite direction, heading back to the Downtown Bellingham Transit Station.

Figure 18 shows the locations for the recommended treatments along the Green Go Line.

Bus stop balancing (removal and relocation)

- W Champion at Unity St outbound (remove)
- W Champion St at Grand Ave outbound (remove)
- Dupont St at D St inbound (remove)
- Dupont St at C St outbound (remove)
- Dupont St at G St outbound – relocate closer to F St (might require right-of-way)
- Dupont St at H St inbound – relocate closer to F St (might require right-of-way)
- Elm St at Broadway inbound (remove)
- Relocate stop Northwest Ave at Lynn St inbound (move closer to Lynn St , might require right-of-way)
- Relocate stop Northwest Ave at Shuksan Middle School outbound to Northwest Ave at Alderwood Ave near the pedestrian crossing
- Northwest Ave at 3400 block inbound (remove)
- Relocate Northwest Ave at McLeod Rd inbound to south of roundabout at Northwest Ave at McLeod Ave
- Northwest Dr at Sterling Dr inbound and outbound (remove)
- Relocate W Bakerview Rd at Palisade Way inbound and outbound to future pedestrian crossing
- Relocate W Bakerview Rd at Eliza Ave outbound closer to the intersection
- Cordata Pkwy at Whatcom Community College inbound (remove)



Figure 18. Green Go Line LPA Recommendations

Add bus stop island

- Elm St at Jefferson St outbound
- Northwest Ave at Connecticut outbound
- Prospect St at Flora St outbound
- Prospect St at Central Ave inbound

Tier 1 transit hubs

- Northwest Ave at Birchwood Center
- Northwest Ave at W Bakerview Rd

New or improved signal operations (TSP and Interconnect)

Specific locations for potential TSP are listed below; however, corridor-wide operations should be evaluated along Northwest and Bakerview to determine if upgrades should occur to provide interconnect allowing for signal communication and corridor signal coordination.

- Dupont St at F St inbound and outbound
- Dupont St at Broadway inbound and outbound (existing)
- Northwest Ave at W Illinois St inbound and outbound
- Northwest Ave at Lynn St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Northwest Ave at Birchwood Ave inbound and outbound (existing)
- W Bakerview Rd at Northwest Ave inbound and outbound
- W Bakerview Rd at Eliza Ave inbound and outbound (existing)

Bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure

- Extend the crossing median at outbound stop Northwest Ave and Bakerview Rd (in front of Belleau apartments)
- Install HAWK (high-intensity activated crosswalk) signalized pedestrian crossing on W Bakerview Road at Palisade Way

Access restrictions

- Study the potential for driveways/access points to be consolidated to help reduce congestion (especially on Northwest between E Victor St and W Maplewood Ave)

Lane or other significant right-of-way solutions

- Consider removing parking along Northwest Ave between Illinois St and Elm St to provide a bus lane
- Queue jump at Northwest Ave between E Maplewood Ave and Birchwood Ave outbound (left turn lane queue jump lane)

Land use

- Revisit land use designations along the Green Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals

4.4.1 Green Go Line Treatment Timelines

Short-term recommendations are those that are likely to be achievable with local resources or readily available grant funds, while long-term recommendations are likely to require more extensive regional, state, and/or federal resources.

Short-term recommendations (see Figure 19)

- All bus stop balancing changes
- TSP (as part of systemwide improvements)
- Bus stop islands
- Elm St at Jefferson St outbound
- Prospect St at Flora St outbound
- Prospect St at Central Ave inbound
- Extend the crossing median at outbound stop Northwest Ave and Bakerview Rd (in front of Belleau apartments)
- Revisit land use designations along the Green Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals

Long-term recommendations (see Figure 20)

- Study potential for queue jump at Northwest and Birchwood
- Study the potential for driveways/access points to be consolidated to help reduce congestion (especially on Northwest between E Victor St and W Maplewood Ave)
- Consider removing parking along Northwest Ave between Illinois St and Elm St to provide a bus lane
- Northwest Ave at Birchwood Center Tier 1 transit hub
- Northwest Ave at W Bakerview Rd Tier 1 transit hub



Figure 19. Green Go Line LPA Short-Term Recommendations



Figure 20. Green Go Line LPA Long-Term Recommendations

4.5 Plum Go Line

Plum Go Line recommendations are limited to bus stop balancing and signal changes, though WTA is also exploring rerouting options near the Downtown Bellingham Transit Station. In October 2021, the City of Bellingham completed the Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study, which evaluated and identified a suite of multimodal solutions to support future development and changing needs of land uses in the area. Solutions along the Plum Go Line route identified in the October 2021 study included upgrading traffic signals along Lakeway Drive, providing a multimodal path on the north side, and consolidating and restricting access along Lakeway Drive. The signals along Lakeway near I-5 are controlled by WSDOT. The City and WSDOT are currently undertaking a joint operations evaluation of Lakeway to improve eastbound congestion. Additionally, the City is completing a Civic Complex Master Planning process to redesign park facilities and potentially relocate an elementary school within the complex. This planning process includes designing pedestrian facilities along Lincoln and Lakeway, which may provide a valuable opportunity for transit-supportive improvements in the area including at intersections. Finally, WTA is exploring the concept of transit hubs to better facilitate in-route transfer points, and the area along Lakeway between Ellis and Lincoln is under consideration. A transit hub in this location could facilitate more convenient transfers between the Plum and Blue Go Lines, providing easier access between the Lakeway corridor and WWU.

The Plum Go Line travels outbound on Lakeway Drive between Downtown Bellingham and Woburn Street. It travels inbound in the opposite direction, heading back to the Downtown Bellingham. In the future, the Plum Go Line is recommended to extend to Birch Street. In this alignment, the route would return via Birch Street and Electric Avenue before proceeding onto Lakeway Drive.

Figure 21 shows the locations for the recommended treatments along the Plum Go Line.



Figure 21. Plum Go Line LPA Recommendations

Bus stop balancing (removal and relocation)

- Lakeway Dr at Franklin St inbound
- Consider stop balancing in Lakeway Center and near Civic Athletic complex based on pedestrian infrastructure developments identified under "Bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure changes"
- Add bus stops at Lakeway Dr and Woburn St/Yew St
- Lakeway Dr at Woburn St outbound and Lakeway Dr at Bayview Cemetery inbound (remove)
- Lakeway Dr at Bayview Cemetery outbound (remove)

Tier 1 transit hubs

- Lakeway at Lincoln St inbound and outbound
- Lakeway Dr at Fred Meyer outbound

New or improved signal operations (TSP and interconnect)

Specific locations for potential TSP are listed below; however, corridor-wide operations should be evaluated along Lakeway to determine if upgrades should occur to provide interconnect allowing for signal communication and corridor signal coordination.

- Lakeway Dr at E Holly St inbound and outbound (existing)

- Lakeway at Interchange (I-5 south on-ramp) inbound and outbound (existing)
- Lakeway Dr at King St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Lakeway Dr at Puget St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Lakeway Dr at Lincoln St inbound and outbound (existing)
- Lakeway Dr at Woburn St inbound and outbound (existing)
- E Magnolia St at Ellis St inbound and outbound (Plum Go Line re-route, existing)

Lane or other significant right-of-way solutions

- Queue jump Lakeway Dr at Woburn St inbound

Land use

- Revisit land use designations along the Plum Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals.

Bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure changes

- Improve pedestrian environment along Lakeway to support stop consolidation
    - Traffic calming
    - Additional pedestrian crossing islands
    - Pedestrian crossing along west side of Yew St at Lakeway Dr intersection
    - Multimodal path north side of Lakeway Dr per Lincoln Lakeway Multimodal Study
    - Consolidate driveways between James St and Lincoln St per Lincoln Lakeway Multimodal Study
    - Pedestrian crossing on Lakeway Dr at Clearbrook Dr (planned)

4.5.1 Plum Go Line Treatment Timelines

Short-term recommendations are those that are likely to be achievable with local resources or readily available grant funds, while long-term recommendations are likely to require more extensive regional, state, and/or federal resources.

Short-term recommendations (see Figure 22)

- Revisit land use designations along the Plum Go Line to identify where zoning should be changed to support high frequency transit as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's housing and employment infill goals
- All bus stop balancing
- TSP (as part of systemwide improvements)



Figure 22. Plum Go Line LPA Short-Term Recommendations

Long-term recommendations (see Figure 23)

- Queue jump at Lakeway and Woburn inbound
- Improve pedestrian environment along Lakeway and revisit stop consolidation/placement, if needed
- Lakeway at Lincoln St inbound and outbound Tier 1 transit hub
- Lakeway Dr at Fred Meyer outbound Tier 1 transit hub



Figure 23. Plum Go Line LPA Long-Term Recommendations

5. Benefits and Costs

This section describes the benefits and costs of implementing the LPA.

5.1 Benefits of the LPA

Implementing a rapid transit system has mobility, accessibility, and sustainability benefits. It improves mobility within the community by making transit a more competitive travel option compared to personally owned vehicles. The improved transit system results in increased ridership and decreases the vehicle miles travelled within the community. The rapid transit system will also increase access to destinations within Bellingham and is a more efficient mode for moving a larger number of people. Rapid transit promotes sustainable development by encouraging the use of public transportation and reducing greenhouse gases with fewer single-occupancy vehicle trips.

One of the key benefits of implementing the LPA will be travel time savings, which will allow WTA to implement 10-minute or better service frequencies. The savings vary based on the treatment, and travel time savings would be cumulative as multiple treatments are applied to each Go Line. Table 1 summarizes the existing travel time characteristics of the Go Lines. The table shows that a significant amount of the travel time for the Go Lines is related to dwell time at the bus stops. This means that treatments like bus stop balancing, bus islands, and other improvements related to decreasing time at stops will be critical to the success of the LPA.

Table 1. Travel Time Characteristics of Go Line Routes

Go Line Route	Average Run Time (minutes)[1]		Overall Average Dwell Time (minutes)[2]
	Inbound	Outbound	
Gold	30	30	19.7
Green	21	21	13.1
Plum	15	15	4.6
Blue	30	20	19.3

Source: Whatcom Transportation Authority

1. Per Rapid Transit Feasibility Study, 2023 and WTA input on Plum Line run time in 2025

2. Represents weekday October 2025

Research was reviewed to understand potential travel time savings of treatments being proposed. Appendix C – Travel Time Savings Calculations provides additional detail on the potential travel time saving by treatment and the calculated travel time savings with implementation of the LPA recommendations.

Table 2 provides a summary of the estimated travel times saving by Go line per run.

Table 2. Estimated Travel Time Savings by Go Line with LPA Implementation

Go Line Route	Travel Times Savings (minutes) Per Run	
	Inbound	Outbound
Gold	7.6	7.9
Green	5.5	5.4
Plum	2.3	2.2
Blue	6.8	6.1

As described previously, WTA is committed to implementing more frequent service once treatments have achieved a travel time savings of 5 to 10 minutes and/or when on-time performance is being met during the peak periods. Implementation of the treatments described in the LPA could result in travel times savings of approximately 2 to 8 minutes per run. This reduction does not account for additional treatments that could be identified through the corridor studies identified in the LPA. The travel times savings analysis shows that implementation of the LPA would allow WTA to provide more frequent service (i.e., 10-minute service) along the Go Line corridors. It is noted that the Plum Line travel times savings is less than 5 minutes; however, there is a potential that additional treatments could be identified, or a greater savings could come from the City's Lakeway Drive signal coordination project.

5.2 Costs to Implement the LPA

Cost for implementing the LPA include operational costs incurred by WTA in providing 10-minute frequency as well as capital cost to construct the treatments identified. There will also be costs to perform the studies identified.

5.2.1 Operational Costs

An overall cost to WTA will be implementing more frequent service along the corridors. Table 3 summarizes potential cost to implement 10-minute frequency along the Go Line corridors.

Table 3. Estimated Cost to Implement 10-minute Frequency

Go Line Route	Net New Revenue Hours	Cost Range (2027 Dollars)	
		High[1]	Low[2]
Gold	7,248	$1,744,764	$745,461
Green	5,189	$1,249,089	$ 533,681
Subtotal	**12,438**	**$2,993,852**	**$1,279,142**
Plum	4,901	$1,179,785	$ 504,070
Blue	1800	$433,272	$185,118
Total	**19,139**	**$4,606,910**	**$1,968,331**

Source: Whatcom Transportation Authority, November 2025

1. Represents fully allocated cost including administrative, direct operating cost, fuel, wages, maintenance, etc.

2. Represents marginal increase in cost assuming some of the staff supporting operations now would be able to also support the increased frequency.

5.2.2 Capital Costs

A structured approach for construction cost estimates was adopted. The methodology is similar to what peer transit agencies, such as King County Metro and Pierce Transit, have applied for planning level alternative evaluations at a similar level of design.

Methodology and Cost Estimate

Quantities for typical treatments as defined at a planning level design were measured, and construction costs were established for typical treatments, such as station upgrades, roadway modifications, and lane striping changes. The cost estimates are based on concept-level designs, with potential investments established through the planning process and confirmed by WTA in the fall of 2025.

WTA – Typical Treatment Unit Prices

Unit prices for this effort were established as described in Appendix D – Cost Analysis Method. These unit prices are for typical locations within WTA's service area and not site specific. These typical treatment costs were established through review of historic construction costs, market trends, and peer agency cost assumptions for similar work. The methodology uses the term "base construction costs" for all unit costs and treatment quantities for this study.

Miscellaneous Costs Considerations

Contractors are compensated for their efforts to support construction of infrastructure. This compensation includes activities such as traffic control, erosion

control, mobilization, surveying, and quality control. A 30% factor was applied on the base construction costs to account for these miscellaneous costs.

Agency General/Soft Costs (e.g., permitting, design, construction management) were estimated at approximately 50% of construction subtotal (unit prices x quantity + contractor's miscellaneous costs).

Contingency and Allowances

To address uncertainties inherent in planning-level estimates, contingency and allowance factors were applied uniformly across all cost items including:

Contingency at 40%, covering design evolution and unknowns for civil investments. The 40% general contingency allocation accounts for "design allowance" or "design risk;" this allowance mitigates factors that are not yet resolved but will be through project design. This contingency considers items such as design refinement to meet jurisdictional partners direction, right-of-way costs, utility relocations, environmental mitigation, and other considerations.

Risk Allocation at 25%, accounting for unknown risk not identified at this time. This risk is "surprises" that are not typical of this type of work and cannot be determined at this planning level stage.

Table 4 presents cost markup percentages used by the study to estimate the full costs of project implementation.

Table 4. Soft Cost and Allowances Markup Assumptions

Item	
General/Soft Costs	50%
Planning	2%
Permits	5%
Design	15%
CM	10%
Construction Contingency	10%
Admin Staff	5%
Project Closeout	3%
Miscellaneous Costs	30%
Traffic Control	10%
Erosion Control	3%
Staging	4%
Mobilization	10%
Survey	3%
Contingency Allowance	40%
Risk Allocation	25%

Table 5. Cost Build Up Example

Example Cost Estimate	
Measured Treatment Quantity	2 Units
Treatment Cost per Unit	$1,000 per Unit
Treatment Cost	$2,000
Miscellaneous Construction Cost @30%	$2,000*30% = $600
Contractor Cost (Treatment Cost + Misc. Construction Cost)	$2,600
Agency Soft Costs @50%	$1,300
Implementation cost without contingency or allowance (Contractor Cost + Agency Soft Cost)	**$3,900**
Contingency Allowance @ 40%	$3,900*40% = $1,560
Risk Allowance @25%	$3,900*25% = $975
Full Cost of Implementation with Allowances	**$6,435**

WTA Full Cost of Implementation

Based on the methodology listed in above, the full cost of implementation has been developed by corridor and split into short-term and long-term treatments.

Short-term treatments include bus islands, c-curb, bus lane (re-channelization), and other treatments as listed in Appendix D – Cost Analysis Method. Long-term treatments or systematic treatments include roundabouts and queue jumps, as listed in Appendix D – Cost Analysis Method. Improved transit service speed and reliability would also be provided with implementation of TSP. However, implementation costs for TSP are not included in the table below and are better represented as a system-wide implementation and not by corridor (see 5.2.3 Other Capital Costs for TSP costs).

Table 6 provides the estimated full cost of implementation by corridor. For a more detailed cost estimate broken out by corridor and segment, see Appendix D – Cost Analysis Method.

Table 6. Full Implementation Costs by Corridor (Short-Term vs. Long-Term)

	Cost (2025 Dollars)	
Go Line Route	**Short Term**	**Long Term**
Gold	$19,304,700	$28,872,900
Green	$6,513,900	$5,279,600
Blue	$6,998,100	$11,465,900
Plum	$3,996,200	$5,279,600

Planning Level Cost Estimating Confidence

Cost estimates have been developed at a very early stage of design. Based on the level of design, the consultant team established a cost estimating confidence range at the Class 5 level as defined by the Association for the Advancement of Cost Engineering (AACE) International practice No. 18R-97. The expected accuracy based on an estimate class 5 is between -50% and +100%.

5.2.3 Other Capital Costs

In addition to the capital costs described previously, TSP and other studies are proposed. TSP is suggested to be implemented systemwide as one project and not corridor by corridor. WTA and the City do not need to activate the TSP at all the intersections where it is implemented; however, it is more efficient and cost effective to implement the full system at one time. The cost for engineering, procurement, installation, and five years of technical support is estimated at approximately $2.0M (2025 dollars), see Appendix D – Cost Analysis Method.

The following corridor studies are also identified as part of the LPA:

- High Street Corridor $100,000
- Samish Way Corridor $50,000 to $75,000
- Woburn Corridor $75,000 to $150,000
- Alabama Corridor $75,000 to $150,000

6. Implementation

Implementing the improvements identified in this LPA requires prioritizing projects, identifying funding sources, and collaborating with other agencies and private developers to realize best value projects that are the most feasible given the limited resources of WTA and the City. It is recommended that the implementation strategy for the LPA be consistent with the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, and other City plans, which have a proven track record. The strategy includes how projects are prioritized, mechanisms used for implementation, and performance measures for tracking implementation progress.

The timeline for the LPA has been categorized as short- and long-term for each of the projects and treatments identified. A more detailed implementation plan that includes a fiscally constrained prioritized project list should be developed separate from the LPA. Project implementation is a dynamic process that can change from year-to-year based on the agency fiscal outlook and opportunities that arise from grant funding, utility and other project coordination, and private development. The implementation plan should be revisited and updated on an annual basis.

6.1 Prioritization

Project prioritization is a multifaceted effort to identify the highest value projects in terms of the LPA's goals balanced with the fiscal constraints. Prioritization of projects should consider the following factors to inform implementation:

- **Goal alignment** centers on criteria tied to the LPA goals, specifically to improve safety and comfort, provide more efficient transit operations, and use transit to increase access to higher density. Examples of criteria that could be used to assess goal alignment would be travel times savings that enable increased frequency, proximity to existing or future higher density land uses and transit-oriented development, and proximity to low-income housing or population/employment.
- **Project scale and complexity** considers the relative size of the project in terms of length, impact to development, right-of-way needs, or environmental factors which can increase design and permitting timelines, regardless of funding source. Environmental factors include multimodal, traffic operations, parking, and other impacts to the transportation system and surrounding areas.
- **Project cost** accounts for the reality of the fiscal resource limitations.
- **Funding opportunities, or grant competitiveness,** identifies projects that are likely to rank well in highly competitive state and federal grant funding programs or have a higher opportunity for implementation with partner funding opportunities like private developer funding.

- **Project readiness, or timeframe,** considers whether additional study or stakeholder coordination is needed to implement a project. The projects have already been ranked for short- and long-term improvements with long-term improvements being less ready for implementation.

WTA and the City will work together to prioritize projects that were identified through the LPA process. A scoring system will be developed to identify projects that have the potential to realize the most value in terms of the LPA goals, as determined by the goal alignment, and that are the most feasible to implement, given the resource constraints that are captured by the other factors. Prioritization of projects could assume projects are being constructed independently or bundled into packages or segments. Independent construction of projects would likely be conservative, because there will be opportunities to construct projects as part of larger roadway projects, utility maintenance activities that impact roadways, or as part of development or redevelopment projects. If projects are incorporated into development or redevelopment, some of the cost burden may be shared by private development partners. Grouping projects into packages could also realize efficiencies of mobilization permitting, stormwater management, utilities impacts, and cost of materials and labor.

6.2 Implementation Strategies

Three key strategies are recommended for implementation of the LPA based on strategies that have worked for other projects in Bellingham and partnerships with WTA and the City.

1. **Develop fundable project packages** – The LPA begins to develop packages by identifying segments for short-term projects. Developing packages will help reduce costs, reduce internal management, and provide a more deliberate process that increases ranking in grant funding competitions. Key actions to be taken for this strategy include:
    - Organize project packages and consider known WTA projects, City projects, development, utility improvements, or legislative priorities.
    - Limit project package construction costs to feasible and fundable amounts based on the intention to fund locally or via an identified grant program, in consideration of the grant program's typical funding limitations.
    - Pursue grant funding for higher-priority packages.
    - Consider identifying a 5-year grant plan around expected grant opportunities, determining if the grant pursual would be led by the City or WTA, and engage with grant program managers to present the planned nature of the applications.
2. **Identify opportunity projects** – Inclusion of transit improvements in other roadway, utility, and/or maintenance projects is an important method of implementing the

prioritized project list. Bundling transit improvements into other projects can potentially lower costs and shorten anticipated schedules, due to economies of scale, when compared to an approach where projects were to be individually funded, designed, and completed. Key actions to be taken for this strategy include:

- Work with the City's departments to identify opportunities for inclusion of transit projects in other project types.
- Where grant requirements or construction in conjunction with another roadway project make construction of a lower priority project possible or required by law, pursue funding sources for that project regardless of priority.

3. **Explore partnerships** – WTA and the City should continue to explore partnerships that have been previously successful in leveraging local funding, including with each other and with other organizations. This can be accomplished by receiving funding from other agencies, providing support to other agencies, or other methods. This approach demonstrates to grant funding agencies the viability and importance of a project. Potential organizations to engage include Bellingham School District and Western Washington University, among others.
    - Approach partnership agencies with a list of high priority projects directly affecting their constituency.
    - Gather formal support letters and financial support where feasible ahead of grant funding applications for projects serving partner agencies.
    - Identify non-traditional grant funding opportunities for schools, transit, etc. that could have a transit infrastructure component and provide City support letters, in-kind support or funding commitments, etc. to those grant applications.
    - Encourage inclusion of projects in capital improvements by other partner agencies.
    - Maintain and develop new strategic partnerships with community agencies and businesses to promote programs that build support for transit and provide economic development potential.

6.3 Potential Funding Sources

It is anticipated that the LPA would be funded through a variety of sources ranging from local, state and federal resources. Potential sources of funding that WTA and the City of Bellingham may pursue when implementing the LPA infrastructure changes are shown in Table 7. Additional information on grant funding sources is provided in Table 8.

Table 7. Potential Funding Sources for Implementing the LPA Infrastructure Changes

Treatment Type	Potential Funding Source
Tier 1 Bus Stop	• State Bus and Bus Facilities • Federal Bus and Bus Facilities • Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)
Tier 2 Bus Stop	• Local • State Consolidated Grants
Bus Stop Island	• Local • STBG
Transit Signal Priority (TSP)	• Local • State Regional Mobility Grant (RMG)
Traffic Lane Improvements (extend turn pocket, bus only lane, etc.)	• Local • RMG • STBG
Roundabout	• RMG • STBG
Bike and/or Pedestrian Infrastructure	• State Bike/Ped Program • Local • STBG

Table 8. Further information about grant funding sources

Grant Funding Source	Website
State	
Bus and Bus Facilities	https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/state-buses-and-bus-facilities
Surface Transportation Block Grant	https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/funding-programs/surface-transportation-block-grant
Regional Mobility Grant	https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/regional-mobility
Bike/Ped Program	https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/funding-programs/active-transportation-funding-programs/pedestrian-bicycle-program
Consolidated Grants	https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/consolidated
Federal	
Bus and Bus Facilities	https://www.transit.dot.gov/bus-program

7. LPA Next Steps

The next step for the LPA is to present it to the public and then have formal adoption by the WTA Board and Bellingham City Council. Once the LPA is adopted, WTA, with the support of the City and community, will seek funding through the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) mobility grant program to implement portions of the LPA. The activities and the anticipated timing for the LPA next steps are presented below.

Activity	**Date(s)**
LPA Draft Finalized	Feb 2026
Public Engagement	Feb-March 2026
Bellingham City Council Adoption	April 2026
WTA Board Adoption	April 2026
WSDOT Regional Mobility Grant Application	June-July 2026

Bellingham Transportation Commission
Transportation Commission Resolution 2026-03

The Transportation Commission (TC) has reviewed and endorses the Rapid Transit Study Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and recommends adoption to the City Council.

PASSED by the City of Bellingham Transportation Commission
this 10th day of March, 2026.

Signed_____
Tim Wilder, Chair
City of Bellingham Transportation Commission