Disrupting urban mobility: The new COVID landscape in cities

LEED for Cities and Communities | June 24, 2020
GBCI CE Number: 920022123 | APA CM: 9201569
Disrupting urban mobility: The new COVID landscape in cities
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US Green Building Council
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Learn how cities are adapting their urban mobility initiatives in response to COVID-19
• Better understand the factors that cities must weigh in their mobility related decision making processes and investments
• Hear how cities are ensuring equity as a critical element of their COVID-related mobility response
• Learn what disruption might look like in the urban landscape of the future
AGENDA

Opening Remarks: How are cities disrupting urban mobility in response to COVID-19?

• Moderator, Harriet Tregoning, World Resources Institute

Urban Mobility Challenges and Innovations

• Susan McLaughlin, City of Seattle, WA
• Julia Thayne, City of Los Angeles, CA
• Stephanie Gidigbi, Natural Resources Defense Council

Moderated Conversation

Question & Answer

• Submit your questions in the chat box or Q&A feature
PANELISTS

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Urban Design Manager
Dept. of Transportation
City of Seattle, WA

Julia Thayne
Mobility Innovation
Office of Mayor Garcetti
City of Los Angeles, CA

Stephanie Gidigbi
Director of Policy & Partnerships
NRDC
Washington, DC
Harriet Tregoning
Director, New Urban Mobility Alliance
World Resources Institute
Purpose

As a department, SDOT can influence change by:

• Understanding how people are impacted by COVID-19 in the realms of mobility and public space
• Developing strategies to address these impacts that also align with long-term goals and values
• Prioritizing our efforts to mitigate impacts and maximize benefit, recognizing resource constraints

COVID-19 Recovery Priorities from the Mayor’s Office:

1. Good Jobs and Economic Recovery: How can we ensure a safe and durable reopening of the economy?
2. Community Resiliency: How can we create a more equitable and just city and center communities who have been most impacted by COVID-19?
3. Civic Resurgence: How do we reimagine our “new normal” in how we interact, get where we need to go, and engage in our urban environment while achieving our climate, health and sustainability goals?
Context: 5 key challenges

- Disproportionate impacts of the virus
- Changes to how we get around
- Increased public space needs to meet physical distancing protocols
- Impacts to local businesses/economy
- City budget constraints

Rate of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases by Race/Ethnicity (per 100,000 people)

- NHPI: 1,006
- Latinx: 895
- Black: 488
- AI/AN: 265
- Asian: 189
- White: 145

Source: King County Public Health, 5/29/20
Challenge: mobility shifts

Public health concerns have led to a significant drop in public transit use (down 70%), raising threat of congestion and growth in SOV trips.

2019 Downtown Seattle Commute Choices

- 46% TRANSIT
- 9% CARPOOL & VANPOOL
- 7% WALK
- 6% TELEWORK
- 3% BIKE
- 26% DRIVE ALONE

Pre-COVID mode split for Center City. Shared, efficient modes (transit + vanpool/carpool) accounted for over 50% of trips. Source: Center City Mode Split Survey

Since early March, transit route requests on Apple Maps have dropped 70%; meanwhile, driving direction requests are rising steadily since April. Source: Apple Maps Mobility Trends Report
Challenge: budget impacts

- Decreased tax revenue and uncertain funding availability for transportation projects.

- West Seattle Bridge closure and the corresponding design, mitigation and longer term construction compounds the transportation budget concerns.

- We need to identify opportunities to leverage resources to make strategic and urgent investments to advance City goals.

$210-300 million shortfall in City of Seattle budget

Source: CBO presentation to City Council 4/22/20
Prioritization Criteria

The vision for investment is centered on 3 principles that are particularly pressing given these challenges:

• **Equity** – Prioritize investments in and services for communities most impacted by COVID-19

• **Mobility** – Allocate right-of-way based on desired mode split targets, with emphasis on transit and active modes

• **Economic resilience** – Support Seattle’s economy through innovative uses of the right-of-way
Understanding disproportionate impacts

• We will develop target geographies to focus investment based on COVID-19’s relative impact

• These geographies take into account: COVID-19 case data and racial equity maps

• Intend to align with other City of Seattle methodologies (OPCD, OED)
Plan structure: strategies & actions

The plan is organized around two themes: **MOVE + THRIVE**

**MOVE Strategies:**
1. Prioritize transit  
2. Accelerate non-motorized mobility and foster “20-minute neighborhoods”  
3. Reduce drive-alone (SOV) mode share  
4. Support low- and no-emissions transportation

**THRIVE Strategies:**
1. Maximize space for people  
2. Support local businesses and business districts  
3. Optimize systems and policies for urban goods delivery and supply chains
Plan phases

**RESPONSE**
stay-at-home in place

Take significant measures to decrease the spread of the pandemic. Focus on meeting the mobility needs of essential service providers.

Example actions:
- Quick build bike lanes
- Temporary sidewalk extensions in dense business districts

**REOPENING**
pre-vaccine

Relaxed social distancing strategies and other community mitigation measures are implemented.

Example actions:
- Rapid expansion of bus only lanes
- Pedestrianize Pike Place to meet physical distancing protocols
- Establish regular open street opportunities on key commute corridors

**RECOVERY**
post-vaccine

Revitalize the local and regional economy and restore our cultural vibrancy.

Example actions:
- Establish ground-level city offices in vacant storefronts in areas most impacted to help foster economic recovery
- Pilot low- to no-contact autonomous delivery
curb space regulation

signals operations

active transportation

public art

517 pick-up priority zones

550 intersections with reduced cycle lengths

20 miles of Stay Healthy Streets

1000+ Public art yard signs
Questions / Discussion

Contacts:
Project Manager – Susan McLaughlin AICP, LEED AP
Urban Design Manager, Seattle Department of Transportation
Covid Impacts on Transit: Los Angeles

Source: Apple Mobility Trends - Apple Maps Directions Requests, Baseline 13 January 2020

Photo Credit: LA Times
Covid Impacts on Transit: Los Angeles

- Although down from normal levels, transit usage did not decline as drastically as in other parts of the country
  - Buses - moving 930k riders / week (37% of pre-Covid levels)
  - Rail - moving 233k riders / week (34% of pre-Covid levels)

- Surveys of transit riders during Covid showed
  - 50% earning less than $20k / year
  - 85% do not own or have access to a car
  - Top three reasons for travel, work (72%), errands (49%), and healthcare (28%)

Sources: LA Metro, LA Metro via Transit app survey
Senior Meal Emergency Response Program

Source: LA Controller’s Office - Estimated Jobs Lost in Los Angeles during the Covid Pandemic, by Industry

Photo Credit: UNITE HERE Local 11
Senior Meal Emergency Response Program

- Newly food-vulnerable populations homebound during the pandemic
  - 80,000 seniors living below the federal poverty line
  - 20,000 seniors qualified for funding under State of California’s Great Plates program

- Job losses >40% for workers in accommodation and food services
  - 25 kitchens employing >250 people and 3 taxi cab companies employing >150 drivers / week

Sources: Mayor’s Office Senior Meal Emergency Response Program
Covid Impacts on the Public RoW: Los Angeles

Source: LADOT - Los Angeles Vehicle and Bike Volume, as of 6/19/20

Photo Credit: Julia Salinas
During the Covid pandemic, VMT has dropped by 30–50% throughout the City (peak decline was 70!)
  - VMT declines were not equal throughout LA, reflecting differences in employment, in density, and in transit-dependency

Bicycle counts were 50% higher compared to the week prior to Safer At Home order
  - Also: more people biking on protected bike lanes
  - Half as many people are using Metro Bike Share (rides down 58%)

Initial roll-outs of “Slow Streets” and “Al Fresco” programs are now entering new phases centered on equity

Source: StreetLight data, LADOT analysis
What Can New Mobility Do?

- Digital infrastructure
- Mobility-as-a-service
- Goods and service delivery
- Universal design
- Covid safety

Image Credit: Karl Baumann, Ben Caldwell, and Sankofa City
How cities are disrupting the urban mobility landscape during COVID-19

Stephanie Gidigbi,
Director of Policy & Partnership, NRDC
@SimplySJG | Sgidigbi@nrdc.org
How the coronavirus is disrupting public transit?

**Change in demand**

Public transit has experienced drops in demand across the board, continuing to be a lifeline for those who must travel. You can use to compare changes in different places.

*Compare to...*

- All Cities
- New York City
- Paris
- San Francisco Bay Area
- Toronto
- Montréal
- Washington D.C.
ANWAN "BIG G" GLOVER SAYS:
“I WEAR MY MASK AND YOU SHOULD TOO. THIS AIN’T OVER.”
CARES
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

Estimated Time HEROES + CARES Funding Would Last

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Who’s left riding public transit?

1. The people still riding public transit are overwhelmingly female.

Pre-crisis, Transit had a 50/50 gender split. Now 56% of our riders are female, while only 40% are male. In some cities like Philadelphia, more than 68% of riders are women. If “essential workers” are indeed the ones taking public transit, women seem to be significantly more essential.

Ladies first?
Gender of riders during the pandemic

- 56% of users are female
- 40% of users are male
- 3% of users prefer not to say
- 1% of users are non-binary/non-conforming

Source: Transit survey of US users (April 2020)

2. Black and Latino riders now make up the majority of Transit’s users

People of colour are a greater share of riders during the pandemic

Transit Riders during the Pandemic

Who’s going to work on public transit?
Proportion of users commuting to work, by industry

Transit riders during the pandemic are poorer
Household income

Source: Transit survey of US users (April 2020)

Mode Shift: The Essential Transit

Before the pandemic, Metrorail provided the majority of WMATA transit trips.

During the pandemic, Metrobus provides the majority of WMATA transit trips.
Regional Reality

Washington DC Region

Jobs within a 45 min transit ride

Access to Jobs

Jobs within a 45 min drive
How agencies are responding?

FTA Announces $130 Million to 41 Projects under the FY20 Low-No Program

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration
DISCUSSION
For more information:

• Explore the TR category in LEED v4.1 for Cities and Communities
• Visit our Tools and Resources page
• Email us at cities@usgbc.org with any questions
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15 points available