Aurora Avenue North
Shoreline, Washington

A Better Corridor through Infrastructure Investment

Redevelopment Strategies

- Broad infrastructure improvements focused on alternative transportation modes
- Creative financing, using a mix of 21 funding sources

Results and Lessons Learned

- Perseverance pays off: the project took nearly 20 years to complete, but the corridor is now a much safer, healthier, and more connected place.
- Numerous improvements to infrastructure along the corridor—including sidewalks, medians, lighting, and utilities placed underground—have made the corridor a safer and more attractive place for biking and walking.
- A new bus rapid transit (BRT) service has increased transportation options for residents who live in housing adjacent to the corridor.

RIGHT: Before reconstruction, the Aurora Avenue North corridor was unsightly and automobile-oriented and lacked pedestrian amenities. *(City of Shoreline)*
ABOVE: The removal of aboveground utility lines and the introduction of medians, greenery, crosswalks, street and traffic lights, and sidewalks have greatly enhanced the corridor's aesthetics, functionality, and safety. *(City of Shoreline)*

The first-tier suburban city of Shoreline, just north of Seattle, began its ambitious redevelopment of the heavily used Aurora Avenue North corridor just three years after the city's incorporation in 1995. Before reconstruction, Aurora Avenue North was an automobile-centric highway featuring gas stations, shopping centers, convenience stores, adult clubs, and tobacco and alcohol stores. The four-lane road had an average of 40,000 to 45,000 vehicles and 7,000 bus riders per day and one of the highest crash rates in the state, at nearly one per day and one fatality per year.

The city knew that the redevelopment of Aurora would take a long-term commitment, and for the next 18 years, Shoreline worked to address land use and safety issues and to improve the conditions of the corridor and the surrounding neighborhoods. The three-mile project was completed without debt in 2016 using a mix of 21 different funding sources, including Shoreline's capital improvement program as well as county, state, and federal funding.[1]

After reaching consensus on elements of a unified vision using design studies and public input in 1998, the city of Shoreline sought to achieve the vision by improving safety, spurring economic development, alleviating traffic congestion, enhancing sustainability, and increasing the number of amenities for pedestrians. To accomplish these goals, the city landscaped medians, added left- and U-turn pockets, upgraded sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, colored and scored concrete crosswalks, and incorporated new street and pedestrian lighting.

Shoreline improved the street appearance and upgraded the capacity of the utility infrastructure by moving it underground—an expensive and complex undertaking that required collab-

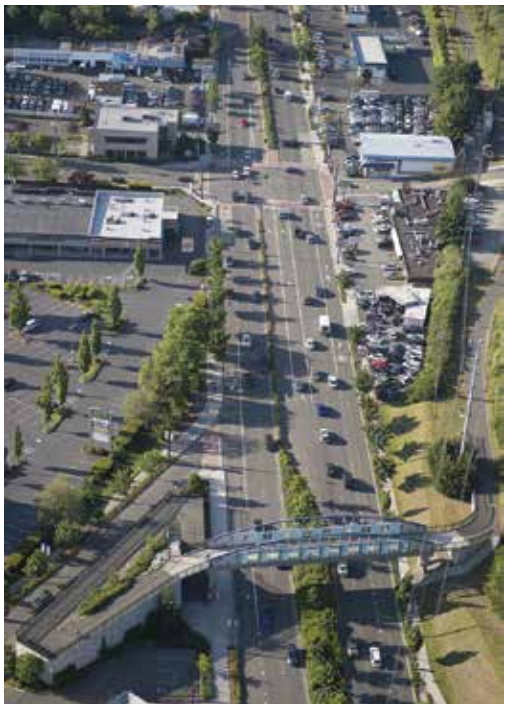
oration with many partners. The city installed sustainable stormwater features and living retaining walls and developed a rainwater filtration plaza for pedestrians.

As part of the project, Shoreline improved its three-mile section of the Interurban Trail—a 24-mile trail connecting the cities of Seattle and Everett—to make it a seamless cycling trail with iconic bridge crossings over Aurora Avenue North and North 155th Street.

To improve transit options, a new dedicated bus rapid transit (BRT) service called RapidRide, the fifth of six county BRT lines, was developed with the help of state and federal resources in partnership with the King County Department of Transportation's Metro Transit division and the city of Seattle. To support the service, Shoreline established what it calls "business-access transit lanes," which support access to businesses and also provide stopping spaces for buses; installed an intelligent fiber-based transportation system to enable buses to communicate with traffic signals; and incorporated preboarding payment stations. The prepayment system allows riders to quickly board the buses, which feature low floors, three doors, and "next stop" displays and audio. The corridor's improved bus stops feature electronic next-arrival signs, weather protection coverings, and interior and exterior lighting to improve bus stop visibility.

Since the construction project began in 2005, Shoreline has begun to experience returns on the $146-million investment. Before the project was even complete, crashes declined by 60 percent. Since 2015, Shoreline's Aurora Avenue North has welcomed multiple new businesses and community services: two health clinics, a YMCA, a biotech lab, a Trader Joe's, the City Hall, and a high school. Seven hundred completed housing units span the affordability range, with another 1,000 units either under construction or in the permitting process.

In addition, the Puget Sound Regional Council, the region's planning agency, gave the city its Vision 2020 Award, and the Federal Highway Administration and the Washington State Department of Transportation presented the city with a 2008 Award of Excellence for Best City Project.



Aurora Avenue North is now Shoreline's main street. It is aesthetically pleasing, safer, more efficient, and optimized for new economic development. The project has improved pedestrian safety, automobile capacity, transit performance, traffic flow, and stormwater management. The BRT is expected to save motorists between $2,000 and $8,000 a year, and, since launching in 2014, bus reliability has increased by 13 percent. Local leaders foresee that the city's investment will encourage local landowners to redevelop their properties along Aurora and that additional redevelopment could further enhance the corridor for all users.

LEFT: Shoreline's corridor improvements include the addition of a bridge to improve connections along the Interurban Trail, a 24-mile cycling trail between the cities of Seattle and Everett. *(HDR Engineering Inc.)*

BELOW RIGHT: Previously, little emphasis was placed on bus accessibility and passenger comfort along the Aurora corridor. *(City of Shoreline)*

BELOW LEFT: Now, dedicated bus lanes, covered and prominent bus stops, and other bus infrastructure improvements have helped improve BRT reliability and ridership along the Aurora corridor. *(City of Shoreline)*

[1] For the last stretch of corridor improvements, funding sources included the Federal Highway Administration, Washington State Transportation Improvement Board, Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Mobility grants, Washington State Department of Ecology, King County Metro, Seattle City Light, Seattle Public Utilities, Ronald Wastewater District, and the city of Shoreline.