Background information/previous requests CM Herbold has made to SDOT about buses on 1st Avenue

In 2018, before the closure of the Alaskan Way Viaduct Councilmember Herbold sent a letter to SDOT about having a bus lane on 1st Avenue in 2018. Below are two newsletters she wrote about this, noting her letter and SDOT’s reply:

[*Letter to SDOT re: Bus Access to Downtown after Alaskan Way Viaduct Closes*](http://herbold.seattle.gov/releasing-xiyue-wang-bus-access-after-viaduct-closure-st3-light-rail-visualizations-bail-reform-spu-drainage-and-wastewater-rates-ferries-open-house-office-hours#bus-access-post-viaduct)

[***Update on Request for 1st Avenue Bus Lane & Access to Downtown after Viaduct Closure***](http://herbold.seattle.gov/update-on-request-for-1st-avenue-bus-lane-solid-waste-collection-delay-this-weeks-budget-update-spd-launches-911-data-dashboard-elected-leadersh#bus-lane-access-after-viaduct)

 The problem is that the strength of the curb lanes on roads on 1st Avenue in Pioneer Square is weak, so they placed restrictions on 1st Ave (see highlight below); they don’t believe the road can support a bus lane.

**April 2019**

Councilmember Herbold asked SDOT about the temporary routing that was used on 4th Avenue for the three weeks after the closure of the Viaduct, and potentially going back to that, since it seemed faster. Here’s the reply she got:

*The Pioneer Sq stop is certainly one reason why Metro will keep running along 1st Ave. Additionally, while 4th Ave S can sometimes be a faster option, reliability is a problem because of the number of buses running from Pierce and South King County through the 4th & Jackson intersection, along with general purpose traffic coming from the 4th Ave S and Airport Way corridors. Avoiding the need to cross the BNSF mainline tracks were another reason that Metro preferred 1st over 4th Ave S. Finally, 1st Ave allows routes coming from West Seattle to operate more closely to how buses will operate on the permanent south end pathway – Alaskan Way to Columbia St – that’s now under construction.*

**May 2019 Response from SDOT**

*SDOT worked closely with Metro last year to identify the pathway that buses would use to travel between SR 99 and 3rd Avenue. 1st Avenue was selected as the preferred interim pathway during the Viaduct demolition due to its proximity to existing bus routing and its direct path through Pioneer Square to 3rd Avenue compared to neighboring streets. The alternatives that were considered showed longer and less reliable travel times compared to 1st Avenue.*

*SDOT has considered implementing a center bus only lane on 1st Avenue, but there are several issues with such an approach.*

*A bus only lane on 1st Avenue would result in the diversion of general-purpose traffic to 4th Avenue, where several other buses operate. This would cause additional congestion that would impact transit riders on the 4th Avenue corridor.*

*North of King Street, 1st Avenue transitions from one parking lane and two travel lanes to one parking lane and one travel lane. While parking is restricted during the peak commute period to keep people and goods moving, the rest of the day the curb lane provides parking for both retail and commercial loading that is critical for businesses in Pioneer Square.*

*A peak period bus only lane was also considered. However, the number and variety of traffic restrictions during different periods of the day that would likely be very confusing for motorists and bus operators. Considering the risk posed by the areaways on this corridor, the potential for noncompliance, and the safety issues that could result from noncompliance, SDOT is not comfortable proceeding with this approach. (Note from Herbold staff: see SDOT’s page here for more information:* [*https://sdotblog.seattle.gov/2019/04/23/changes-under-way-new-rules-for-large-trucks-in-pioneer-square/*](https://sdotblog.seattle.gov/2019/04/23/changes-under-way-new-rules-for-large-trucks-in-pioneer-square/)*)*

*SDOT is considering additional signal timing changes and other traffic modifications to streamline bus operations on 1st Avenue. It's also important to note that the use of 1st Avenue is only temporary; when the Viaduct Demolition and Alaskan Way reconstruction are complete, buses will switch to operating on the new Alaskan Way surface street that will include transit-only lanes in both directions. The timing of this change will depend on construction schedules but is expected to occur in late 2019/early 2020.*