

Connecting the Skyway to the Ground

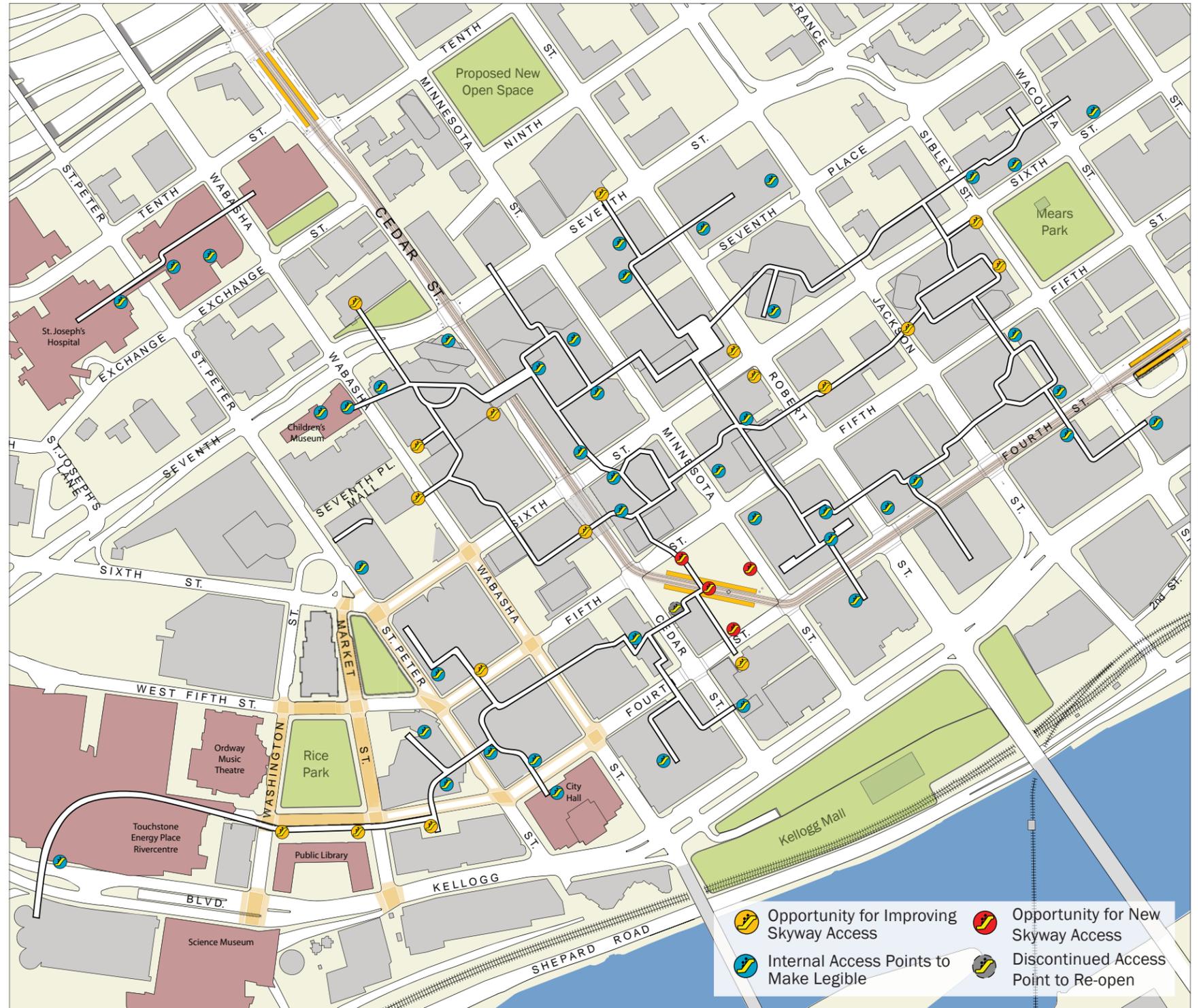
The skyway system and the resulting separation of the pedestrian network from the street are key contributors to the inactivity at street level. In conjunction with making people-friendly streets, one of the principal strategies in reconciling this division is the gradual re-engineering of the system to bring foot traffic back to the ground. Convenient, legible and accessible connections will help enable greater movement between the two systems and, over time, encourage greater levels of activity along the street.

Strategies to connect the skyway to the ground include:

- capitalize on opportunities to improve linkages between LRT and the skyway system;
- improve the visibility of internal connections through the use of signage or by externalizing them to make them visible from the street;
- bring the skyway to ground level in parks and open spaces;
- increase the number of access points at street level to provide more opportunities for movement between the two systems; and
- improve the condition of entrance areas by including elements such as public art, improved pedestrian amenities and plantings.



This skyway access point off of Fourth Street employs materials and lighting that help improve its legibility from the street. The addition of signage and mapping would help further.



An illustration of the existing and potential future skyway access points along the Central Corridor. Convenient, legible and accessible connections will enable greater movement between the skyway system and the ground, helping to encourage more activity along the street and connections to transit.



A rendering of what an improved skyway entrance might look like at a renovated Sixth Street station. A lane of traffic has been reclaimed to expand the sidewalk, and a transparent pavilion creates a legible access point to the system. Along the street, pedestrian-oriented lighting and new street trees help provide a pedestrian amenity adjacent to the bus stop while extending “a rung” on the ladder along LRT.

Rebalancing Streets

With the exception of areas such as Rice Park and Lowertown, streets in the core of downtown are for cars. They have been designed primarily for the free flow of traffic and have little regard for the needs and comfort of pedestrians. LRT provides an opportunity to rebalance the role of streets in downtown and shift the focus in favor of both pedestrians and transit.

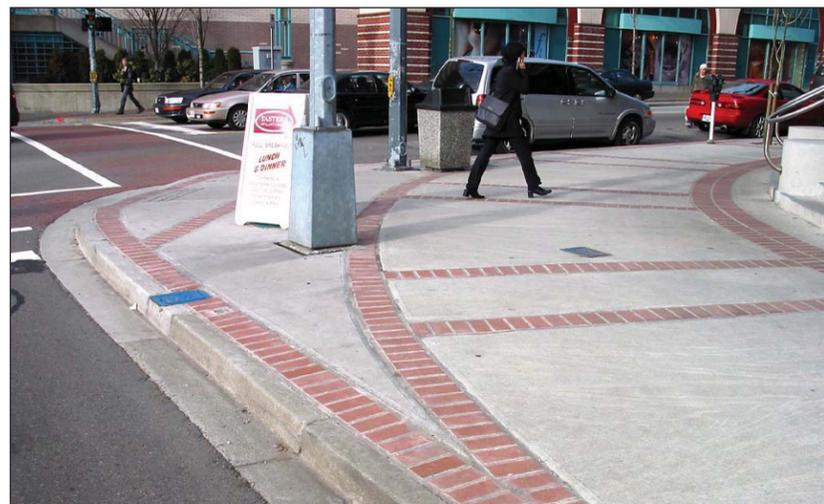
Reduced vehicular lanes resulting from LRT and lower levels of traffic on some streets create an opportunity to reclaim segments of the roadway for pedestrians. This is most obvious along segments of Fourth and Cedar, but may also be possible along several east/west transit routes crossing the Corridor.

Strategies to rebalance the streets:

- reclaim lanes of traffic for pedestrian use where possible;
- widen sidewalks to permit greater street planting and the provision of pedestrian amenities, especially at transit stops;
- narrow lane widths where possible to reflect the slower speeds appropriate for downtown;
- take site-specific measures to balance the needs of both vehicular travel and site servicing;
- maintain a continuous drive-lane on Cedar & Fourth;
- provide drop off areas adjacent to stations;
- create dedicated bicycle lanes, storage racks and lockers where possible; and
- reduce curb radii at intersections.



A street in Portland, Oregon comfortably combines narrow lane widths and streetscaping in order to support not only vehicles but pedestrians and LRT.



Reducing the curb radius helps to shorten crossing distances for pedestrians and reduce traffic speeds.



An example of a balanced street in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Here an LRT train, cars, pedestrians and cyclists all share the road.



A photo of existing Cedar Street illustrates the wide, car-oriented street pedestrians must cross.



This rendering demonstrates the potential for reclaiming the pedestrian realm created by LRT. With the northern half of Cedar reduced to a single lane of traffic, there is no longer the need for five lanes of traffic south of Fifth Street. The expanded public realm that results from the removal of two lanes allows for more pedestrian amenities and additional street planting, and creates a shorter distance for pedestrians to cross the street.