

4.13 Parks and Recreational Resources

There are more than 400 parks and open areas in the City of Seattle, including facilities such as community centers, open spaces, gardens, athletic fields, and off-leash areas for dogs. Parks in the study area (which is defined as one block on either side of the LPA alignment) are classified as triangle parks and/or downtown parks. Triangle parks are often dedicated as parks in the original plat rather than purchased for use. They are small sites typically composed of traffic islands or leftover pieces of land, and serve a transportation function. Downtown parks are typically small public spaces or beauty spots, which are “small islands within the urban environment that present opportunities to enhance the city’s character and identity, and the public’s enjoyment of downtown, but are not large enough for substantial park facilities.” They are typically between 0.1 and 5 acres” (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2009).¹

There are eight parks or recreational areas located within the study area shown on Figure 4.13-1 and described briefly below. Additional information about location, size, and whether these facilities qualify as section 4(f) or Section 6(f) resources (see definitions in inset to right) is included in Table 4.13-1.

Westlake Square is a visually open plaza. The center 469-square-foot area is owned by the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department (Parks) and categorized as a triangle park. The outer portion of the plaza is city-owned right-of-way; together the square is approximately 2,740 square feet. The square was once an underground comfort station in the form of a bus stop shelter, built in 1917. It was demolished and its rooms filled in 1964. Currently, Westlake Square is a concrete pedestrian island used for street crossings. It contains a few street trees, with no other amenities or activities.

McGraw Square and the McGraw Square Plaza are visually one open plaza; however, the site consists of two separate properties (see Figure 4.13-2): McGraw Square, which is a small triangular portion of the site (658 square feet) adjacent to Fifth Avenue and Stewart Street, owned by Parks, includes a historic statue of former Governor John H McGraw; and the

Applicable Regulations

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (23 U.S.C. 138 and 49 U.S.C. 303)

Section 4(f) prohibits the FTA from approving a project or program that uses land from a significant park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or historic site unless the following criteria are met: (1) there is no feasible or prudent alternative to the use of the land, and (2) the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property.

Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Section 6(f) protects outdoor recreation property that was acquired or developed with LWCF grant assistance. Section 6(f) prohibits the conversion of property acquired or developed with these grants to non-recreational purposes without approval of the National Park Service.

¹Neither triangle nor downtown parks contribute to usable open space or serve a primary recreational function. Therefore, they are not protected under Section 4(f).

Figure 4.13-1 Park Resources in the Center City Connector Study Area

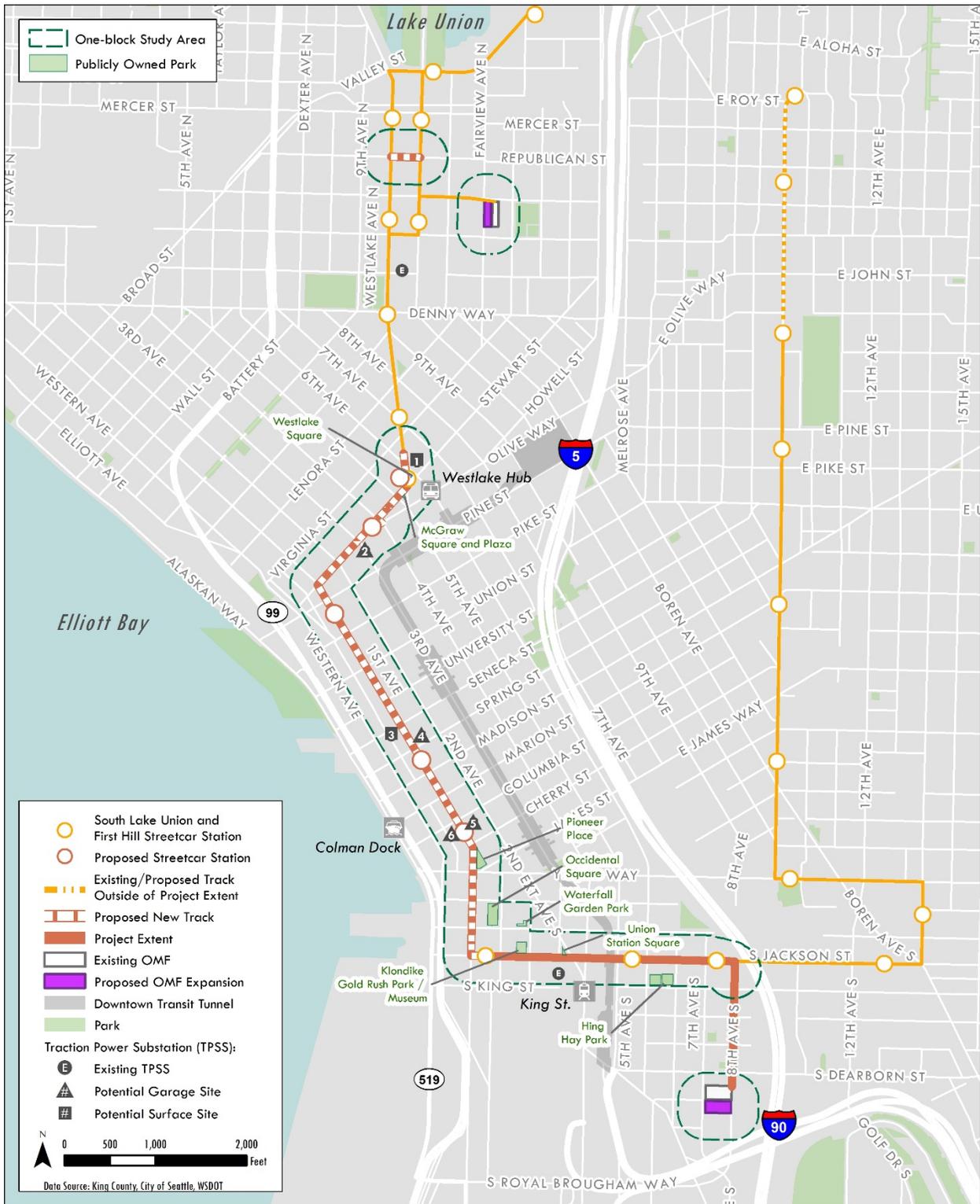


Table 4.13-1 Park and Recreational Resources Within the Study Area

Park Name	Address	Acreage	Hours of Operation	4(f)/6(F) Resource?	Ownership ^b
Westlake Square	1900 Westlake Ave	469 square feet (with public right-of-way, it is 2,740 square feet)	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	No/No	Parks
McGraw Square	1801 Stewart St ^c	658 square feet	NA	No/No The John H. McGraw statue is a Section 4(f) resource. The Plaza is not.	Parks (maintained and managed by SDOT)
Pioneer Place	100 Yesler Way	0.3 acre	NA	Yes (includes National Historic Landmark as well as park resource)/ No	Parks
Occidental Square	S Main St and Occidental Ave S	0.6 acre	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	Yes/No	Parks
Waterfall Garden Park	219 2nd Ave S	0.05 acre	8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.	No/No	Private, but open to public
Union Station Square	3rd St, 2nd Ave, and Jackson St	0.04 acre (1,600-square-foot triangle)	NA	No/No	Parks
Hing Hay Park	423 Maynard Ave S	0.3 acre	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	Yes/No	Parks
Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park	319 Second Avenue South	NA (located in a historic building – former Cadillac Hotel)	September to May: 7 days a week, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. May to June: 7 days a week, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Yes/No	National Park Service

^a The 2009 Seattle Park classification system serves as a basis for policies for programming and uses of City of Seattle parks and open spaces (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2009).

^b Parks = Seattle Parks and Recreation

Westlake Square Plaza, which is vacated city street right-of-way (Westlake Avenue and the terminus for the South Lake Union Streetcar line). The plaza is maintained and operated by SDOT. Westlake Plaza connects with McGraw Square, but it does not qualify as a park resource. McGraw Square was acquired by the City in 1911 “for a public square” and designated as a Seattle City Landmark in 1985.

Pioneer Place is a downtown/ triangle park and registered on the NRHP as a National Historic Landmark. This triangular park contains benches and a historic totem pole and fountain adjacent to a small garden, which includes a historic pergola. The pergola cover originally served as a cover for passengers waiting for the previous streetcars that serviced this area from 1889 to 1941.

Occidental Square is a large open space park that contains benches, historic totem poles, modern sculptures, outdoor seating, a large chess set, and movable café seating areas. It often hosts events with vendor activities.

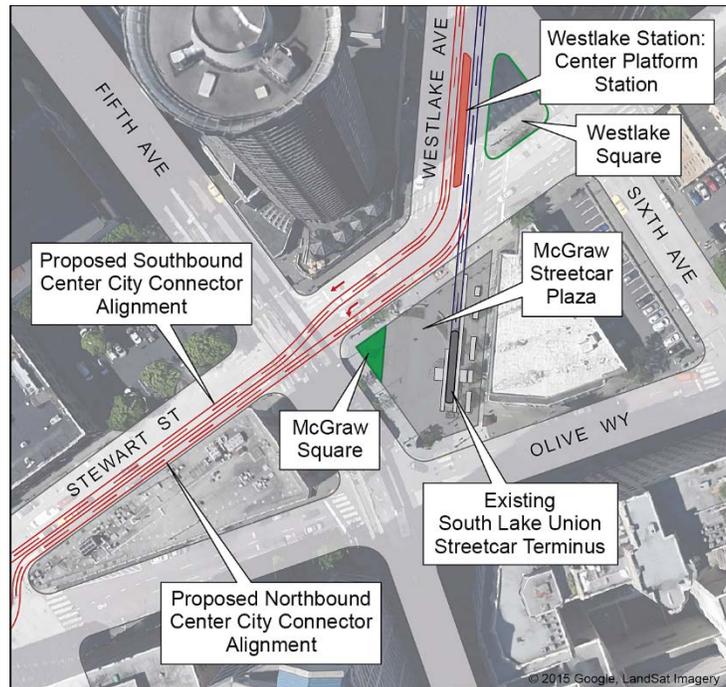
Waterfall Garden Park is a small, enclosed, pocket park developed as a tribute to United Parcel Service’s first headquarters. Although privately owned, it remains open to the public during regular business hours and is locked at night. It contains a large, manmade 22-foot-high waterfall, many tables and chairs, and stepped-down, landscaped planter boxes. The rushing waterfall effectively removes outside street noises.

Union Station Square is a downtown/triangle park. It serves as a traffic island in front of King Street Station. It is primarily open with street trees on its edges and a sculpture of square-stones that can serve as seating. It also contains a bus shelter.

Hing Hay Park is a downtown park containing a red brick square and Asian artwork and pavilion structure. It serves as open space, meditation space, and meeting area in the Chinatown-International District.

The Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park is a series of places with the purpose of preserving the trails, historic structures, artifacts, landscapes, and stories associated with the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-1898. The Seattle Unit of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park preserves the story of the stampede to the Yukon gold fields and Seattle’s crucial role in this event. The Seattle Unit is located in the historic former Cadillac Hotel and provides information about of the historic Klondike Gold Rush in an indoor museum environment.

Figure 4.13-2 Plan View of McGraw Square versus Roadway Right-of-Way with LPA Tracks and Westlake Station



4.13.1 Impacts

4.13.1.1 No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, none of the park resources would be affected.

4.13.1.2 Locally Preferred Alternatives

Operational Impacts

The LPA would travel in the street right-of-way that would pass adjacent to the following park facilities: Westlake Square, McGraw Square, Pioneer Place, Union Station Square and Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park, as shown on Figure 4.13-1. Other parks and recreational facilities in the study area are far enough away from the alignment and OMFs that there would be no impacts during streetcar operations.

The Westlake Station platform and a crossover track as an optional turnback and storage track for the First Hill Streetcars would be adjacent to Westlake Square on Westlake Street between Stewart Street and Sixth Avenue (see Figure 4.13-2 for station locations). Persons in Westlake Square would see the platform and streetcars arriving, departing, and using the turnback tracks, in addition to streetcars continuing along the existing tracks. The station would include a bell that sounds as trains arrive and leave the station. Access to the platform would include a crossing from Westlake Square, which serves as a traffic triangle for pedestrians crossing Westlake Street. There would be more streetcars visible from Westlake Square and more persons using the Square. The additional streetcars and the station bell noise would not affect the function of Westlake Square. One of the six potential TPSS (site No. 1) is proposed to be located on the Westlake Square. While the original square managed by the Seattle Park's Department is only 469 square feet, the total area of the Westlake Square including City right-of-way is approximately 2,740 square feet (0.06 acre). The TPSS would occupy up to 800 square feet (0.02 acre), which is approximately one-third of the Square's area. The TPSS enclosure would be above ground and include architectural enhancements (see Section 3.4.2.3 for description and images of a TPSS). The TPSS may affect some of the park property and a portion of one sidewalk on one side of the triangle, but it would not alter Westlake Square's function as a traffic island for pedestrians.

McGraw Square is adjacent and connected to the McGraw Streetcar Plaza, within which is the current southern terminus station of the South Lake Union Streetcar. The Center City Connector would not remove the tracks nor platform within the Plaza; however, it would relocate the primary Westlake Station for both northbound and southbound passengers to a center platform in Westlake Street as described above—adjacent to Westlake Square. During typical operations, the streetcars would leave the station (southwest bound) and turn onto Stewart Street, passing by McGraw Square and the John H. McGraw Statue. During special events, when more frequent streetcar service may be needed, SDOT may use the existing streetcar station within the McGraw Streetcar Plaza as additional station and streetcar layover. None of these operational activities would change the appearance or function of McGraw Square nor would they encroach onto McGraw Square.

The Pioneer Square station would be located just one intersection north of Pioneer Park. It would not intrude on any portion of park property, but it would provide more access to and from Pioneer Place Park and the adjoining Pioneer Square-Skid Road Historic District. Sidewalk curbs along First Avenue in Pioneer Square would be upgraded to ADA standards to enhance accessibility along the route.

Along S Jackson Street, the LPA would travel on trackway built for the First Hill Streetcar line and pass in front of Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park and Union Station Square. The LPA would add to the total number of streetcars passing in front of these two parks. However, the increase in streetcars would not affect Union Station Square's function as a bus stop and traffic island for pedestrians, and because the functions of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park are indoors, there would be no effect on that park's functions either. The LPA would pass nearly one block away from Occidental Park, Waterfall Garden Park, and Hing Hay Park; therefore, the LPA would not affect the function of these parks, but it may result in more visitors to these parks.

The LPA would not result in property acquisition from these facilities, and none of these parks contains uses that are dependent on quiet atmosphere. Therefore, the noise caused by passing streetcars or bells at the station would not affect the function of the park facilities. As discussed in Section 4.7, Visual and Aesthetic Resources, the LPA would not degrade visual quality. There are no park facilities near the OMFs, the proposed access tracks on Republican Street, or the turnback track at S Jackson Street and Eighth Avenue.

Construction Impacts

Construction activities would potentially include installing a TPSS within a portion of the Westlake Square. This may require closing a portion of the walkway on one-third of the square until construction is complete. The other two sidewalks would be open, which would facilitate access to each intersection crossing during construction.

Construction activities would have minor, short-term impacts on the five parks adjacent to the LPA trackway, station platforms, and staging area for track welding (S Main Street): Westlake Square, McGraw Square, Pioneer Place, Occidental Square, and Waterfall Garden Park (see Figure 4.13-1). The project would not encroach onto any of these parks for staging or construction activities. Temporary noise, vibration, dust, and equipment traffic from construction activities may affect the user experiences, but construction would occur within existing roadway right-of-way and would be limited in duration. Although partial roadway closures (two of the four lanes) along First Avenue would be necessary, access to adjacent uses would remain open. Some construction activities may affect sidewalks, resulting in short-term closures, but access to each park resource would be maintained.

Occidental Square and Waterfall Garden Park are near the staging area proposed for track welding, which would occur within street rights-of-way. The welding may include noise for pounding steel for short periods, but none of the Occidental Square or the Waterfall Garden Park uses would be effected by short periods of noise. The Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park is within one block of the track-welding staging area, but because the park museum's activities are located indoors and the entry is a full block away, construction would not affect Klondike Gold Rush National Park visitors.

Routes for detouring one direction of travel around Pioneer Square (from First Avenue between Jackson Street to Cherry Street) would not affect the use of Pioneer Place or other parks; however, trucking routes to and from the construction areas may result in additional noise, vibration, and dust. In the north end of the study area, construction trucks would likely to use Stewart Street and Westlake Avenue, which pass by Westlake Square and McGraw Square. Both roadways are already heavily traveled, so truck traffic is not likely to change the user experience at these parks. In the south end of the study area, construction trucks would use Yesler Way and First Avenue to access construction areas. Yesler Way passes along the south side of Pioneer Square and park visitors would experience the nuisance of the passing trucks, which may limit the amount of time they spend at this location. However, this would not change the overall use and purpose of the square.

Sections 4.1, Transportation, 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas, 4.3, Noise and Vibration, and 4.7, Visual and Aesthetic Resources of this EA include more detailed discussions of construction-related impacts and mitigation measures to address these temporary impacts. Although the construction BMPs would include dust suppression measures and limit most noise to daytime hours, some users may avoid parks during construction or not stay as long, but after construction is completed, users would be expected to return. Due to the proposed construction plan and phasing (see description in Section 3.4.2.5) most parks would not be affected for longer than 8 months. While rail welding may occur for a longer period, the noise would not affect the use of the nearby parks. No long-term impacts on the parks would result from construction activities. Other parks in the study area are either outside of the construction area or not close enough to be disturbed during construction.

4.13.2 Mitigation Measures

For the impact of locating a TPSS on Westlake Square, SDOT will either select another one of the five other site locations under consideration to avoid this site, or the TPSS enclosure will be designed to provide a point of interest consistent with Seattle's design plans for the Square. The TPSS placement will not inhibit pedestrian circulation on the Square.

Due to the short duration of each stage of construction and the mitigation measures included in relevant EA sections to address short-term, construction-related impacts on park users' experience, no mitigation measures specific to park resources during construction are proposed.