



West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions

Q1 2021 EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT REPORT

January/February/March 2021



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Link Extensions

Activities snapshot



69 comments and questions



56 stakeholder calls and emails



12 community briefings



31 fieldwork activities and 12 property owner meetings



1 email update engaging 10,539 subscribers

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sound Transit conducted outreach with community groups, property owners and other stakeholders on virtual platforms during the reporting period. We are continuing to find creative ways to engage with the communities in which we work that support the recommendations to socially distance to enhance public safety.



Emails and phone calls

During the reporting period, the project team received 69 comments and questions via emails and phone calls.

A few questions and comments

- Support for receiving frequent updates on the realignment process.
- Interest in having in-person site tours with student groups.
- Interest in learning more about the cost differences between Ballard Link Extension alternatives.
- Interest in learning more about joint development opportunities near station areas.
- Questions about potential effects to properties in Ballard.
- Questions about when property owners in West Seattle will be notified of potential property acquisition and what the acquisition process looks like.
- Questions about Sound Transit's property appraisal process.
- Questions about the West Seattle alternatives being studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Questions about the project's visual effects on existing views.
- Questions about the anticipated ridership at the Smith Cove and Ballard stations.
- Requests for Sound Transit to consider aerial transit over the Duwamish Waterway in the Draft EIS.
- Requests for general project updates with community groups and stakeholders across the corridor.



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Audience expansion engagement

During the reporting period, the project team reached out to 56 stakeholders to update them about the project and answer questions. This outreach primarily focused on engaging community-based organizations and social service providers who have not engaged recently or who have not been previously engaged with the project. The project team connected directly with 23 people through phone, email and/or a virtual briefing.

Common questions and comments

- What is the project timeline?
- What are different ways we can engage right now?
- General interest in reconnecting closer to the release of the Draft EIS.
- Excitement for future light rail expansion and having more transit options for employees.
- Some concerns around limited capacity to engage at the moment, suggesting more availability later this year to learn more about the project and participate.

Sound Transit staff engagement

Many community-based organizations and social service providers have limited time and the WSBLE project team is finding creative ways to show support and engage in learning more about the neighborhoods in the project corridor. On Wednesday, March 31, members of the project team attended a virtual tour of the Wing Luke Museum. Wing Luke staff provided a historical tour of the museum, focusing on the experiences of Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese immigrants in the United States.



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Community briefings

During the reporting period, the project team participated in 12 virtual briefings, engaging the following groups or individuals:

- Seattle Subway (1/11)
- Ballard Alliance (1/12)
- South Downtown Stakeholders (1/19)
- West Seattle Transportation Coalition (1/28)
- West Seattle SkyLink (2/1)
- Sierra Summit Schools (2/17)
- International Special Review District (2/23)
- Mercer Corridor Stakeholders (2/24)
- SODO BIA Transportation Committee (2/24)
- Ballard Alliance (3/9)
- Pioneer Square Monthly Information Session (3/19)
- Avalon Neighbors (3/29)

Common questions and comments

Corridor wide

- Interest in building a project that accounts for potential future connections to an expanding system and with minimal disruptions to current Link light rail service.
- Questions about how to provide comments on the Draft EIS.
- Questions about the length of the Draft EIS public comment period.
- Questions about property owner engagement during the Draft EIS public comment period.
- Questions about how the realignment process might affect the project.

Interbay/Ballard

Stations: Ballard, Interbay and Smith Cove

- Interest in having affordable housing options near the future Ballard station.
- Interest in third-party funding, cost estimates and timelines for the Ballard extension.
- Interest in new federal administration infrastructure investment opportunities.
- Concerns about maintaining truck route and delivery access during light rail construction.



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- Concerns about delaying the construction of the Ballard station due to realignment.
- Questions about the height of elevated alternatives in Ballard.
- Questions about the cost differences between the elevated and the tunnel alternatives to Ballard.
- Questions about the tunnelling and underground station construction methods that will be studied in the Draft EIS.
- Questions about if stations and station entrances could be incorporated into new buildings.

Downtown

Stations: *Seattle Center, South Lake Union, Denny, Westlake and Midtown*

- Questions about potential station locations and access points near the Seattle Center.
- Questions about tunnel depths of various Downtown stations.
- Questions about future train capacity of the new downtown transit tunnel.

Chinatown-International District/SODO

Stations: *Chinatown-International District and SODO*

- Interest in finding meaningful ways to engage students in this project.
- Interest in continued community engagement in Pioneer Square.
- Interest in learning about how the light rail could potentially affect local properties and businesses in the Chinatown-International District once the station opens.
- Interest in knowing how the City of Seattle and Sound Transit are coordinating with one another, as it relates to other infrastructure projects in the Chinatown-International District and Pioneer Square.
- Interest in knowing about the key differences between a deep and shallow station.
- Interest in learning more about the 5th Avenue alternatives in the Chinatown-International District.
- Concerns about pedestrian safety during construction in the Chinatown-International District.
- Concerns about the rising costs of acquiring public right-of-way.
- Questions about opportunities to participate in the project moving forward.
- Questions about the options to connect the Chinatown-International District station to the future SODO station.
- Questions about the SODO station alternatives and potential station design.
- Questions about how much of the current funding issues are a result of unexpected price increases in construction versus decreasing revenue from ridership.
- Request to extend the Draft EIS comment period to provide community groups more time to prepare and comment.



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West Seattle

Stations: Delridge, Avalon and Alaska Junction

- Support for continuing to engage the community so people are prepared to comment on the Draft EIS.
- Interest in aerial transit technology in place of light rail.
- Questions about how stations will integrate into the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Questions about guideway heights at future stations.
- Questions about the property acquisition process and when notifications will be distributed.
- Questions about the proximity between homes and the future light rail extension.



Fieldwork activities and Property owner meetings

During the reporting period, the project emailed or called residents and businesses about 31 fieldwork activities. The project team also attended 12 meetings with property owners during the reporting period.

Fieldwork activities

Activities

- Notified 52 stakeholders in Chinatown-International District, Downtown, Interbay, SODO and West Seattle about upcoming geotechnical borings, groundwater testing, civil and historical surveys, vibration monitoring, and environmental site assessments.



Geotechnical drilling rig in South Lake Union.

Property owner meetings

Question and comments

- Support for continued partnership with community groups in SODO.
- Concern about potential construction impacts for the Chinatown-International District station alternatives.
- Concerns about potential traffic effects to and from Harbor Island during construction.
- Concerns about residential homes near potential station locations in West Seattle.
- Concerns about potential construction effects on nearby apartment buildings.
- Questions about if all alternatives are studied equally in the Draft EIS.
- Questions about the potential for future displacement.
- Questions about if station entry locations can change during the environmental review phase of the project.
- Questions about the project timeline for the Ballard Link Extension.
- Questions about how the realignment process could affect the project.
- Questions about what is included for study in the Draft EIS.
- Questions about potential third-party funding sources.
- Questions about property owner notifications in advance of the Draft EIS publication.
- Questions about parking options at the future Interbay and SODO stations.
- Questions about potential locations of the future SODO station.
- Questions about potential guideway and station heights in Interbay.
- Questions about the option to use the BNSF tracks in Interbay for the future light rail.
- Questions about potential tunnel depths in the Downtown corridor.

[soundtransit.org/wsblink](https://www.soundtransit.org/wsblink)



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