REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

MOTION NO. 98-19
BACKGROUND AND COMMENTS

Meeting:	Date:	Agenda Item:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Board Meeting	3/12/98	No. 8	Paul Price Val Batey	689-4760 684-1591

ACTION:
The Board is asked to identify preferred station locations for the Tacoma-to-Seattle Commuter Rail project for purposes of environmental review. The Board is also asked to adopt an environmental mitigation program for the project. Based on the preferred station locations identified and the adopted mitigation program, staff will complete the environmental review for the project and forward the Final NEPA Environmental Assessment to the Federal Transit Administration.

BACKGROUND:
The RTA is completing environmental review for the Seattle-Tacoma Sounder Commuter Rail project. This involves preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of this environmental assessment is to provide environmental information to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to support a decision on grant funding and to other federal agencies to support project permitting. The environmental review also includes an "expanded" environmental checklist in compliance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to support RTA Board actions on the project, as well as local permitting.

The Federal Transit Administration's NEPA regulations provide that a final EA may identify an agency's preferred alternative and document the decision process that led to it. SEPA regulations allow agencies to identify preferred alternatives in environmental documents. To address these regulations, the Board is asked to identify preferred station locations for the project, selecting from the alternatives analyzed in the environmental documents.

The RTA Board has had an opportunity to review the draft EA and environmental checklist and was briefed on February 12 on the impacts of, and choices among, the alternatives. Additional briefing will be provided to the Board on the alternate station locations before the Board is asked to make a decision on the preferred sites. That briefing will include market value, relocation cost and construction cost estimate information for the Kent station alternatives addressed in the environmental document.

Staff has also developed an environmental Mitigation Program and is asking for Board review and approval of that program. Staff also requests authorization to include additional mitigation measures as determined to be appropriate as the environmental review process is completed. This environmental mitigation program is based on measures recommended as part of the environmental review process, and it has been shared with many of the affected local jurisdictions for their review. Once adopted by the Board, these and any other additional mitigation measures will be incorporated into the project. These measures will ensure that the project, as mitigated, will not have any

significant adverse environmental impacts. Once adopted, staff will complete the project SEPA review and will likely issue a mitigated determination of nonsignificance.

The RTA began the environmental review process for this project in 1994 by holding community scoping meetings, preparing a preliminary environmental review document, and circulating the document for review by local jurisdictions. That environmental review was suspended in 1995, as the Regional Transit System Plan was revised after the first vote. The process resumed in September 1997 to reflect developments in project design, local conditions, and other factors. A new round of community meetings were held in October and November 1997 to inform the community of the RTA's revised plans, the schedule for environmental review, the opportunities for public involvement and the implementation schedule.

A preliminary draft EA/Environmental Checklist was distributed to FTA and local jurisdictions for comment in November 1997. In December 1997, a draft EA/Environmental Checklist was then distributed for public review and comment. During that time, public information meetings were held in Puyallup, Kent, and Seattle. In addition, the RTA has coordinated with state and federal resource agencies. The period for public and agency comment on the draft document closed on January 30, 1998, and the RTA is considering the comments and is revising its environmental document to reflect and respond to those comments.

This environmental review is a project-level environmental review and is part of phased environmental review under SEPA. It builds on prior plan-level review prepared by the Joint Regional Policy Committee (1993 Environmental Impact Statement on the Regional Transit System Plan) and the Puget Sound Regional Council (1995 Environmental Impact Statement on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan). The RTA's Major Investment Study completed in March 1997, and approved by the Puget Sound Regional Council, also addresses the project. Additional environmental review has been conducted by local jurisdictions as part of their Comprehensive Plan update process.

The EA/Environmental Checklist provides a brief analysis of alternatives and environmental impacts. It is accompanied by a Technical Report that includes more detailed information. The purpose of the EA is to provide the FTA with the information required to determine whether to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement or to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The EA/Environmental Checklist addresses the development of nine commuter rail stations and the track and signal improvements required to provide peak hour commuter services between Tacoma and Seattle starting in December 1999. Impacts discussed in the document include the effect of development on land use, transportation, air quality, noise, biological resources, historical and archaeological resources, and visual quality, among other elements. The draft environmental assessment indicates that a fast and effective transportation alternative can be provided cost effectively and implemented on schedule, and that environmental impacts identified can be mitigated through project design.

RELEVANT BOARD POLICIES AND PREVIOUS ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Adoption of *Sound Move* (Resolution No. 72).
- Adoption of 1998 Budget (Resolution No. 101).
- Also see Background discussion above.

KEY FEATURES:

- Identifies preferred station locations for purposes of environmental analysis.
- Adopts an environmental mitigation program.
- Directs Staff to finalize environmental documentation and forward to the FTA.

FUTURE BOARD DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIONS:

- Final selection of station locations, following completion of environmental review.

FUNDING:

The proposed action is consistent with the adopted budget.

ALTERNATIVES:

Delay identification of preferred station locations and adoption of environmental mitigation program to a later time.

CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY:

Postponing these decisions would result in extending the schedule for environmental review, which would delay Board actions necessary to implement the project.

Regional Transit Authority
Motion No. 98-19

A motion of the Board of the Regional Transit Authority for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties region identifying preferred station locations, adopting an environmental mitigation program, and directing staff to finalize the environmental review of the Tacoma-to-Seattle Commuter Rail project.

Background:

The RTA is undertaking environmental review of *Sound Move's* Tacoma-to-Seattle Commuter Rail project. A draft NEPA Environmental Assessment ("EA") and SEPA environmental checklist has been prepared that identifies station location alternatives. In progressing with the environmental review, staff has requested direction from the RTA Board to identify preferred station locations and adopt an environmental mitigation program.

Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Regional Transit Authority that staff is authorized to complete the environmental review for the Tacoma-to-Seattle Commuter Rail project with the following direction:

1. For the Tacoma-to-Seattle Commuter Rail project, the RTA identifies the following sites (as more fully described in the draft EA and checklist) as the preferred station locations for purposes of environmental review:

    - Tacoma (interim)
    - Downtown Puyallup
    - Downtown Sumner
    - Downtown Auburn
    - Longacres
    - Boeing Access Road
    - Georgetown
    - Seattle King Street

2. Adopt an environmental mitigation program for the project, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit A, and authorize staff to include additional mitigation measures as determined to be appropriate as the environmental review process is completed.

3. Finalize the project environmental review, based on the preferred station locations identified above and the adopted mitigation program .

Approved by the Board of the Regional Transit Authority for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties region at a regular meeting thereof on the 12th day of March, 1998.

Bob Drewel
Board Chair

ATTEST:

Marcia Walker
Board Administrator

DRAFT

SOUND TRANSIT
TACOMA-to-SEATTLE COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT

ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PLAN

This Environmental Mitigation Program has been developed by the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority -- Sound Transit to mitigate adverse environmental impacts that may occur as a result of the development and operation of the Tacoma-to-Seattle component of Sound Move's commuter rail program. This mitigation program derives from the environmental analysis contained in the NEPA Environmental Assessment ("EA"), SEPA Environmental Checklist ("Checklist") and related documentation developed for the project. The elements of the mitigation program track the order of the elements of the environment set out in the EA.

This mitigation program contains Sound Transit's most current commitments regarding mitigation. To the extent that this material differs from the potential mitigation measures described in provisions of the EA/Checklist, this program supersedes those provisions. It may be further updated prior to the Sound Transit Board's final selection of station locations, and it may be subject to further refinement as part of the permitting process. Unless otherwise noted, the elements of this program apply to all commuter rail stations and track improvements in the Tacoma-to-Seattle segment.

1 LAND USE

1.1 Land Use impacts will be controlled and mitigated by local jurisdictions through their comprehensive planning and development process. [Checklist] [EA, 3.1.2]

2 SOCIOECONOMICS

2.1 Business and residential displacements would occur as a result of the purchase of land by Sound Transit. To mitigate the impacts of displacement, Sound Transit will follow federal and state relocation requirements, as applicable. [EA 3.2.1.2] These include the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policy Acts and similar Washington state laws.

2.2 Sound Transit will develop and follow its own relocation assistance procedures for affected landowners. [EA 3.2.1.2]

2.3 In the event of acquisition of all or part of a parcel of property, appropriate compensation will be paid, consistent with applicable laws and procedures. [EA 3.2.1.2]

3 TRANSPORTATION

3.1 During construction, Sound Transit will provide any necessary detour route signing, flaggers, alternate routes, and other safety actions. For at-grade crossings at major arterials, hours of construction may be limited to non-peak hours to provide full access during peak traffic hours. [EA, 3.3.2.1]

3.2 During operation of stations that accommodate park-and-ride trips, Sound Transit will mitigate traffic impacts at intersections that are projected to be operating at LOS F as a result of the proposed commuter rail project, or otherwise in compliance with local jurisdictions' Traffic Concurrency Standards. [EA, 3.3.2.2] Specifically, Sound Transit will provide the mitigation measures set out in Mitigation Program Table 1 below.

Mitigation Program Table 1

Stations	Mitigation
Longacres	• Reconstruct and channelize Longacres Way • Participate in the extension of 16th St. SW/S. 156th St.
SW43rd St. (Renton)	• Signalize intersection of SW 43rd St. at park-and-ride lot.
Downtown Kent (North or South)	• Signalize James and Smith Streets at Railroad Ave. • Add right turn lane at Willis St. and Washington Ave. • Add westbound right turns lane at Willis St. and northbound SR 167 ramp.
Auburn	• Right turn lane for eastbound Cross St. SE/Auburn Ave.
Sumner	• May include traffic signals, signal phasing, interconnecting signals, and channelization.
Tacoma	• Left turn pocket at Pacific Ave. and 25th St.

4 NOISE AND VIBRATION

4.1 During construction, Sound Transit will impose reasonable and appropriate restrictions on the construction activity, including time-of-day restriction on construction activities near sensitive land uses and enforcement of industry noise standards for construction equipment. [EA 3.4.3.2]

4.2 To minimize vibration during rail operation, Sound Transit will develop and implement a maintenance program, which may include rail grinding, wheel truing, wheel flat detector systems, and vehicle reconditioning programs. In addition, Sound Transit will plan and design crossovers and other special track work to avoid sensitive land uses and will develop vehicle specifications that limit the vertical resonance frequency of the primary suspension. [EA 3.4.3.2]

5 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

5.1 Sound Transit will perform an Environmental Site Assessment (ESA or environmental audit) for all property acquisitions. If a project site is contaminated, Sound Transit will either select an alternative site or undertake remedial actions appropriate for the site, such as removal of contaminated material, on-site treatment, or other remedy. [EA 3.5.3]

5.2 Sound Transit will monitor work sites that are identified as potentially having hazardous materials. Depending on the specific hazardous materials suspected at a given site, Sound Transit will conduct appropriate health and safety monitoring, testing and other protections to ensure a safe working environment for construction workers.

6 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES/ECOLOGY

6.1 In the rail corridor, the new third track segment will be designed to avoid or minimize wetland impacts. In the event that such impacts cannot be avoided, Sound Transit will work closely with the Corps of Engineers through the 404 permit process to comply with regulations, identify appropriate locations for wetland creation and/or enhancement to mitigate wetland losses. [EA, 3.6.3]

6.2 In the event that the SW 43rd Street Station site design unavoidably affects wetlands, Sound Transit will enhance nearby wetlands at a ratio consistent with applicable legal requirements to address wetland area lost by station development. [EA, 3.6.3]

Additional mitgation measures may be added after consultation with WDFW, and Tribal Fisheries.

7 HISTORICAL, PARK, AND RECREATION RESOURCES

7.1 Sound Transit will avoid/mitigate any impacts to historic resources by developing station designs that are compatible with the site of historic structures. For each station site with historic resources, Sound Transit will enter a Memorandum of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office to provide specifically for compatible station design and protection of historic resources. [EA, 3.7.1.2]

8. ARCHEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

8.1 For all station sites, Sound Transit will arrange for a professional archeologist to monitor subsurface excavations expected to penetrate fill to native soils. [EA, 3.8.2]

8.2 As to the SW 43rd Street Station, Sound Transit will perform field reconnaissance, prior to subsurface disturbance, to identify any cultural resources eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. [EA, 3.8.2]

9. VISUAL QUALITY

9.1 Sound Transit will use a community-based design process and establish Technical Advisory Committees for each station to create designs that consider local context and aesthetic preferences. [EA, 3.9.1]

9.2 In developing station sites, Sound Transit will preserve existing vegetation to the maximum extent practicable and consistent with site development. Sound Transit will use landscape screening where appropriate and in accordance with local codes and ordinances. [EA, 3.9.1]

10. SAFETY AND SECURITY

10.1 At selected public grade crossings identified in the EA, Sound Transit will employ mitigation measures including flashers, bells and gates. [EA, 3.10.1.1]

10.2 For pedestrian grade crossings, Sound Transit will provide gate and signal protection, consistent with applicable safety requirements. [EA, 3.10.1.1]

10.3 Sound Transit will participate in public information and education programs to promote awareness of railroad grade crossing risks and regulations. [EA, 3.10.1.1]

10.4 Constant Warning Time (CWT) signalling and Automated Horn System warning devices will be employed at grade crossings as identified in the EA.

11. AIR QUALITY

To be completed.

12. WATER QUALITY/HYDROLOGY

12.1 Sound Transit will comply with applicable laws and regulations for design of stormwater collection, treatment and discharge to avoid or minimize sediment and erosion impacts. Depending on local conditions and requirements, specific steps may include covering stockpiled soils, use of sediment traps and ponds, locating construction on areas with existing impermeable surfaces, minimizing new construction, and revegetating cleared areas as soon as practicable. [EA, 3.12.3]

12.2 Sound Transit will minimize on-site refueling and chemical storage areas. Water drainage will be directed away from any on-site refueling or chemical storage areas. [EA, 3.12.3]

12.3 Sound Transit will minimize construction in floodplains. For site development located in a floodplain, Sound Transit will seek to minimize construction by use existing structures where possible and will design and size culverts and crossings conssitent with applicable requirements. [EA, 3.12.3]

13. EARTH

13.1 Sound Transit will use best management practices, consistent with applicable laws and regulations, to avoid or mitigate any erosion impacts. [EA, 3.13.3]

13.2 Sound Transit will reestablish vegetation in non-paved cleared areas as soon as practicable and will apply appropriate ground cover to minimize erosion.

14. OTHER

14.1 ENERGY - All proposed facilities will be designed to minimize the use of electricity and fuels. [Checklist]