

**SOUND TRANSIT
STAFF REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO. R2004-08

Identification of North Link Light Rail Project Preferred Route

| Meeting: | Date: | Type of Action: | Staff Contact: | Phone: |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Board | 5/20/04 | Discussion/Possible Action | Ahmad Fazel, Link Director Ron Endlich, North Link Program Manager | (206) 398-5389 (206) 398-5141 |

OBJECTIVE OF ACTION

To identify the preferred route, profiles and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project (North Link).

ACTION

Identify the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project.

KEY FEATURES

Identifies the following preferred North Link route, profiles and stations:

- From the Westlake Station in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT), the light rail route crosses under I-5 to a mined tunnel station at First Hill.
- The light rail route proceeds north to a cut-and-cover station and crossover beneath Nagle Place, south of E John Street on Capitol Hill.
- The tunnel route then crosses the Ship Canal via the Modified Montlake Route with cut-and-cover crossover track and station at Husky Stadium and a second cut-and-cover station under Brooklyn Avenue NE south or north of NE 45th Street.
- The tunnel route includes a vent and traction power facility in the vicinity of East Roanoke Street and 22nd Avenue East (Hop-In Market Site) in the Montlake neighborhood to meet operational and system requirements. Staff will work to design the vent facility at the Hop-In Market site with the goal of avoiding displacement of the market or creating a redevelopment site after construction is completed.
- North of the University District through the Roosevelt neighborhood, staff will carry one of the following two alternatives through the preliminary engineering stage:

The light rail line continuing in a tunnel to a cut-and-cover station in the Roosevelt neighborhood near 12th Avenue NE and NE 65th Street

or

The light rail line continuing in a tunnel to a portal near Ravenna Boulevard NE and an elevated station west of 8th Avenue NE and south of NE 65th Street. Staff will perform further work on

portal options and route variations for the 8th Avenue route to optimize the route with the goal of reducing residential displacements.

- North of Roosevelt, the light rail line runs along the east side of Interstate 5, staying west of the parallel city streets to Northgate. The elevated Northgate station will be located east of 1st Avenue NE, near NE 103rd Street. Staff will work with King County Metro, the City of Seattle and other affected property owners to refine Northgate station location, access and design issues and examine associated cost implications.

This resolution would authorize staff to proceed with preliminary engineering on the preferred route and stations described above and complete the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the preferred alternative and other alternatives in the Draft SEIS. Staff would also be authorized to take steps deemed necessary to become eligible for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Full Funding Grant Agreement for North Link.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

If approved, this action would authorize staff to proceed with preliminary engineering on the preferred route and stations. There is sufficient budget to complete preliminary engineering on a single route. Funds would be reallocated within the North Link budget and staff would seek Board approval to possibly amend existing consultant contracts to accomplish this work, if needed.

If the Board chooses to identify more than one route for a portion of the North Link project, then staff will assess the budget implications of that action and seek additional budget authority from the Board, if necessary, to complete this effort before proceeding.

REVENUE, SUBAREA, AND FINANCIAL PLAN IMPACTS

The proposed action is consistent with the current Board-adopted budget and is affordable within Sound Transit's current long-term financial plan and the subarea financial capacity

HISTORY OF PROJECT

On November 18, 1999, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R99-34, selecting the location of the route, station locations, and vehicle maintenance base for the Central Link Light Rail Project. On July 27, 2000, the Board adopted Resolution No. R2000-11, narrowing routes for further study from the University District to Northgate.

After re-examining the Central Link light rail project because of cost, schedule, and engineering issues, on September 27, 2001, the Sound Transit Board identified the preferred initial 14-mile light rail segment to be constructed and operated from Convention Place in downtown Seattle to South 154th Street. On November 29, 2001, the Board adopted Resolution R2001-16, selecting that Initial Segment of the Central Link Light Rail Project to be constructed and operated by 2009.

Also on September 27, 2001, the Board adopted Motion No. M2001-104, directing the Executive Director to evaluate Central Link Light Rail routes and station alternatives between Convention Place and Northgate (North Link), through commencement of a work plan including a SEIS, engineering and design work. A scoping process to evaluate the range of proposed actions,

alternatives and impacts to be discussed in the Draft SEIS took place with a comment period for North Link alternatives that ended November 9, 2001.

On January 24, 2002, staff presented a variety of possible North Link route alternatives to the Board in three categories: routes recommended for study in the Draft SEIS and conceptual engineering, routes to be held for additional review before a final Board decision and routes not recommended for further study. Staff also provided the Board with information on cost factors, environmental impacts, and transportation service of the various route alternatives. Because several of the routes were still undergoing technical review necessary to determine their feasibility, the Board gave verbal direction to proceed on staff's recommendations. On February 14, 2002, the Board adopted Motion No. M2002-13, identifying certain routes for inclusion in the North Link Draft SEIS and associated conceptual engineering, and excluding less promising routes.

On May 23, 2002, the Sound Transit Board adopted Motion No. M2002-69, authorizing staff to modify the set of route alternatives previously identified to be included for study in the North Link Draft SEIS by: discontinuing further study of the Capitol Hill via Convention Place Station (CPS) route; modifying a route under study in the University District to provide an additional route connection to the station site at Brooklyn Avenue NE and NE 45th Street via the Montlake route; and discontinuing further study of another station site at 15th Avenue NE primarily north of NE 45th Street.

The Sound Transit Board adopted Motion No. M2003-33 on March 13, 2003, directing staff to complete additional work on North Link route alternatives in order to provide the Board with more comprehensive information for its North Link route decision-making process.

Sound Transit issued the Draft SEIS on November 21, 2003, which was followed by a 70-day public comment period and two public hearings. Following a request from the University of Washington to consider a route modification to the Montlake Route, the Sound Transit Board directed staff on December 11, 2003 by Motion No. M2003-128, to study a modified Montlake route, including engineering, environmental analysis and community outreach activities. Sound Transit issued an Addendum to the Draft SEIS in February 2004, analyzing the Modified Montlake Route through the University of Washington Campus, which was followed by a 30-day comment period and a public meeting. Sound Transit received over 300 letters and oral comments on the Draft SEIS and Addendum.

In early 2004 the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) asked the Sound Transit Board to consider jointly participating in a regional transportation funding ballot issue. Funding for the North Link project is being considered for possible inclusion in joint ballot issue, if it goes forward. The Board will make a separate decision about joint RTID ballot participation; action on this resolution is independent of that decision.

On April 22, 2004, the Sound Transit Board reached verbal consensus on a preliminary preferred route and stations for most of the North Link corridor. This action would formalize the identification of the preferred route, and allow Sound Transit to report the "Locally Preferred Alternative" to FTA, prior to the commencement of preliminary engineering. The Sound Transit Board will have the opportunity to make a final decision on the North Link route and stations to be built after the publication of the Final SEIS in early 2005.

CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY

Delaying the identification of the preferred North Link route and stations will delay the completion of preliminary engineering and Final SEIS.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Sound Transit staff has held a number of station design workshops, project open houses, and other meetings involving property owners, neighborhood and business groups, and other interested parties throughout the North Link study area as part of the environmental and conceptual engineering work completed to date. A 70-day comment period and two open houses/hearings were held on the Draft SEIS. An additional 30-day comment period and open house was held on the Modified Montlake environmental addendum.

Since the April 22, 2004 Board meeting, staff participated in a Brooklyn station walking tour and meeting on May 12, 2004, a Capitol Hill community forum on May 13, 2004, attended other meetings, contacted interested parties, and responded to numerous public inquiries about North Link issues.

Sound Transit would continue an active community outreach program as part of the North Link preliminary engineering and Final SEIS work efforts.

DESCRIPTION OF POLICY

Identification of a preferred North Link route will enable Sound Transit to proceed with preliminary engineering. Identification of a route is required for the federal process and to efficiently program the engineering budget for the next phase of the North Link.

IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY

Identification of a preferred North Link Light Rail route will allow Sound Transit to complete the preliminary engineering and environmental work that will be necessary to build this portion of Central Link light rail.

ALTERNATIVES

Identify a different preferred North Link route or stations.

LEGAL REVIEW

DB 5/13/04

SOUND TRANSIT

RESOLUTION NO. R2004-08

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority identifying the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project.

WHEREAS, a Regional Transit Authority, hereinafter referred to as Sound Transit, has been created for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish County region by action of their respective county councils pursuant to RCW 81.112.030; and

WHEREAS, on November 5, 1996, at a general election held within the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority district, the voters approved local funding for Sound Move, the ten-year plan for high capacity transit in the Central Puget Sound Region, which includes an electric light rail line connecting SeaTac, Tukwila, and Seattle; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is implementing the Sound Move transit plan; and

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound region is currently burdened with heavy congestion, especially in the Interstate-5 corridor, and needs a congestion-free, high-capacity transit alternative; and

WHEREAS, the additional congestion caused by an expected 30% increase in the region's population over the next 20 years will further hamper the movement of people and goods and will adversely affect the region's quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the light rail segment between Convention Place and Northgate (North Link) will provide congestion-free, high-capacity transit access to some of the state's largest employment and population areas and will triple Central Link's system-wide daily ridership to more than 150,000 in 2030; and

WHEREAS, on November 5, 1999, Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Central Link Light Rail Transit Project to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA); and

WHEREAS, on November 18, 1999, the Sound Transit Board (Board) approved Resolution No. R99-34, which selected the light rail alignment from the University District in Seattle to South 200th Street in the City of SeaTac; and

WHEREAS, on July 27, 2000, the Board adopted Resolution No. R2000-11, which further refined the alternatives to be studied for the University District to Northgate light rail segment; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit subsequently decided to re-examine the project for cost, schedule, and engineering reasons; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit has implemented strong project management controls and developed strong financial and technical capacity needed for the construction of North Link; and

WHEREAS, on November 29, 2001, the Board approved Resolution No. R2001-16, selecting the 14-mile segment from Convention Place Station in downtown Seattle to South 154th Street in Tukwila, with connections to Sea-Tac Airport as the first segment of the Central Link Light Rail Project to be constructed; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is committed to completing the light rail segments from downtown Seattle to the University District and to Northgate; and

WHEREAS, on September 27, 2001, the Board adopted Motion No. M2001-104, which authorized a work plan, including the engineering and environmental analysis required to evaluate light rail routes and station alternatives for North Link; and

WHEREAS, the scoping process to evaluate the range of proposed actions, alternatives, and impacts to be discussed in the draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the North Link alternatives was completed in November 2001; and

WHEREAS, on February 14, 2002, the Board approved Motion No. M2002-13, which identified routes for inclusion in the North Link draft SEIS; and

WHEREAS, on May 23, 2002, the Board approved Motion No. M2002-69, which modified the route alternatives previously identified for study in the North Link draft SEIS; and

WHEREAS, on January 23, 2003, the Board approved Motion No. M2002-121, which adopted a scope control policy providing guidance on potential project enhancements and reasonable mitigation measures; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2003, the Board approved Motion No. M2003-33, which authorized additional work to further develop the North Link route alternatives in order to better inform its decision-making; and

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2003, Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration issued a draft SEIS to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and SEPA. The draft SEIS included a detailed evaluation of the costs and impacts of the North Link route alternatives. To ensure adequate public input, the draft SEIS process included a 70-day public comment period and two public hearings; and,

WHEREAS, in response to a request from the University of Washington, the Board approved Motion No. M2003-128 on December 11, 2003, which authorized study of a modified Montlake route; and

WHEREAS, in February 2004, Sound Transit issued an addendum to the draft SEIS. The addendum analyzed the impacts of a modified Montlake route through the University of Washington campus. The addendum process included a 30-day public comment period and a public meeting to discuss its contents. Over 300 letters and oral comments were received on the draft SEIS and addendum; and

WHEREAS, NEPA and SEPA require Sound Transit to identify its preferred alternative, if it has one, in the final SEIS; and

WHEREAS, identification of the preferred alternative will also enable Sound Transit to report a “Locally Preferred Alternative” to the FTA, pursuant to the requirements of 23 CFR 771.123; and

WHEREAS, the preferred alternative is a statement of the Board’s intent regarding the North Link project; it is not a final decision. The Board will make a final decision on the North Link project, including the route and the station locations after publication of the final SEIS; and

WHEREAS, the Board’s identification of the North Link preferred route and station locations is based on a review of the North Link draft SEIS, the addendum addressing a modified Montlake route, public comments from interested citizens, and other information submitted to Sound Transit; and

WHEREAS, in identifying this route and these station locations, the Board intends that Link light rail serve the highest-density existing residential and commercial areas in the City of Seattle and the region as provided in the Sound Move transit plan. This approach will yield the highest ridership for the light-rail system and will also provide a competitive alternative to the automobile for people traveling to and from these dense areas. In particular, the selected route will provide an important light rail connection for residents of south Seattle and south King County to jobs and education opportunities on First Hill, Capitol Hill, the University District, and Northgate. The light rail line will benefit people throughout the region by providing fast, reliable, all-day access to major employment centers. In addition, the preferred alternative described herein is intended to serve areas where light rail can help spur economic revitalization and development of neighborhoods and help to realize the vision of the regional growth management plan to connect the region’s urban centers with high-capacity transit.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority as follows:

Section 1: The preferred alternative for the North Link segment of the Central Link Light Rail Project shall consist of the following described alignment, station locations, and operational and service parameters:

A. From the Westlake Station in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT), the light rail route would cross under Interstate-5 to a mined tunnel station at First Hill. The First Hill station would serve the dense residential and employment areas in the vicinity, including major institutions such as Virginia Mason Hospital, Swedish Hospital, and Seattle University.

B. The light rail route would then proceed north to a cut-and-cover station and crossover track beneath Nagle Place south of East John Street on Capitol Hill. The Capitol Hill station would serve the dense residential neighborhoods as well as the commercial activities along Broadway and major institutions such as Seattle Central Community College and Group Health Cooperative. Impacts to adjacent businesses, residents, and Cal Anderson Park shall be addressed consistent with Section 4 of this resolution. The cost and feasibility of including an additional station entrance on the west side of Broadway at the Seattle Central Community College campus shall be analyzed. The cost and feasibility of including structured parking adjacent to the Bonney Watson Funeral Home shall be analyzed consistent with the Sound Transit Scope Control Policy and federal and state laws.

C. The tunnel route would then cross the ship canal via the modified Montlake route with a cut-and-cover crossover track and station at Husky Stadium and a second cut-and-cover station under Brooklyn Avenue NE south of NE 45th Street. Providing two stations in the University District is important to serve the residents, employers, and retail businesses in the surrounding areas, as well as the University of Washington. Rail ridership forecasts show high daily boardings for both a north and a south station in the University District. Preliminary engineering of the Stadium station shall include grade-separated pedestrian crossings of

Montlake Boulevard NE, NE Pacific Place, and NE Pacific Street to the University of Washington's main campus and medical center complex. Preliminary engineering of the Brooklyn Station shall include additional study of the site environmental conditions.

D. The tunnel route would include a vent and traction power facility in the vicinity of East Roanoke Street and 22nd Avenue East (Hop-In Market site) in the Montlake neighborhood to meet operational and system requirements. Sound Transit staff shall work with nearby residents, impacted businesses, the City of Seattle, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to design an efficient and attractive facility and minimize negative impacts. Sound Transit staff shall also work to design the vent and traction power facility at the Hop-In Market site with the goal of avoiding the displacement of the market or creating a redevelopment site after construction is completed.

E. North of the University District through the Roosevelt neighborhood, the light rail route should either continue in a tunnel to a cut-and-cover station near 12th Avenue NE and NE 65th Street and remain in a tunnel until reaching a portal location inside Washington State Department of Transportation right-of-way immediately north of the Lake City Way interchange with Interstate-5; or continue in a tunnel to a portal south of Ravenna Boulevard NE and an elevated station west of 8th Avenue NE and south of NE 65th Street that would be adjacent to the existing park-and-ride lot. Sound Transit staff shall carry both alignments through preliminary engineering to optimize routes, identify and reduce displacement impacts, and develop 30% design cost estimates.

F. North of Roosevelt, the light rail line would continue along the east side of Interstate-5 staying west of the parallel city streets to Northgate. The elevated Northgate station would be located east of 1st Avenue NE, near NE 103rd Street. This station would provide access to bus transfers at the Northgate Transit Center and to adjacent park-and ride facilities. The Northgate station shall be integrated with the surrounding development where feasible, to foster effective transit-oriented development, in accordance with Section 3. Sound Transit staff shall work with King County, the City of Seattle, WSDOT, and other affected property owners to refine Northgate

station location, access, and design issues and examine associated cost implications. Sound Transit staff shall report to the Sound Transit Board on these issues within four months.

Section 2: Although the 1996 voter-approved Sound Move transit plan provided that the northern terminus of North Link be NE 45th Street in the University District unless additional funding became available, the Board again emphasizes the importance of extending light rail to Northgate as soon as possible. Northgate is an important urban center in the region that must be served by excellent transit. Building light rail beyond the University District to Roosevelt and Northgate would increase light rail boardings in 2030 by over 20,000 per day. Both stations are important and efficient collector points for bus riders from north Seattle and north King County that would reduce bus volumes in downtown Seattle.

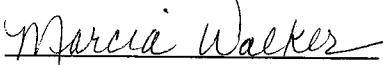
Section 3: North Link light rail stations shall be developed to foster effective transit-oriented development, where practical. Consistent with Board policy, light rail station access considerations should include pedestrians, bus transit, passenger drop-off or pick-up, and bicycles to link the light rail line with surrounding neighborhoods. This shall include providing space near stations, where practical, for bus passenger facilities that facilitate easy transfers and bicycle storage.

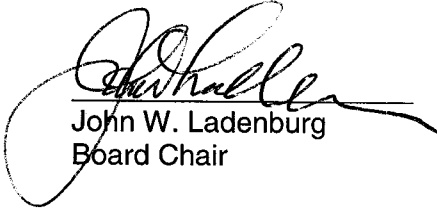
Section 4: Sound Transit will identify appropriate measures to mitigate significant impacts of construction or operation of the light rail system in the North Link final SEIS consistent with Board policy and will involve local jurisdictions, businesses, community groups, affected institutions, and citizens in its implementation. In addition, Sound Transit staff shall provide opportunities for affected neighborhoods to have input on the design of the North Link light rail stations and other project elements to ensure cost-effective, community-sensitive design solutions. Sound Transit staff shall work with King County Metro to develop plans for bus feeder service to light rail stations to knit the light rail line into the surrounding neighborhoods and encourage light-rail ridership.

Section 5: Staff is authorized to complete the final SEIS for the preferred alternative and other alternatives in the draft SEIS. Staff is also authorized to perform the work deemed necessary to become eligible for FTA funding for North Link, including proceeding with preliminary engineering on the preferred route and stations. Staff will brief the Board regularly on North Link progress and will seek Board review on appropriate North Link issues.

ADOPTED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on May 20, 2004.

ATTEST:


Marcia Walker
Board Administrator


John W. Ladenburg
Board Chair