

**SOUND TRANSIT  
STAFF REPORT**

**RESOLUTION NO. R2005-20**

**Modify North Link Preferred Route and Identify “University Link” Segment  
for purposes of obtaining a New Starts Rating**

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Type of Action:</b>	<b>Staff Contact:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>
Board	7/28/05	Discussion/Possible Action	Joni Earl, Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Fazel, Link Director	(206) 398-5450 (206) 398-5389

**PROPOSED ACTION**

- Modify the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project.
- Identify “University Link” as the preferred segment of North Link for purposes of the final SEIS and for obtaining a New Starts rating from the Federal Transit Administration participation.

**KEY FEATURES of PROPOSED ACTION**

- Modifies the preferred route, profiles and station locations for the North Link portion of the Central Link Light Rail Project as follows:
  - From the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT), the light rail route would cross under Interstate-5 and proceed east and then north to a cut-and-cover station beneath Nagle Place south of East John Street on Capitol Hill.
  - 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.
  - The tunnel route would include a vent 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.
  - North from the University of Washington Station, the tunnel route would continue to a cut-and-cover station under Brooklyn Avenue NE south of NE 45th Street in the University District.
  - North of the University District through the Roosevelt neighborhood, the light rail route would continue north in a tunnel to a cut-and-cover station just west of 12th Avenue NE between NE 65th Street and NE 68th Street. From the Roosevelt station, the tunnel route would continue north and then northwest to a portal location inside Washington State Department of Transportation right-of-way immediately north of the Lake City Way interchange with Interstate-5.
  - 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, spanning NE 103rd Street. This station would provide

access to bus transfers at the Northgate Transit Center and to adjacent park-and ride facilities.

- Identifies “University Link” as the preferred segment of North Link for purposes of the final SEIS and for obtaining a New Starts rating from FTA, from the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel to University of Washington Station, consistent with the preferred route described above.
- Staff will brief the Board regularly on North Link progress and will seek Board review on appropriate North Link issues.
- Technical work required to develop a proposed regional transportation system plan to present to voters should continue on a schedule to permit any voter-approved plan to be implemented in conjunction with University Link.

### **BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY**

Not applicable to this action.

### **BUDGET and FINANCIAL PLAN DISCUSSION**

In order to preserve eligibility for federal funding for North Link, Sound Transit must identify a preferred segment of North Link proposed for a New Starts rating. A preferred alternative must also be identified in the final SEIS, consistent with NEPA. The identification of a segment of North Link for a New Starts rating is a statement of the Board’s intent regarding the North Link project federal grant strategy; it is not a final decision about the project phasing or financing. The Board will make a final decision on the North Link project, including project phasing and financing after publication of the Final SEIS.

### **BUDGET TABLE**

Not applicable to this action.

### **M/W/DBE – SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION**

Not applicable to this action.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND for PROPOSED ACTION**

On November 18, 1999, the Sound Transit Board (Board) approved Resolution No. R99-34, which selected the Central Link light rail alignment from the University District in Seattle to South 200th Street in the City of SeaTac to be built.

After re-examining 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 No. 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, which authorized a work plan including the engineering and environmental analysis required to evaluate light rail

routes and station alternatives for North Link. 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.

On February 14, 2002, the Board approved Motion No. M2002-13, which identified routes for inclusion in the North Link draft SEIS. On May 23, 2002, the Board approved Motion No. M2002-69, which modified those route alternatives previously identified for inclusion in the North Link draft SEIS.

The Board approved Motion No. M2003-33 in March 2003, which directed staff to complete additional work to further develop the North Link route alternatives in order to better inform its decision-making.

Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration issued a draft SEIS to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and SEPA on November 21, 2003. The draft SEIS stated that a purpose of the North Link project was to reduce costs and construction risks. The draft SEIS included a detailed evaluation of the costs and impacts of the North Link route alternatives. The draft SEIS process included a 70-day public comment period and two public hearings.

Following consultation with the University of Washington, the Board approved Motion No. M2003-128 on December 11, 2003, authorizing study of a modified Montlake route. In February 2004, Sound Transit issued an addendum to the draft SEIS, which 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.

On May 20, 2004, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R2004-08 identifying the preferred route and stations for North Link and directing staff to complete the final SEIS and other work on the preferred alternative and other alternatives in the draft SEIS. On January 27, 2005, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R2005-06 identifying the preferred Roosevelt route and station location.

NEPA requires Sound Transit to identify its preferred alternative in the Final SEIS. Identification of the preferred alternative will also enable Sound Transit to report a "Locally Preferred Alternative" to the FTA. To preserve eligibility for federal funding for North Link, Sound Transit must identify a preferred segment of North Link proposed for a New Starts rating.

The identification of a preferred segment of North Link for a federal New Starts rating is a statement of the Board's intent regarding the North Link project federal grant strategy; it is not a final decision about the project phasing or financing. The Board will make a final decision on the North Link project, including route, station locations, project phasing or financing after publication of the Final SEIS.

Based on new information and changed and unforeseen circumstances regarding the engineering, construction, and budget risks associated with construction of the First Hill station, including the North Link risk assessment, the North Link Risk Assessment Technical Report (July 2005), the tunnel construction expert recommendation (July 2005), the lack of funding to address such risks, and the briefing at the July 14, 2005 Board meeting, staff believe it is impractical to construct the First Hill Station because there is a substantial risk that the time and cost involved in attempting to solve the complex engineering and construction problems posed

by construction of the First Hill Station could significantly delay completion of University Link and require funding needed to construct the remainder of the segment.

Thus, this action represents Sound Transit's staff recommendation to modify the preferred North Link alignment and identify "University Link" as the preferred segment of North Link proposed for the final SEIS and for a New Starts rating, from the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel to University of Washington Station, consistent with the preferred route described in the Key Features section of this staff report.

**Prior Board or Committee Actions and Relevant Board Policies**

Motion or Resolution Number	Summary of Action	Date of Action
R2005-06	Identified the preferred Roosevelt route and station location for the North Link Light Rail Project.	1/27/05
R2004-08	Identified the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project.	5/20/04
M2003-128	Authorized staff to conduct additional study of a modified Montlake route for future Board consideration as part of the North Link Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement process, including additional engineering and cost estimating work, environmental analysis, continued coordination with the University of Washington, and additional community outreach efforts.	12/11/03
M2003-33	Directed 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.	3/13/03
M2002-69	Authorized staff to modify the set of route alternatives previously identified to be included for study in the North Link Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.	5/23/02
M2002-13	Identified the route alternatives for inclusion and study in the North Link Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Draft SEIS) and deleting less promising route alternatives from further study.	2/14/02
R2001-16	Selected the initial segment of the Central Link Light Rail Project to be constructed and operated by 2009.	11/29/01
M2001-104	Directed the Executive Director to evaluate Central Link Light Rail routes and station alternatives between Convention Place and Northgate (North Link).	9/27/01
M2001-103	Identified the preferred initial segment to be constructed and operated for Central Link Light Rail.	9/27/01
R99-34	Selecting the alignment alternatives and profiles, station locations, and vehicle maintenance base site alternative to be built for the Central Link Light Rail line.	11/18/99

**CONSEQUENCES of DELAY**

Delay in Board action to identify a preferred segment of North Link for the final SEIS and for a New Starts rating would result in a delay in the final SEIS and in the preliminary engineering, final design and FFGA award steps of the New Starts process. If Sound Transit does not submit a New Starts Report by August 15, 2005 then a one year delay would be incurred before Sound Transit could resubmit a report as part of the annual FTA evaluation and rating cycle used nationally for potential projects seeking FTA New Starts funding.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Throughout preliminary engineering, community outreach to the First Hill neighborhood has taken place through various efforts including a station design open house at Town Hall, mailing of project updates and involvement opportunities to ensure a widespread distribution of information, email notification to those subscribed to the North Link interested party list, briefing community organizations/groups on the project status, and holding one-on-one briefings with institutions, stakeholders and community members on First Hill. One-on-one and community briefings were held as recently as June and July of 2005.

Sound Transit staff has also contacted First Hill and other community stakeholders to explain the risk assessment and the Board discussion prior to and after the July 14 Board meeting, and informed them of the upcoming Board meeting discussions on July 28. Staff is also responding to individual emails, comments and questions that have been coming in through the website or customer service phone line. Staff is doing an informal briefing with the First Hill Improvement Association on Wednesday, July 27, to go through the Board materials.

### **LEGAL REVIEW**

PW 7/26/2005

## **SOUND TRANSIT**

### **RESOLUTION NO. R2005-20**

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority modifying the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project and identifying University Link as the preferred segment of North Link for purposes of the final supplemental EIS and for obtaining a New Starts rating from the Federal Transit Administration.

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 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 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 Central Link light rail alignment from the University District in Seattle to South 200th Street in the City of SeaTac to be built; 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, because of the changed and unforeseen circumstances set forth in Resolution No. R2001-16 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 initial segment of the Central Link Light Rail Project to be constructed; and

WHEREAS, because Sound Transit is committed to completing the light rail segments from downtown Seattle to the University District and to Northgate, on September 27, 2001 the Board approved 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 Central Link light rail between Convention Place and Northgate (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 March 13, 2003, the Board approved Motion No. M2003-33, which directed staff to complete 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 stated that a purpose of the North Link project was to reduce costs and construction risk. The draft SEIS

included a detailed evaluation of the costs and impacts of the North Link route alternatives. The draft SEIS process included a 70-day public comment period and two public hearings; and,

WHEREAS, following consultation with 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, on May 20, 2004, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R2004-08 identifying the preferred route and stations for the North Link Light Rail Project and authorizing staff to complete the final SEIS and other work on the preferred alternative and other alternatives in the draft SEIS; and

WHEREAS, on January 27, 2005, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R2005-06 identifying the preferred Roosevelt route and station location for the North Link Light Rail Project; and

WHEREAS, based on new information and changed and unforeseen circumstances regarding the engineering, construction, and budget risks associated with construction of the First Hill Station, including the North Link risk assessment, the North Link Risk Assessment Technical Report (July 2005), the tunnel construction expert recommendation (July 2005), the lack of funding to address such risks, and the briefing at the July 14, 2005 Board meeting, it appears impractical to construct the First Hill Station because there is a substantial risk that the time and cost involved in attempting to solve the complex engineering and construction problems posed by construction of the First Hill Station could significantly delay completion of University Link and require funding needed to construct the remainder of the segment. Because it is in the best interest of Sound



Transit to allocate its limited resources in a manner that best achieves the goals of Sound Move, and in this case, the completion of University Link within the available budget and within a reasonable time, it appears impractical to accomplish construction of First Hill Station; and

WHEREAS, NEPA requires Sound Transit to identify its preferred alternative 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, in order to preserve eligibility for federal funding for North Link, Sound Transit must identify a preferred segment of North Link for purposes of obtaining a New Starts rating from FTA; and

WHEREAS, the identification of a preferred segment of North Link for purposes of obtaining a New Starts rating is not a final decision about the project phasing or financing. The Board will make a final decision on the North Link project, including each of these items (route, station locations, project phasing and financing) 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, to prepare for a ballot measure to seek voter-approval to expand the region's high-capacity transportation investment, Sound Transit issued a final supplemental environmental impact statement to identify and assess the impacts of proposed amendments to the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan; and

WHEREAS, on July 7, 2005, the Sound Transit Board approved Resolution No. R2005-14, adopting the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan to guide development of a mix of light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, regional express bus, and other supportive high-capacity

transportation facilities and services to be considered for inclusion in the next regional transportation system plan, which will be presented to voters as a proposal to expand and complement the region's transportation facilities and services.

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 Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT), the light rail route would cross under Interstate-5 and proceed east and then north to a cut-and-cover station beneath Nagle Place south of East John Street on Capitol Hill, serving the First Hill/Capitol Hill Urban Center.

B. 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, serving the University of Washington campus and the surrounding neighborhoods.

C. The tunnel route would include a vent 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.

D. North from the University of Washington Station, the tunnel route would continue to a cut-and-cover station under Brooklyn Avenue NE south of NE 45th Street in the University District, serving the business district, surrounding residential neighborhood and north University of Washington campus.

E. North of the University District through the Roosevelt neighborhood, the light rail route would continue north in a tunnel to a cut-and-cover station just west of 12th Avenue NE between NE 65th Street and NE 68th Street. From the Roosevelt station, the tunnel route would continue

north and then northwest to a portal location inside Washington State Department of Transportation right-of-way immediately north of the Lake City Way interchange with Interstate-5.

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, spanning NE 103rd Street. This station would provide access to bus transfers at the Northgate Transit Center and to adjacent park-and ride facilities.

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 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.

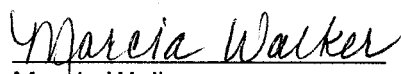
Section 5: The work required to perform necessary analysis and engineering to complete the final SEIS for the preferred alternative and other alternatives in the draft SEIS, including preliminary engineering on the preferred route and stations, is authorized.

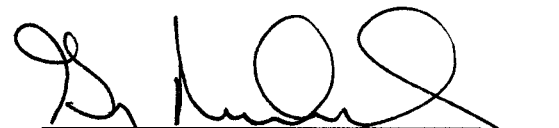
Section 6: The Board identifies "University Link" as the preferred segment of North Link for purposes of the final SEIS and for obtaining a New Starts rating from FTA. The University Link segment is defined as from the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel to University of Washington Station, consistent with the preferred route described in Section 1 A, B, and C above. Staff will brief the Board regularly on North Link progress, will seek Board review on appropriate North Link issues, and will return to the Board after the completion of the final SEIS to request a final decision on the North Link project to be built and funded.

Section 7: To the extent possible, the technical work required to develop a proposed regional transportation system plan to present to voters should continue on a schedule that enables any voter-approved plan to be implemented in conjunction with University Link.

ADOPTED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on July 28, 2005.

ATTEST:

  
Marcia Walker  
Board Administrator

  
Greg Nickels  
Board Vice Chair