

**SOUND TRANSIT
STAFF REPORT**

MOTION NO. M2009-41

East Link Project - Preferred Alternative for the Final EIS

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Board Meeting	5/14/09	Discussion/Possible Action	Ahmad Fazel, Link Light Rail Executive Director Ron Lewis, Link Light Rail Deputy Executive Director Don Billen, East Link Program Manager	(206) 398-5389 (206) 689-4905 (206) 398-5052

Contract/Agreement Type:	✓	Requested Action:	✓
Competitive Procurement		Execute New Contract/Agreement	
Sole Source		Amend Existing Contract/Agreement	
Agreement with Other Jurisdiction(s)		Budget Amendment	
Real Estate		Property Acquisition	

PROJECT NAME

East Link Light Rail Project

PROPOSED ACTION

Identify the preferred light rail routes and stations for the final East Link Light Rail Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

KEY FEATURES of PROPOSED ACTION

- This motion identifies a preferred alternative for and authorizes staff to complete the final East Link EIS, including the preferred alternative and the other alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS. The motion directs -- subject to further environmental review -- some modifications to the Draft EIS alternatives or evaluation of new design options based on cities and public comments.
- The Final EIS will respond to public comments, including suggestions for design modifications or new alternatives. The Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after completion of the Final EIS, which is anticipated to be published in 2010.

The route, profile, station location, and maintenance facility alternatives for consideration by the Board to identify as the preferred alternative are as follows:

Segment A

There is one route alternative between downtown Seattle and Bellevue. The route begins in the existing Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel and connects to the Central Link light rail system at the Chinatown/International District Station. It enters I-90 via the existing D2 roadway, a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) ramp between downtown Seattle and Rainier Avenue. The route is in the center reversible lanes of I-90 across Lake Washington and Mercer Island.

Design options for consideration to identify as preferred are:

- D2 Roadway as exclusive light rail or joint bus-light rail operations
- Mercer Island station west entrance at 77th Avenue SE or with a new pedestrian bridge to 78th Avenue SE

Segment B: I-90 to Downtown Bellevue:

Alternatives for consideration to identify as preferred are:

- Alternative B1: Bellevue Way
- Alternative B2-A: 112th SE At-grade
- Alternative B2-E: 112th SE Elevated
- Alternative B3: 112th SE Bypass
- Alternative B7: BNSF

Design options for consideration to identify as preferred at Bellevue Way with respect to HOV access are:

- At-grade exit of the center roadway and elimination of Bellevue Way HOV access
- An elevated exit of the center roadway and preservation HOV direct access for south Bellevue Way to west I-90
- An elevated exit of the center roadway and modifications to HOV access, including realignment of I-90 to the south, for the provision of HOV direct access for south Bellevue Way to west I-90 and east I-90 to north Bellevue Way

Segment C: Downtown Bellevue to Overlake Hospital

Alternatives for consideration to identify as preferred are:

- Alternative C1-T: Bellevue Way Tunnel
- Alternative C2-T: 106th NE Tunnel
- Alternative C3-T: 108th NE Tunnel
- Alternative C4-A: Couplet
- Alternative C7-E: 112th NE Elevated
- Alternative C8-E: 110th NE Elevated

Design options for consideration with the C2-T and C3T tunnels are to locate the southern portal:

- In the median of 112th Avenue NE (construction staging in Surrey Downs Park)
- At the southwest corner of 112th Avenue NE and Main Street (Surrey Downs)
- At the southeast corner of 112th Avenue NE and Main Street (Red Lion site)

Design options with the C3-T, C4-A, C7-E, and C8E alternatives for consideration to identify as preferred for the Ashwood/Hospital station are:

- Locate the station over I-405 with an entrance on the west side to serve downtown and on the east side to serve the Hospital District
- Locate the station on the east side of I-405 to serve the Hospital District and use sidewalks on NE 12th to access downtown

Segment D: Downtown Bellevue to Overlake Transit Center

Alternatives for consideration to identify as preferred are:

- Alternative D2-A: NE 16th At-Grade
- Alternative D2-E: NE 16th Elevated
- Alternative D3: NE 20th
- Alternative D5: SR 520

Design options for consideration to identify as preferred with D2-A, D2-E, and D3 are:

- Design only the 124th Station

- Design only the 130th Station
- Design both the 124th and 130th Stations

Segment E: Overlake Transit Center to Downtown Redmond

Alternatives for consideration to identify as preferred:

- Alternative E1: Redmond Way
- Alternative E2: Marymoor to Redmond Town Center or Redmond Transit Center
- Alternative E4: Leary Way

Maintenance Facility

The planning assumptions for new maintenance facilities will be reviewed in greater detail by Sound Transit operations staff as implementation of the ST2 plan proceeds. In the long-term, the regional light rail system will require a satellite maintenance facility on the Eastside for vehicle storage, inspection, wash, light maintenance and operator report functions. Some storage on end-of-the line tail tracks and a small operator report building may be needed at the Overlake Transit Center interim terminus for East Link. It is in the Board’s discretion as to whether to identify a preferred alternative for an Eastside maintenance facility at this time. Alternatives for consideration are:

- MF-1: 116th Maintenance Facility
- MF-2: BNSF Maintenance Facility
- MF-3: SR 520 Maintenance Facility
- MF-5: Redmond Maintenance Facility

BUDGET AND FINANCE PLAN

Identification of a preferred East Link light rail alternative affects the preliminary engineering budget if more than one alternative is identified as preferred for any segment of the alignment and all are advanced into preliminary engineering. Authorization for preliminary engineering will be the subject of a future Board action.

The Board cannot make a decision upon the East Link alternative to build until after completion of the Final EIS, which is anticipated for 2010. Based on the current level of design the most significant potential budget impact will be identification of the preferred alternative in downtown Bellevue.

The tunnel alternatives evaluated in the East Link EIS are beyond the funding identified in the ST2 plan and would require additional funding. City of Bellevue and Sound Transit staff are working together to identify other potential funding sources for the Board to consider prior to the completion of the Final EIS and the decision on the project to be built.

M/W/DBE – SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

Not applicable to this action.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND for PROPOSED ACTION

In November 2008, voters approved funding for the East Link project to provide light rail service between Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue, and the Overlake Transit Center in Redmond. The East Link EIS evaluates the impacts of constructing and operating light rail service from Seattle to the Overlake Transit Center, and studies the alignments from the Overlake Transit Center to downtown Redmond.

The evaluation of alternative route alignments, stations locations, and light-rail maintenance facility locations is being conducted in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Before committing federal funds to the East Link project, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the East Link project, Sound

Transit is required to comply with the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is also a SEPA co-lead agency. The FTA, as the federal lead agency under NEPA, and Sound Transit, as the state lead agency under SEPA, have determined that alternative route alignments and station locations may have probable significant adverse environmental impacts. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies are preparing a combined NEPA/SEPA environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project.

Sound Transit, FTA, and WSDOT published a Draft EIS for the project on December 12, 2008. The 75-day comment period closed on February 25, 2009. To ensure adequate public and agency input, the comment period included five informational open house events. Public hearings were held at each open house event. The Board received copies of each of the 765 comments submitted during the comment period.

At its January 15, 2009 meeting, the Sound Transit Board reviewed the Draft EIS analysis of the potential environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and project benefits associated with the light-rail route alternatives. Sound Transit staff summarized the Draft EIS public and agency comments at the March 26, 2009 Board meeting. At the April 9, 2009 Board meeting, representatives from the cities of Bellevue, Mercer Island, and Redmond each made comments and recommendations regarding the alignments under consideration. On April 23, 2009, staff answered questions from the Board regarding the alignment alternatives. The Board also received public testimony at the March and April meetings.

NEPA requires that Sound Transit identify its preferred alternative in the Final EIS. 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.

The identification of a preferred alternative for the Final EIS is a statement of the Board’s current intent regarding the East Link Project based on the Board’s review of the East Link Draft EIS, public comments from interested citizens, agencies, tribes and organizations, and other information developed to date; it is not a final decision. The Board will make a final decision on the East Link Project, including the route and station locations, after publication of the Final EIS.

Prior Board/Committee Actions on this Project and Relevant Board Policies

Motion/ Resolution Number and Date	Summary of Action
R2008-10 7/24/08	Adopting a revised Sound Transit 2 Regional Transit System Plan
M2006-87 12/14/06	Identifying the light rail routes, stations, and maintenance facility alternatives to be studied in detail in the East Link Draft EIS
R2006-15 7/13/06	Identifying light rail as the preferred high capacity transit mode in the Seattle to Bellevue to Redmond via I-90 corridor
M2005-86 7/21/05	Authorized the CEO to execute a Task Order within Agreement GCA 3536 with the Washington State Department of Transportation for a light rail operation simulation on the I-90 floating bridge using heavy trucks and an analysis of I-90 roadway structures.
R2005-14 7/7/05	Adoption of the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan designating Seattle to Redmond via I-90 and Bellevue as light rail or rail convertible bus rapid transit
M2004-63 8/12/04	Authorized the CEO to enter into an amendment to the I-90 Memorandum Agreement.
R2004-09 8/12/04	Amended Sound Move to provide for Two-Way Transit and HOV Operations in the outer roadways of I-90 and to select Alternative R-8A as the project to be built.
M2003-120 11/13/03	Directed staff to negotiate an amendment to the Memorandum Agreement for I-90 to define the guiding principles for the ultimate configuration of the I-90 roadway with HCT in the center roadway.
M2003-99 11/13/03	Identified Alternative R-8A as the preferred alternative for the I-90 Two-Way Transit and HOV Operations Project.

CONSEQUENCES of DELAY

A delay in identifying a preferred alternative would lead staff to defer the start of more detailed study of light rail routes and stations for the Final EIS and could delay completion of the Final EIS.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

An extended 75-day comment period for the East Link project Draft EIS ended on February 25, 2009. The process involved an extended comment period, five open houses and public hearings, where the public and agencies had the opportunity to review the Draft EIS and provide comments. The Board received a summary and copies of each of the 765 comments received during the comment period. The Board also received public testimony at their March and April meetings.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Jl 5/8/2009

LEGAL REVIEW

DB 5/8/2009

SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M2009- 41

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority identifying the preferred light rail routes and stations for the East Link Light Rail Project Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Background:

In November 2008, voters approved funding for the East Link project to provide light rail service between Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue, and the Overlake Transit Center in Redmond. The East Link Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates the impacts of constructing and operating light rail service from Seattle to the Overlake Transit Center, and the EIS also studies alignments from the Overlake Transit Center to downtown Redmond.

The evaluation of alternative route alignments, stations locations, and light-rail maintenance facility locations is being conducted in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Before committing federal funds to the East Link project, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the East Link project, Sound Transit is required to comply with the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is also a SEPA co-lead agency. The FTA, as the federal lead agency under NEPA, and Sound Transit, as the state lead agency under SEPA, have determined that alternative route alignments and station locations may have probable significant adverse environmental impacts. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies are preparing a combined NEPA/SEPA environmental impact statement for the project.

Sound Transit, FTA, and WSDOT published a Draft EIS for the project on December 12, 2008. The 75-day comment period closed on February 25, 2009. To ensure adequate public and agency input, the comment period included five informational open house events. Public hearings were held at each open house event. The Board received copies of each of the 765 comments submitted during the comment period.

At its January 15, 2009 meeting, the Sound Transit Board reviewed the Draft EIS analysis of the potential environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and project benefits associated with the light-rail route alternatives. Sound Transit staff summarized the Draft EIS public and agency comments at the March 26, 2009 Board meeting. At the April 9, 2009 Board meeting, representatives from the cities of Bellevue, Mercer Island, and Redmond each made comments and recommendations regarding the alignments under consideration. On April 23, 2009 staff answered questions from the Board regarding the alignment alternatives. The Board also received public testimony at the March and April meetings.

NEPA requires that Sound Transit identify its preferred alternative in the Final EIS. 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.

The identification of a preferred alternative for the Final EIS is a statement of the Board's current intent regarding the East Link Project based on the Board's review of the East Link Draft EIS, public comments from interested citizens, agencies, tribes and organizations, and other information developed to date; it is not a final decision. The Board will make a final decision on the East Link Project, including the route and station locations, after publication of the Final EIS.

Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority as follows:

- Sound Transit staff will work with the City of Bellevue to identify additional external funding sources that the Sound Transit Board may consider prior to the completion of the Final EIS. A tunnel option could

offer higher ridership than the at-grade or elevated alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS. However, a tunnel alternative is not financially feasible at this time without additional funding sources. Any additional funding sources should be formally identified by the City of Bellevue within one month after the completion of the 15% design cost-estimates, which Sound Transit anticipates to be completed in early 2010. The Board also requests interim reports from Sound Transit staff and the City of Bellevue. The reports should identify a list of potential additional funding sources by the third quarter of 2009, and state the potential value of such sources by the fourth quarter of 2009.

- Sound Transit encourages transit oriented development and design in the Bel-Red and Overlake neighborhood areas where transit supportive development is minimal or nonexistent. The regional cost to serve these areas is substantial, and light rail will play an important role in supporting the redevelopment planned by the cities of Bellevue and Redmond. Staff will explore opportunities for shared right-of-way construction and reconstruction, cities' dedication of right-of-way, and public-private partnerships, as funding sources for the regional investment. Additionally, staff will review the cities' station area planning processes for transit supportive facilities and design, reduced parking requirements and the implementation of transit overlay districts needed to ensure high levels of transit ridership.
- The preferred alternative for the Final East Link EIS is identified below:

Segment A

There is one route alternative between downtown Seattle and Bellevue. The route begins in the existing Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel and connects to the Central Link light rail system at the Chinatown/International District Station. It enters I-90 via the existing D2 roadway, a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) ramp between downtown Seattle and Rainier Avenue. The route is in the center reversible lanes of I-90 across Lake Washington and Mercer Island.

The preferred alternative for the D2 Roadway is:

- Joint bus-light rail operations

The preferred alternative for the Mercer Island station west entrance is at:

- 77th Avenue SE

A design option to study is:

- Evaluating proposed partnerships by the City of Mercer Island for new park-and-ride capacity in or near the Mercer Island Town Center

Segment B: I-90 to Downtown Bellevue:

The preferred alternative for Segment B is:

- Alternative B3: 112th SE Bypass

Design modifications to incorporate with B3 subject to further evaluation are:

- Touching down to an at-grade profile to the east of Bellevue Way south of the South Bellevue station
- At-grade station on the existing Park-and-Ride property with an approximately 1400 stall garage and mitigation necessary to restore traffic operations to the no-build condition
- At-grade along the east side of Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE
- Following the elevated B3 alignment behind the commercial structures on 112th Avenue SE as evaluated in the Draft EIS but with slight modifications when prudent to minimize property impacts.

The preferred alternative at Bellevue Way is:

- An elevated exit of the center roadway and preservation of the HOV direct access for south Bellevue Way to west I-90 and east I-90 to north Bellevue Way.

Segment C: Downtown Bellevue to Overlake Hospital

The preferred alternative in Segment C is:

- Alternative C4-A: Couplet with the Ashwood/Hospital Station located on the east side of I-405.

The Board recognizes the City of Bellevue's concern regarding potential traffic impacts with the C4-A: Couplet and directs staff to work the City of Bellevue to:

- Conduct a peer review of the effects on traffic and light rail operations of the C4-A alternative and consider sensitivity analyses of reasonably foreseeable changes over time such as increases in light rail frequency. If the City of Bellevue proceeds with current plans to perform a separate traffic analysis of C4-A, conduct a peer review of the City's analysis as well.
- Update in consultation with the Puget Sound Regional Council and the City of Bellevue, the underlying land use forecasts in the traffic analysis to reflect recently adopted plans in the adjacent Bel-Red subarea.

Additionally, the Board will give future consideration to a tunnel as the preferred alternative if additional funding sources are identified so that a tunnel alternative becomes financially feasible. The Board directs further evaluation on a tunnel alternative in parallel with efforts in cooperation with the City of Bellevue to identify additional funding. The tunnel alternative for further evaluation and future consideration as preferred is:

- Alternative C3-T: 108th NE Tunnel with the south tunnel portal at the southeast corner of 112th Avenue NE and Main Street (Red Lion site) and the Ashwood/Hospital Station located on the east side of I-405.

The Board furthermore recognizes the interest of the City of Bellevue in Alternative C2-T: 106th NE Tunnel. While C2-T is not the preferred tunnel alternative, the Board directs limited additional review to either revise or validate the draft EIS conclusion that C2-T would be more expensive than C3-T and that C2-T would have the potential for substantial construction impacts.

Specifically, the Board directs responses to the following questions posed by the City of Bellevue:

- Which parts of C2T and C3T are cut and cover construction and can any part of C2T be a bored tunnel?
- Could operational and construction impacts to the Bellevue Transit Center associated with the C2T alignment be minimized, for example, by staging the construction of the station at the current transit center?
- What mitigation measures can be implemented to address access impacts identified in the C2T option to the Meydenbauer Center and the Bravern?
- What are the cut and cover impacts associated with the C3T option at 108th Ave NE and NE 12th?
- What are the operational impacts to the Bellevue Transit center of the cut and cover station construction of the C3T alignment?
- What are the operational impacts on 108th and NE 12th due to the cut and cover and aerial construction associated with the C3T tunnel?
- How will mitigation for visual and access impacts to neighborhoods along NE 12th be achieved for C3T?
- Is the proposed at-grade crossing of the C3T option at 116th compatible with the recently adopted land use plans for the Bel Red corridor and the hospital district and how does it affect emergency vehicle access to the hospitals?
- How will accessibility to the C3T Ashwood/Hospital station located over I-405 or on the east side of 405 be accommodated (i.e. pick up and drop off)?

- How will the risks associated with building the Ashwood/Hospital station over I-405 be taken into account in costing this option?

A design option to study with both C3-T and C4-A is:

- Avoiding the full displacement of the Commons Medical Building, and
- Grade separating the light rail crossing of 116th Avenue and providing a pedestrian overpass to the Overlake Hospital Campus from the Ashwood/Hospital Station.

Segment D: Downtown Bellevue to Overlake Transit Center

The preferred alternative in Segment D is:

- Alternative D2-A: NE 16th At-Grade with both the 124th and 130th stations advanced for further design.

A design modification to incorporate with D2A subject to further evaluation is:

- Locating the D2-A alternative to the north rather than south side of NE 24th Street.

A design option to study with D2A is:

- Designing the 124th station as a retained cut and grade separating the intersection of 120th Avenue and 124th Avenue and pursue public/private partnerships if this becomes the preferred alternative.

Segment E: Overlake Transit Center to Downtown Redmond

The preferred alternative in Segment E is:

- Alternative E2: Marymoor

A design option to incorporate with E2 subject to further evaluation is:

- Terminating the Alternative at the Redmond Town Center station and shifting the station farther west to reduce the walking distance to the Redmond Transit Center and park and ride.

Maintenance Facility

The Board does not have a preferred maintenance facility location at this time.

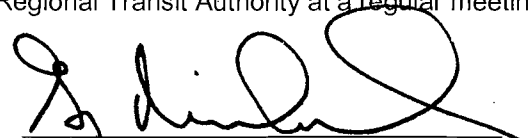
This motion also authorizes staff to complete the Final East Link EIS, using the preferred alternative identified above and the other alternatives in the Draft EIS. The Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after completion of the Final EIS, which is anticipated to be published in 2010.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on May 14, 2009.

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator



Greg Nickels
Board Chair