

Motion No. M2019-51

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority identifying the preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Background

The West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) project would expand Link light rail transit service from downtown Seattle to West Seattle's Alaska Junction neighborhood, and to Ballard's Market Street area. The project corridor is approximately 11.8 miles long and is part of the Sound Transit 3 Plan (ST3) of regional transit system investments, approved for funding by voters in the region in 2016.

The mode and corridor served for the proposed project were identified through the years-long planning process for the Sound Transit Regional Transit Long-Range Plan and ST3 Plan. Through the local alternatives development process, Sound Transit assessed the representative project included in the ST3 Plan and, based on additional public engagement and technical analysis, developed light rail transit alternatives with design options. Each light rail transit alternative includes fourteen stations that serve the following areas: Alaska Junction, Avalon, Delridge, SODO (South of Downtown), the sports stadiums, International District/Chinatown, Midtown, Westlake, Denny, South Lake Union, Seattle Center, Smith Cove, Interbay, and Ballard.

Evaluation of the alternatives identified by the Board will be conducted in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Before committing federal funds to the WSBLE, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the project, Sound Transit is required to comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The FTA, as the federal lead agency under NEPA, and Sound Transit, as the state lead agency under SEPA, have determined that the proposed project may have probable significant adverse environmental impacts. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies are preparing a combined NEPA/SEPA EIS for the project.

The planning and alternatives development processes included technical analysis, public engagement, and input from affected local, state, and federal agencies and tribes. Sound Transit developed an initial range of alternatives from agency and public input during the SEPA early scoping process held February 2 through March 5, 2018. The project Elected Leadership Group (ELG), a comprehensive group of elected officials that represent the service corridor, and the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), an advisory group consisting of members of the community appointed by the ELG, then recommended how to narrow and refine these alternatives based on additional analysis and community, agency, and tribal input.

In total, 14 SAG and seven ELG meetings were held over the course of the alternatives development process. In addition, Sound Transit continuously engaged the public to inform the recommendations of the advisory groups at each level of screening and held 17 open houses, forums and workshops throughout the corridor; attended 26 fairs/festivals and tabling events; visited more than 189 neighborhood and community organizations including 27 interviews with social service providers; provided 25 email updates, and developed three online open houses for those who could not engage in person.

Briefings on the status of the alternatives development process were provided to the Capital Committee on October 11, 2018, the System Expansion Committee on February 14, 2019, and to the Sound Transit Board on May 24, 2018 and February 28, 2019. The Alternatives development results were documented in the *West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Level 1 Alternatives Development and Screening* report (July 2018), *West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Level 2 Alternatives*

Development and Screening report (October 2018) and West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Alternatives Development Report (February 2019).

The FTA and Sound Transit conducted EIS scoping from February 15 through April 2, 2019, under SEPA and NEPA for the WSBLE project. Three public scoping meetings and a meeting for agencies and tribes were held during this period, as well as an online open house from February 15 through April 2, 2019. FTA and Sound Transit asked for comments on the draft Purpose and Need statement; the alternatives that should be evaluated in the Draft EIS; and social, economic, environmental, and transportation issues to evaluate in the Draft EIS. Comments were accepted by mail, email, online comment forms, transcribed phone messages, and through comment forms and via a court reporter at the scoping meetings. Input from the EIS scoping period was documented in the *West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Scoping Summary Report (April 2019)* and was made available on the project website.

The System Expansion Implementation Plan (SEIP) includes the objective to “Identify (the) Preferred Alternative Early” and notes that “staff will ask the Board to identify the preferred alternative at the end of the alternative development process and prior to starting preparation of draft environmental documents, having considered recommendations on this topic from the Leadership and Stakeholder groups. Early identification of the preferred alternative and key project goals will jump-start the public debate about station and alignment decisions, revealing areas of broad agreement as well as areas where project leadership needs to focus problem-solving efforts.” Identification of an early preferred alternative is integral to the agency’s efforts to meet the aggressive project timelines in the ST3 Plan, which assumed the acceleration of the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions by three years from the dates originally identified in the draft ST3 Plan. Based on prior experience with project development timelines, waiting to identify any preferred alternative until after publication of the Draft EIS could extend the project schedule up to 18 months or more. The SEIP further notes that “At the initiation of each major capital project, Sound Transit will propose a Partnering Agreement to be executed with project partners” and that “By providing project milestones and establishing partnering agreements, Sound Transit and its partners will have a common understanding of roles, responsibilities and schedule and budget imperatives to ensure timely delivery of capital projects.”

Consistent with the SEIP, a partnering agreement specific to this project between Sound Transit and the City of Seattle was finalized and adopted by the Seattle City Council and the Sound Transit Board at the beginning of the project development process in December 2017. Per the agreement, “This project partnering agreement reflects that commitment to a new way of doing business so that together we can deliver the quality transit improvements approved by the voters in ST3 on schedule and within budget”. The Partnering Agreement notes that “the parties acknowledge the importance of meeting Project schedule milestones and objectives in order to begin light rail operations on time. Accordingly, the Parties will work in good faith toward the completion of necessary processes no later than the target dates identified in the schedule attached as Exhibit D.” The target date included in Exhibit D (Schedule Milestones) for Board identification of a preferred alternative is noted as Q1/Q2 2019 and, per Exhibit E (Overall Approach to Project Development and Delivery), prior to the start of environmental review. The Partnering Agreement further notes that “In cases where the City or other parties have an interest in changing Project scope beyond that allowed under Sound Transit’s financial plan, the City will collaborate with Sound Transit to identify reductions in scope or risk elsewhere on the project or provide increased funding through local contributions to finance the requested change. Agreement on the scope changes and local contributions will be memorialized in the Preferred Alternatives Concurrence Document or other agreements as mutually determined by the Parties.” This requirement for local contributions for substantial scope expansions is mirrored in the partnering agreements Sound Transit has entered into with several other municipalities in the region.

As part of the alternatives development process, Sound Transit developed comparative estimates to inform the evaluation of alternatives. Estimates were based on limited conceptual design; as design advances and additional information becomes available, estimates will be updated and may change. The updated estimates will inform future discussions related to additional project scope elements and associated local funding contributions. The final project budget will be established during final design.

The identification of a preferred alternative for the Draft EIS is a statement of the Board's current intent based on the Board's review of the findings from the alternatives development process; public and agency scoping comments; tribal comments; input from the SAG (April 17, 2019) and ELG (April 26, 2019); the Partnering Agreement with the City of Seattle; the System Expansion Transit Integration Agreement with King County Metro, input from FTA, and other information developed to date. It is not a final decision and, as noted in the SEIP, "For major projects requiring environmental review of multiple alternatives, a reasonable range of alternatives must be studied in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act and State Environmental Policy Act, and Sound Transit staff and the Board must keep an open mind about all such alternatives until the completion of environmental review." As such, the Board will make a final decision on the WSBLE project to be built, including the route and station locations, after publication of the Final EIS.

To implement the SEIP, this action identifies a preferred alternative in each segment (with the exception of the Chinatown/International District). The preferred alternative reflects feedback and enhancements to the representative project included in the ST3 Plan, based on community and agency input during the alternatives development process, and is consistent with the scope and estimated cost identified in the ST3 Plan.

Through the course of alternatives development, interest has been expressed in adding substantial scope elements (e.g. tunnels in West Seattle and Ballard, and 4th Avenue viaduct replacement) not included in the ST3 Plan. The addition of such scope elements would require the commitment of third-party funding, approved by the Board before being identified as the preferred alternative. Such third-party funding commitment must be sufficient to pay any costs above the estimated cost to construct and operate the alignment identified in the ST3 Plan.

Motion

Recognizing the objectives included in the SEIP of identifying a preferred alternative and other alternatives under SEPA and NEPA prior to preparation of environmental documents in order to accelerate overall project delivery and the commitments to schedule and budget noted in the Partnering Agreement, the Board will consider identification of a "Preferred Alternative" and "Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding" within any given segment as follows:

- Preferred Alternative: Incorporates refinements to the representative project, consistent with the scope identified in the ST3 Plan, based on recommendations from the Elected Leadership Group and Stakeholder Advisory Group.
- Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding: A preferred alternative acknowledges the desire to continue to examine an alternative in the Draft EIS that, based on information to date, would likely require third-party funding. The alternative incorporates enhancements to the scope of the representative project identified in the ST3 Plan that most likely would require third-party funding.

As part of the DEIS analysis, Sound Transit will establish estimates of the costs of delivering the Preferred Alternative and Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding. The estimates would be inclusive of any necessary modifications identified during the DEIS analysis that may be needed to meet ST3 voter-approved requirements and would be calculated based on delivering the full project, not

individual segments. These estimates would reflect updates to the costs of construction, real estate, EIS mitigation requirements, etc. If, after DEIS analysis, a gap continues to exist between the end-to-end alignment estimates of the Preferred Alternative and the Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding, the gap must be filled by third party funding approved by the Board, while considering the regional funding aspects of the new downtown tunnel.

After publication of the DEIS and receipt of public comment, the Board intends to reaffirm or change the preferred alternative. Board identification of the Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding as the preferred alternative would be contingent on the identification of third-party funding to cover the gap between the cost of delivering the Preferred Alternative and the Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding.

As such, it is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that, based on Board's review of the findings from the alternatives development process; the identification of third-party funding consistent with the partnering agreement; public and agency scoping comments; tribal comments; input from the SAG (April 17, 2019) and ELG (April 26, 2019); the Partnering Agreement with the City of Seattle; the System Expansion Transit Integration Agreement with King County Metro, input from FTA, and other information developed to date, the preferred alternative, potentially preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft EIS are identified as follows:

West Seattle (Avalon and Junction)

Preferred Alternative

- Elevated stations – Avalon station in vicinity of SW Genesee Street, SW Avalon Way and 35th Avenue SW. Turns southwest on Fauntleroy Way SW with both elevated Alaska Junction station options oriented north/south and staying east of the Alaska Junction on Fauntleroy and in the vicinity of 41st/42nd Avenue SW.

Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding

- Tunnel station – Avalon station in vicinity of SW Genesee Street, SW Avalon Way and 35th Avenue SW. Turns southwest with both tunnel Alaska Junction station options oriented north-south in the vicinity of 41st Avenue SW and 42nd Avenue SW. Based on current information, these alternatives would require additional third-party funding.

Additionally, the Board directs staff to evaluate potential cost savings opportunities and look for opportunities to minimize community impacts and create a high quality transfer environment for both the Avalon and Alaska Junction station locations.

West Seattle (Delridge)

Preferred Alternative

- N of Genesee station – Elevated guideway runs south adjacent to Delridge Way SW to an elevated Delridge station on a diagonal between Delridge Way SW and 26th Avenue SW north of SW Genesee Street. Continues west on an elevated guideway along SW Genesee Street.

Additionally, the Board directs staff to explore refining the Delridge station location, prioritizing a further south location and looking for opportunities to minimize potential residential impacts, create a high quality transfer environment, optimize transit-oriented development (TOD) potential and reduce costs.

Other DEIS alternatives

- S of Andover station – Elevated guideway follows Delridge Way SW south to an elevated Delridge station south of SW Andover Street. Continues south along Delridge Way SW and then runs west along SW Genesee Street.

The Board directs staff to conduct an initial assessment of the following alternatives, which were suggested during the scoping period, to establish whether further detailed study in the Draft EIS is appropriate:

- Yancy/Andover alignment – An alignment along the Yancy/Andover corridor with a Delridge Station serving Youngstown.
- Pigeon Point Tunnel – A refinement of the Pigeon Ridge Tunnel alignment that was previously evaluated in Level 1 and Level 2 screening. This alignment would include a refined Duwamish crossing location that includes a tunnel through Pigeon Point with a further south Delridge station location. Based on current information, this alternative would require additional third-party funding.
- The assessment and recommendation for further study shall be brought back to the Sound Transit Board for review and potential action.

Duwamish Crossing

Preferred Alternative

- South crossing – Elevated guideway crosses over the Spokane Street Viaduct, curves west and parallels the West Seattle Bridge on the south side. Crosses over the Duwamish Waterway on a high-level fixed bridge on the south side of the existing bridge, then rounds Pigeon Point and heads south along Delridge Way SW.

Other DEIS alternatives

- North crossing – Elevated guideway curves west and parallels the existing West Seattle Bridge on the north side. Spans the Duwamish Waterway on a high-level, fixed bridge on the north side of the existing bridge, then crosses over the West Seattle bridge ramp, passes over the Nucor Steel property and runs south along Delridge Way SW.

The Board directs staff to conduct an initial assessment of the following alternative, which was suggested during the scoping period, to establish whether further detailed study in the Draft EIS is appropriate:

- Pigeon Point Tunnel – A refinement of the Pigeon Ridge Tunnel alignment that was previously evaluated in Level 1 and Level 2 screening. This alignment would include a refined Duwamish crossing location that includes a tunnel through Pigeon Point with a further south Delridge station location. Based on current information, this alternative would require additional third-party funding.
- The assessment and recommendation for further study shall be brought back to the Sound Transit Board for review and potential action.

SODO

Preferred Alternative

- E3 at grade – South of Stadium station, continues at grade within the E3 busway under new roadway grade separations of S Holgate Street and S Lander Street. Includes a new at-grade SODO station west of the existing station. At-grade alignment transitions to an elevated guideway within the E3 busway south of S Lander Street.

Additionally, the Board directs staff to continue to evaluate the potential impacts to bus transit currently using the E3 busway and explore opportunities to reduce the impacts of vehicle overpasses to adjacent property owners. Further, staff should articulate how alternatives considered in SODO align with the various alternatives in Chinatown-International District and whether SODO alternatives preclude any alternatives in Chinatown-International District.

Other DEIS alternatives

The Board directs staff to conduct an initial assessment of the following alternative, which was suggested during the scoping period, to establish whether further detailed study in the Draft EIS is appropriate:

- Elevated SODO stations – Elevate new and existing SODO stations
- The assessment and recommendation for further study shall be brought back to the Sound Transit Board for review and potential action.

Chinatown-International District (CID)

Preferred Alternative

- No preferred alternative is identified in this segment.

Other DEIS alternatives

- 5th shallow or deep station – At-grade alignment heads north under a new roadway grade separation of S Holgate Street and transitions to a tunnel portal for the new downtown transit tunnel located near S Massachusetts Street between the E3 busway and 6th Avenue S. Continues in a bored tunnel beneath 6th Avenue S, transitions to 5th Avenue S and runs under 5th Avenue S to Yesler Way. Shallow International District/Chinatown station option includes a new cut-and-cover tunnel station adjacent to the existing station under 5th Avenue S. Deep International District/Chinatown station option includes a new mined tunnel station adjacent to the existing station under 5th Avenue S.
- 4th shallow or deep station – Shallow International District/Chinatown station option heads north near Stadium station and transitions into a new cut-and-cover tunnel and turns northwest under S Royal Brougham Way. Continues north under 4th Avenue S in a cut-and-cover configuration along 4th Avenue S to a new cut-and-cover tunnel station west of the existing station under 4th Avenue S. Deep International District/Chinatown station option heads north near Stadium station and transitions into a new cut-and-cover tunnel and turns northwest in the vicinity of S Massachusetts Street. Continues north under 4th Avenue S in a bored tunnel to a new mined tunnel station west of the existing station under 4th Avenue S. Both shallow and deep station options transition to 5th Avenue near James Street. Based on current information, these alternatives would require additional third-party funding.

Additionally, the Board directs staff to continue to evaluate potential impacts to Ryerson Base and bus operations, concerns about deep stations and long-term operational impacts and the need to balance near-term construction impacts with long term operations.

Downtown

Preferred Alternative

- 5th and Harrison – Bored tunnel runs under 5th Avenue, transitions to Westlake Avenue, then curves west to Harrison Street. Follows Harrison Street and then transitions to Republican Street with north tunnel portal at Elliott Avenue W. Includes a Midtown station under 5th Avenue in the vicinity of Columbia Street and Madison Street, a Westlake station under 5th Avenue

connecting with the existing Westlake station, a Denny station under Westlake Avenue, a South Lake Union station under Harrison Street near Aurora Avenue N, and a Seattle Center station under Republican Street near 1st Avenue N.

Other DEIS alternatives

- 6th and Mercer – Bored tunnel runs under 5th Avenue S and transitions to 6th Avenue S then to Terry Avenue N and curves west toward Mercer Street. Runs along Mercer Street and curves northwest to Elliott Avenue W, with north tunnel portal at Elliott Avenue W. Includes a Midtown station under 6th Avenue in the vicinity of Madison Street and Seneca Street, a Westlake station under 6th Avenue connecting with the existing Westlake station, a Denny station under Terry Avenue N, a South Lake Union station north of Mercer Street near Aurora Avenue N, and a Seattle Center station under Mercer Street near Queen Anne Avenue N.

Additionally, for all the Downtown alternatives, the Board directs staff to continue to look for opportunities to optimize transfers and bus integration with Madison Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Further, staff should articulate how alternatives considered in Downtown align with the various alternatives in Chinatown-International District and whether Downtown alternatives preclude any alternatives in Chinatown-International District.

Smith Cove

Preferred Alternative

- Galer St station – Alignment emerges from the downtown tunnel portal along the east side of the BNSF Railway tracks. Continues to a Smith Cove station location between the W Galer Street and Magnolia bridges. Curves north to the area between the golf course and BNSF Railway tracks. Crosses over W Dravus Street and curves east to an Interbay Station on Thorndyke Avenue W north of W Dravus Street.

Other DEIS alternatives

- Prospect St station – Alignment emerges from the downtown tunnel portal paralleling Elliott Avenue W to a Smith Cove Station near W Prospect Street. Continues north along the hillside to 15th Avenue W and W Armory Way, crossing over the intersection. Runs along the east side of the BNSF Railway tracks to an Interbay Station on Thorndyke Avenue W north of W Dravus Street.
- Prospect St station/ST3 Representative Project – Alignment emerges from the downtown tunnel portal in an elevated guideway along Elliott Avenue W to Smith Cove Station near W Prospect Street. Continues north along the hillside then transitions back to elevated guideway along 15th Avenue W to an Interbay station on 15th Avenue W at W Dravus Street.

Additionally, for all the Smith Cove alternatives, the Board directs staff to continue to look for opportunities to better serve potential future development, connect to the Port's cruise terminals, and reduce costs.

Interbay and Ballard

Preferred Alternative

- High fixed bridge with 14th elevated station – From elevated Interbay station, continues over 15th Avenue W, crosses Salmon Bay via a fixed bridge east of the existing Ballard Bridge and continues in an elevated guideway on 14th Avenue NW. Terminates at an elevated station on 14th Avenue NW at NW Market Street.

Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding

- Tunnel with 14th and 15th tunnel stations – From Interbay station, descends into a tunnel beneath Salmon Bay. Terminates at a tunnel Ballard station with station options beneath 14th Avenue NW and east of 15th Avenue NW at NW Market Street. Based on current information, both these alternatives would require additional third-party funding.

Other DEIS alternatives

- Movable bridge with 15th elevated station – From elevated Interbay station, continues along 15th Avenue W and crosses Salmon Bay via a movable bridge west of the existing Ballard Bridge. Continues in an elevated guideway along 15th Avenue NW. Terminates at an elevated Ballard Station on 15th Avenue NW near NW Market Street.

Additionally, the Board directs staff to evaluate potential refinements to the Ballard station to optimize bus/rail integration and access to the Ballard urban village (such as improved connections across 15th Avenue NW).

The Board directs staff to conduct an initial assessment of the following alternative, which was suggested during the scoping period, to establish whether further detailed study in the Draft EIS is appropriate:

- Tunnel with 20th tunnel station – A refinement of a tunnel alignment that was previously evaluated in Level 1. From Interbay station, crosses over the BNSF tracks, then descends into a tunnel beneath Salmon Bay. Terminates at a tunnel Ballard station beneath 20th Avenue NW in vicinity of NW Market Street. Based on current information, this alternative would require additional third-party funding.
- The assessment and recommendation for further study shall be brought back to the Sound Transit Board for review and potential action.

Additionally, the Board directs staff to evaluate potential cost savings opportunities and look for opportunities to minimize community impacts and create a high quality transfer environment at all station locations.

This motion also authorizes staff to complete the Draft EIS, using the preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives identified above. 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 2022.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on _____.

ATTEST:

John Marchione
Board Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator