

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

East Link Update: Sound Transit will provide cost estimates for the C9T tunnel alternative, a report on the first meeting of the At-Grade Peer Review Panel, and a summary of the value analysis workshop findings.

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FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

POLICY ISSUES:

This update is the second in a series of updates to inform Council of the progress that has been made since the Sound Transit Board of Directors' May 2009 identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative. Sound Transit staff will present the new information. City staff will note areas of consistency (or inconsistency) with City policies and plans, and will highlight unresolved issues.

The Bellevue Council has adopted a body of light rail policy (including light rail best practices policies adopted by Council in August 2008, other Comprehensive Plan policies, and Council interest statements) that articulates community values related to the development of light rail in Bellevue. This policy body provides guidance and support for light rail transit investment in Bellevue and is complementary to the information provided in the East Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The City Council has articulated its preferences and strong opinions regarding the East Link project through its communications to Sound Transit, amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, and other actions. These City actions provide the basis for addressing project issues cooperatively with Sound Transit.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

Action
 Discussion
 Information

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

On February 23, 2009 the Council selected a preferred East Link alignment and recommended it to the Sound Transit Board of Directors for its consideration. On May 14, 2009 the Sound Transit Board of Directors identified a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the East Link project. This preference, which City staff discussed with Council on May 18, and all other alternatives that have been studied to date, will continue to be evaluated in the East Link Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that is expected to be complete in fall 2010.

Concurrently, the LPA will be advanced through preliminary engineering, which is also expected to be complete by fall 2010.

The Sound Transit Board of Director's LPA includes several components that require City action before the end of 2009. As previously discussed, the City is expected to:

- Develop a financing plan with Sound Transit for a downtown tunnel alternative;
- Join Sound Transit in a peer review of the downtown at-grade alternative (C4A Couplet);
- Jointly evaluate a south Bellevue B3 side running alternative (modified 112th Bypass Alternative), which is consistent with the Council's preference; and,
- Consider an alternative 124th station design.

On October 12, 2009 Sound Transit staff presented an update to Council on the preliminary engineering design process, including sharing designs for a South Bellevue side-running option ("B3S"), a recently developed 110th Avenue NE tunnel alternative ("C9T"), Spring District station design options, and a new D2A "north hybrid" at-grade alignment in the Bel-Red corridor. Council provided initial feedback on the design options and expressed strong support for continued analysis of the new C9T tunnel option.

Tonight's Council briefing will focus on the following topics:

C9T Cost Estimate

On October 8, 2009 the Sound Transit Board of Directors considered a modification to the suite of downtown Bellevue East Link alternatives. They directed Sound Transit staff to study a recently developed 110th Avenue NE tunnel alternative ("C9T") in the FEIS, develop conceptual engineering, and estimate the potential cost. As described during the October 12 City Council meeting, the C9T alternative would route through downtown Bellevue on the south side of Main Street, under 110th Avenue NE, and across I-405 at Northeast 6th Street (see Attachment A). There would be stations near the intersection of Main and 112th Avenue, NE 4th Street and 110th Avenue NE, and in the BNSF corridor just north of NE 8th Street. The C9T alternative is a variation of several DEIS alternatives. It was developed by Sound Transit as a result of their review of multiple comments made during public review of the DEIS and additional technical work. Sound Transit will present a cost estimate for the C9T alternative this evening. It is expected to be considerably less than the 108th Avenue NE Tunnel (C3T) alternative because the tunnel would be less than half as long. As such, C9T will likely offer a means to begin to close the funding gap between the at-grade (C4A) alternative and the 108th Avenue NE (C3T) alternative.

At-Grade Peer Review Panel

The Sound Transit Board Motion directed Sound Transit staff to conduct a peer review of the effects on traffic and light rail operations of the C4A alternative in response to the concerns expressed by the City during the DEIS public comment period and in previously adopted City policy. It also directed peer review of any City-led analysis. The City has undertaken its own traffic analysis, and Sound Transit has hired a consultant to facilitate the peer review process and formed an At-Grade Peer Review Panel. Sound Transit staff will provide a report on the composition, charge, and first meeting of the Panel.

Value Analysis Workshop Findings

Sound Transit conducted a four-day value analysis workshop the week of October 26 to identify potential areas for cost savings for the East Link Project. The workshop included reviewing the conceptual engineering of the preferred alignment, taking field tours of the alignments, and conducting design workshops around different pieces of the alignments. Participants included

Sound Transit staff and consultants and technical staff from local jurisdictions. Sound Transit will report on the findings of the value analysis workshop.

Other Updates

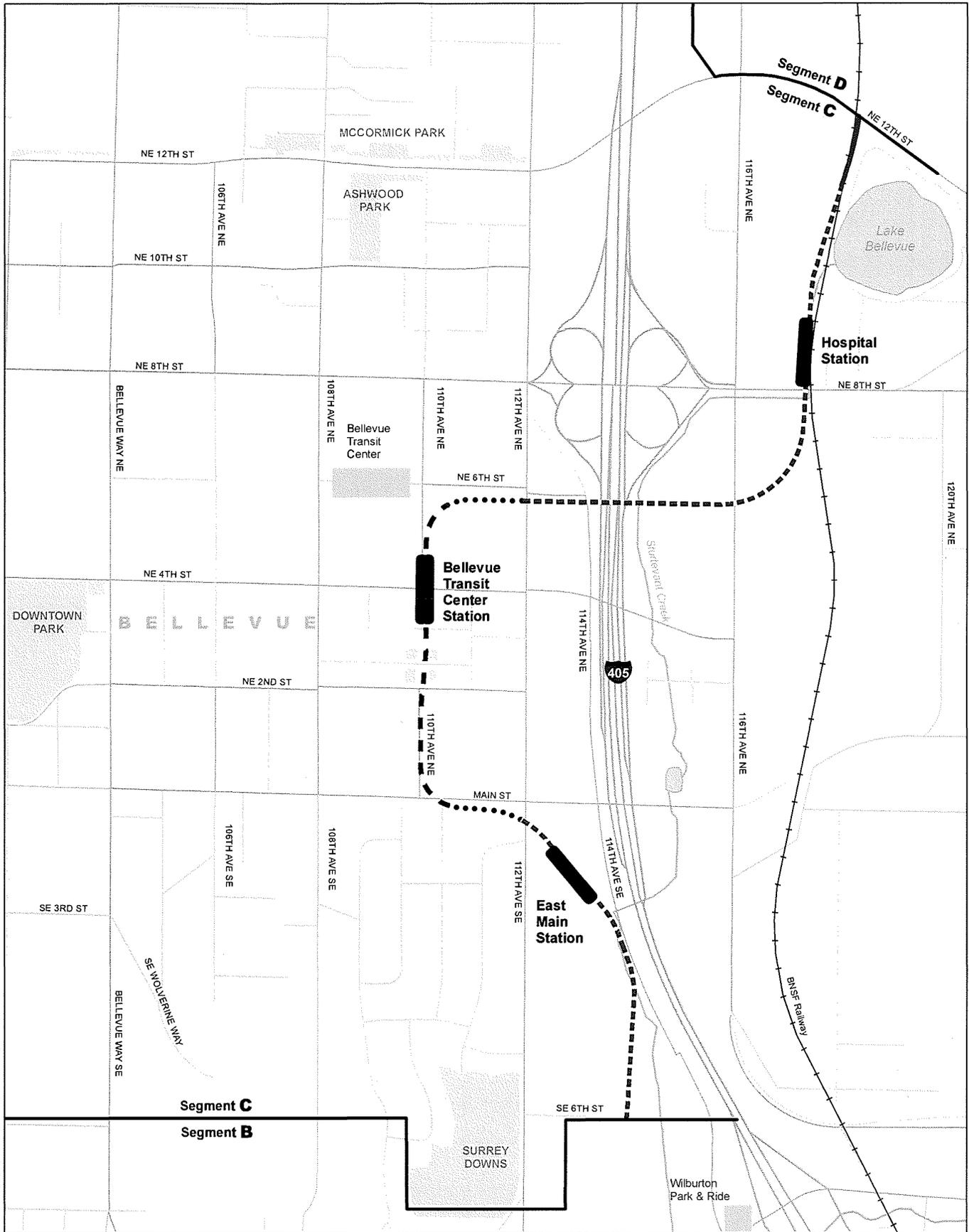
Sound Transit held two open houses in October seeking input from the community on the designs of the South Bellevue side-running alternative and the Bel-Red design options. Over 100 people attended the South Bellevue workshop and over 65 attended in Bel-Red. Sound Transit staff will be hosting a public workshop on the downtown alternatives on November 18 at City Hall. This is an opportunity for members of the community to provide input on the design of the at-grade and tunnel options for downtown Bellevue. City staff attended both previous workshops and will attend the downtown workshop as well.

Sound Transit is also preparing to release a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement in the first quarter of 2010 to document the environmental impacts of the new B3S, C9T, and D2A “north hybrid” alternatives and to provide for a 45-day public comment period. The information and comment received during this period will be included in the Final EIS, which is expected to be published in fall 2010.

Staff anticipates returning to Council this winter to share new information as it becomes available.

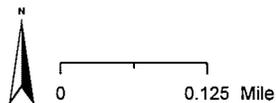
ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) C9T Alternative Map



Source: Data from City of Bellevue (2005) and King County (2006).

- At-Grade Route
- Elevated Route
- Retained-Cut Route
- Tunnel Route
- Proposed Station
- New and/or Expanded Park-and-Ride Lot



Segment C
C9T Alternative
 East Link Project