

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

Briefing on Sound Transit Operations and Maintenance Satellite Facility

STAFF CONTACT:

Chris Salomone, Director
Department of Planning & Community Development
Dave Berg, Director
Transportation Department

POLICY ISSUES:

What concerns and issues should be transmitted to Sound Transit regarding its review of potential sites for a light rail maintenance facility in the Bel-Red area?

- The proposed Operations and Maintenance Satellite Facility (OMSF) is not addressed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Sound Transit for the East Link light rail extension.
- The OMSF supports Sound Transit's regional light rail network, including, when it is constructed, East Link, but is not considered a component of the approved East Link project.
- As a separate capital project, Sound Transit is commencing environmental review of alternative locations for the OMSF, and has identified several sites in the Bel-Red area to include in that alternatives analysis.
- The proposal to site the OMSF within Bel-Red is inconsistent with and undermines the goals of the City's Bel-Red Plan adopted in February 2009. The Plan established a vision and strategies for transforming the area from low-intensity light industrial to a mix of higher intensity residential and employment land uses focused around two transit oriented development nodes in the heart of the Bel-Red area.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

 X Action
 X Discussion
 X Information

City staff are seeking direction from Council on a draft letter to Sound Transit expressing the City's strong opposition to Sound Transit's potential siting of an operations and maintenance satellite facility in Bellevue.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Sound Transit has initiated a siting study and environmental scoping process for five potential locations for an operations and maintenance satellite facility (OMSF). Four of the five sites are located in the Bel-Red area of Bellevue, and one is located in Lynnwood. Through the environmental scoping process, which included a public meeting and comment period, Sound Transit intends to narrow the number of potential sites to two or three before preparing a site analysis study and draft and final environmental impact statements (EIS).

Sound Transit first indicated a need for a satellite maintenance facility as part of the environmental review process for East Link, and included potential sites for that facility within the EIS for East Link. At the time, the scale and functionality for the satellite facility was narrower and envisioned more to address the needs of the East Link portion of Sound Transit's light rail network.

Of the four sites identified in Bellevue, two are similar to potential sites identified in the East Link EIS, the "BNSF Maintenance Facility (MF2)" is similar to Site 1 or International Paper site; and the "SR 520 Maintenance Facility (MF3)" is similar to Site 2 or SR-520 Retail site. According to the East Link FEIS, published in July 2011, "A second storage and *light* maintenance facility would be needed *with full buildout* of the East Link project.... This facility would require approximately *10 to 15 acres of land....*" [*emphasis added*] The City of Bellevue commented as early as the Draft EIS in 2009 that "The three maintenance bases evaluated in Segment D are not consistent with the land uses envisioned for the Bel-Red corridor." Sound Transit subsequently indicated that it would not need a satellite facility as described in the East Link EIS within the time horizon of ST 2, and dropped further inclusion of that facility from the East Link project description.

In early 2012, Sound Transit determined that the capacity of its current maintenance facility in the SODO region of Seattle is not large enough to accommodate the number of light rail cars that will be needed to serve the system extensions north and east (Lynnwood to Redmond) in 2023. As a result, Sound Transit commenced this current planning and environmental review process for a separate OMSF project, encompassing 20 to 25 acres of land. Two of the four potential sites in Bellevue are within the designated transit oriented development nodes envisioned in the Bel-Red Plan. Sound Transit held one open house at the Highland Community Center on October 8 as part of the environmental scoping process for the facility. There were over 50 people in attendance, and many of them expressed strong opposition to all of the sites being proposed by Sound Transit. Several people have also sent letters and e-mails to the City and spoken during public comment at City Council meetings in opposition to this type of facility being located in the Bel-Red area.

NEXT STEPS:

City staff has drafted a letter (Attachment A) expressing the Council's opposition to siting this facility in the Bel-Red area. Sound Transit granted the City's request for an extension beyond the October 22 environmental scoping comment period to submit a letter to Sound Transit. The

Sound Transit Capital Committee is scheduled to meet and recommend sites for further study through the EIS process at their regular meeting on November 8. The Sound Transit Board is expected to narrow the number of sites for further analysis to two or three at their meeting on November 15. Once the Board has selected the sites to be studied, Sound Transit anticipates a site study and environmental analysis will be done in approximately one year.

ACTION:

City staff is requesting City Council direction and approval of a letter to be sent to Sound Transit prior to a recommendation by the Capital Committee on November 8.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Draft letter to Sound Transit
- B. Map showing suggested Bellevue and Lynnwood sites for proposed light maintenance facility

September 27, 2012 (Date?)

Mr. Kent Hale

Senior Environmental Planner

Mr. Michael Williams (Letter is supposed to be addressed to Kent Hale)

Director for Light Rail Project Development

Sound Transit

401 South Jackson Street

Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Bellevue City Council response to Sound Transit Link Operations and Maintenance Satellite Facility

Dear Mr. Hale~~Williams~~:

I am writing on behalf of the Bellevue City Council to express our strong opposition to the siting of a Link Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Satellite Facility in Bellevue. I would like to reiterate and clarify the Council's concerns about the timing of this initiative as well as the potential location and impact of such a facility in the City's Bel-Red area, which ~~the~~ City has consistently opposed this location for this type of facility.

The timing of the O&M study outlining potential sites in Bellevue comes as an unwelcome surprise to the City. We were assured by Sound Transit during ST2 package development in 2007-08 and development of East Link DEIS that a maintenance base was not needed for East Link or on the eastside. This message was reinforced by Sound Transit staff during the City Council's alignment deliberations following the release of the East Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Sound Transit's January 12, 2009 presentation to Council indicated that a base was not funded in ST2. During the same presentation, Sound Transit staff stated that they had looked at the Bel-Red corridor's existing industrial uses and acknowledged that the maintenance facility alternatives for the area were no longer consistent with the City's land use planning goals.

The City Council's February 2009 letter responding to the East Link DEIS also addressed the location of the O&M facility; *"We view maintenance base MF-5 in downtown Redmond as the most desirable location. The three maintenance bases evaluated in Segment D are not consistent with the land uses envisioned for the Bel-Red Corridor. Given that the maintenance base will not be operationally necessary until East Link is extended to downtown Redmond, there is no funding included in ST2 for the base, and MF-5 is consistent with the surrounding land uses in Redmond, we see no need for a maintenance base site to be selected in the Bel-Red area"*.

The Bel-Red Subarea Plan resulted from the City working intensively with the community for several years to develop a vision for the Bel-Red area that transforms the current light industrial and low-intensity commercial land uses to a mixed-use transit oriented community. The plan was developed in parallel with the East Link EIS and supports the investment in light rail infrastructure by emphasizing higher density development nodes around the light rail stations. A light rail maintenance facility at any of the proposed sites in Bellevue would clearly be incompatible with the adopted Bel-Red Subarea Plan and current zoning.

Locating an O&M facility in the Bel-Red area could diminish the capacity for employment and housing in a key TOD node which is contrary to the City's plans as well to Sound Transit's interests. For example,

Sound Transit has provided notice of its intention to undertake a protective acquisition of the International Paper (IP) site; this site corresponds to MF2 in the East Link DEIS/FEIS and part of site E-2 in the current O&M facility study. The site is adjacent to the NE 120th Avenue Station, the Spring District development and the proposed Pine Forest Properties development, and is identified as a part of the future TOD node around the station. Based on the TOD zoning, the IP site alone has the potential for up to 1,604,502 square feet of office space (4,814 jobs) or 1,337 housing units (population 2,540); a 60/40 blend of office and housing would yield 962,725 square feet (2,888 jobs) and 535 housing units [JSR1] (population 1,017). Locating an O&M facility adjacent to parcels zoned for high density mixed-use development may make the parcels harder to develop. Locating the facility in such close proximity to Children's Hospital also presents numerous concerns.

We are also concerned that multiple potential O&M sites are identified in Bellevue, yet only one is identified adjacent to the North Link extension; Northlink is the area where travel demands will be the greatest and the need for the facility is generated. According to recent studies, Sound Transit has concluded that travel demand will equate to roughly 50 percent of the capacity of the downtown Bellevue station in 2030 during peak periods. This is important because demand at this station is projected to be the highest of stations on the eastside and, as recently as April of this year, Sound Transit staff contemplated shorter three-car train platforms as a cost savings option. The system expansion requirements appear to be driven by demands on North Link and, therefore, the O&M facility should be located on the west side, rather than forcing it into an area where it would be incompatible with the community vision, adopted land use regulations, and transit oriented development.

Lastly, it is disappointing that this unwelcome surprise comes without warning so soon after the City and Sound Transit entered into the East Link Memorandum of Understanding. The City has devoted substantial effort and resources to the Collaborative Design Process and has enjoyed the spirit of transparency and partnership. The Council believes that this new approach is a success and serves as the model for our future interactions. However, this approach to the O&M effort violates this spirit of cooperation.

Section 2.1 of the MOU calls for the parties to act cooperatively and in good faith, and to communicate problems that arise with the performance of the terms of the MOU. A maintenance facility in Bellevue would create such a problem. Under the MOU definitions, the maintenance facility is part of the "Light Rail Transit Facility" but is not described as part of the "Project". The maintenance facility will need to be added to the Project definition and the entire MOU will need to be rethought and amended to reflect this material change. The timelines in the MOU will need to be adjusted to provide sufficient time for the City to conduct due diligence on the proposals and consider how the MOU will be modified.

The maintenance facility was not studied in the FEIS nor included in the FTA's ROD. The cumulative noise and environmental impacts of a maintenance facility in Bellevue would need to be studied in conjunction with the rest of the Project. Noise studies will need to be updated to reflect the fact that light rail trains will be operated along the line between the hours of 1:00 am and 5:00 am.

The City Council expects that Sound Transit will consider our concerns seriously. We believe a deeper investigation of potential O&M sites in direct proximity to the North Link Extension is warranted. We request that the candidate sites in Bellevue be immediately dropped from further consideration based on Sound Transit's past commitments, inconsistency with the community vision, and incompatibility with adopted land use regulations.

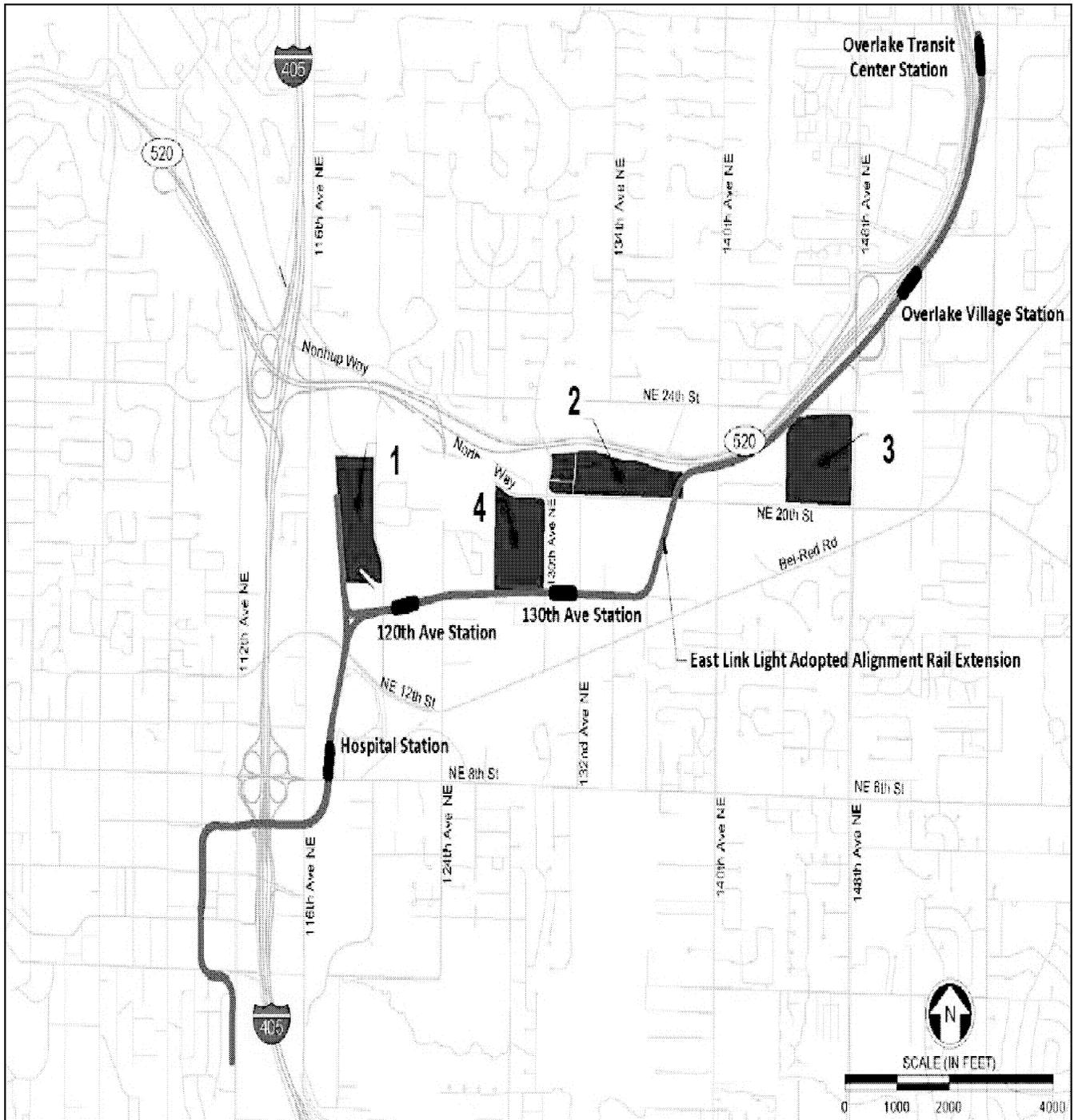
Sincerely,

Conrad Lee
Mayor

CC: Sound Transit Board of Directors
Bellevue City Council
Steve Sarkozy
Kate Berens
David Berg
Mike Brennan
Chris Salomone

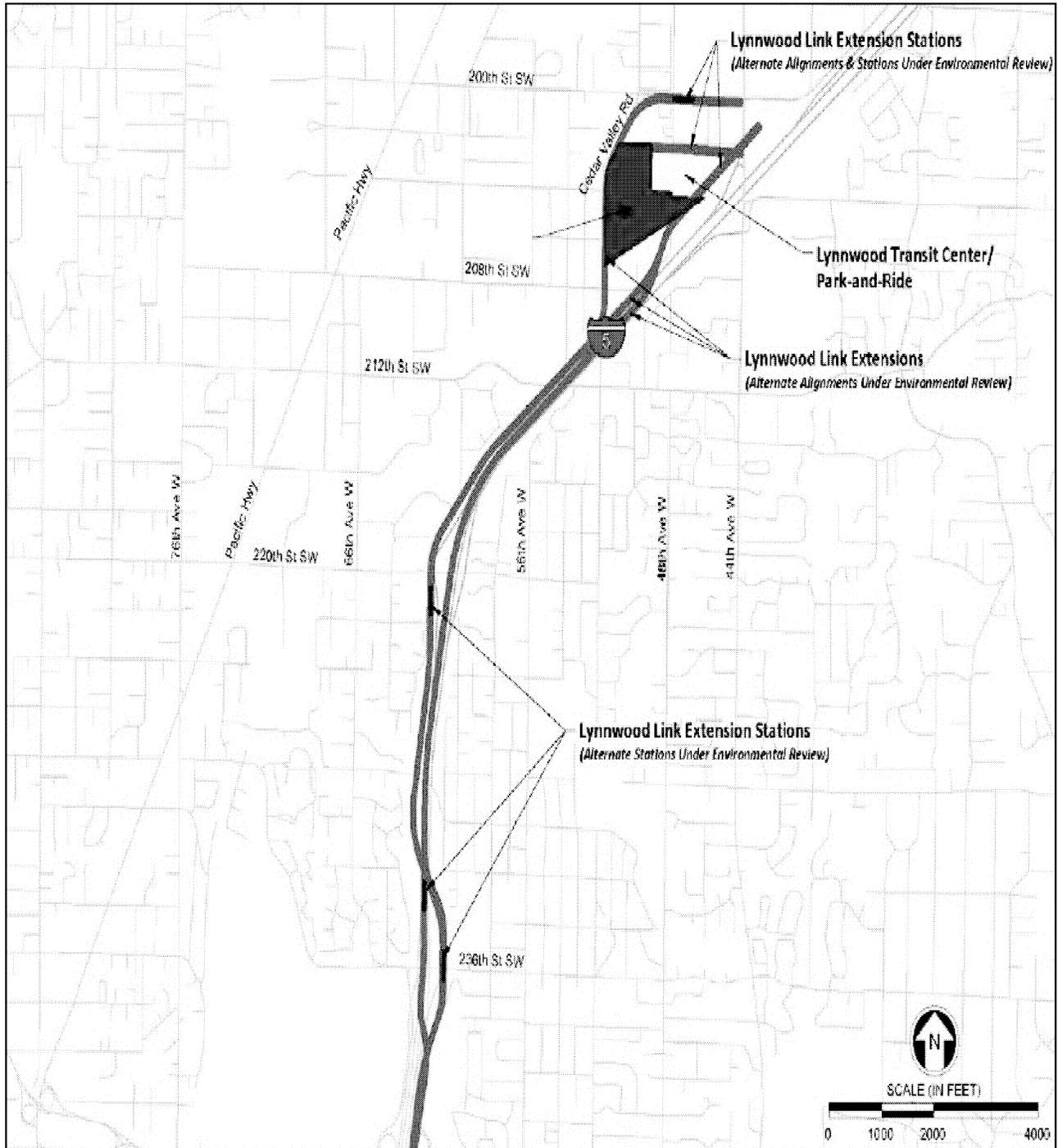
DRAFT

Bellevue Sites



- 1) International Paper
- 2) SR-520 Retail
- 3) Fred Meyer
- 4) Cadman

Lynnwood Site



Edmonds School District