

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

City review of East Link Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).

STAFF CONTACT:

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POLICY ISSUES:

Sound Transit released the East Link light rail project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in December 2008. The DEIS provided a technical analysis of 19 alignment alternatives for the light rail project. Sound Transit has worked with various stakeholders, including the City, to refine the number of alternatives. The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) released on November 12, 2010 analyzes new alignment alternatives and data developed after the publication of the DEIS, including those evaluated in the Winter 2010 Downtown Bellevue Light Rail Alternative Concept Design Report and the Sound Transit preferred options evaluated in the Summer 2010 112th Avenue Light Rail Options Concept Design Report.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

Action
 Discussion
 Information

At the November 8, 2010 Council Study Session, Sound Transit staff presented the SDEIS and briefed Councilmembers on changes since the last submittal. The SDEIS was released to the public on November 12, 2010 with a 60-day comment period ending January 10, 2011. City staff has been reviewing the SDEIS and will be preparing technical comments to submit to Sound Transit by the close of the comment period. Staff will present the major findings from their review at this Study Session. Staff expects to return to Council on January 3 and 10, 2011 to support Council deliberation and preparation of the communication to the Sound Transit Board.

At the December 6, 2010 Council Study Session, Council approved a motion by Councilmember Balducci to submit the four studies related to the B-7 alignment funded by Bellevue earlier this year as part of the City's comments on the SDEIS. At the same Study Session, Councilmember Wallace suggested that the previous traffic studies done by Bellevue staff as part of the Downtown Concept Design Report analysis could also be included in the City's comments on the SDEIS. He requested that staff provide a briefing on the traffic analysis at the December 13, 2010 Council Study Session in order to decide whether to submit that analysis to Sound Transit as well.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Sound Transit has been working for several years to develop the East Link light rail project, and the City has been involved throughout that process to represent Bellevue's interests. The voter approved project will connect Bellevue with Overlake, Mercer Island and Seattle, as well as areas in north and south King County when it opens in 2020/21. Sound Transit is responsible for project development and delivery. The agency is currently focused on completion of environmental review and preliminary engineering. The City is actively involved and seeks to influence the alignment and design to reflect City goals and objectives.

Sound Transit's April 2010 revised preference (Attachment 2) is largely consistent with the City's in the Bel-Red Corridor and downtown Bellevue. In Bel-Red, the preference is the D2A alternative. In downtown, the preference is the C9T 110th Avenue NE tunnel alternative, with the C11A 108th Avenue NE at-grade alternative also advancing in case funding for the C9T alternative does not materialize. In South Bellevue, the Sound Transit Board identified the B2M option as their preferred alternative as a means of achieving \$75-100 million in cost savings relative to the B3S alternative, which was Sound Transit's previously identified preferred alternative. The Bellevue City Council's July 2010 revised preference in South Bellevue is the Revised B7 option with a NE 2nd Street tunnel portal (Attachment 1). In the Bel-Red area, the Sound Transit Board revised the preferred D2A alignment to the retained cut guideway including the 120th Avenue NE station in the "Spring District" that is separated from the proposed NE 15th Street right-of-way; the previously identified at-grade alignment is a design option.

On July 22, the Sound Transit Board updated the preferred alternative by selecting specific design options for the 112th Avenue SE corridor. For a connection to the C9T 110th Tunnel option, light rail will travel on the east side of 112th Avenue SE from Bellevue Way to SE 6th Street, with a station at SE 8th, then cross over to the west side of 112th to connect to a tunnel portal on the south side of Main Street. For a connection to the C11A 108th At-Grade option, light rail will travel from the east side of 112th Avenue into the center median near SE 15th Street, travel in the median to SE 6th Street, where it will cross to the west side of the street and continue to an at-grade alignment and station on the south side of Main Street between 110th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE.

Sound Transit is currently focused on completion of two major phases of project development, environmental review and preliminary engineering (PE). The SDEIS reflects the new 112th Avenue SE and downtown alignments as well as the retained cut alignment and station in the Bel-Red area. The SDEIS also includes updated conceptual designs for the B7 alignment that reflect the widening of I-405, recent development along 118th Avenue SE, and updated noise analysis. The transportation analysis in the SDEIS does not reflect the additional traffic analysis conducted by the City and Sound Transit for the new downtown alternatives as part of the Downtown Concept Design Report. One of the issues being considered by the City Council is whether to submit that traffic analysis as part of the City's SDEIS comments. Although Sound Transit has declined to include this analysis in the EIS process to date, formally submitting the information would require a formal response in the FEIS.

The Final EIS is anticipated to be published in Spring 2011. All alignments will be included in the Final EIS, including responses to comments received during the Fall 2009 DEIS and 2010 SDEIS public comment periods. The final alignment will be identified in the Record of Decision (ROD) published by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), expected in Summer 2011. City staff will continue to work with Sound Transit to address issues of concern as the environmental process and preliminary engineering move forward.

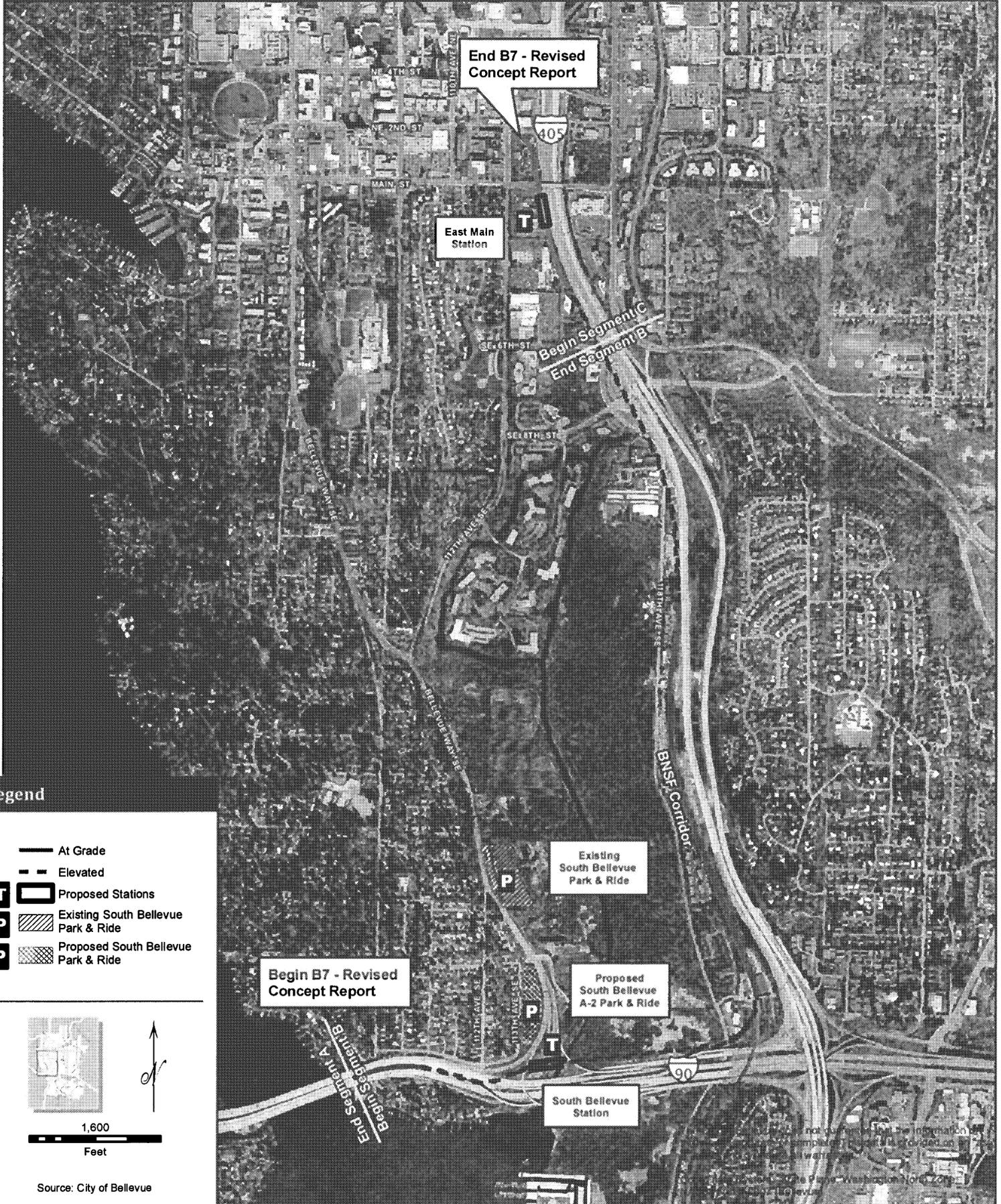
Concurrent with the environmental review process, Sound Transit is advancing preliminary engineering (PE) on the preferred alternative in an effort to deliver the project by 2020-21 as described to voters in the ST2 ballot measure. Because the alignment will not be final until the ROD is published, Sound Transit takes the risk that the preferred alternative advancing in PE may change. If the preferred alternative does change then the PE work completed to date will largely be set aside and design efforts will shift to the new preference. PE to approximately 30% design is expected to be completed by the end of 2010.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Revised B7 option with a NE 2nd Street Tunnel Portal
- 2) Sound Transit's April 2010 Revised Preference

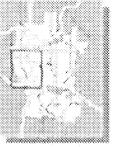
B7-Revised/C9T to NE 2nd Portal

Nov 2, 2010



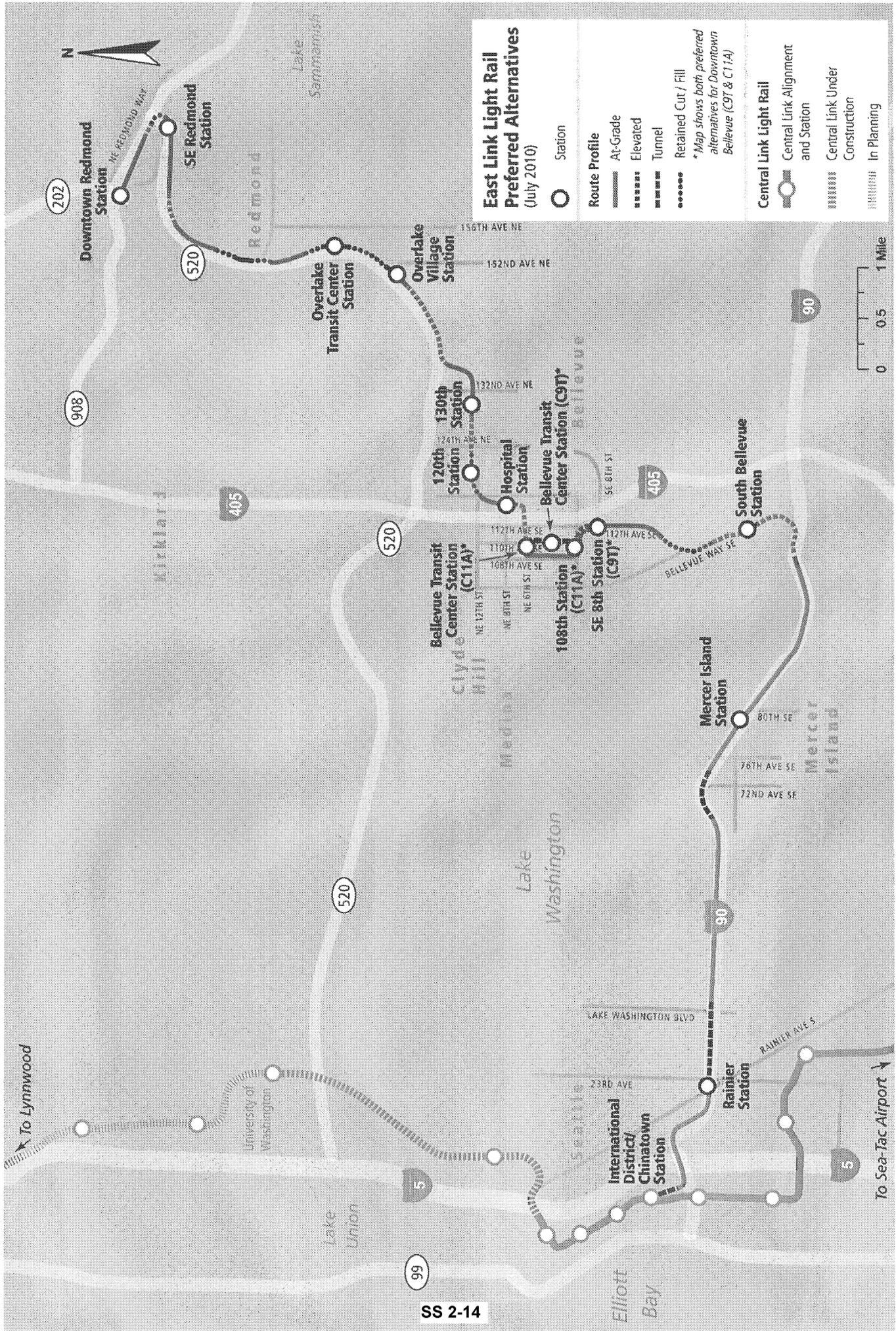
Legend

-  At Grade
-  Elevated
-  Proposed Stations
-  Existing South Bellevue Park & Ride
-  Proposed South Bellevue Park & Ride





Source: City of Bellevue



East Link Light Rail Preferred Alternatives (July 2010)

- Station
- Route Profile**
 - At-Grade
 - ⋯ Elevated
 - ⋯ Tunnel
 - ⋯ Retained Cut / Fill
- * Map shows both preferred alternatives for Downtown Bellevue (C9T & C11A)

- Central Link Light Rail**
 - Central Link Alignment and Station
 - ⋯ Central Link Under Construction
 - ⋯ In Planning

