City of Bellevue

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 16, 2013

TO: John Carlson, Chairman
Members of the Bellevue Planning Commission

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SUBJECT: Update on East Link Light Rail Project & Station Area Planning

At the May 22, 2013 Planning Commission study, session staff will present an update on recent decisions and next steps related to the East Link light rail extension through Bellevue:

- Finalizing the overall alignment
- Kick-off of final design by Sound Transit for the system including stations
- Station area planning (SAP) being conducted by City of Bellevue

This is being provided as information to the Commission and no action is required.

FINAL ALIGNMENT

The City and Sound Transit have worked since early 2012 to identify and evaluate potential cost savings measures to reduce the cost of the East Link project. This effort is consistent with the 2011 memorandum of understanding (MOU) and Council direction. A particular focus of the cost savings effort has been to reduce overall East Link project costs in Bellevue in order to reduce or eliminate the City's contingent $60 million tunnel funding contribution, as detailed in the MOU.

In April 2013, the City Council and Sound Transit Board took separate, final action to determine which cost-savings options would be included in the final design. As a result the project alignment is set and Sound Transit is moving ahead with final design. The final alignment is shown in Attachment A and the four specific options selected in April are described below:

1. MOU option along Bellevue Way, which includes a lidded trench in front of the Winters House and a combined driveway at that location for both the Winters House and farm stand. The HOV lane is not part of the East Link project, but the City Council may decide to proceed with the project at some future date. It remains in the draft Transportation Facilities Plan that is going back to the Transportation Commission in June and later to the City Council for action.

2. An elevated section of 112th Avenue SE at SE 15th Street that will cross over the light rail as it transitions from the east side of 112th to the west side of 112th. SE 15th Street will be realigned farther north of its current location and continue to provide access to Bellefield Office Park and Bellefield Residential Park, though limited to right-in/right-out.

3. SE 4th Street will be closed to all but emergency vehicles and Surrey Downs Park will only be accessible from the neighborhood. The status of the District Court and the park access have yet to be determined. The level of activities in the park will be reduced from a community to a neighborhood level (i.e. there will be no programmed activities like little league).

4. The Downtown station will be located along the south side of NE 6th Street between 110th and 112th Avenues SE. The station will be situated at the north portal of the tunnel on the west end and be elevated on the east end before it crosses over 112th Avenue NE.

FINAL DESIGN – SOUND TRANSIT

With the alignment set, Sound Transit is proceeding to move from preliminary design (30%) to final design. Sound Transit has begun the process with three public meetings to introduce design concepts and seek public input, two of which will have occurred prior to the Commission's study session. The meetings also seek suggestions for naming of the stations and they will introduce the public to ST*art*, Sound Transit's public art program. Some examples of the station concepts presented so far are included in Attachment 2.

Final design kick-offs for:

- 120th Avenue NE/130th Avenue NE – March 28
- Downtown/Hospital – May 16
- South Bellevue/E Main – May 30

Additional public involvement will occur at the 60% design stage in the fall.

<u>STATION AREA PLANNING</u>

In 2008 the City conducted the Light Rail Best Practices project to review the "best practices" used by other cities in planning for and implementing light rail. The *Light Rail Best Practices Report* that resulted from that effort recommends the following best practice for Bellevue:

> *Develop station area plans once the locations are known and before design and development of the stations. Station area plans can be developed by the City in conjunction with the community and Sound Transit to address the specific issues related to development of the station and the immediate vicinity. These plans can be used to preserve existing residential areas south of downtown and to encourage transit-oriented development downtown and in the Bel-Red corridor.*

The *Light Rail Best Practices Report* contains numerous other best practices and recommended actions, including several policies that were subsequently adopted as part of the *Comprehensive Plan* that can best be achieved through the Station Area Planning program.

The primary objectives of this Station Area Planning work program are to:

1. Engage the community in a planning process that establishes a clear vision and community goals for each station area.
2. Identify and prioritize City-funded capital investments that enhance the community and help to integrate the station with the surrounding area.
3. Optimize access to the station by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit patrons.
4. Support the land use vision in Bellevue's *Comprehensive Plan* for each neighborhood adjacent to light rail and encourage appropriate redevelopment where consistent with the City's land use vision.

<u>What is Station Area Planning?</u>

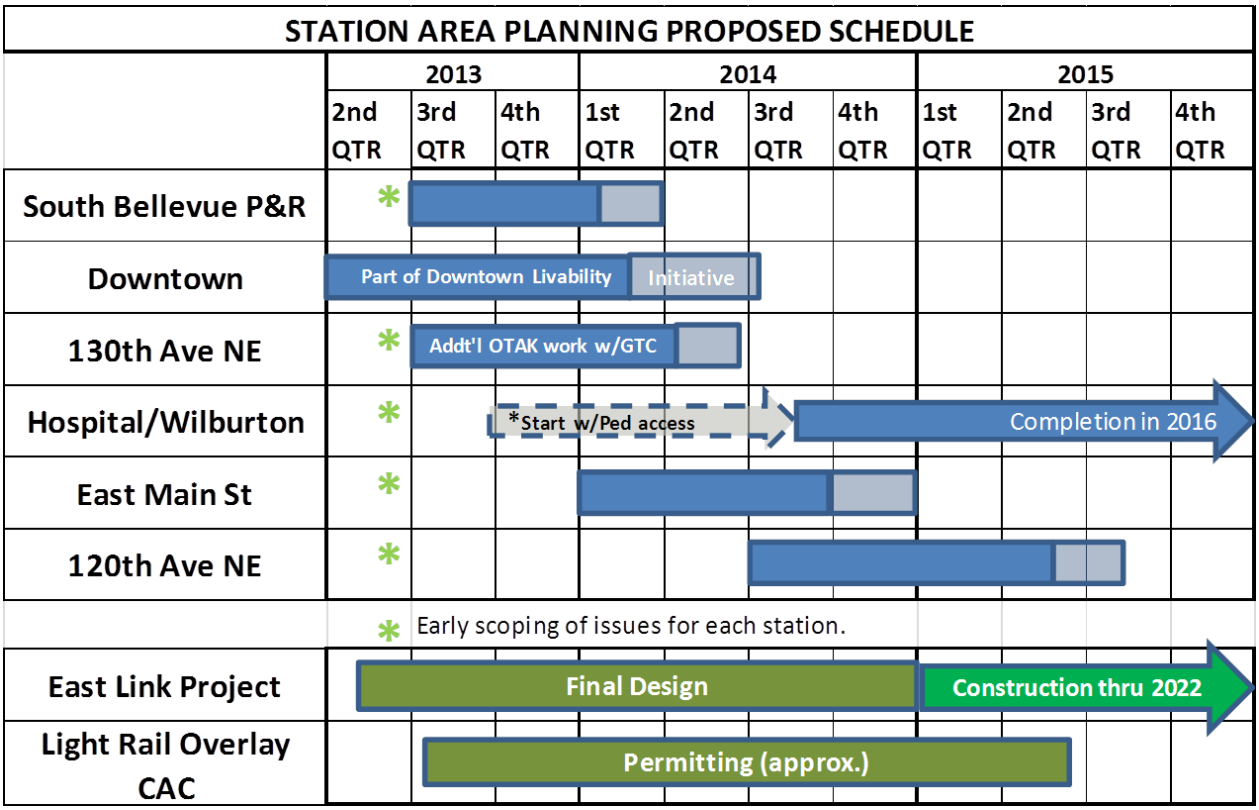
Station area planning is a process to establish a collective vision for a transit station area, ensure a compatible fit with the neighborhood, capture the value of transit, optimize neighborhood and community connectivity to the station, and provide meaningful community involvement.

Station area planning occurs around planned light rail stations and typically focuses on the area within a ¼- to ½-mile radius of a station, roughly a 5- to 10-minute walk. It is done at a much more focused level than a broader subarea plan (such as for Bel-Red). More information on the preliminary scope of station area plans is provided in Attachment 3. Station area planning is distinct from issues that pertain to design, construction and mitigation of the light rail facilities themselves. These are addressed through the City's design and mitigation permitting process, which is separate from this program.

<u>Why is Station Area Planning important?</u>

Station area planning provides the tools to achieve better integration and make the most of the light rail system when it is finally operational. It is also completely within the responsibility and authority of the City. In contrast, the collaborative design and permit processes rely on Sound Transit applications that provide engineering, environmental and other technical information. The station area planning program proposed here is developed, conducted and implemented by the City. It is driven by City policies and objectives and guided by public involvement and input.

The following graphic illustrates the approximate timeline for conducting each of the station area plans. At the bottom of the graphic are the approximate timelines of the concurrent processes for final design and permitting.



NEXT STEPS

Final design by Sound Transit is underway. This phase includes public outreach on station designs and station names. Next steps in the final design phase include completing the kick-off of open houses on station design concepts with the May 30th open house on East Main & South Bellevue stations wrapping up that series. Sometime this fall, Sound Transit is expected to have another series of open houses on station design. There will also be outreach on the Sound Transit arts program.

Station area planning work will continue on the Downtown and 130th areas into the middle part of 2014. Planning for the South Bellevue area will kick-off with the public in June or July of this year and continue into early 2014. Planning on the pedestrian access issue for the Hospital/Wilburton station area will begin later this year with the full station area planning program starting in the latter half of 2014 and continuing into 2016. East Main station area planning is proposed to begin in early 2014 and continue throughout that year. Finally, the 120th station planning will begin in mid-2014 and be completed the following year.

There will be periodic updates to the Planning Commission and other boards and commission about the progress of the station area planning program. The particular role of the Planning Commission and other city boards and commissions (e.g. Transportation, Parks, Arts) will depend on the implementation recommendations of the individual station area plans. Any proposed amendments to the land use designations or development regulations will be considered by the Planning Commission with a recommendation to the City Council. Similarly,

if there are transportation capital investments as part of plan recommendations, those would need to be reviewed and recommended by the Transportation Commission. Any actions recommended in the station area plans that would typically require review and/or recommendation by a city board and commission will be processed according to existing procedures.

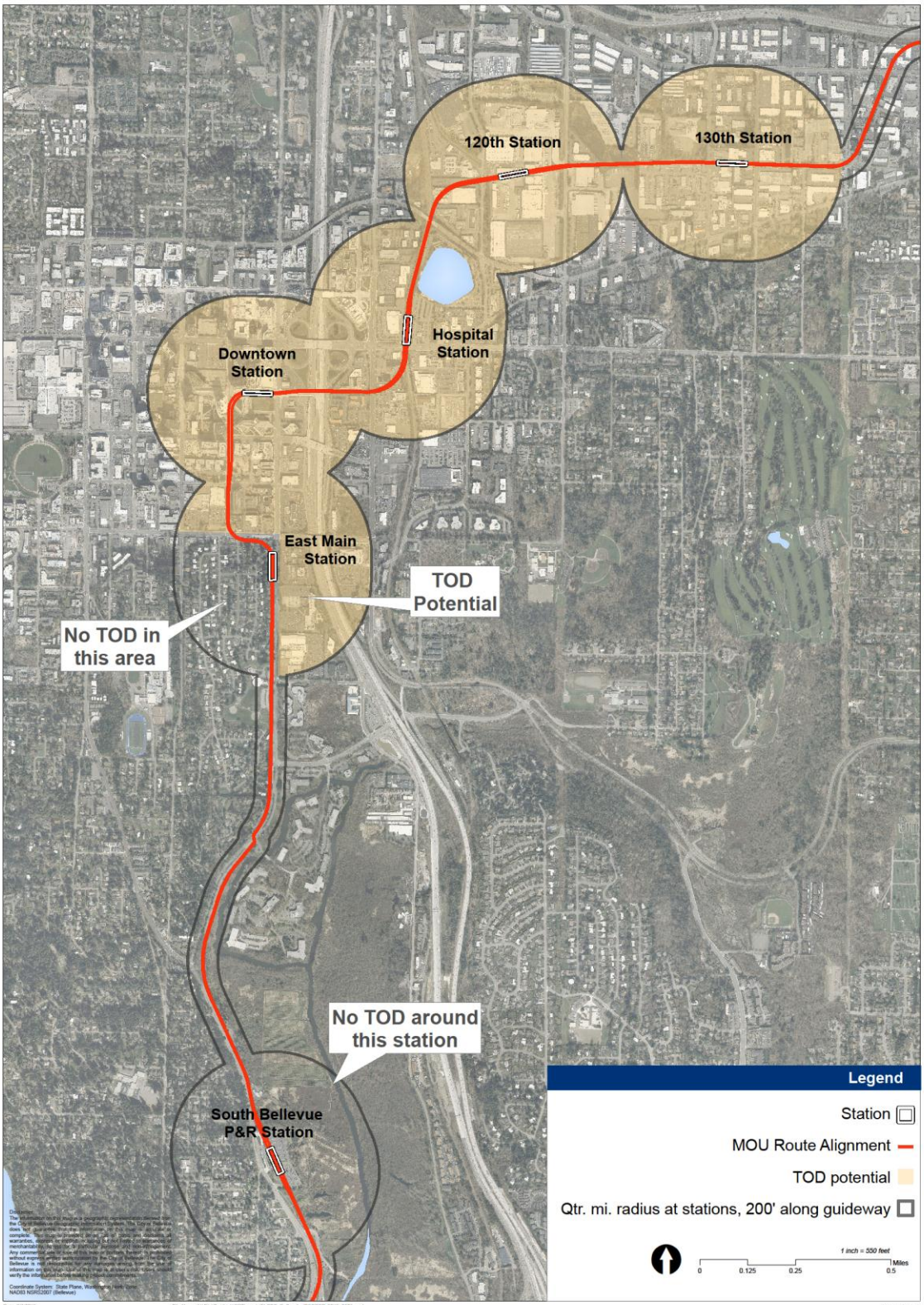
Attachments:

1. Alignment and station area planning map
2. Sound Transit station design concept examples
3. Station area planning overall work program

Station Area Planning

Areas with Potential for Transit Oriented Development

City of Bellevue
PCD Services



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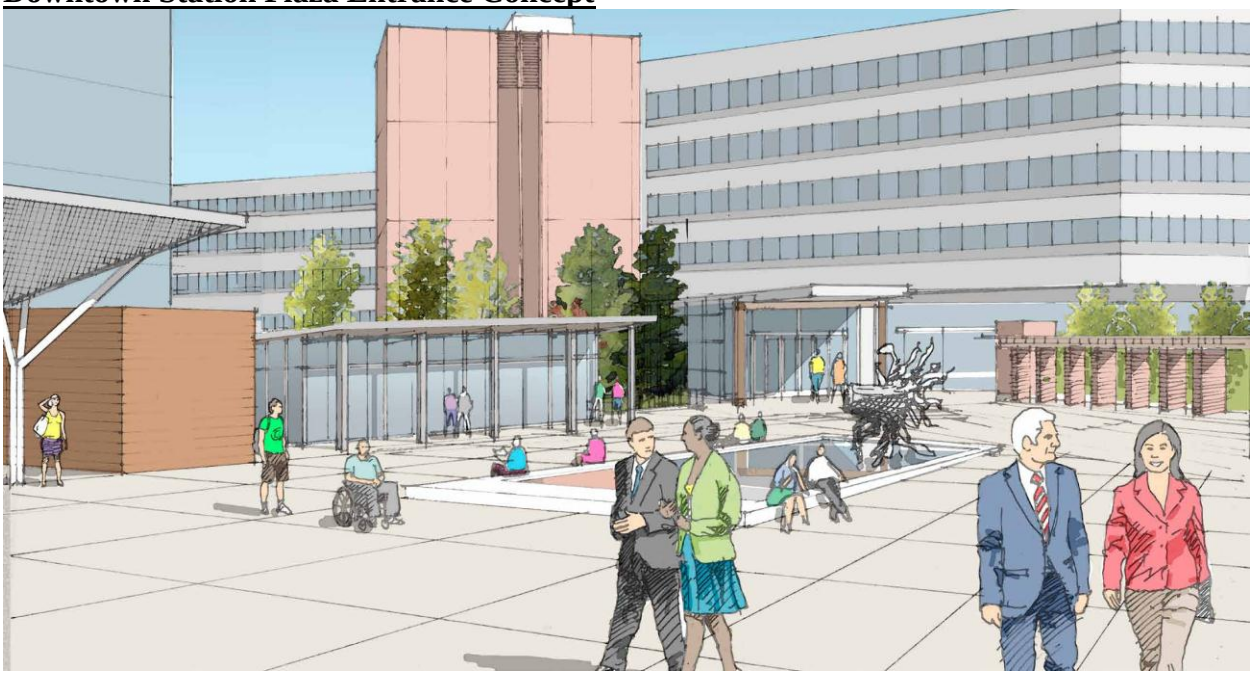
Downtown Station Plaza Entrance Concept



Downtown Station Platform Concept

130th Station Entrance Concept

120th Station Entrance Concept

STATION AREA PLANNING OVERALL WORK PROGRAM

The table below indicates the major elements proposed for the station area plans. These are the elements anticipated at this time based on public feedback to date as well as previous planning for each area. Following the table is a list of the basic elements anticipated for all of the stations as well as brief descriptions of the work program proposed for each element.

Stations	Visioning	Land Use	Redevelopment Economics	Urban Design	Traffic, Parking, Transit	Ped/Bike	Streams & Wetlands	Coordination w/ Capital Investments	SEPA
South Bellevue P&R	■				■	■	■	■	■
East Main	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Downtown	Part of Downtown Livability Initiative & Downtown Transportation Plan Update								
Hospital/Wilburton	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
120th Ave NE	■		■		■	■		■	
130th Ave NE	■		■		■	■		■	

■ Proposed work plan item

□ Not anticipated to be a work plan item for station area plan

- Development of a collective Vision for the area, including desired neighborhood character
- Pedestrian, bicycle and transit linkages
- Policy amendments reinforcing where Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is precluded and where it is desired, with direction for design guidelines and code amendments, where applicable
- Traffic and parking management
- Needed capital improvements (e.g. sidewalks, bike facilities, lighting, public spaces and other facilities)
- Coordination with East Link (e.g. way-finding, Sound Transit art program)

<u>Visioning</u>

A workshop or similar event is planned for inclusion in the work program for each of the station area plans. The purpose is to develop or refine the vision and goals for the planning area through a public process involving the range of stakeholders. As with other elements, the work component will depend on how much planning has been done, how much change is anticipated,

and how well the current vision and character of an area are defined by the community. In all cases the vision will need to be reviewed to incorporate the future light rail station.

Land Use

As previously discussed, land use change (potential *Comprehensive Plan* and zoning amendments) will be a significant issue for only two of the station areas: Hospital/Wilburton and East Main. The land use designations for the other areas have already been established in previous plans or changes are precluded by existing *Comprehensive Plan* policies. In those two areas where land use changes are possible, the work program will include an analysis of existing land use and ownership patterns, existing and planned infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and possible land use scenarios and implementation strategies (e.g. rezones, amendments to development regulations, design guidelines and/or policies).

Redevelopment/Economics

Realization of the land use scenarios for the station areas requires an understanding of market economics as a factor of redevelopment potential. For the two station areas that could have land use changes as a result of this planning effort, the work program will involve analyzing market potential for one to three possible scenarios and the factors that could inhibit or promote the redevelopment envisioned under those scenarios. For the station areas in the Bel-Red subarea, the work program will focus on specific strategies to catalyze redevelopment, building on the previous work done for the subarea plan and the recent Growing Transit Communities project for TOD at the 130th station park and ride property.

Urban Design

Land use is about the activities that do or can happen on individual or groups of properties. Good urban design is what creates compatibility and synergy among the different uses and fosters human activity which in turn indicates social and economic viability for the uses and the space around them. Urban design will be an important component for areas with redevelopment potential. It may also be reviewed for other areas if needed to update existing design guidelines or related policies.

Traffic/Parking/Transit

Transportation is a multi-faceted component of the work program for all of the plans. Depending on the amount of previous planning and the particular issues for that area, the work program could include some combination of traffic modeling, planned roadway improvements, transit service, traffic and parking management. Transportation is tied to the planned land use for the area and any land use scenarios will need to include the various transportation modes in the development and analysis of the scenarios as well as strategies for implementing the approved plan.

Ped/Bike

An equally important aspect of the transportation component for each plan, but worthy of its own task, is the ability of pedestrians and bicyclists to access the station from the planning area and beyond. The work program for this element will include an evaluation of the existing conditions and needed improvements to the pedestrian network within the five- and ten-minute walk distance. A similar evaluation will be conducted for the bicycle network with additional focus

on connections within the planning area to the local and regional bicycle network outside of the ½-mile planning area.

Streams & Wetlands

All of the station areas have streams and/or wetlands that are located within the planning area; however, no additional work is anticipated for the 120th and 130th areas due to the work done in the Bel-Red Subarea Plan. Much of the work program will be focused on the effects of land use changes around Lake Bellevue and Sturtevant Creek for the Hospital/Wilburton and East Main station areas. The South Bellevue station area includes the Mercer Slough and associated wetlands that could be affected by any proposed changes to the trail system.

Coordination with Capital Investments

The work program for this element will focus on the particular improvements that are needed in the area to help achieve the vision and goals captured in the plan for each station area. In some cases it could involve coordinating capital projects with already planned investments and in other instances it could involve identifying additional capital investments. Coordination will also involve timing, prioritization and identifying other departments and agencies that have projects in the same area.

SEPA

The type and level of environmental analysis for each plan will depend on what elements are included in the options being considered, the potential change from existing conditions, and previous environmental analysis for plans and projects in the area. One approach that has been successfully used in the past involves conducting the environmental analysis as part of the planning effort during the development and refinement of the various options.