



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 15, 2009

TO: Transportation Commission

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Transportation
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SUBJECT: East Link Light Rail Project Update

Purpose

In November, the Transportation Commission requested staff provide an update on the East Link project at a future meeting. In response to this request, staff will provide this update on January 22nd. The purpose of this briefing is to update Commissioners on the East Link project, review major findings of the East Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and update Commissioners on Sound Transit's public comment opportunities on the DEIS. There will be no action required with this briefing.

Background

The East Link light rail transit project will extend light rail from Downtown Seattle/ International District via I-90 to downtown Bellevue, Overlake, and downtown Redmond. The East Link extension will connect to the Central Link line that is under construction in Seattle to SeaTac airport, and its planned extensions north to Lynnwood and south to Federal Way. East Link environmental review of alignment (route) and station location alternatives began in the summer of 2006 with public scoping meetings and discussions among local jurisdictions. These meetings helped to identify major issues and concerns in the community and potential alignment and station options. Subsequently, the Sound Transit Board selected numerous alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental process. Sound Transit also conducted local workshops in early 2007 to gather information and feedback from stakeholders about alignment design and the local context.

The DEIS was released on December 12th, 2008. It discloses the effects of each alignment and station alternative for: Transportation (regional travel, transit, highway operations and safety, arterials and local streets, non-motorized facilities, freight mobility and access, and navigable waterways); property acquisitions, displacements, and relocations; land use; economics; social impacts, community facilities, and neighborhoods; visual and aesthetic resources; air quality; noise and vibration; ecosystem resources; water resources; energy impacts; geology and soils; hazardous materials; electromagnetic fields; public services; utilities; historic and archaeological resources; and parkland and open space. The DEIS, appendices, executive summary,

maps, and an interactive review tool are available on the Sound Transit website at: <http://www.soundtransit.org/x3245.xml>.

The formal DEIS comment period began December 12th and will close February 25th, 2009, a total of 75 days. The City and Sound Transit seek to maximize public involvement to ensure community concerns and preferences are well understood. Sound Transit will host a series of public hearings in January, two of which will be in Bellevue (January 28th and 29th). The Bellevue City Council will host a public hearing on February 2nd. These local preferences will be communicated to the Sound Transit Board before it identifies a preliminary preferred alternative and initiates the final environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the development of the DEIS, Bellevue undertook the Light Rail Best Practices effort to better understand other cities' experiences in developing and operating light rail systems. This effort engaged the public through an extensive involvement process and in doing so ensured its inclusion in the formation of City policies regarding light rail. Lise Northey and Joel Glass represented the Transportation Commission on the Light Rail Best Practices Committee. Additionally, Francois Larrivee served as a representative of the Environmental Services Commission. Last May, the Transportation Commission had a briefing on the Light Rail Best Practices Project draft report. The report has since been finalized and Comprehensive Plan policies were adopted by Council in August 2008.

The City also undertook the Bel-Red Corridor planning at the same time that Sound Transit was preparing the East Link DEIS. The resulting redevelopment plan for the Bel-Red subarea will be considered by the City Council in January, and has therefore not been included in the East Link DEIS. The Bel-Red plan does provide recommendations regarding the routing of light rail between downtown Bellevue and Overlake and the location of stations.

Next Steps

Sound Transit is holding several open houses and public hearings in Bellevue later in January. Sound Transit is encouraging citizens to participate in these open houses and provide comments directly to Sound Transit by February 25th. Additionally, comment about Bellevue's preferences can be directed to the City Council at a public hearing on Monday, February 2nd, 8pm, at City Hall. Bellevue open house dates are provided below:

Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2009
Open House: 5:30-8:30 p.m.
Public Hearing starts at: 6:00 p.m.
Bellevue High School
10416 Wolverine Way, Bellevue, WA

Thursday, Jan. 29, 2009
Open House: 3:30-6:30 p.m.
Public Hearing starts at: 4:30 p.m.
Bellevue City Hall
450 110th Ave. NE, Bellevue, WA

For information about the East Link project:
<http://www.soundtransit.org/x3245.xml>

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For information about the city's participation in East Link:
<http://www.bellevuewa.gov/light-rail-comments.htm>
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