



MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 3, 2009

TO: Transportation Commission

FROM: Maria Koengeter, Senior Planner
Transportation Dept.
425-452-4345, mkoengeter@bellevuewa.gov

SUBJECT: East Link Project Update –Memo only

Purpose

This is an informational update to the Commission on the status of the East Link Project. Staff last briefed the Commission on the East Link Project in July and indicated at that time that staff would return at the end of the year to present an update on a number of work program items. Because Sound Transit's timeline for certain project elements has been extended, and therefore extended the timeframe for City-led efforts as well, staff are providing this update memo and plan to return to Commission for a briefing in 2010.

Background

The East Link light rail transit project will extend light rail from Downtown Seattle 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 to planned extensions north to Lynnwood and south to Federal Way.

In December 2008, Sound Transit released the East Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), beginning a 75-day public comment period. Sound Transit held a series of open houses, solicited comments on-line and in writing, and held numerous meetings with interested groups to learn about public preferences for the East Link routing. The Bellevue City Council simultaneously undertook a process of reviewing the technical information provided in the DEIS, reviewing city policy direction for the development of light rail in Bellevue, and considering public input provided at Sound Transit and City Council public hearings to develop an alignment recommendation. Commission received a briefing on the DEIS findings in January 2009, and Commissioners were encouraged to participate in Sound Transit's and the City Council's public processes for developing a recommendation on a preferred alignment. The City Council submitted an alignment recommendation to the Sound Transit Board in February 2009, and Commission received a memo summarizing this action in March.

On May 14, the Sound Transit Board passed a motion identifying the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for light rail routes and stations (map attached) for the East Link Project Final EIS. The LPA and all of the other alternatives continue to be evaluated in

the East Link FEIS that is expected to be complete in fall 2010. Concurrently, the LPA was advanced into preliminary engineering, beginning a more detailed design process. The City has been actively participating in Sound Transit's preliminary engineering design teams in order to advance the project consistent with the City Council's direction. A description of the design status for each segment follows:

Segment B – South Bellevue

The City Council requested, and the Sound Transit Board advanced into the LPA, a Bellevue Way-112th Ave SE side-running alternative, a modification of the "B3 Bypass Alternative." Sound Transit developed conceptual engineering of the alternative and has determined that the design is feasible and may be slightly less costly than the B3 alternative. City staff continues to work through details with Sound Transit, including the design of the South Bellevue P&R station, access to the Blueberry Farm, design options to preserve the Winters House, and mitigation opportunities.

Segment C - Downtown

The Sound Transit Board selected two options, an at-grade (C4A Couplet) and a deep-bore tunnel (C3T 108th Tunnel), for further engineering. It also directed that the City join Sound Transit in a peer review of the downtown at-grade alternative and develop a financing plan with Sound Transit for the cost increment of the downtown tunnel alternative. The City initiated a number of work items in support of identifying an agreeable downtown option:

- At-grade modeling – The city initiated a modeling effort to evaluate the implications for a downtown at-grade light rail alternative. This work is underway and results are expected in the first quarter of 2010.
- Peer Review Panel – Sound Transit formed a Peer Review Panel to make observations about the implications for the C4A at-grade alternative in downtown. The Panel has met once and will meet again in early 2010. The focus of the first meeting was learning about the downtown Bellevue transportation system and land use vision and the East Link analysis to date.
- Financial Plan – City staff have developed and submitted to Sound Transit a list of possible funding sources. Work is ongoing to determine the potential magnitude of the sources and the implications for other City efforts.

Meanwhile, Sound Transit and the City have collaborated to identify additional potential downtown alternatives that will meet the needs of both agencies. There have been many issues and concerns raised by City of Bellevue and many of its citizens about the C4A (at-grade couplet) alignment selected as the preliminary preferred alternative by the Sound Transit Board in May 2009. The City Council's preferred alignment has been and continues to be a tunnel through downtown that surfaces on NE 6th east of the Bellevue Transit Center and crosses over I-405 at that point. The tunnel option being considered by the Sound Transit Board (C3T) was a bored tunnel through downtown from Main Street to NE 12th, then surfacing in McCormick Park and crossing over I-405 at NE 12th north of Overlake Hospital. Based on feedback from the public and the City, and input from expert panels assembled by Sound Transit, there are potentially five new alternatives currently being considered for Segment C.

Two of the new alternatives are at-grade, two are elevated and one is in a tunnel. All of the new alternatives cross I-405 at NE 6th (rather than NE 12th). Both of the at-grade alignments (C9A and C11A) cross over 112th on the south side of Main. C9A then travels north in the median of 110th to NE 6th with a station platform, partially elevated in the median of NE 6th between City Hall and Meydenbauer Convention Center. C11A travels north in the median of 108th to NE 6th with a combined light rail and bus transit center at the current Bellevue Transit Center site. Both at-grade alternatives are elevated over 112th and I-405 to the BNSF right-of-way and then north along the BNSF with an elevated station straddling NE 8th behind Whole Foods. The C9T (tunnel) alternative follows the same alignment as C9A, but goes underground on the south side of Main and resurfaces in the median of NE 6th between City Hall and Meydenbauer Center. It follows the same alignment as C9A and C11A from that point. The underground station would be under the intersection of 110th and NE 4th with access at either end of the station (approximately City Hall and NE 3rd Place). One of the elevated alternatives (C10E) is similar to one of the DEIS alternatives that travels up 112th with an elevated station just south of NE 6th and an elevated walkway to the City Hall plaza. The other elevated alternative (C14E) travels up 114th along I-405 with an elevated station just south of NE 6th and an elevated pedestrian connection, including moving sidewalks, to the City Hall plaza. Both elevated alternatives would cross over I-405 north of NE 6th and connect to the BNSF right-of-way with an elevated station north of NE 8th, behind Whole Foods.

Sound Transit will be reviewing and soliciting comments from the many downtown stakeholders during December and January in order to narrow down the alternatives for analysis in a supplemental EIS that will be conducted in early 2010. This is anticipated to result in the Sound Transit Board revisiting and possibly revising its preferred alternative for purposes of the final EIS that is projected to be completed by the end of 2010. Cost and construction risks will continue to be major concerns for Sound Transit. Preliminary cost estimates of the C9T alternative are \$300M over the cost of the C4A at-grade alternative (by comparison, the C3T bored tunnel is approximately \$500M more than the at-grade alternative). Preliminary cost estimates for the other new alternatives are not yet available. The City is continuing to work with Sound Transit on developing an alternative that meets the City Council's objectives.

Segment D

Sound Transit advanced the NE 16th At-Grade Alternative (D2A) for further engineering, consistent with the City Council's preference. The Board also directed evaluation of alternative station profiles for the 124th Station in the Wright Runstad-owned "Spring District." The Spring District will be developed as a mixed use office/commercial/residential district on the old Safeway distribution site. City staff has been working closely with Sound Transit and the developer to determine the station location and address various engineering and design issues in the area. In addition to the Spring District, the City has been focusing on developing concepts for a multi-purpose off-street trail that will connect the Bel-Red area and the light rail stations to the regional trail system. The City is also concurrently advancing the NE 15th/16th Street

Design Project, including coordinating between this project and the ongoing light rail work as well as future station area planning in the Bel-Red corridor.

Environmental Process

Because of the new downtown options and the significant design variations in Segments B and D, Sound Transit has determined it is necessary to release a Supplement Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) to document the potential impacts of these new alternatives and seek public comment. The SDEIS is expected to be released in spring 2010. These new alternatives and the comment from the SDEIS will be included in the FEIS, expected to be published in fall 2010.

City Work Program

The City Council has consistently expressed a strong interest in actively participating in the development of the East Link Project. This interest has been expressed in communications to the Sound Transit Board, in adopted policies, and in the City's actions, such as undertaking the Bel-Red Subarea Plan Update and the Light Rail Best Practices Project in anticipation of light rail. In late summer, the City Council approved a new CIP account and allocated resources to support the City's East Link work program to respond to the Sound Transit Board direction and the City's interests.

Next Steps

Staff plan to brief Commission on the East Link Project and the City's work program efforts in early 2010, when the SDEIS is released.



City Limits

East Link Light Rail Alternatives

- East Link Segment
- Station

Route Profile

- At-Grade
- Elevated
- Tunnel
- Retained Cut

Central Link Light Rail

- Central Link Alignment and Station
- Central Link Extension

East Link Project Preferred Alternatives
East Link Project

Scale: 0, 0.5, 1 Mile