

Alternatives Considered

The alternatives analysis process for the East Link Extension project took place over almost eight years, from 2006 through 2013. The chronology for this process is presented on the next page, followed by a review of the alternatives considered in Segment B, where Mercer Slough Nature Park is affected.

All alternatives were evaluated to determine whether they satisfied the following Sound Transit project planning goals described in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

- **Transportation Goal:** Improve transit mobility in the East Link Extension corridor.
- **Environmental Goal:** Preserve environmental quality.
- **Land Use Goal:** Support regional and local land use goals and objectives.
- **Implementation Goal:** Minimize risk.
- **Financial Goal:** Provide a financially feasible solution.

The first step in the alternatives development process involved exploring all previously suggested transit routes within the East Link Extension corridor from 24 previous studies completed between 1970 and 2006. This occurred during the pre-scoping phase. From these studies, 7 conceptual route alternatives or variations of the alternatives adjacent to Mercer Slough Nature Park (Segment B) were studied, and several of these were removed from further consideration during the pre-scoping process.

The EIS scoping process (2007) presented 8 specific alternatives for consideration in Segment B, which consisted of traveling up Bellevue Way SE, 118th Avenue SE or BNSF corridors with different profiles (elevated, at-grade and retained cut) and alignments in respect to the roadway. During the scoping process, a tunnel alternative was suggested but, after a preliminary evaluation of that alternative, it was not carried forward. The Draft EIS (2008) studied five alternatives in the project area including four alternatives along Bellevue Way SE and one along the BNSF corridor east of Mercer Slough Nature Park (Alternative B7). Alternative B7 included an elevated structure across Mercer Slough Nature Park, before turning north as part of the BNSF corridor. Based on extensive public comment regarding Segment B alternatives and coordination with the City of Bellevue, the Supplemental Draft EIS (2010) identified a new alternative along Bellevue Way SE (Alternative B2M) and modified Alternative B7.

The Final EIS (2011) studied 6 alternatives (2 with design options) for Segment B, including the five alternatives from the Draft EIS and Alternative B2M from the Supplemental Draft EIS. Alternative B7R, proposed and studied by the City of Bellevue, was also addressed and compared to Alternative B7 in the Final EIS. After selection of the project by the Sound Transit Board, and approval by the City of Bellevue in 2011, an additional alternative was studied in an EIS SEPA Addendum and the final alignment decision was made in 2013. While the SEPA Addendum considered other alignments and modifications along Bellevue Way SE, the approved project by Sound Transit and City of Bellevue remained the B2M Alternative along Mercer Slough Nature Park. At each step along the way, the impacts of the various project alternatives on North Conversion (LWCF) and South Conversion (State Bonds) properties were evaluated and described in each environmental document.

Through years of study, Sound Transit has conducted an extensive evaluation of reasonable and practicable alternatives under NEPA, SEPA, as well studied avoidance alternatives to meet requirements of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. Sound Transit's alternatives analysis was reviewed and approved by multiple federal, state, and local agencies with expertise in transportation, park and other environmental issues. In two separate legal proceedings, the adequacy of Sound Transit's EIS was challenged and upheld by a Hearing Examiner, a King County Superior Court judge, and a federal district court judge.

The public has had extensive opportunities for participation in the 8-year long process. Sound Transit's alternatives analysis and EIS provided numerous opportunities for public comment and other forms of participation.



2006 Pre-Scoping

Reviewed 24 previous studies to develop conceptual routes.



2007 Scoping

Project Scoping provided a 30-day comment period for the public to comment on the scope of the EIS and alternatives.

- 4 open house meetings
- Agency meetings

Conceptual Development of Alternatives in 6 community workshops



2008-2009 Draft EIS

Draft EIS published in 2008 provided information on the environmental impacts of the alternatives, with a 75-day comment period.

- 5 open house meetings
- 765 comments received
- **March 16, 2009 – DOI (NPS) DEIS and Section 4(f)/6(f) comment letter provided feedback on potential Section 4(f) 'use' of parklands**



2009-2010 Supplemental Draft EIS

Supplemental Draft EIS published in 2010 provided information on new and modified alternatives in Segments B and C, with a 60-day comment period.

- 1 public meeting
- 822 comments received, including:
 - **February 19, 2010 – Letters from NPS/RCO discouraging cross Mercer Slough alignment concept**
 - **April 12, 2010 – Consultation with RCO and NPS on impacts to Mercer Slough Nature Park**



2010-2011 Final EIS

Final EIS published in November 2011 provided responses to all Draft and Supplemental Draft public, agency, and tribe comments.

- **August 19, 2011 – DOI (NPS) FEIS and Section 4(f)/6(f) comment and concurrence letter**



2011 Project Approval

Project Selection

- July 2011 – Sound Transit Board selected B2M
- November 2011 – City of Bellevue adopted resolution approving B2M and signed MOU with Sound Transit
- November 2011 – FTA and FHWA issued Record of Decision



2011-2012 SEPA Appeals NEPA Appeals

Appeals

- Final EIS challenged under SEPA. Hearing Examiner upheld the adequacy of the Final EIS. The Superior Court dismissed the appeal.
- Final EIS challenged under NEPA to Federal District Court. The court upheld the adequacy of the Final EIS and found that:
 - A tunnel alternative in Segment B was not reasonable
 - The B7-R alternative was adequately addressed in the Final EIS
 - No project alignment alternative provided a prudent and feasible alternative that avoids all Section 4(f) resources, including Mercer Slough Nature Park
- Final EIS identified all reasonable measures to cause the least overall harm to park resources



2011-2013 SEPA Addendum & Final Project Approval

Collaborative Design Process between Sound Transit and City of Bellevue to manage project costs and impacts in 2011.

- Several public meetings in April 2013
- April 2013 – Sound Transit Board and Bellevue City Council approved project revisions (no changes to B2M along Mercer Slough Nature Park)
- **November 4, 2013 – Consultation and site visit with RCO, NPS, and Washington State Parks at Winters House**



2011-2016 Final Design

Final Design on stations and alignment includes community involvement.

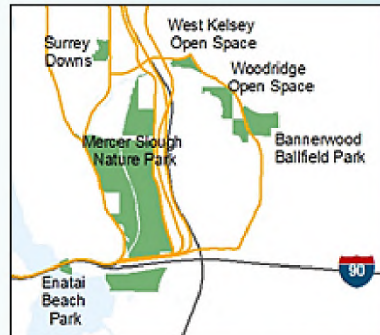
- Several design workshops
- **2 conversion briefings and requests to RCFB:

 - April 16, 2014
 - October 30, 2014**
- **May 28, 2014 – Washington State Parks Commission approved transfer of Mercer Slough property interests to Bellevue Parks**

NOTE: Green text indicates coordination with park agencies (DOI, NPS, and RCO).

East Link Extension Alternatives Development, Key Milestones, and Schedule

2006 Pre-Scoping



Segment B Alternatives Developed (1970 – 2006)

- 7 conceptual routes in Segment B
- 37 conceptual routes project-wide

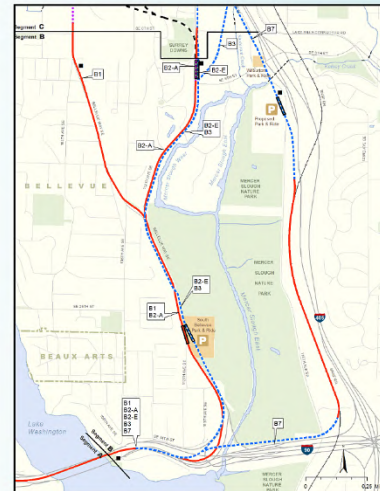
2007 Scoping



Segment B Alternatives for Public Scoping

- 8 alternatives in Segment B
- 24 alternatives project-wide
- Tunnel screened from consideration

2008-2009 Draft EIS



Segment B Alternatives Evaluated in Draft EIS

- 5 alternatives in Segment B
- 19 alternatives project-wide

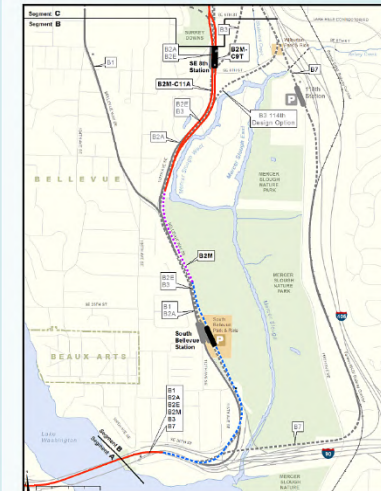
2009-2010 Supplemental Draft EIS



New Alternative B2M Evaluated in SDEIS

- 1 new (with 2 design options) and 2 modified alternatives in Segment B
- 5 new and 4 modified alternatives project-wide

2010-2011 Final EIS



Final EIS Alternatives

- 6 alternatives in Segment B (2 with design options)
- 24 alternatives project-wide
- Considered Mercer Slough Park avoidance alternatives

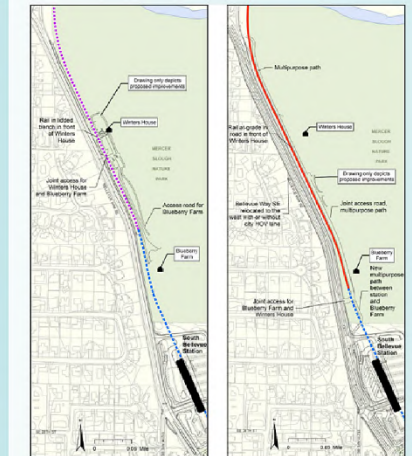
2011 Project Approval



Selected Alternative B2M

- Sound Transit Board and Bellevue City Council approve B2M along Mercer Slough Nature Park

2011-2013 SEPA Addendum & Final Project Approval



Selected Alternative and Shift Bellevue Way West

- Evaluated changes to Segment B:
 - Light rail on east side of road and shift Bellevue Way west
 - 112th Road over Rail
- Resulted in minor changes to B2M by Mercer Slough Nature Park



- Considered Alternative B7-R (City of Bellevue)

NOTE: Red text indicates responses to RCO Board inquiries.

East Link Extension Alternatives Development for Segment B