

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	North Corridor Light Rail Process
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works/Planning and Development Services
PRESENTED BY:	Mark Relph, Public Works Director Joseph W. Tovar, FAICP, Planning and Development Services Director

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT: In 2008, voters approved the ST2 ballot measure, which will expand Sound Transit's existing service network in the region. ST2 includes expansions to Sound Transit bus, commuter rail and light rail service and infrastructure. One element of this measure, and probably the most significant for the City of Shoreline, is the extension of Link light rail north from the University District to Lynnwood. This extension will pass through Shoreline.

Before Sound Transit can begin design and construction of the light rail extension, they need to undergo planning and environmental work, which is scheduled to be a multi-year process.

BACKGROUND: When the ST2 package was developed, it included several assumptions that were necessary in order to develop costs estimates for the proposed projects. One of these assumptions concerns the alignment of the Link light rail extension north of the University District to Northgate, Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood.

From Northgate north to Lynnwood, the ST2 conceptual plan identifies Interstate 5 as the alignment location. Two stations were programmed for Shoreline at NE 145th Street and NE 185th Street, with a 500 stall parking garage at each. The alignment was assumed to be entirely aerial, on the east side of Interstate 5 until it reached SW 200th Street in Snohomish County, where it would cross over to the west side.

Although these were the assumptions made as part of the package presented to voters, Sound Transit must undertake a thorough review of multiple alignments for the north light rail extension as part of the required federal and state environmental process. Sound Transit will compare the Interstate 5 alternative to other north-south options. In Shoreline, these are likely to include Aurora Avenue N, the Interurban Trail and 15th Avenue NE. This first stage, known as Project Development, has just begun with the selection of a consultant team to assist Sound Transit with this process. The Project Development stage is anticipated to last through 2014 and includes the following steps:

- Alternative analysis (AA) – Late 2010 through early 2011. This step will include the initial identification of multiple station locations along multiple alignments.

- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Conceptual Engineering – Mid 2011 through early 2012. The range of routes and stations will be narrowed and examined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Preliminary Engineering – Mid 2012 through 2014. A single route and set of stations, known as Sound Transit's Locally Preferred Alternative, will be selected.

Attachment A outlines Sound Transit's general planning, design and construction schedule for the north corridor extension.

Sound Transit is considering a public education process in advance of the AA later this summer and fall. The intent would be a series of public meetings to present information on how light rail may impact issues such as land use, economic development, zoning, station design, etc. The information would present examples from points further south, as well as examples from around the country. It would be a specific goal to keep these meetings on the general aspects of such issues and not get caught up with specific alignments, as that work will occur with the AA.

Some cities have made early requests to Sound Transit for them to study certain alignment and design issues as part of their planning process. Bellevue made this request as part of East Link. Several cities in the north corridor have already expressed their desire for a preferred alignment.

- As part of their Comprehensive Plan, Mountlake Terrace has identified a light rail station at approximately Interstate 5 and SW 236th Street to tie in with the recently constructed transit center.
- The City of Everett has taken the position that they do not want any alignment selected that forecloses the option to serve the Paine Field / SW Everett Manufacturing and Industrial Center when light rail is extended north of Lynnwood. This position was outlined in a comment letter to the Puget Sound Region Council on the draft final plan for Transportation 2040. They have not taken a position on the alignment for Phase 3 (north of Lynnwood), but want an analysis of alternative alignments done in the very near future to determine which will provide the greatest benefits. That work is funded in ST2.
- Lynnwood's City Center planning is a component of their Comprehensive Plan. They have adopted transportation plans that were recently completed that illustrate the preferred alignment and station locations in City Center. The routing south and north of City Center is less defined however, what is illustrated requires an I-5 routing consistent to what was approved with ST2 and a continuation north from City Center to Alderwood Mall and the Ash Way Park and Ride at 164th and I-5.
- In 2005, the City of Edmonds approved Resolution 1117, supporting Sound Transit Project Number N2. This project included a planning study from Ash Way to Everett Station which identifies an I-5 alignment. An I-5 alignment is the choice of the City of Edmonds.
- Seattle has not taken an official position on the light rail alignment north of Northgate. The I-5 corridor north of Northgate in Seattle is built and planned for single-family densities, including a couple of large parks that diminish the

ridership potential in this area. Seattle is interested in exploring alternatives that would serve existing and proposed higher density areas.

Snohomish County has not taken a position on the alignment at this time. Staff is aware of the significance of the north corridor light rail extension and has already begun working with Sound Transit and the other cities in the north corridor. Staff contacted the planning directors of all of the cities in the north corridor, as well as Snohomish County, and established a staff group that meets bi-monthly. In addition to planning directors, the group includes transportation planners, economic development managers, Sound Transit staff, public works directors and staff from PSRC. This group has met twice and is scheduled to meet again in June.

Sound Transit's Program Development schedule has the potential to influence planning efforts in Shoreline. The Comprehensive Plan update, tentatively set for final adoption by the end of 2011, will want to address the land use and transportation implications of the selected station area locations. This can be done after the alignment and station area location is determined, either through a future comprehensive plan amendment or via a subarea plan process. The current Comprehensive Plan does not state a preference for the light rail alignment.

The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) update, currently underway, will include a transit plan that discusses the light rail extension. Much of the TMP will be influenced by the light rail alignment and station locations, such as traffic impacts, bus redirection to serve light rail and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. At this time, the existing TMP does not include a stated preference for the light rail alignment or station locations. Nevertheless, there are some concerns with this issue that may bear early resolution, for example, by including a hypothetical preference in the draft TMP for evaluation.

The first concern is that if the City does not make some preferences known, we may lose opportunities in the future to state a strong opinion about light rail station locations. Getting both heavy rail and Sound Transit buses through Shoreline quickly in order to connect Snohomish County to Seattle has resulted in very little Sound Transit service available in Shoreline itself. We have a strong concern that the City's silence could easily be interpreted as not having much interest in station locations at all. This concern is somewhat heightened since Shoreline does not have any direct representation on the Sound Transit Board and, if budgets have to be trimmed, then the stations identified for Shoreline may really be at risk.

The second concern is if the City wants to make some preliminary suggestions, but would like to have some level of public participation to gather input, staff will not have the information and resources to properly conduct such an effort. Staff sees this as Sound Transit's lead.

In late May, staff met with Futurewise and their partners, GGLO and Transportation Choices Coalition, to understand where they may be coming from on this topic. It may be possible to work with them as part of the public education process if they can stay on the general approach and not get specific with alignment. However, they expressed a strong preference for an Interurban Trail/Aurora Avenue N alignment and they may not be able to provide an entirely objective presentation to the community.

RECOMMENDATION

At this time, we recommend that Council direct staff to undertake the following:

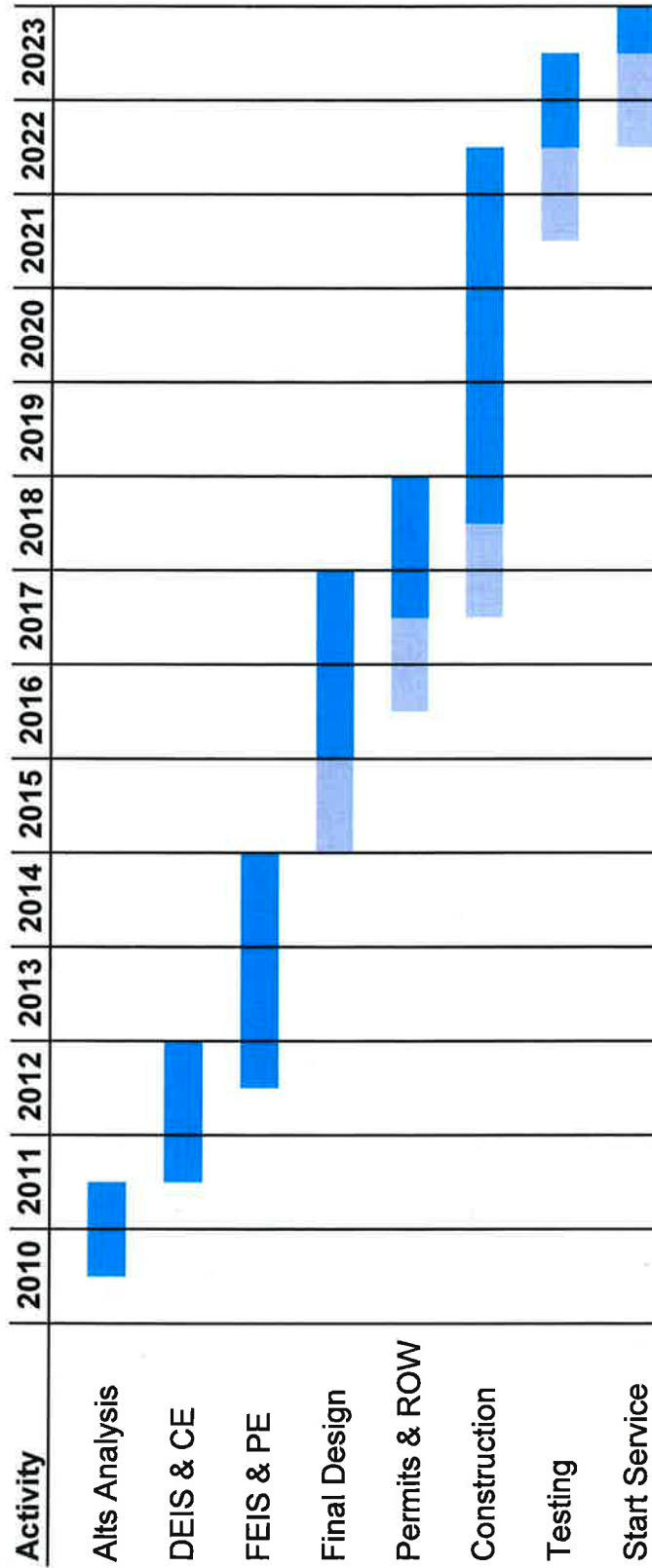
- Develop a series of preliminary issues for Council evaluation that would be passed along to Sound Transit for study. These would be higher level issues to correspond at this time with Sound Transit's level of review, such as evaluation of alternate route alignments and station locations..
- Work with ST to develop a public outreach and education program for Shoreline.
- Set up a meeting with Council and Sound Transit staff, including Joni Earl, CEO, and Matt Shelden, North Corridor Light Rail Development Manager, to further discuss the light rail alignment planning process.

Approved By: City Manager  City Attorney _____

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – North Corridor High Capacity Transit Schedule

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