

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**  
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

**AGENDA TITLE:** Sound Transit Update – North Corridor Transit Project  
**DEPARTMENT:** Public Works  
**PRESENTED BY:** Mark Relph, Public Works Director  
Kirk McKinley, Transportation Services Manager  
Alicia McIntire, Senior Transportation Planner  
**ACTION:** ☐ Ordinance ☐ Resolution ☐ Motion ☒ Discussion

**PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:**

Sound Transit is currently in the process of evaluating alternatives to extend high capacity transit north of Northgate. This extension is part of the 2008 voter approved Sound Transit 2 funding plan that will connect Shoreline to the light rail line. Currently under construction is the section from downtown Seattle to the University of Washington. The section to Northgate will follow.

As part of the required process to be eligible for federal funding, Sound Transit must evaluate several alignment and mode alternatives for high capacity transit in the North Corridor. The process began last fall and will continue through the environmental process, scheduled to be complete in 2014.

**RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

At this time, there is no significant financial impact to the City associated with this process, as it is being managed and funded by Sound Transit. Throughout the environmental review process, the City will need to participate in Sound Transit's process by continuing to provide technical and policy direction. Upon completion of this process and determination of the light rail alignment in 2014, the City, along with Sound Transit will need to engage the community in station area planning for the selected station locations and to identify appropriate mitigation for the station areas.

**RECOMMENDATION**

No action is required at this time. This report is for discussion purposes only. The Council is scheduled to discuss light rail guiding principles at their October 3 study session. Upon Council consensus on these principles, these will be forwarded to the Sound Transit Board for consideration as they move through the environmental process.

Approved By: City Manager ger City Attorney

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past several months of analysis and evaluation, Sound Transit has narrowed the mode and alignment alternatives for the North Corridor Transit project. Sound Transit staff will discuss these results with Council, explain the next steps in the evaluation process and answer questions from Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

In September 2010, Sound Transit began the planning process to extend high capacity transit from Northgate to Lynnwood. This extension is part of the 2008 voter approved Sound Transit 2 funding plan. The North Corridor Transit Project will connect Shoreline to Lynnwood in the north and to Northgate and points south by 2023. The existing light rail line that runs from Sea-Tac Airport to downtown Seattle is currently being extended to the University of Washington, with completion all the way to Northgate by 2021.

The electorate voted for and approved a light rail alignment on I-5, with potential stops at NE 145<sup>th</sup> and NE 185<sup>th</sup> Streets in Shoreline. However, in order to qualify for federal funding, Sound Transit is required to examine multiple high capacity transit modes, as well as corridor alignment alternatives, and potential station locations for the North Corridor. The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to select the alternatives that will be evaluated through the federal environmental process in late 2011 or early 2012. Sound Transit will make a final alignment decision in 2014 following completion of a National Environmental Policy Act/State Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement (NEPA/SEPA EIS) and preliminary engineering.

The process began with a wide field of alignment alternatives and three different mode options (traditional bus, bus rapid transit and light rail). With each level of evaluation, the review of the alternatives has become more technical and refined. As a result, different mode and alignment alternatives have been removed from consideration. Attachment A shows Sound Transit's schedule for the Alternatives Analysis (AA) portion of the North Corridor project and the alternative concepts that have been eliminated through the process. Sound Transit has recently completed their Level 2 screening process and will be presenting the results to Council at this meeting. City staff has been working with Sound Transit throughout this process providing technical feedback.

The Level 2 screening process will identify the most promising alternatives that will be studied in the environmental review process. Scoping for environmental review is scheduled to begin this fall. Upon completion of the scoping process, the alternative(s) to be evaluated in the EIS will be identified. The EIS will include multiple station locations within the vicinity of NE 145<sup>th</sup> and NE 185<sup>th</sup> St on I-5 and potentially stations on SR 99, if it is included in the EIS. Different aspects of the alignment, such as west and east side of I-5 will also be considered.

Ms. Joni Earl, CEO of Sound Transit, last visited Council on August 9, 2010, to explain the AA process just before it began. Ms. Earl is also scheduled to visit Council at the dinner meeting prior to this Council meeting.

## DISCUSSION

The extension of high capacity transit into Shoreline will greatly influence transit service in the City. It is assumed that this extension will come in the form of an extended light rail line north of Northgate and continuing to Lynnwood, as Sound Transit has eliminated all other mode alternatives from consideration. The alignment of the light rail line and station locations have the potential to greatly affect the surrounding neighborhoods, including land use patterns and traffic.

Upon completion of the Level 2 screening process, Sound Transit has reduced the alignment options to a mixed profile (elevated and at-grade) I-5 alignment and an entirely elevated Highway 99 alignment. Earlier in the AA process, the Highway 99 alternative was a combination of at-grade and elevated structures. This created a conflict between the Sound Transit goal of four minute peak period service frequency and being able to maintain a reasonable level of service for traffic at intersections. Trains would come too often at grade to manage the traffic effectively at intersections. In response to this determination, Sound Transit has developed a Highway 99 alternative that is entirely elevated.

The elevated Highway 99 represents an alternative that is reasonable to compare to I-5. The Highway 99 alternative is two miles longer than the I-5 alternative; the travel time is greater and includes an additional station in Seattle. By 2030, the I-5 alternative is projected to have greater ridership, including more new riders. The Highway 99 alternative is also significantly more expensive than the I-5 alternative.

Sound Transit submitted the AA to the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) for review in late July. After receiving FTA and public comments, as well as the completion of environmental scoping, a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) may be adopted by the Sound Transit Board by the end of 2011. If a LPA does not emerge, more than one alternative would then proceed into the EIS process. Sound Transit staff shared that an evaluation of the I-5 alignment in the EIS would likely include several crossing alternatives to get from the east side of I-5 (Northgate) to the west side (no later than Lynnwood). These options may include locating the NE 185<sup>th</sup> station on the west side of I-5, closer to Shoreline Center and stadium, and converting the Mountlake Terrace Freeway Station for light rail use.

The alignment options will serve different neighborhoods and, as a result, have differing impacts. As Sound Transit's review process continues, the City of Shoreline should be concerned with the following issues:

1. **Cost:** Each alignment alternative and the type of construction will have a different cost associated with it. The options for using the cost differences for enhancements or mitigations in less expensive alternatives, should they be available within the assumed budget for this project, should be considered. Cost overruns or decreased revenue could also potentially reduce the project scope. It is important to remember that the North King subarea funds the majority of the project investment in King County, but Snohomish County is also investing in the

project within Shoreline. Nevertheless, staff feels it imperative to retain two stations in Shoreline that include parking facilities.

2. **Travel Time:** Travel time for either alternative will be impacted by the length of the route, with the Highway 99 option being the longer route.
3. **Ridership:** Ridership will be impacted by a variety of features of light rail, such as origins, destinations, travel time/speed, population densities in the immediate vicinity of and farther from the stations and accessibility of the stations.
4. **Traffic Impacts:** It is possible that the two stations in Shoreline, regardless of the alignment decision, will include some level of parking facilities. Even if non-motorized and transit alternatives are available to provide transportation options to the stations, some riders will want to drive to the stations. Impacts to the arterial and local streets in the neighborhoods surrounding the stations are inevitable and must be mitigated.
5. **Accessibility:** The ability of riders to access the light rail stations will vary depending upon the station locations. Transit service may be able to more easily access some stations over others. The existence or provision of sidewalks and bicycle facilities has the potential to make non-motorized options safer and more appealing to light rail users.
6. **Social Equity:** Transit needs to serve a variety of purposes. It is a transportation option for persons who are unable to drive due to age, disability or other challenges, or because they cannot afford a car. It provides commuters that might otherwise drive with an option to leave their cars at home or at a park and ride. Roadways and cities are less congested when fewer cars are on the road and fewer greenhouse gases are emitted into the air when people choose transit over cars. The location, alignment and operation of light rail must achieve all of these aims.
7. **Transit Service:** Regardless of the alignment and station locations, one of the primary factors that will contribute to the success of light rail service will be bus service that serves outlying areas of the City and feeds into the light rail stations. The City of Shoreline and Sound Transit must work with Metro Transit and Community Transit to develop a plan and implementation strategy to orient bus service to feed light rail stations. The transit providers will need to examine the potential for duplication of service should light rail locate in a corridor served by BRT. In addition, providing a second high capacity corridor on I-5 to supplement BRT service on Highway 99 improves transit access for Shoreline residents and businesses.
8. **Land Uses:** Because of Shoreline's historic development patterns, any alignment alternative is likely to impact single-family neighborhoods, either through the direct placement of the stations and railway or due to the increased traffic travelling to and from stations. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process is likely to generate some discussion relative to land use, and City and Sound Transit staff will need to coordinate and define roles as these discussions occur.
9. **Business Impacts:** Clearly, the impacts to businesses are greater with the Highway 99 alignment. The elevated structure as proposed by Sound Transit would run up the west side of Aurora, requiring as much as 50 feet of additional right-of-way. Although the station locations may stimulate reinvestment, the impacts to existing businesses and the potential redevelopment of properties

between stations will be a challenge, especially with shallow depth of existing commercial zoning.

10. **Visual Impacts:** The location of the alignment and the design of the stations will have a visual impact on the surrounding properties. An aerial or a mixed profile alignment and the type of neighborhoods the route traverses will experience greatly different visual impacts.
11. **Noise:** As with visual impacts, different land uses will have varying levels of tolerance for the noise generated by the operation of light rail, as well as the traffic and buses travelling to the stations. Elevated or at-grade alignments create different levels of noise, as well.
12. **Development Potential:** The opportunities for redevelopment are different between the two alignments. The Shoreline Center and the NE 145<sup>th</sup> St. Park and Ride both represent opportunities for redevelopment on large, underutilized parcels adjacent to the stations (the stations will likely be located within the I-5 right-of-way). Transit oriented developments are very possible at these locations. The right-of-way acquisition necessary to accommodate the Highway 99 alignment will result in shallow lots on the west side of the roadway, with very little opportunity to redevelop. Due to the existing smaller size of parcels along both sides of the Highway 99 corridor, consolidation of existing parcels will be needed to create parcels large enough to create significant redevelopment.

### **STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH**

Sound Transit has managed the public outreach for this process. Early AA scoping was undertaken in September – October 2010. Three public workshops were held in North Seattle, Shoreline and Lynnwood, as well as one agency scoping meeting, with over 200 people attending the workshops. More than 260 online surveys were completed and over 90 comments were received via mail or email. Sound Transit has also briefed various business and community groups throughout the AA process. Additional public comment opportunities will be available during the environmental process.

### **COUNCIL GOAL(S) ADDRESSED**

This project addresses Council Goal 2: Provide safe, efficient and effective infrastructure to support our land use, transportation and surface water plans, as one of the major objectives of the Goal is to work with Sound Transit, neighboring cities, regional agencies and Shoreline neighborhoods to implement the Sound Transit II plan to bring light rail through Shoreline

### **RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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and coordinate with Sound Transit to identify appropriate mitigation for the station areas. These costs should be considered in light of recent budget impacts experienced by Sound Transit, due to the economic downturn and the potential for additional mitigation funding, should a lesser cost alternative be adopted.

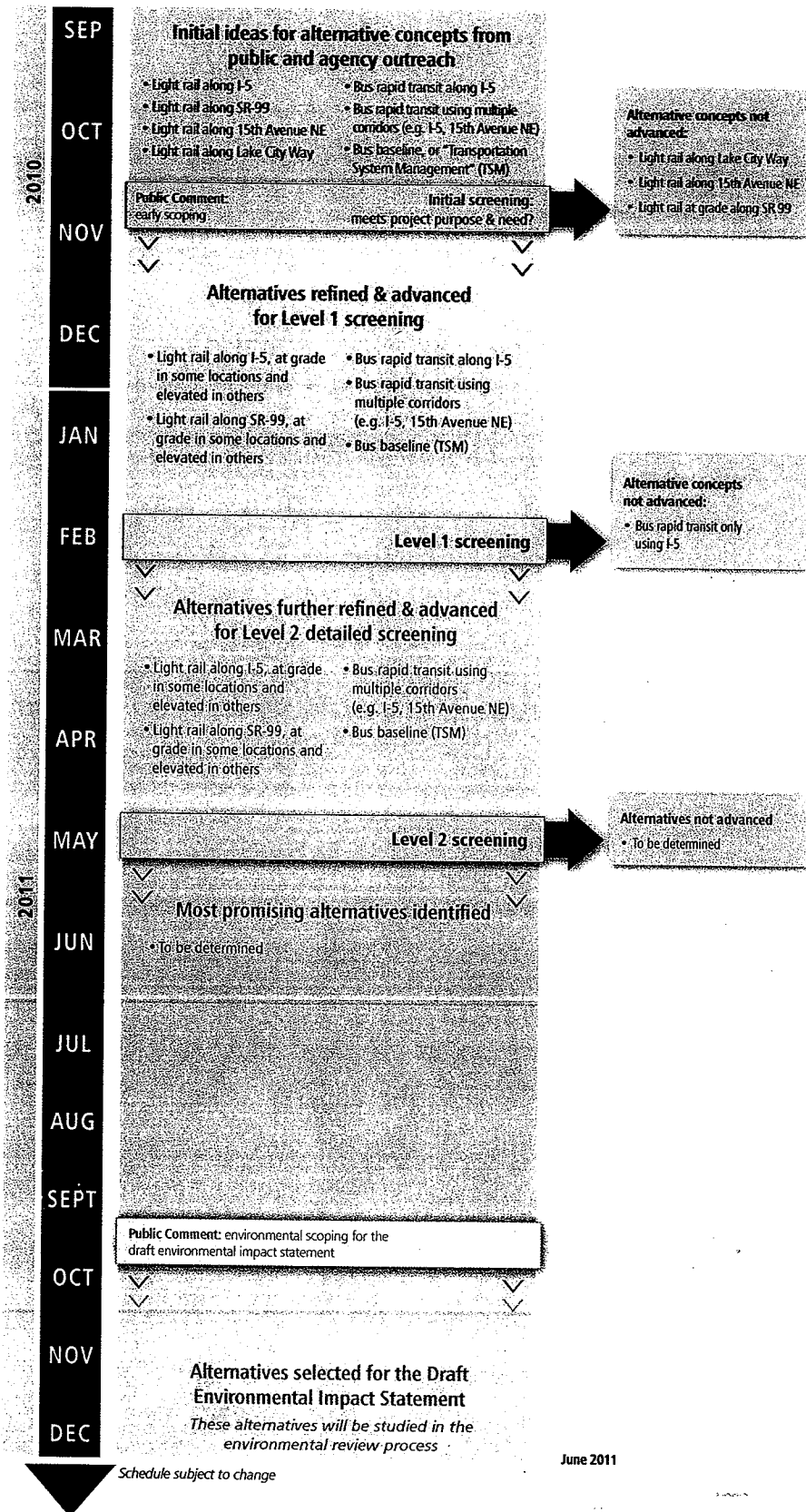
### **RECOMMENDATION**

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Sound Transit Alternatives Analysis Schedule

## Screening potential alternative concepts (Alternatives Analysis)



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