

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: Council Approval to Finalize Comments on Light Rail Draft Environmental Impact Statement

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

PRESENTED BY: Kirk McKinley, Transportation Services Manager
Alicia McIntire, Senior Transportation Planner

ACTION: ☐ **Ordinance** ☐ **Resolution** ☒ **X** **Motion** ☐ **Discussion**

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

Sound Transit is currently in the planning and design process for the Lynnwood Link light rail extension north of Northgate. The light rail line will travel along I-5 and include two stops in Shoreline. Light rail represents a significant change to transit service in Shoreline. The City has been extensively engaged in Sound Transit's planning, environmental and public outreach processes to determine the alignment and station locations.

Sound Transit has released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Lynnwood Link Extension. The DEIS identifies and evaluates the impacts of several different alignments for the project, including six possible options in King County. The alignment through Shoreline is along the east side of I-5 and includes elevated and at-grade options. Potential station locations in Shoreline include NE 145th Street, NE 155th Street and NE 185th Street. The DEIS examines the impacts associated with several topics including transportation, land use, noise, visual and acquisitions. Review of the DEIS includes a 60 day public comment period that ends on September 23, 2013. Sound Transit is requesting Council input on the alignment options and station locations examined in the DEIS, as well as the identified potential impacts and possible mitigation.

The DEIS does not include a recommended alternative for the project. The Sound Transit Board will use the information developed in the DEIS, Council's input, as well as feedback received from other jurisdictions and the public to develop a Preferred Alternative that will be carried through the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) process. Staff is seeking direction from Council regarding the development of DEIS comments and recommendations for the alignment, stations and mitigation. The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to identify the Preferred Alternative for the project in October. The FEIS will identify appropriate mitigation for the station areas. The FEIS is scheduled to be released in late 2014.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with tonight's discussion. There is no significant financial impact to the City associated with this process, as it is being managed and funded by Sound Transit. The City has been and will continue to participate throughout the EIS process by providing technical and policy direction. Staff has reviewed Sound Transit's DEIS and will participate in the development of the FEIS, including identification of appropriate mitigation for the station areas. This will require continued dedication of City staff resources. Upon completion of the EIS process and determination of the final alignment and station locations in 2014/2015, the City, along with Sound Transit, will need to engage the community in site specific planning for the selected station locations.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council approve the attached list of comments, recommendations and mitigation measures (Attachment A) for staff to formalize and transmit to the Sound Transit Board.

Approved By: City Manager **DT** City Attorney **IS**

BACKGROUND

Sound Transit is currently in the process of planning and design of the Lynnwood Link light rail extension north of Northgate. The light rail line will travel along I-5 and include two stops in Shoreline. Light rail represents a significant change to transit service in Shoreline. The City has been extensively engaged in Sound Transit's planning, environmental and public outreach processes to date to determine the alignment and station locations currently under consideration.

Staff presented their findings and initial recommendations to Council on August 12, 2013. A description of the station options, alignment alternatives and issues of concern were outlined in the staff report which can be found at <http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/cck/council/staffreports/2013/staffreport081213-8a.pdf>. The DEIS can be found at <http://www.soundtransit.org/Projects-and-Plans/Lynnwood-Link-Extension/Lynnwood-Link-Document-Archive/Lynnwood-Draft-Environmental-Impact-Statement>.

DISCUSSION

As outlined in the August 12 staff report and presentation, there are several issues of concern for the City associated with the alignment and station locations selected for light rail. Because the alternatives included in the DEIS were developed to identify the range of design options, they have several components that can be combined in ways beyond those specifically packaged in the DEIS.

Attachment A summarizes the station options, DEIS comments and issues for mitigation that staff recommends Council approve to be forwarded to Sound Transit. These will be formalized in a letter from the Mayor and submitted to Sound Transit as the City's official response to the DEIS. Staff is continuing to identify detailed mitigation and will include site specific comments in the letter where applicable. Some examples of these types of specific comments are provided in Attachment A. Staff will advocate for the highest levels of mitigation for Shoreline. It is expected that staff will continue to work with Sound Transit through development of the FEIS to detail the specific mitigation at the stations and elsewhere in the City.

Although Council has identified NE 145th Street as the preferred station location over NE 155th Street station, comments are included for NE 155th Street for the Sound Transit Board's consideration. The formal comment letter sent to the Sound Transit Board will restate and emphasize Council's preference for the NE 145th Street station.

At the August 12 meeting, Council discussed several issues which have been incorporated into the staff recommendation. They include:

- Compliance with the City's adopted stormwater management requirements
- Development of off-street transit loading and unloading facilities at the NE 145th Street and NE 155th Street stations
- Impacts associated with a lengthy closure of NE 185th Street for bridge reconstruction
- Shared use by the Shoreline School District of the NE 185th Street parking facility (should it be located on the west side of I-5) and
- Commercial uses in parking structures (subject to Council direction).

Council briefly discussed the issue of co-locating commercial uses in the street level of parking structures. This is an issue that would be appropriate for staff to explore as part of the subarea planning process. Should Council direct staff to include this as a work item, the DEIS comment letter will notify Sound Transit that the City is considering this issue.

Staff followed up with Sound Transit staff regarding the following issues that arose at the August 12 meeting.

- Sound Transit staff did not discuss opportunities to utilize the Shoreline School District parking lot at 5th Avenue NE and NE 185th Street for their parking structure. The primary reason is that Sound Transit has been working to minimize right-of-way acquisition and utilize the I-5 right-of-way to the maximum extent possible. Location of the west side parking structure primarily within the I-5 right-of-way, as proposed, achieves these goals.
- Traffic is expected to increase on NE 185th Street in conjunction with the station location. According to the DEIS, the 2035 traffic volumes near the NE 185th Street station are projected to increase by 295-370 vehicles in the AM peak hour and 278-345 vehicles in the PM peak hour. These volumes include vehicles using the park and ride, drop off/pick up and busses.
- The Shoreline Fire Department has expressed their concerns to Sound Transit about the impacts to operations should a station be located at NE 155th Street. Should the presence of the light rail station so greatly impact the fire station as to render it inoperable, Sound Transit would be responsible for the costs associated with relocation. Several factors, such as changes to access, property acquisition or lost functional and operational requirements, would need to be considered before it is determined that the fire station would be eligible for relocation.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Sound Transit has managed the public outreach for the EIS process. Three public meetings, as well as one agency meeting, were held in October 2011 for the EIS scoping process, including one at the Shoreline Conference Center which was attended by about 100 people.

As part of the scoping process, Sound Transit requested comments from the public and agencies identifying the issues they should address in the EIS process. The City of Shoreline submitted a scoping comment letter identifying several issues the City wanted to see addressed in the EIS.

Throughout October 2011, the City went through a process to develop guiding principles to assist Council in identifying a preferred light rail alignment. Staff was present at the EIS scoping meeting in Shoreline as part of the public outreach associated with developing the guiding principles. These principles were approved by Council on October 24, 2011 and the I-5 alignment was identified as the City's preferred alignment on November 14, 2011. The Sound Transit Board identified I-5 as the light rail alignment in December.

As part of the screening process, Sound Transit staff held a series of “drop in” sessions in March 2012, including three in the City of Shoreline. These meetings provided the public with an opportunity to learn where the light rail route could be located along I-5, see where stations are being considered and ask questions of project staff. Sound Transit staff provided Council with an update on the DEIS process on April 2, 2012. Council sent a letter to Sound Transit in April 2012 identifying NE 145th Street and NE 185th Street as the preferred station locations.

In an effort to further promote awareness of the Lynnwood Link Extension, Sound Transit, along with City staff, was present at several summer 2012 events in Shoreline including Swingin’ Summer Eve, Celebrate Shoreline and a Farmers’ Market. Sound Transit has given presentations to several neighborhood associations including Echo Lake, Meridian, North City, Briarcrest, Ridgecrest, Ballinger, Highland Terrace, Richmond Highlands and the Council of Neighborhoods and participated in the City’s May 22, 2013 open house that kicked off station area planning efforts. Sound Transit staff also shared a booth with Shoreline staff at Swingin’ Summer Eve on July 24, 2013.

Sound Transit staff presented the findings of the DEIS to Council on July 29, 2013. Staff presented additional information to Council on August 12, 2013.

Sound Transit hosted four open houses/public hearings, including one in Shoreline on August 22, 2013. Staff from Sound Transit was available to answer questions and receive public input. Interested parties could also provide individual testimony directly to a court reporter.

COUNCIL GOAL(S) ADDRESSED

This project addresses Council Goal 3: Prepare for Two Light Rail Stations.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with tonight’s discussion. There is no significant financial impact to the City associated with this process, as it is being managed and funded by Sound Transit. The City has been and will continue to participate throughout the EIS process by providing technical and policy direction. Staff has reviewed Sound Transit’s DEIS and will participate in the development of the FEIS, including identification of appropriate mitigation for the station areas. This will require continued dedication of City staff resources. Upon completion of the EIS process and determination of the final alignment and station locations in 2014/2015, the City, along with Sound Transit, will need to engage the community in site specific planning for the selected station locations.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council approve the attached list of comments, recommendations and mitigation measures (Attachment A) for staff to formalize and transmit to the Sound Transit Board.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Lynnwood Link Extension DEIS Comments and Recommendation

ATTACHMENT A

LYNNWOOD LINK EXTENSION DEIS COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION

NE 145th Street Station

Station recommendation

- Develop a station with associated parking facilities located just north of the overpass, primarily in the vegetated area between the bridge and a relocated northbound on-ramp (as shown in Alternative A3, Option 2). Of the two options presented in the DEIS, this one provides for a more compact station and parking design and requires fewer property acquisitions.

DEIS comments and issues for mitigation

- Improved pedestrian facilities: The sidewalks on NE 145th Street that would serve the station are substandard, do not meet ADA requirements and often contain barriers to travel, such as utility poles and mailboxes. The pedestrian environment crossing the I-5 overpass is also uncomfortable, with narrow sidewalks and no buffer between pedestrians and vehicles. In order to facilitate pedestrian access to the station, sidewalks need to be reconstructed on both sides of the street and across the overpass.

Example: Construct/reconstruct sidewalks on NE 145th Street from 1st Avenue NE to 8th Avenue NE to Shoreline City Standards. This is a reasonable walking zone to connect nearby residents and school attendees along a busy and severely substandard arterial street walkway to the station at NE 145th Street.

- Transit patron safety: Bus service to the station will be critical to provide an option for those who cannot or do not wish to drive in order to access light rail. Depending upon how busses are routed to serve the station, there needs to be safe facilities for riders boarding and exiting busses and crossing streets, where necessary. This will be of particular importance if all bus stops are located on-street rather than within the station area. Examine options for development of a transit patron loading and unloading area that is off-street in order to minimize street crossings and maximize safety for riders.
- Bicycle safety: It is unlikely that significant bicycle improvements will be installed on 145th Street in conjunction with the station development. However, bicyclists are likely to access the station via 5th Avenue NE, as bicycle lanes currently exist on NE 155th Street (and will be extended east to 15th Avenue NE by the City in 2014).

Example: Install bicycle facilities and improvements on 5th Avenue NE, Meridian Avenue N and other routes bicyclists will use to access the station. The conflicts

between bicyclists and busses should also be minimized and busses cannot block bicycle lanes.

- Traffic flow and interchange improvements: N/NE 145th Street and the interchange are currently congested during the peak periods. It is anticipated that traffic volumes will increase with the presence of the light rail station (as well as general growth and toll diversion) and busses will have a difficult time navigating through the congestion. Improvements that help relieve this congestion will be required.
- Thornton Creek protection: Sound Transit has designed all of the alternatives at NE 145th Street to be elevated in part to minimize impacts to Thornton Creek. Measures should be taken during construction to ensure the creek is not impacted.

NE 185th Street Station

Station recommendation

- Develop an at-grade station on the east side of I-5 with associated parking facilities located on the west side of I-5, primarily within the I-5 right-of-way and mostly below the grade of NE 185th Street and 5th Avenue NE (as shown in Alternative A1, Option 1). Of the three options presented in the DEIS, this one requires the fewest property acquisitions.

DEIS comments and issues for mitigation

- Improved pedestrian facilities: Sidewalks already exist in much of the area around the station location. These sidewalks need to be adequate for the anticipated pedestrian volumes. Existing sidewalks may need to be upgraded and new sidewalks constructed. Should the parking structure be located on the west side of the freeway, pedestrian facilities that cross the freeway must be safe, comfortable and provide weather protection. This may come in the form of significant improvements or reconstruction of the NE 185th Street bridge or construction of a separate pedestrian overcrossing from the parking structure across I-5 to the station. The bridge should provide a strong connection to the Shoreline Center.

Example: Construct sidewalks on NE 180th Street, 10th Avenue NE and NE 185th Street. This is a reasonable walking zone to connect nearby residents for riders coming from North City and east of the station.

- Upgrades to the NE 185th Street bridge: The NE 185th Street bridge will need improvements to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, busses and vehicles. One of the at-grade station alternatives anticipates total reconstruction of the NE 185th Street bridge, as it will impact the bridge abutment on the east side of I-5. Construction that will last 9-12 months will have significant impacts to the community. It will eliminate a major east-west access roadway and result in

additional congestion at NE 175th Street, as drivers utilize this roadway as a substitute. Shoreline will not accept closure of this key arterial corridor.

The DEIS identifies a 24-inch diameter water line crossing at NE 185th Street (this is incorrectly identified as a Shoreline Water District water line; it is a Seattle Public Utilities water line). Any modifications to or replacement of the NE 185th Street bridge must be sure not to impact this line or disrupt service to customers.

- Transit facilities and patron safety: As with the NE 145th Station, bus service will be critical to provide an option for those who cannot or do not wish to drive in order to access light rail. The NE 185th Station is likely to serve as more of a transit center, with Community Transit likely to terminate their Swift BRT service at the NE 185th Street station. The bus facilities at this station are likely to be off-street and need to be adequate to provide ample space for the various routes serving it. Additionally, there needs to be safe facilities for riders boarding and exiting busses and crossing streets, where necessary.
- Bicycle safety: N/NE 185th Street currently has bicycle lanes from Midvale Avenue N to 1st Avenue NE (The bicycle lanes will be continued to 10th Avenue NE this summer) and would be one of the primary bicycle routes serving the station. Bicyclists are likely to access NE 185th Street and the station via 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE and 7th Avenue NE. Bicyclists coming from North City and east of the station are likely to travel on NE 180th Street, 10th Avenue NE and NE 185th Street. Improvements on these and other routes bicyclists will use to access the station should be installed. The conflicts between bicyclists and busses should also be minimized and busses cannot block bicycle lanes.

Example: Install bicycle facilities and improvements on NE 180th Street, 10th Avenue NE, NE 185th Street and other routes bicyclists will use to access the station. The conflicts between bicyclists and busses should also be minimized and busses cannot block bicycle lanes.

- Visual impacts: The visual impacts of an elevated station or at-grade station are quite different, as are the impacts of a parking structure on the west or east side of the freeway. Because of the grade difference between I-5 and 5th Avenue NE on the west side of the freeway, approximately half of the parking structure on the west side would be below the level of 5th Avenue NE (include photo simulations). The visual impact of this is significantly less than a structure or surface lot on the east side. Similarly, an at-grade alignment that goes under the NE 185th Street bridge is much less visible than an elevated alignment that would go over NE 185th Street.
- Roadway improvements/reconstruction: The at-grade alternatives and the option for a parking structure on the west side of the freeway will require reconstruction of portions of 7th Avenue NE south of NE 185th Street and 5th Avenue NE on the west side of the freeway. Any roadway improvements will need to be in compliance with the City's road standards, including installation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Example: Improvements to 5th Avenue NE and 7th Avenue NE shall provide for the greatest nonmotorized transportation opportunities and should extend as far as possible to help create continuous systems. These intersections may also need to be signalized subject to additional review and evaluation by Shoreline and Sound Transit.

- Shared use of the parking facility: A parking structure that is located on the west side of I-5 could be jointly used by the Shoreline Center, particularly visitors to the Shoreline Stadium. The potential for shared use during off-peak hours should be explored to maximize the public benefit of this facility.

NE 155th Street Station

Station recommendation

- Emphasize preference for NE 145th Street over NE 155th Street
- Develop a station as shown in Alternatives A5 and A7

DEIS comments and issues for mitigation

- Improved pedestrian facilities: The sidewalks on NE 155th Street that would serve the station would need to be upgraded. In locations where they do not exist, such as 1st Avenue NE, they would need to be constructed. The pedestrian environment crossing under the freeway is uncomfortable as it is dark with narrow sidewalks. New and improved pedestrian crossings of NE 155th Street at 1st Avenue NE and at the bus stops are also needed. In order to facilitate pedestrian access to the station, pedestrian facilities will need upgrades. Any walkways from the parking structure to the station must be safe, comfortable and provide weather protection.

Example: Construct sidewalks on NE 1st Avenue NE from NE 145th Street to NE 155th Street. This is a reasonable walking zone to connect nearby residents and for riders coming the south of the station.

- Transit patron safety: As with the other two stations, bus service will be critical to provide an option for those who cannot or do not wish to drive in order to access light rail. Depending upon how busses are routed to serve the station, there needs to be safe facilities for riders boarding and exiting busses and crossing streets, where necessary. This will be of particular importance if all bus stops are located on-street rather than within the station area. Examine options for development of a transit patron loading and unloading area that is off-street in order to minimize street crossings and maximize safety for riders.
- Traffic, transit and bicycle volumes: A light rail station at this location will result in significant increases to traffic volumes over what currently exists. Additionally, transit and bicycle traffic will increase. Improvements to ensure safety for all users will be required.

- Bicycle safety: N/NE 155th Street currently has bicycle lanes from Midvale Avenue N to 5th Avenue NE (and will be extended east to 15th Avenue NE by the City in 2014) and would be one of the primary bicycle routes serving the station. Bicyclists are likely to access NE 155th Street and the station via 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE and Meridian Avenue N. Improvements on these and other routes bicyclists will use to access the station should be installed. The conflicts between bicyclists and busses should also be minimized.

Example: Install bicycle facilities and improvements on NE 155th Street, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE, Meridian Avenue N and other routes bicyclists will use to access the station. The conflicts between bicyclists and busses should also be minimized and busses cannot block bicycle lanes.

- Fire Station Access: A station at NE 155th Street may interfere with the existing Fire Station just east of I-5 and therefore may negatively impact response times due to increased bus and vehicle traffic the station would generate. Depending on the specific design of the rail line itself and/or the station and the subsequent increase in traffic, the fire department may have to consider moving the facility altogether.

Alignment

Alignment recommendation

- Construct an alignment that is at-grade as much as possible in order to minimize cost, visual and noise impacts.

DEIS comments and issues for mitigation

- All elevated sections of the alignment need to be designed in a manner that does not impede any future modifications to the interchanges at NE 145th Street, NE 175th Street and NE 205th Street.

System wide Issues and Improvements

- Bus service: Improved bus service that feeds each station will be imperative. Although the specific number of routes and frequency of service is not known at this time, the stations need to be designed to handle the maximum bus service that is forecast to serve them. Because light rail will so fundamentally change bus service in Shoreline, a comprehensive evaluation of all transit service in the City is needed to ensure that the stations have adequate bus facilities, other facilities in the City are adequately served and that feeder service to the stations is serving all neighborhoods in Shoreline. As part of Shoreline's station area planning process this and next year, the City will identify policies addressing future transit needs throughout Shoreline once light rail service begins. This process will identify levels of service and areas the City wants to see served when future service changes are implemented. This will be a coordinated

process with Metro, Community Transit and Sound Transit that looks at their current policies for service distribution and redistribution of service hours in conjunction with commencement of light rail service. The expected outcome will be an agreement with Metro, Community Transit and Sound Transit on policies that will direct future transit service integration.

- **Traffic impacts:** For each station, there will be impacts to nearby intersections that need to be mitigated. The specific improvements will be designed in coordination with the City's Transportation Planning Manager and Traffic Engineer to ensure they meet the City's design and operational standards. Additionally, cut-through traffic on local streets is likely. Measures that are designed to prevent or minimize this cut-through traffic will be required. Finally, any impacts to the roadway network that modify streets need to maintain the existing street grid and not result in new dead end streets.
- **Roadway preservation:** Streets serving the stations will experience additional traffic and more busses will utilize them. Additionally, construction equipment is likely to impact the condition of roadways that are part of haul routes. The additional vehicle use and the added weight of more busses will cause damage to City roads and cause them to deteriorate more quickly. An assessment of the pavement condition for roads serving the station should be performed to determine if overlay work is likely to be needed to support the additional volumes.
- **NE 195th Street Bridge:** All of the alternatives will require demolition and reconstruction of the NE 195th Street pedestrian and bicycle bridge. Reconstruction of the bridge should include: improvements to the approaches that remove the existing bollards and improve accessibility; connections to 5th Avenue NE on the west side and a connection through the school through the park on the east side (within the I-5 right-of-way); improved lighting; protection for users; and graffiti proof materials. The bridge may be a location where Sound Transit is able to install art. Finally, the bridge should be wide enough to provide access for emergency or maintenance vehicles. Should the NE 185th Street bridge also need to be replaced, the construction on both bridges should be staggered so as to minimize detours and inconvenience to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Noise and vibration:** All noise and vibration impacts associated with operations must be fully mitigated. Noise from construction, including night work, must be mitigated to the fullest extent possible.
- **Cost:** The different alternatives were to identify a variety of design options but do not necessarily show the full range of project costs. The options presented could be combined in a manner in which the costs exceed those presented in the DEIS. The options selected by the Sound Transit Board need to include two light rail stations in Shoreline. Should funding be available, a third station in King County is acceptable, however, the quality of the stations and passenger facilities in Shoreline should not be compromised in order to fund the third station.

- Bicycle connections: In areas where there is connected surplus right-of-way that cannot be utilized for redevelopment purposes, separated bicycle facilities (such as a path adjacent to I-5) should be constructed to facilitate bicycle travel to the stations.
- Park impacts: The alignment is going to impact a portion of Ridgecrest Park, as some land on the west side of the park will be acquired for the rail line. Because the park property was purchased with Forward Thrust funding, a like amount of park space will need to be provided to the City by Sound Transit. Sound Transit will need to work with the City's Parks Department to identify the appropriate location and type of mitigation for this impact.
- Stormwater management: All construction and improvements must comply with the City's adopted regulations for stormwater management.
- Retail uses at parking facilities: As part of its light rail station subarea planning process, the City will explore the creation of development regulations addressing the location of commercial/retail uses as part of parking structures (subject to Council direction).