

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	Discussing Potential Changes to Community Transit Blue Line		
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works		
PRESENTED BY:	Nora Daley-Peng, Senior Transportation Planner		
ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

The Community Transit (CT) *Swift* Blue Line launched in 2009 and currently provides service primarily along State Route 99 (Aurora Avenue) between Everett Station at the northern end and the Aurora Village Transit Center (AVTC) at the southern end. In 2024, CT intends to extend the *Swift* Blue Line to integrate with Sound Transit’s Link light rail system, which will include new stations in Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood. Extending the Blue Line will move the existing AVTC terminus to the Shoreline North/185th Link Light Rail Station (Shoreline North/185th Station). As Sound Transit (ST) builds Link light rail to Snohomish County, the Blue Line expansion will help provide access to the transit regional network and connect communities.

Tonight, Emmett Heath, Chief Executive Officer of CT, will present an overview of the Blue Line Expansion project, analysis of three proposed alternative routes for the Blue Line in Shoreline, and next steps toward project implementation.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no direct financial impact regarding tonight’s Council discussion. CT is leading the Blue Line Expansion project in close collaboration with the City of Shoreline, as well as partner jurisdictions and transportation agencies along the project corridor. The design of the Blue Line Expansion will not include construction of all the elements of the City’s adopted 185th Multimodal Corridor Strategy (185th MCS). If future improvements are desired, reflective of the 185th MCS Preferred Option, then the City will need to seek additional capital funding.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no action required with this agenda item as this report is for discussion purposes only. Tonight is an opportunity for Council to ask questions of CT staff and provide feedback on the Blue Line Expansion alternative routes in Shoreline. Staff recommends that the City support CT’s selection of Alternative B as the proposed alignment for the near-term implementation of the Blue Line extension to the Shoreline North/185th Station by 2024. Recognizing that it will take time, funding, and partnerships to implement the 185th MCS Preferred Option as well as redevelop the

Shoreline Park and Ride at 192nd Street (Shoreline P-n-R) as a potential Transit Oriented Development (TOD) location, staff recommends that CT continue to be open and flexible to working with the City and Metro in the future on potentially shifting to Blue Line service route to Alternative A.

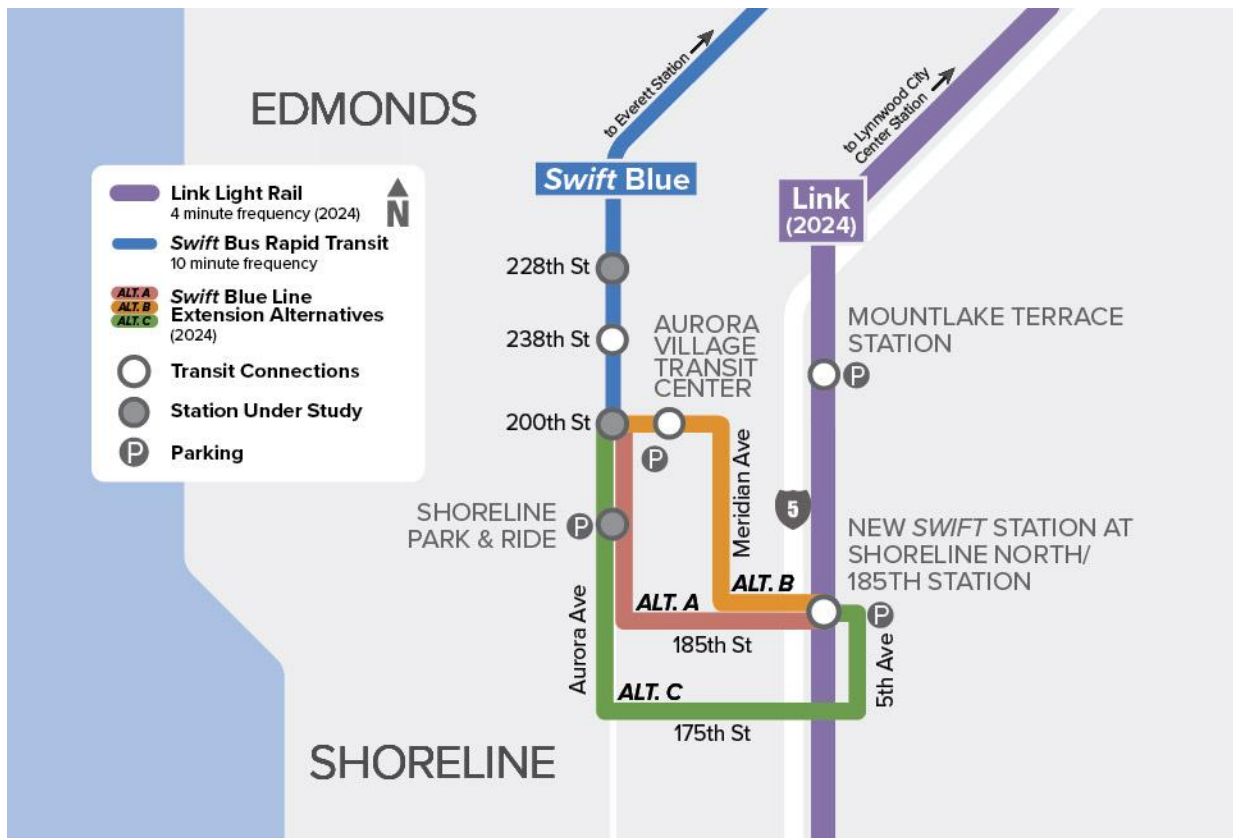
Approved By: City Manager **DT** City Attorney **MK**

INTRODUCTION

CT launched the Blue Line in 2009 and currently provides service primarily along Aurora Avenue between Everett Station at the northern end and the AVTC at the southern end. In 2024, CT intends to extend the Blue Line to integrate with ST's Link light rail system, which will include new stations in Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood. Extending the Blue Line will move the existing AVTC terminus to the Shoreline North/185th Station. As ST builds Link light rail to Snohomish County, the Blue Line expansion will help provide access to the regional network and connect communities.

Pertaining specifically to Shoreline, CT is considering extending the Blue Line to connect to the Shoreline North/185th Station by studying the three alternatives (see descriptions and map below).

- **Alternative A** - No station at AVTC, instead continue south on Aurora Avenue to 185th St and end at Shoreline North/185th Station. May include new stations on Aurora Avenue at N 200th Street and the Shoreline P-n-R.
- **Alternative B** - Keep AVTC, express service between AVTC and Shoreline North/185th Station is proposed along N 200th Street to Meridian Avenue N to N 185th Street with no new stations in between.
- **Alternative C** - No station at AVTC, instead continue south on Aurora Avenue to 175th St, then east to 5th Ave and end at Shoreline North/185th Station. May include new stations on Aurora Ave at N 200th Street and the Shoreline P-n-R.



BACKGROUND

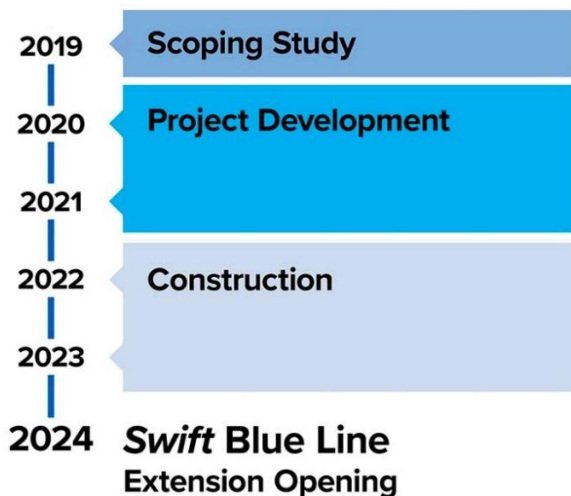
CT is building a network of *Swift* Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services in Snohomish County. *Swift* BRT provides fast and frequent service by adhering to a set of design principles, which includes unique branding of stations and vehicles as well as transit priority treatments including Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes, queue jump lanes, and Transit Signal Priority (TSP). *Swift* BRT stations incorporate features designed to support rapid service and establish a sense of place, such as permanent structures with raised platforms, ticket vending machines, shelters, seating, and Passenger Information Displays (PIDs).

The *Swift* Blue Line Expansion Program, which began in late 2019, is an effort by CT to not only extend the line to the Link LRT network, but also to evaluate the existing corridor for potential improvements to speed, reliability, and access. The *Swift* Blue Line carries more riders each day than any other route in the CT network and, with these improvements, expects to carry many more riders in the future. As such, CT intends to work with its jurisdictional partners to build on the successes achieved by the Blue Line to date so that it remains a viable and effective transportation option well into the future.

Project Schedule

The Blue Line Expansion project will take approximately four years to complete (see project timeline below). The project's Scoping Study phase began in December 2019. While the time and complexity of the Project Development and Construction phases will be dependent on the scope of the program as determined by the Scoping Study, CT expects that the Project Development phase, which includes the project's engineering and design efforts, may take approximately 18 months to complete and the Construction phase may take 18 to 24 months to complete. Under this timeline, CT anticipates the Blue Line extension launching when ST Link light rail service starts at Shoreline North/185th Station in 2024.

Project Timeline



Relevant Plans and Policies

185th Street Station Subarea Plan

The adopted 185th Street Station Subarea Plan incorporates transit-oriented development principles to encourage mixed-use residential and commercial development to maximize multimodal access to the light rail and bus transit. Zoning allows for increased density and commercial development. This allows more residents, workers, and visitors to access the light rail station and bus transit along the 185th Street corridor.

185th MCS

On October 28, 2019, the City Council adopted the Preferred Option for the 185th MCS through a comprehensive process that included community, stakeholder, agency involvement, and technical analysis. The 185th Street Corridor is anchored by the future light rail station on the east side of Interstate 5 (I-5) and composed of three roads: N/NE 185th Street, 10th Avenue NE, and NE 180th Street. The 185th MCS vision is future-focused and supports the needs of multiple transportation modes including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit operators and riders. CT and King County Metro (Metro) were actively engaged stakeholders throughout the 185th MCS process and helped shape the vision for a frequent and reliable transit service along the 185th Street Corridor. To realize the 185th MCS vision of frequent and reliable transit service along the 185th Street Corridor, the City is ultimately interested in having CT and Metro transit service run in BAT lanes along 185th Street from Aurora Avenue to the Shoreline North/185th Station when the 185th MCS Preferred Option is implemented.

Central Shoreline Subarea Plan Report

In March 2001, the City Council selected the Ronald Subarea - later renamed Central Shoreline Subarea - as the 2001 subarea planning project. The Central Shoreline Subarea encompasses all properties along Aurora Avenue N between N 192nd Street and just south of N 175th Street that are not designated low density residential. The goal of the project was to develop a subarea plan that acts as an incentive for redevelopment while protecting nearby residential neighborhoods. Particularly relevant to transit planning, the Central Shoreline Subarea Plan Report includes two TOD concepts for the Shoreline Park-n-Ride that maintains the park and ride function while adding housing, offices, services or commercial uses close to the heart of Shoreline. In order to synergize the benefits of the potential TOD redevelopment of the Shoreline P-n-R, the City is interested in integrating access to CT and Metro transit service in its site development plan.

2018-2023 Economic Development Strategic Plan

The City's Economic Development Strategic Plan designates four main "City-Shaping Areas" where placemaking projects should be focused to trigger large-scale redevelopment and growth, the first being the Aurora Corridor about which the plan states: "Strengthen Shoreline's Signature Boulevard – leveraging the City's \$140 million Aurora Corridor Project by facilitating constant investment along its six miles of improved frontage." The Plan also commits the City to Placemaking Projects in Neighborhood Commercial Centers to create identity, encourage walkability, expand

housing options, and provide needed goods and services. “Echo Lake at Aurora & N 192nd” is one of the six nodes in the City where this is to take place.

Complete Streets

The City’s Complete Streets Ordinance No. 755 requires the accommodation of all transportation modes within the public right of way. Therefore, the City is interested in accommodating the safe movement of pedestrians and bicyclists (and other personal wheeled devices) to and from future Blue Line stations.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

CT conducted the following outreach activities to engage the public and get their input on the Blue Line Expansion study. For more details about the project and the outreach process can be found at the following webpage link: [Community Transit Swift Blue Line Expansion 2024](#).

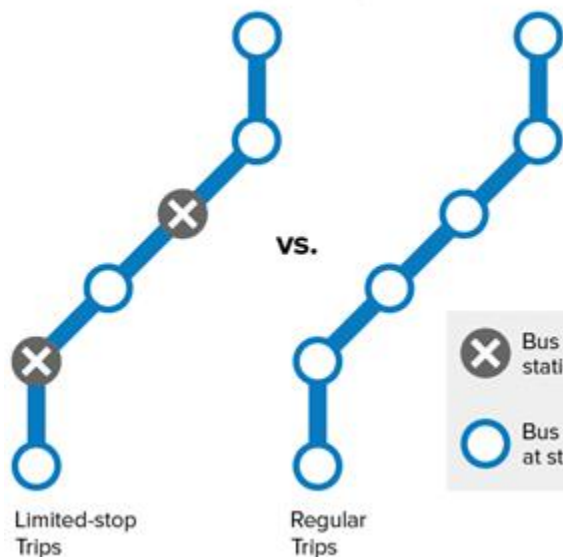
Online Open House

With a focus on understanding the public’s priorities to help shape the scope of Blue Line Expansion study, CT conducted an online open house from February 6 to 27, 2020. This online open house included illustrations and brief descriptions of concepts that CT was concurrently evaluating, including various extension route alternatives, service concepts, and infrastructure investments.

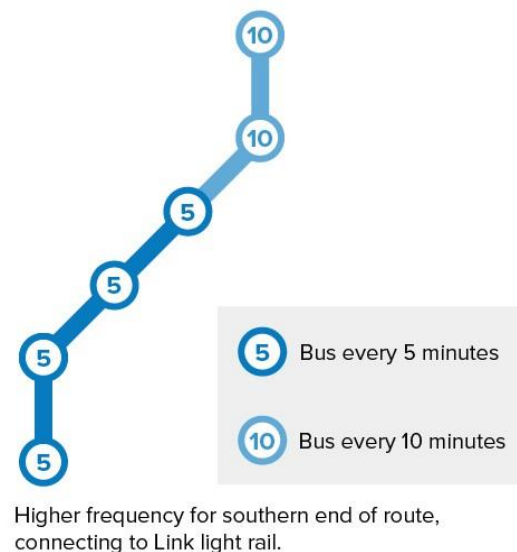
Online Survey

Also included within the online open house was a survey to seek input directly from the public on their preferences on route alternatives, service concepts to increase capacity (see figures below), and infrastructure investments. In addition, the survey invited the public to share ideas with CT to help avoid any potential blind spots in Blue Line Expansion study.

Limited-stop Trips



Short-turn Trips



Service Concepts to Increase Capacity

Handout Distribution

To increase exposure to the online open house and the survey tool, CT distributed handouts with project information and a link to the online open house at six venues during the three-week comment period. These venues included the following locations:

- Feb 11, Blue Line (on-board)
- Feb 12, Everett Station
- Feb 18, Shoreline P-n-R
- Feb 18, 200th St SW Station
- Feb 20, AVTC
- Feb 21, Blue Line (on-board)

Social Media

CT also discussed the topic in their Facebook Live webcast, CT Live, on Feb 11, 2020 to reach audiences virtually. These efforts, along with cross postings of the press release with the City of Shoreline, and articles in the Everett Herald, the Seattle Transit Blog, and The Urbanist helped generate interest and increased response rates for the survey tool.

ANALYSIS

Survey Results

Over a three-week comment period, 248 people completed the survey. Of these 248 responses, 137 (55%) were received from residents of Snohomish County, 81 (33%) were received from residents of the City of Shoreline, and 30 (12%) were received from residents outside these areas – primarily residents of the City of Seattle.

Results regarding preferences by demographic can be found in Table 1 (responses from residents of the City of Shoreline are highlighted in blue):

Table 1. Summary of Responses from Online Open House Survey

	Total	SnoCo Residents	Shoreline Residents	Other Residents	Swift Blue Line Riders	Swift Blue Line Non-Riders
COUNT	248	137	81	30	124	124
	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE
Limited Stops	2.53	2.49	2.58	2.57	2.52	2.54
Short-Turns	2.98	2.77	3.25	3.23	2.85	3.11
More Stations	1.85	1.94	1.80	1.60	1.93	1.78
Reliability	2.64	2.80	2.37	2.60	2.71	2.56
	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE
Alt A	2.27	2.20	2.36	2.33	2.18	2.36
Alt B	2.25	2.31	2.07	2.40	2.42	2.07
Alt C	1.48	1.48	1.57	1.27	1.40	1.56

As Table 1 illustrates, most Shoreline residents preferred short-turn trips as the way to increase capacity and preferred a focus on speed and reliability in the corridor compared with adding more stations to increase access. These preferences lined up

with preferences by the other survey respondents. However, when selecting preferences on extension alternatives, Shoreline residents preferred Alternative A to Alternatives B and C, which was consistent with responses from persons who are not currently utilizing the Blue Line, but inconsistent with the other demographics, including today's Blue Line riders, who preferred Alternative B. In sum, respondents did not have a conclusive preference between Alternatives A and B but did agree that Alternative C was not preferred.

While overall preferences were not conclusive between Alternatives A and B, some respondents used the survey section, where respondents were asked in an open-ended question for their ideas, to contextualize their preferences. Here, a plurality of respondents voiced their opinions in support of retaining a direct connection with the AVTC (Alternative B). From these contextualized responses, it was clear that there are strong feelings associated with the potential of pulling the Blue Line service out of the AVTC, leading to more challenging connections for riders arriving at the site by car or from another local bus. Meanwhile, respondents did not express particularly strong feelings one way or another regarding access to the Shoreline P-n-R.

Data Analysis

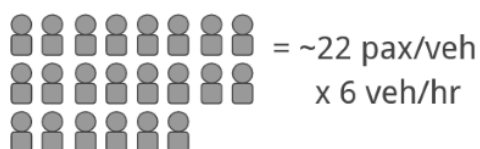
CT further evaluated the Blue Line service options, infrastructure investments, and route alternatives, in addition to several ideas shared by the public through the survey.

Service Options

While the public preferred short-turn trips as an option to increase capacity in the southern section of the corridor, CT ran ST's incremental ridership model and found that the 10-minute frequency in the corridor from 6AM to 7PM would be sufficient to manage the peak demand generated by the service (see figure below).

Demand

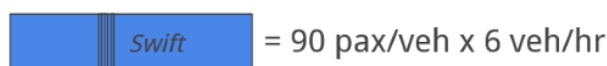
Max Load = ~130 pax/hr*



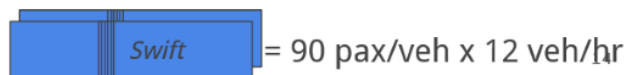
*ST Incremental Ridership Model

Capacity

10 min headway = 540 pax/hr



5 min headway = 1,080 pax/hr



Peak Demand per Hour vs Capacity per Hour (10 min headway and 5 min headway)

Infrastructure Investments

To increase speed and reliability, CT assessed the different opportunities and the extent to which those opportunities could benefit riders on the Blue Line corridor. While that process is on-going, CT has determined that substantial capital may be necessary at a few critical locations to see large benefits to travel time in the corridor. While these areas of focus are north of the City of Shoreline, the benefits will accrue for residents and workers in Shoreline who travel to and from Snohomish County. Furthermore, Shoreline will experience more reliable headways as a result of upstream improvements that would mitigate the effects of traffic congestion on Blue Line operations.

Route Alternatives

CT evaluated Alternatives A and B to tease out the benefits and costs of both. While Alternative A was the baseline option, it requires the construction of two additional stations to show any ridership benefit over Alternative B in ST's incremental ridership model – these capital expenses would take the place of work that could otherwise be done as a part of the speed and reliability program in this project. Alternative B, on the other hand, requires no additional stations to function effectively. Furthermore, in evaluating the connectivity options provided by the two alternatives, comparing the projects with the services included in Metro's 2025 Metro Connects plan illustrates the significance of retaining easy connections at AVTC, where service is concentrated, rather than at the Shoreline P-n-R.

Both alternatives retain connectivity with the Rapid Ride E Line; however, Alternative A makes all the local bus transfers in the corridor more challenging with the closest Blue Line station located at N 200th Street on Aurora Avenue rather than in the AVTC. This evaluation validated the concerns expressed by some members of the public in the survey. However, Alternative B will require some roadway work along Meridian Avenue N to match CT's *Swift* design principles – which the agency strives to adhere to whenever feasible. Achieving this will require partnership with the City, which has already identified transportation improvements for Meridian Avenue N in the proposed 2021-2026 Transportation Improvement Plan (Project 10) that would help toward meeting this goal.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Extension

Based on the survey results and supporting data analysis, CT prefers Alternative B as the appropriate extension at this time. Alternative B will serve to meet the mobility interests of residents and workers by maximizing strong connectivity between Link light rail and the AVTC, where transit resources are already, and continue to be, focused. This will also support CT's goal to improve the reliability of the Blue Line corridor to ensure that the service remains both fast and consistent, which benefits all users of the service, including riders in Shoreline.

Per the 185th MCS vision of frequent and reliable transit service along the 185th Street Corridor, the City is ultimately interested in having CT and Metro transit service run in BAT lanes along 185th Street from Aurora Avenue to the Shoreline North/185th Station. In order to synergize the benefits of the potential TOD redevelopment of the Shoreline P-n-R, the City would be interested in integrating access to CT and Metro transit service with the eventual site redevelopment plan. At this time, staff recognizes there is no certainty on when either of these projects will be implemented. However, when these projects do come to fruition, staff sees Blue Line Alternative A, which would run along Aurora Avenue to 185th Street and end at Shoreline North/185th Station, as an essential component of each of these projects' success.

Staff has been in close coordination with CT regarding the possibility of eventually shifting the Blue Line service route to Alternative A when the 185th Street improvements and/or the potential Shoreline P-n-R TOD redevelopment are constructed. For now, CT's selection of Alternative B is responsive to the foreseeable near-term conditions

and is a practical way to sync the opening of the Blue Line extension in Shoreline with the opening of the Shoreline North/185th Station in 2024, while maintaining direct connections to the local bus network at AVTC. The near-term implementation of Alternative B does not preclude potential changes to the Blue Line service route in the future. CT has expressed a willingness to stay open and flexible to discuss future Blue Line extension routing changes as the 185th MCS implementation and/or the Shoreline P-n-R TOD redevelopment materializes.

NEXT STEPS

Upcoming next steps for the project include:

- **June** - CT shares proposed extension with jurisdictional partners.
- **June** - CT shares proposed extension with general public.
- **Fall** - CT begins to develop the design of the Blue Line Expansion project, including the proposed extension. City staff will continue to closely coordinate with CT to further study and discuss Blue Line Expansion design development and environmental review.

COUNCIL GOAL(S) ADDRESSED

This project addresses the following Council Goals:

- Council Goal 2: Improve Shoreline's infrastructure to continue the delivery of highly valued public service.
- Council Goal 3: Continue preparation for regional mass transit in Shoreline.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no direct financial impact regarding tonight's Council discussion. CT is leading the Blue Line Expansion project in close collaboration with the City of Shoreline, as well as partner jurisdictions and transportation agencies along the project corridor. The design of the Blue Line Expansion will not include all the elements of the City's adopted 185th MCS. If future improvements are desired, reflective of the 185th MCS Preferred Option, then the City will need to seek additional capital funding.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no action required with this agenda item as this report is for discussion purposes only. Tonight is an opportunity for Council to ask questions of CT staff and provide feedback on the Blue Line Expansion alternative routes in Shoreline. Staff recommends that the City support CT's selection of Alternative B as the proposed alignment for the near-term implementation of the Blue Line extension to the Shoreline North/185th Station by 2024. Recognizing that it will take time, funding, and partnerships to implement the 185th MCS Preferred Option as well as redevelop the Shoreline Park and Ride at 192nd Street as a potential Transit Oriented Development location, staff recommends that CT continue to be open and flexible to working with the City and Metro in the future on potentially shifting to Blue Line service route to Alternative A.