Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

David Cutler
Planning Commission, LRRP Co-Chair

Tom Nelson
Design Commission, LRRP Co-Chair

Bernie Alonzo
Design Commission

Brodie Bain
Design Commission

Catherine Benotto
Planning Commission

Jay Deguchi
Public Art Advisory Committee

Shannon Loew
Design Commission

Jerry Garcia
Arts Commission

Megan Groth
Design Commission

Brad Khouri
Planning Commission

Laurel Kunkler
Design Commission

Kevin McDonald
Planning Commission

Osama Quotah
Design Commission

Martin Regge
Design Commission

Ellen Sollod
Design Commission/
Public Art Advisory Committee

Ross Tilghman
Design Commission
(awaiting Council confirmation)

Michael Jenkins
Design Commission Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

December 5, 2013
Convened 8:30 am
Adjourned 12:00 pm

Project Reviewed
Rainier Light Rail Station 30% design

Panel Members Present
David Cutler, Co-Chair
Tom Nelson, Co-Chair
Bernie Alonzo Brodie Bain
Catherine Benotto
Jay Deguchi
Jerry Garcia
Megan Groth
Brad Khouri
Laurel Kunkler
Shannon Loew
Kevin McDonald
Martin Regge
Ellen Sollod

Non-Voting Panel Members Present
Ross Tilghman

Panel Members Excused
Osama Quotah

Staff Present
Valerie Kinast
Joan Nieman

December 5, 2013	**Project:**	**Rainier Light Rail Station**	
1:45 – 4:00 pm	**Phase:**	30% design	
	Previous reviews:	none	
	Presenters:	David Hewitt	Hewitt Architects
		Cynthia Padilla	Sound Transit
	Attendees:	Debora Ashland	Sound Transit
		Gary Baldasari	Sound Transit
		Tammy Frederick	SDOT
		Jay Johnson	Hewitt Architects
		Luke Lamon	Sound Transit
		Sara Vernia	Hewitt Architects
		Tia Raamot	Sound Transit
		Jim Yamaguchi	Nakano Associates
		Ruri Yampolsky	Office of Arts and Culture
		Gayle Zeller	Sound Transit

Recusals and Disclosures
Osama Quotah was recused.
Ross Tilghman stated that he was a non-voting future commissioner.
Kevin McDonald stated that his employer, City of Bellevue, was working with Sound Transit on East Link and that he was involved, but not with this station.
David Cutler and Megan Groth stated that their employer, GGLO, has participated on projects that involve Sound Transit, but that these project do not include the design of this station.

Purpose of Review
The purpose of this meeting was to review the 30% design of the Rainier Light Rail Station.

Summary of Proposal
Sound Transit is proposing to build the Rainier Light Rail Station as part of the East Link line that will run from Downtown Seattle through Mercer Island and Bellevue to Redmond. It is located in the Interstate 90 right-of-way between Rainier Ave S and 23rd Ave S. It consists of a long central platform where passengers will catch the trains and entry buildings (gateways) at Rainier Ave S and 23rd Ave S. To reach the platform from Rainier Ave S, passengers will move up a stair, escalator, or elevator through the entry building, move along a path, and cross the tracks to get to the platform. To reach the platform from 23rd Ave S, passengers go through the entry building, across a bridge, and down to the platform by stair or elevator (the escalator travels up).

Summary of Presentation
Cynthia Padilla, architect for Sound Transit, introduced project and gave the presentation dated December 5, 2013, available on the Design Commission website. Ms. Padilla explained that the station was part of East Link, which will start at the International District station and end at the Overlake Transit

Center station in Redmond. It is slated for construction from 2015 through 2022 and anticipated to open in 2023. She explained the public outreach that had been undertaken and summarized that safety and connecting to the station were priorities they heard from the community. Ms. Padilla went over the transit and pedestrian connections surrounding the proposed station and showed photos of the existing conditions. One scheme considered would have repurposed the existing ramp system on Rainier Ave S and led passengers through a tunnel and along a ramp to the platform level. Proposing to remove the flyer bus stop structure makes it possible to do an entry building with a stair, elevator, and escalator instead. She went over the project design schedule, stating that the 60% design would be completed in the summer of 2014.

David Hewitt presented the station design. He first explained a potential major change to the eastern entry building should studies show that the track crossover can be eliminated. In that case, the pedestrian ramp would be removed and the headhouse functions would be combined into one structure adjacent to 23rd Ave S. Mr. Hewitt described the design of the station with its two transparent, glass headhouse structures. He explained that the east entry would have ancillary uses, including a bike cage. Moving west, he spoke about the acoustic walls on the north and south edges of the site that will be mitigated visually with plantings.

Mr. Hewitt then moved to the platform design. A proposed canopy structure would span 30% of the length and nearly the entire width of the platform, which is planned at the same grade as the freeway. He described the design of the west headhouse, which includes an ancillary building along the north edge. Access to the station from Rainier Ave S would be either through the headhouse on the east side of Rainier Ave S or via ramps on the west side of Rainier and over the Rainier overpass. The headhouse is intended as an intervention into the hill along the east edge of Rainier Ave S; through it, passengers can reach the platform via elevator or escalator. The proposed roof canopy is transparent and may include art. The headhouse would be illuminated at night.

Agency Comments
none

Public Comments
none

Action
The Light Rail Review Panel thanked the team for the presentation of the 30% design of the Rainier Light Rail Station. The panel members found the canopy a strong sculptural element.

With a **vote of 6 to 3**, the Light Rail Review Panel approved the 30% design of the Rainier Light Rail Station project with the condition that Sound Transit return for 30% review of any major changes to the access from 23rd Ave S. The Panel also made the following recommendations:

Station

1. Given the long length of the station, explore opportunities to shorten the distance of travel for pedestrians. Consider both physical and perceptual interventions. Look again at the principles that came out of preliminary engineering studies.
2. The Commission has concerns about the ridership projections and the adequacy of access to and within the station.
3. Improve the integration of the station design within the complex neighborhood context.

4. Knit the three larger segments of the design together: the Rainier Ave S entrance, the platform, and the 23rd Ave S entrance. Unify the language of the landscape and consider drawing the strong sculptural quality of the canopy outward beyond the interior of the facility.
5. Provide for sidewalk integration at both ends of the station—at Rainier Ave S and 23rd Ave S. This area of the city is poorly developed for transit, bike, and pedestrian travel, so overcoming the challenges around reaching the station and connecting to other modes will be more important at this location than it was at others.
6. Find solutions to the drawbacks of the pedestrian bridge at the east end of the station. The bridge increases the perceived length of the station.
7. Explore and explain stormwater solutions.

23rd Ave S Entrance

1. Explore ways to connect the Mountains to Sound Greenway.
2. Strengthen the visual portal the east entrance creates.
3. Address concerns about the elevated pedestrian entry bridge. Being above the level of the tracks gives a sense of being removed from the platform and may make people feel unsafe. Furthermore, being elevated above the sound walls will make this area a noisy place.

Platform

1. The canopy is a strong sculptural element. Extending it would better serve the public and help decrease the perception of length of the facility overall. As it is refined, consider the addition of color.
2. Further refine the sound walls and berming design and integrate it with the landscape. Pay mind to the perception of safety in a walled environment. Develop the walls, berming, and landscape language as unifying feature throughout the station design.

Rainier Ave S Entrance

1. As stated above, explore drawing the walls and berms solutions from the platform level down to street level to provide a unifying design feature the length of the station.
2. Explore extending the language of the canopy down to the street level in some form.
3. Carefully plan pedestrian access and modal connections at the west entrance along Rainier Ave S. The entrance is located at the center of a series of freeway access points that pose challenges for pedestrians and bikes accessing the station. Work collaboratively with the planners at the City of Seattle to make this a well-accessed and connected station.
4. Carefully plan for necessary vehicular access at the station, such as drop-off points and parking for maintenance vehicles.
5. Create safe linkages to buses.
6. Refine the architectural design to respond more to the unique location under a freeway overpass. This might mean taking a more delicate approach or creating a more strong statement. Celebrate that uniqueness of surroundings and location.

The reasons for the votes against approval were as follows:
Shannon Loew: Some decisions have not been made yet (such as the bridge and rail crossing) that could change the concept significantly.

Tom Nelson: In addition to Shannon Loew's concerns, the design is missing elements of connectivity to the neighborhood. Opportunities to mitigate issues of how to get to the station have not been addressed. If the pedestrian bridge access to the station were changed, it would go beyond the scope of an administrative design.

Bernie Alonzo: Fundamental decisions remain unmade that could affect the design in too broad a way. Concerned opportunities will be missed to integrate the station into the neighborhoods to both the north and the south.