



Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

October 2, 2014

Northgate Station Garage

David Cutler

Planning Commission, Co-Chair

Osama Quotah

Design Commission, Chair

Bernie Alonzo

Design Commission

Brodie Bain

Design Commission

Lee Copeland

Design Commission

Jay Deguchi

Public Art Advisory Committee

Thaddeus Egging

Design Commission

Jerry Garcia

Arts Commission

Grant Hromas

Design Commission

Brad Khouri

Planning Commission

Shannon Loew

Design Commission

Marj Press

Planning Commission

Martin Regge

Design Commission

Ellen Sollod

Design Commission

Ross Tilghman

Design Commission

Michael Jenkins

Design Commission Director

Valerie Kinast

Coordinator

Nicolas Welch

Planner

Joan Nieman

Administrative Staff

Panel Members Present

David Cutler, Chair

Lee Copeland

Thaddeus Egging

Jerry Garcia

Grant Hromas (non-voting)

Shannon Loew

Marj Press

Ellen Sollod

Ross Tilghman

Panel Members Excused

Osama Quotah

Bernie Alonzo

Brodie Bain

Jay Deguchi

Brad Khouri

Martin Regge

Project Description

Sound Transit proposes to build a partially below-grade parking garage adjacent to the north entry plaza of the future Northgate Light Rail Station. The garage would be located on the southwest corner of the Northgate Mall property. It would have two vehicle entries: one from 1st Ave NE and another onto NE 103rd St.

The garage would have five levels of parking. Surface parking would be reserved for mall customers; the four below-grade stories would be for Sound Transit customers. Pedestrians would access the north entry plaza from an entrance at the southwest corner of the garage on ST Level 1. This corner would also have elevator and stair towers. Transit users visiting Northgate Mall would traverse the north entry plaza, walk around the parking garage, and use a ramp to reach the mall parking lot. The garage would be secured at night.

Meeting Summary

The Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP) approved the concept design for the garage with a vote of 6 to 2. This was the first review of the proposed garage, though the station itself has come before the LRRP six previous times. Most recently, the LRRP approved the design development of the station in March 2014. Two dissenting panel members were concerned about wayfinding, view corridors, the garage entrance on 1st Ave NE, and opportunities for program elements that would enhance Northgate as a dense and walkable neighborhood. The LRRP expects to review the garage again at schematic design.

Recusals and Disclosures

Osama Quotah was recused. David Cutler disclosed that he is employed by GGLO, which does work for Sound Transit; that work does not include this station.

October 2, 2014**10:15 am – 12:00 pm****Phase**

Concept Design

Previous Reviews**Northgate Station**[March 6, 2014](#)[November 7, 2013](#)[May 16, 2013](#)[December 20, 2012](#)[November 1, 2012](#)[November 3, 2011](#)**Project Team****Debora Ashland**

Sound Transit

Mike Bell

M.A. Mortenson Company

Ron Endlich

Sound Transit

Andrew Engel

Jacobs Associates

Leah Ephrem

HEWITT

George Hanna

Hewitt Architects

David Hewitt

HEWITT

Gareth Loveridge

Swift Company

Barbara Swift

Swift Company

Attendees**Ayelet Ezran**

SDOT

Gordon Clowers

DPD

Tammy Frederick

SDOT

Sun Jing

UW visiting scholar

Gary Prince

King County Metro

Iain Robertson

University of Washington

Steven Shain

DPD

Sally Turner

King County Metro

Yaping Zhang

UW visiting scholar

Alex Zimerman

Stand Up America

Summary of Presentation

Ron Endlich described the history of and rationale for the parking garage. The team's presentation is available on the Seattle Design Commission website. The project's Record of Decision outlined certain environmental mitigation requirements, among them an obligation to replace all park-and-ride stalls displaced by station construction. Mr. Endlich noted that by locating the replacement parking at the mall site, the King County Transit Center property immediately east of the south entry is available for future transit-oriented development.

Mr. Endlich stated that Sound Transit has had discussions with Simon Property Group, the mall owner, on a number of design and acquisition issues. He noted that at the height of construction Sound Transit will displace 700 mall parking stalls and are still negotiating impact mitigation and compensation issues with Simon Property Group. To minimize impacts on the mall property, Sound Transit is interested in consolidating construction of Northgate Link and Lynnwood Link to the degree possible. For the garage, Mr. Endlich stated that the current garage concept design meets both Sound Transit's and Simon Property Group's functional needs, including separate access for mall and transit customers.

David Hewitt introduced the garage design and oriented the LRRP to the site. A site plan showed the proposed parking garage in relation to the rest of Northgate Station and the surrounding Northgate Mall property. Mr. Hewitt noted that the surface level of the garage matches the existing grade of the site and showed that there is no connection between mall parking and Sound Transit parking. He identified the two entrances to the Sound Transit parking from NE 103rd St and 1st Ave NE, respectively.

Barbara Swift described how the north entry plaza, parking garage, and mall parking all sit on a podium at the corner of NE 103rd St and 1st Ave NE. She believed the proposed gabion walls on both frontages will provide continuity and improve the pedestrian experience at this corner.

Mr. Hewitt described vehicular and pedestrian circulation in and around the parking garage. A section diagram showed the four levels of Sound Transit parking and surface mall parking. Elevations showed the south and west façades of the garage, and Ms. Swift described the layers of vegetation and trees along these façades. Ms. Swift detailed the grade changes at the site, specifically around the north entry plaza. She stated that the team has intentionally made the stair at the north end of the north entry plaza and its landing more gracious.

A perspective looking northeast from NE 103rd St showed the glass-enclosed elevator and stair. At the LRRP's request, the team also included views looking west at the garage from NE 103rd St and south from the mall property towards to the north entry.

Ms. Swift showed examples of the materials and planting proposed for the project, which are consistent with the rest Northgate Station. She noted that the vegetation along the west side of the garage may have a rain garden quality similar to the one proposed at the south entry plaza.

Debora Ashland addressed how Sound Transit is considering art at the station plaza. Currently the team is considering including some of Cris Bruch's artwork at the north entry / garage area; he is doing artwork at the south entry.

Summary of Discussion

After six previous reviews of the Northgate Light Rail Station, the LRRP was pleased to see the concept design for the adjacent parking structure at last. Overall, they commended many elements of the design, above all the extent to which the garage is below grade. That the majority of the discussion centered on edges and details was an indication of the important steps the project team had taken to mitigate the impact of a large parking structure adjacent to a future transit station. The LRRP felt positive about the relatively modest scale of the garage.

That said, the LRRP identified several areas that either were problematic or warranted further attention. One of those was the west entry on 1st Ave NE, where the LRRP focused several of their comments. There was interest in modifying the stair to provide a more direct and inviting approach for pedestrians to the north entry plaza. The LRRP suggested incorporating some sort of use into the void space just south of the garage; some LRRP members suggested an artist workspace. In the rendering of the 1st Ave NE entry looking southeast, the LRRP found the design most compelling where the gabion wall and plantings slip between the guideway and less successful at the concrete stair. They encouraged the team to take the concept further and emphasize the contrast of the gabion wall with the strong concrete guideway structure above it.

Another broad point of concern was visibility for pedestrians moving between the station, garage, and Northgate Mall. The LRRP appreciated Sound Transit's inclusion of additional perspectives, which helped the LRRP members conclude that sightlines and connections needed further attention throughout the garage site but particularly at its northwest corner. There was concern that failing to making a stronger and more legible connection between the station and Northgate Mall was shortsighted and that pedestrian access was subservient relative to vehicular circulation at the east end of the ramp from the north entry plaza towards Northgate Mall. The LRRP suggested modifying the geometry, viewsheds, or materials and paving in this area to improve the pedestrian experience.

Similarly, there was interest in greater clarity about wayfinding, particularly for mall customers making their way to the station. The LRRP discussed how the garage could be a successful contribution to the urban environment in this area, particularly to achieve the vision of Northgate as a dense, walkable neighborhood when light rail arrives. The LRRP encouraged the team to continue thinking broadly about how to achieve this goal, whether through use of plantings and color, clearer cues for how pedestrians move through the site, or inclusion of retail or other activating uses.

Agency Comments

none

Public Comments

Alex Zimmerman noted that the public was not present at the meeting [though the meeting is open to the public]. He stated that the LRRP represents government. He criticized that he had only two minutes for public comment. He said we have a fascist government and lamented that the King County Council does not even have a public hearing. Mr. Zimmerman said people will not understand the details of the presentation of Northgate Garage. According to Mr. Zimmerman, the city, the state, and America are dying, but the LRRP is discussing details of the parking garage design. He said the LRRP are mentally sick, brainwashed people.

Iain Robertson said he appreciates the work the project team and the LRRP are doing. He appreciates the effort to work with the mall owner and the different levels of the garage. He found the elevations and sections helpful in understanding the garage layout and function. He was interested in the width of the planting strip on NE 103rd St.

Action

The LRRP thanked the project team for a concise presentation of the Northgate Station Garage concept design. The LRRP recognized Sound Transit's coordination with Simon Property Group (the mall owner) and noted that locating much of the garage below grade allowed for a smaller building mass. They acknowledged Sound Transit's obligation to replace park-and-ride parking lost due to station construction and the important opportunity for transit-oriented development at the transit center site that the proposed garage location creates.

The LRRP noted several successful functional elements of the garage, such as how its flat plate helps with visibility and wayfinding. That said, much of the LRRP's questions and comments concerned the relationship of the garage to the rest of the station, particularly since its many previous reviews of Northgate Station did not include information about the garage.

The LRRP also recommended that Sound Transit, King County Metro, and the City of Seattle work collaboratively to make the station area an excellent place to walk, bike, and ride transit despite the presence of a large parking structure. The LRRP commended the steps Sound Transit and its design team have taken to date towards this goal. Were there a Pedestrian Zone in this area, the context for review would be different. Nevertheless, the LRRP strongly recommends proactive coordination and integration among all parties to develop a successful pedestrian environment in this important part of the Northgate Urban Center.

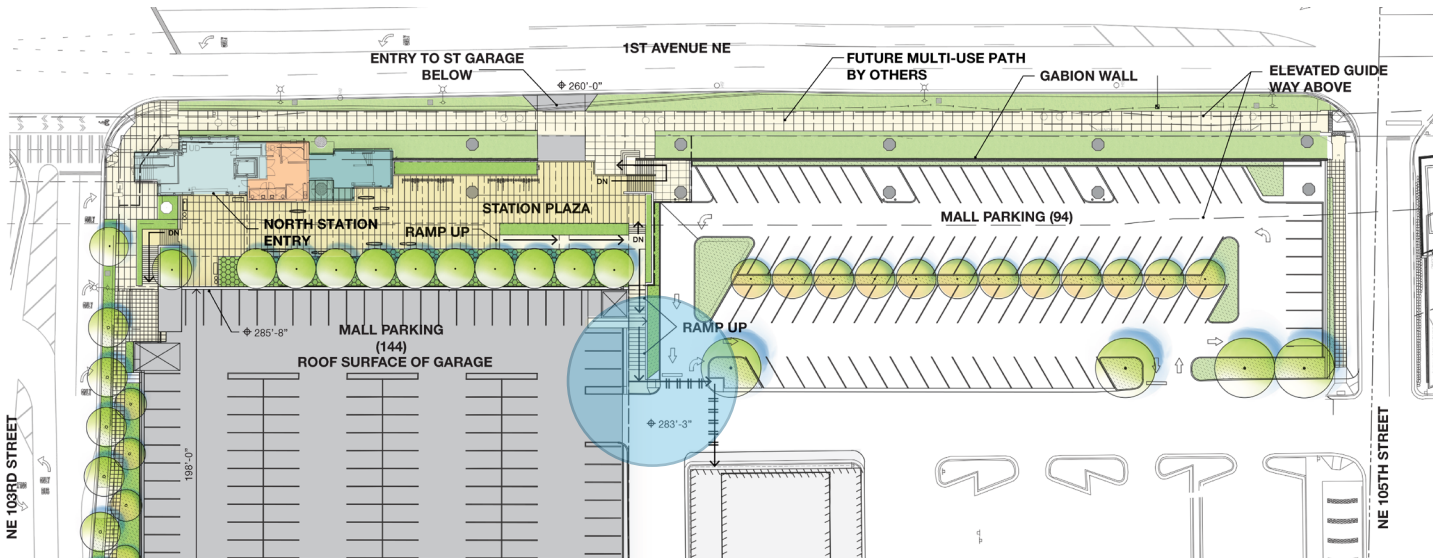
With a **vote of 6 to 2**, the Light Rail Review Panel approved the concept design for the Northgate Station Parking Garage with the following recommendations:

- Refine the west entry to the garage from 1st Ave NE to be less massive. Find opportunities to soften this edge, give the entry a more human scale, and incorporate the richness in plantings and materials employed at the south side of the parking structure. Emphasize the delicacy of the gabion wall in relation to the massiveness and strength of the concrete infrastructure. Maintain a contrast in scale and materials between the west garage entry and the guideway surrounding it.
- Explore adding a commercial or other use in the void space at the west entry along 1st Ave NE immediately south of the garage entrance, shown in the image below.
- Consider other alignments for the stair at the west entry to create a more legible and inviting route for pedestrians to reach the north entry plaza.
- Improve wayfinding between the mall and the garage, recognizing that this is a secondary approach. Increase the visibility of the north entry plaza, perhaps by adjusting the edges of the garage or the width of the ramp that connects the plaza to the mall. Consider using Cris Bruch's artwork as a wayfinding element here.
- Reinforce the rich layering of landscaping and materials along NE 103rd St to make it a great urban pedestrian experience. The LRRP appreciates that the material and planting palette are of the same high quality seen elsewhere in the station design. The LRRP believes Cris Bruch is the right choice to develop artwork for the garage area.



View from 1st Ave NE looking southeast at the garage entrance and north entry plaza above.

- Prioritize pedestrian safety and movement, particularly where the aforementioned ramp intersects with mall parking circulation. Pedestrian circulation feels subservient to vehicles in the location of the blue circle in the image below.
- Provide a deeper and more detailed discussion of sustainability at the next review, especially but not limited to stormwater management.
- Provide more information about lighting and wayfinding at the next review.



The reasons for the votes against were as follows:

Ellen Sollod: I'm always torn about voting to approve at concept design because I want to see the next design iteration. That said, I have serious concerns about the design of the west garage entry on 1st Ave NE and the major issues of wayfinding and view corridors.

Shannon Loew: My vote against has nothing to do with design, which as I've said feels to be strong. I'm voting with the philosophical understanding this is area that requires density. The complexity notwithstanding, Sound Transit needs to continue to think through how they can integrate various programs for long-term urban solutions. This includes retail and mixed-use. With high compliments to the design itself and appreciation for how complex Sound Transit's job is, this area nevertheless demands the flexibility to develop into a dense and walkable place in the future.