



## Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

**Julie Bassuk**  
Design Commission  
LRRP Co-Chair

**David Cutler**  
Planning Commission  
LRRP Co-Chair

**Catherine Benotto**  
Planning Commission

**Dan Corson**  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Mary Fialko**  
Design Commission

**Kurt Kiefer**  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Malika Kirkling**  
Design Commission

**Laurel Kunkler**  
Design Commission

**Kevin McDonald**  
Planning Commission

**Tom Nelson**  
Design Commission

**Julie Parrett**  
Design Commission/  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Osama Quotah**  
Design Commission

**Norie Sato**  
Design Commission/  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Donald Vehige**  
Design Commission

**Debbie Wick-Harris**  
Design Commission

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Tom Iurino**  
Senior Staff

## November 3, 2011

Convened 8:00 am  
Adjourned 10:30 am

## Project Reviewed

Northgate Station Light Rail Review Panel

## Panel Members Present

David Cutler, Chair  
Julie Bassuk  
Julie Parrett  
Dan Corson  
Malika Kirkling  
Kurt Kiefer  
Tom Nelson  
Kevin McDonald  
Osama Quotah  
Norie Sato

## Unconfirmed Panel Members Present

Mary Fialko (excused from 8:00-8:45)

## Excused Panel Members

Laurel Kunkler  
Don Vehige  
Debbie Wick-Harris  
Catherine Benotto

## Staff Present

Valerie Kinast  
Tom Iurino

---

**November 3, 2011**      **Project:**                      **Northgate Station Light Rail Review Panel**

**Phase:**                                      30% Design  
**Last Reviewed:**                        N/A  
**Presenters:**                              Ron Endlich, Sound Transit  
     David Hewitt, Hewitt  
     Andrew Engel, Hewitt  
     Barb Swift, Swift Company

**Attendees:**                                Bob Nichols, Sound Transit  
     Barbara Luecke, Sound Transit  
     Debora Ashland, Sound Transit  
     Fred Wilhelm, Sound Transit  
     Gareth Loveridge, Swift Company  
     Katie Zemtseff, Daily Journal of Commerce  
     Phil Harrison, Sound Transit  
     Robert Bean, Sound Transit  
     Thomas Whittemore, Department of Neighborhoods

**Time: 8:30am – 10:30am**

---

## Disclosures

Panel member Quotah works for a firm, LMN, which is designing the Brooklyn and UW light rail stations.  
 Panel member Parrett works for the University of Washington, which is affected by Sound Transit's work.  
 Panel member Sato used to work with Sound Transit on the Central Link light rail project.  
 Panel member Corson used to work with Sound Transit on the Central Link light rail project.

## Presentation

Sound Transit and its design team presented the 30% design for the Northgate Light Rail Station. The station, part of the 4.3 mile North Link extension, will be built by 2021 and will board 15,000 people per day by 2030.

The station is elevated, spanning NE 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, and the platform is 45 feet above 1st Avenue NE and the KCM site and 25 feet above the Northgate Mall property. The south entrance connects to the TOD site owned by King County, home to the existing park and ride facility. The north entrance connects to Northgate Mall. King County has proposed a bridge across I-5 to connect the eastern and western portions of the Northgate community that has been bisected by I-5. Multiple locations have been considered for the bridge and one of them is near the south end of the station. The station can accommodate a connection to the bridge near the south exit stair. Sound Transit and King County are working together to integrate bus service to the station and replace parking in the park and ride lot. The HUD Sustainable Communities grant includes a City-lead urban design study of the Northgate area that is looking at TOD plans including connections by pedestrians and bicyclists. The station's elevated guideway has been located at the westernmost side of the site to reduce impacts to the King County TOD site and the mall. The team shifted the tunnel portal to NE 94<sup>th</sup> Street to better accommodate the boring machine, avoid utilities conflicts, and minimize impacts to the community.

The base of the station features a circulation space oriented N-S parallel to 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and the station itself. It lies between the station and the TOD site. Trees will be planted under the guideway south of the station. The first floor level of the station is permeable, permitting patron flow from east to west and allowing for loading and unloading

on 1<sup>st</sup> and pedestrian movement to the south entrance. The south entrance features a glass lobby, a canted escalator, and toilet rooms. The north entrance connects to the mall and parking garage via sidewalks. The station will be screened on the west from I-5 with wind screens, solid glass panels, and metal mesh. The roof is proposed as a tensile fabric roof, and the team is exploring two different alternatives. The team plans to have an artist on board in early 2012. Likely places for the inclusion of art are the platform, the lobby, the 1<sup>st</sup> Ave sidewalk underneath the cantilevered station, and the glazing that faces I-5.

### **ACTION (by David)**

The Light Rail Review Panel thanked Sound Transit and its design team for its presentation of the Northgate Light Rail Station. By a vote of 6-4, the panel approved the 30% design, contingent on Sound Transit adequately addressing the following comments before the 60% review:

- **Develop a clear vision for the surrounding area for the purpose of showing how the station may integrate appropriately with the King County TOD site, the southwest quadrant of the mall, and the public realm and mobility corridors from 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE to 5th Avenue NE. Northgate is designated an Urban Center and recently, the city has undertaken major urban design and planning efforts and invested in public infrastructure to support Northgate's evolution from an auto-dominated suburban area to a vibrant, mixed-use urban hub. However, the station design as presented does not yet clearly reflect how it will approach this planned context. As an early civic anchor of this future neighborhood, the station can set a precedent and should inspire, set an attitude, and be a catalyst for urban redevelopment.**
- **Improve the clarity and relationship of building elements; they appear disjointed, especially at grade, and do not yet express the cohesive architectural execution of a "big idea" in relation to the urban context. The entry points and vertical circulation elements do not yet clearly indicate their importance in the overall station design and functionality. Investigate further the design of the transition between the station's large scale gestures at the platform level to the building elements at grade and at the entry.**
- **Further study how the visual and physical "permeability" between 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and the southern entry plaza support pedestrian flow, bike parking, and vehicular drop-off functions. Develop the design of the "negative space" between the solid elements of the lobby, stair, and guideway support piers. Study how the trees under the guideway affect the scale of the public realm and how they relate to the building elements. Take into account the noise and presence of I-5 when refining "permeable."**
- **Further study the roof structure and the use of a tensile material on the upper levels of the structure. Explore how the figural aspects of a tensile structure may help the station stand out against the backdrop of the city. Many tensile structures address a broad scale (such as the Jeddah or Denver airports) or address a small scale indigenous vernacular (such as native huts); the proposed design does neither. Investigate whether including an artist in the design of the roof would enhance the project. Consider maintenance and wear issues associated with this roof type.**
- **Develop the lobby of the south entrance as a jewel; possibly involve an artist in its design to help add to its sculptural possibilities. The glass shard that pierced through the volume of the entry is an intriguing idea, but could be manifested much better and allowed to become more sculptural. Bring lightness and more dynamism to the glass treatment through the sizing of the mullions, panels, and panel spacing. The lobby space has exciting possibilities, as a light architectural element and an entry to the station. Keep the toilet rooms; they are welcome amenities. Incorporate vendor space, perhaps within the station area to help activate it. Consider how vehicles delivering to and picking-up from the service building will impact the plaza space and the jewel-like qualities of the lobby; the storage doors appear to open onto the plaza space.**
- **Propose a station design strategy that could integrate a future pedestrian and bicycle bridge connecting North Seattle Community College to the station area. Consider how the station**

design could accommodate connections to the bridge that minimize the need for light rail passengers to travel up and down to enter or exit the system, while also providing non-passengers a pleasant and convenient route across I-5.

- Further refine the design of the north entrance to respond to the north-south pedestrian circulation spine that is envisioned on the east side of the station connecting between entrances. The north entrance entrance should also possess the visual presence to serve as a wayfinding element as viewed from the mall. Small moves such as reorienting the exterior stair to face south and east at the base of the station may help reinforce the circulation spine, and it may provide transit users with a clearer, grade-level path between the mall, the north entrance, the south entrance, and the King County TOD site.
- Develop drawings of the experiential quality of spaces. Study how the user experiences the entry sequence. Study variations in behavior, such as how transit users might find their way should they inadvertently come down the wrong stair. Ensure that presentation materials and graphics are legible.
- Integrate and resolve sustainability elements such as storm water functions.
- Provide clear wayfinding and travel paths for bicyclists, especially riders utilizing the potential connector bridge across I-5 and those going to and coming from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

Panel member Bassuk voted no because she believed too many issues were unresolved as evidenced by the comments and discussion. She is concerned that the 60% review will be too late, given the level of detail presented at this Concept (30%) review. Her major concern is the design and experience of station users on the ground plane.

Panel member Parrett voted no because she felt the larger question of the project's civic component was not answered. Also, there is a lack of resolution with the massing and the ground plane.

Panel member Quotah voted no for the same reasons as Bassuk and Parrett. He felt that the massing should be resolved at 30% design.

Panel member Kirkling voted no because the project required substantial changes, as evidenced by the number and type of comments.

## Panel Members' Questions and Comments

*Why did you move the tunnel portal?*

The location is a better place to start the tunnel boring machine, due to the track alignment and location of utilities. With this location, there are fewer total impacts to the project, which bring minor cost savings.

*It is challenging to see the images; 4 images per page is too small. Can you blow them up? Consider that when you make your next presentation to us.*

Yes. We have on boards and will pass them around.

*Could you show and describe the spaces and materials under the guideway and at the entry?*

The pavilion is a single story with a roof. It is punctured by glass shard for the escalator, which also has a roof. Once inside, the passenger is not exposed to the guideway. The escalator and its landing walls are also glazed. The guideway will be exposed from street.

*Is the roof of the pavilion structure solid?*

Yes, and it is pierced by the form of the escalator.

*Where is the station open to the sky?*

Under the guideway, it is open to the sky. In the lobby and in the middle of the station platform, it is covered.

*Would you describe the transit oriented development with King County? What conversations have you had with Simon, the owners of the mall, to develop north entry?*

We've met with the King County team. We moved the escalators to focus on their property and oriented the pedestrian movement outside the station to north-south. The north entry needs to be a landmark, a good place for people. Simon is a large company headquartered in Indianapolis. It initially opposed a light rail station at Northgate because it was concerned about the impact of spill over parking in the mall parking lot.

We are starting a working relationship with them and have presented options for access to the mall. They have been receptive to the ideas you see here. Wayfinding is important. We don't want people to walk diagonally through the mall parking lot going to or from the station. We need to minimize the number of stalls displaced at the mall. We currently don't own any of the property we're talking about.

*I appreciate the complexity of the site. This site is not urban. To what extent are you trying to shoot for an urban condition? Why hold the street edge? I-5 is across the street. You propose a canopy of trees under guideway above and the areas south and north of the project along 1<sup>st</sup> are untreated.*

The site is not urban. The station is not going to make it urban. But it will activate spaces and tie them to urbanized projects, like the King County transit oriented development. The station and guideway will form the edge for the transit oriented development, reducing the scale and noise of I-5. We're creating access to the station that is pleasant and accommodates bikes and pedestrians.

*Can you describe your approach to sustainability and integrated systems?*

We are following Sound Transit's sustainability checklist. We're making a conscientious effort for sustainable strategies for construction and the use of unconditioned spaces, durable materials, and energy. At this site, we're also planning to capture water run-off using rain gardens. During construction, for example, we're studying turning the trucks off and how far do they travel to reduce fuel use.

*The county and city has a bold vision for the immediate area. What are your thoughts of how connections might take place north and into neighborhood when the station is first open and in 2030 when this neighborhood is more dense?*

The accommodation for bicycle parking on site is generous. The E-W connections are still being developed by the county. They will respond to the station's design. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE. are bike routes as is NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St. We will work with community and get feedback from the bike community.

*Will we see the portal?*

Yes, we'll present it at a future review. The visibility of it is low, as it is in a retained cut on WSDOT property.

*We should be trying to capitalize on light rail investments. I question the logic of the bridge; go down to go back up to station. You can influence what happens. Say this is a good strategy for approaching it.*

There are many questions regarding the proposed bridge and many of them are unresolved. For example, it would be used by cyclists; do they need a ramp? Those are all design questions that need more work. The county has done a feasibility study but has no money for design or construction of the bridge. We can report on more details the next time. We talked to the design team for the King County TOD; they made a viable argument about the notion of bringing everyone to grade with the bridge.

*The glass shard piercing the pavilion is exciting. Push it as much as possible; it could be a sculptural piece. The glass mullions are heavy handed; I want something more light. Involve the artist in the glass shard, perhaps. The combination of the solids vs glass structures is a bit of a jumble and needs more clarity. I love the idea of the trees under the guideways.*

*There is a lack of clarity of scale and position of pavilion elements. I wonder about the use of the tensile fabric; in the rendering, the roof seems tacked on and not integrated. If you're going to explore tensile structures, they work well set in a larger landscape, like Denver airport, or when they are much smaller. Your proposal is kind of lost behind all of the other pieces. The roof needs more dynamic ribs; it looks structured and rigid. The roof should be a more expressive and bigger part of the station. Play it up. At the bottom of the structure, the pieces are chaotic and jumbled. The design lacks a sense of scale for the pedestrian and entry. It's hard to imagine how the large scale of the top transitions to pedestrian scale at grade. The permeability is an intriguing idea. Study the negative space more; solid is more dominant, but I'm not sure that's how you expressed it. What if I go down the wrong side of the station? We want people to get to mall on light rail. Also think about going past the mall and making connections up north. Push that with Simon. The bridge is a great idea. It needs to be integrated with the station. I'm nervous about bringing everyone to the street.*

*I applaud the use of glass and the amount of it. I am concerned about the module size and mullions and the scale. They feel dated. There must be some other way to put pieces together. Exploit the back lit opportunity to west of the platform waiting area. The forms and massings of the lower area are not resolved well. The art experience at the entry could be a very interesting opportunity. Please consider developing a shared vocabulary between the*

*entry area and the ancillary building. I applaud the bathrooms. A vendor space would be great for the lower area and would help to activate that space. The roof relates in material to the transit structure. I hope that you will push its form and make it a strong iconic entity visible from the freeway.*

*The station is not proposed to be used by pedestrians; most are coming by bike, bus and cars. I support the bridge. Make the plaza areas as pedestrian-scaled as possible. The station is primarily serving the mall; it is not serving adjacent neighborhoods well. Make more simple the mullions and glass patterning. I would prefer scheme 2 of the roof options as it reduces the height of the station. Study how the station's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Electrical Systems work with the natural structure of the tensile roof. Right now, the tensile roof structure will have to be supplemented by additional framing elements (as shown in the current interior rendering, where an additional strut has been added to capture the platform lighting fixtures, there will also need to be speakers and cameras). The inclusion of these additional framing/support elements will detract from the form and interior ambiance of using a tensile canopy roof, and 'clutter' the interior space with the conflicting patterning of multiple support systems – from mullions, to tensile roof supports, to ITS and electrical supports and even platform paving patterns.*

*This project is answering a different question; this station is going into a place which will be very different from it is today. It is a suburban model and the city/county has been working to change that. You have a responsibility and opportunity: what can the station offer the civic realm? The team hasn't considered that aspect. The station will set a precedent to inspire and engage and set attitudes for redevelopment. It will last for 50-100 years. The building is turning itself inward, and the team is not thinking in a conceptual way how the station might engage the neighborhood. The bridge needs to connect right into the light rail. We can do better. Next time, we should see images for materials, the building and site, and of your inspirations for a user's experience. You did not provide a lot about what you hope these spaces will be like.*

*I appreciate the bike parking. Clearly designate it. I support the use of 100<sup>th</sup> as a bike connection. Add wayfinding. Not all of the users of the bridge will want to use the station. The bridge will serve the neighborhoods, linking across I-5.*

*Think about the big picture and the station as a catalyst for change. Consider the little design moves you can make to suggest the way the neighborhood could develop. For example, the stair at north entry should face east.*