



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Tim Parham, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, April 26, 2018
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, Eileen Canola, David Goldberg, Sandra Fried, Rick Mohler, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Kelly Rider, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Grace Kim, Ellen Lohe, Lauren Squires

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Katy Haima, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Cathal Ridge, Ron Endlich, and Sloan Dawson, Sound Transit

In Attendance: Vera Giampietro, Austin Jacobsen, Emily Miner

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here: <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Tim Parham called the meeting to order at 7:32 am.

ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the April 12, 2018 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Chair Parham provided an overview of the meeting agenda and upcoming Commission meetings.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming community events and encouraged Commissioners to attend.

Briefing: West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Alternatives Development Level 1 Update

Cathal Ridge, Ron Endlich, and Sloan Dawson, Sound Transit

If you would like to view the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Alternatives Development Level 1 Update presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Cathal Ridge, Sound Transit Central Corridor Project Director, provided an overview of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project and the Level 1 alternatives development process. He described the results of the Early Scoping process and mentioned that the Early Scoping Summary Report is now available. He highlighted the various alternatives that have been generated through the Level 1 process and compared those with the Representative Project.

Mr. Ridge and Ron Endlich, Sound Transit staff, reviewed all of the Level 1 alternatives for each of the following four segments:

- West Seattle
- SODO
- Downtown
- Interbay/Ballard

They described in detail the differences of each alternative from the Representative Alignment, as well as the unique benefits and challenges associated with each. They showed the results of an early Level 1 evaluation of the alternatives within each segment and presented the recommendations from the Stakeholder Advisory Group regarding which of the alternatives should be carried forward for additional analysis in level 2. Mr. Ridge noted that the alternatives analysis will inform the identification of a locally preferred alternative by next spring that will be studied, along with other appropriate alternatives, in an Environmental Impact Statement.

Sloan Dawson, Sound Transit staff, spoke about ongoing community engagement and collaboration efforts, including neighborhood forums, agency workgroups, and station area workshops/charrettes. He stated that station access planning will include technical work to integrate Sound Transit's project planning with the City's community planning efforts. He also mentioned that this station planning work is a new approach for Sound Transit, as it considers not only how the stations will function but how they will integrate with the surrounding communities.

Commission Discussion

Clarifying Questions

- Commissioners asked if the alternatives development evaluation process incorporates consideration of transit-oriented development opportunities. Mr. Dawson replied by saying that the evaluation measures included both land use considerations and station area opportunities for each alternative.
- Commissioners requested more information on how the Level 1 alternatives were generated and evaluated. Mr. Ridge stated that the alternatives were based on comments received during the early scoping period. He noted that some comments were very general, and others were very specific. He then stated that the evaluation summary results presented to the Commissioners do not highlight all the evaluation results but tried to demonstrate the potential fatal flaws (e.g., cost, constructability) associated with each alternative. He also noted that the evaluation criteria are not weighted. Sound Transit staff do not make recommendations based on their evaluation. It is incumbent on decision-makers to incorporate technical and community input into their final decisions.
- Commissioners followed up asking whether more detailed evaluation data is available. Mr. Ridge replied saying that data is available. If it is not on the Sound Transit website, his team will provide that information to the Commissioners.
- Commissioners asked how the alternatives were evaluated for their ability to serve historically underrepresented populations, such as the Delridge community. Mr. Ridge stated that several measures were used to evaluate the impacts and benefits of the alternatives to underserved populations. Sound Transit tried to understand how to best serve those populations using information provided by the City of Seattle. They evaluated potential negative impacts of the various alternatives, including displacement risk. The Delridge station area alternatives were included in this analysis.
- Commissioners asked how the Representative Alignment compares with the other alternatives using the evaluation criteria and asked if it will be carried forward for further analysis. Mr. Ridge stated that Sound Transit intends to keep the Representative Alignment moving forward throughout the planning process. He noted the possibility that other alternatives may perform better than the Representative Alignment as the Level 2 and 3 process continues.
- Commissioners inquired how dependencies between segments will be evaluated. Mr. Ridge noted that transitions between segments and their unique implications, such as where tunnel portals are located, will be analyzed. Mr.

Dawson also stated that the inter-dependencies between stations will be analyzed, especially during station area planning discussions.

- Commissioners asked about the potential depth of the proposed First Hill tunnel station compared with the existing Westlake station. Mr. Endlich stated that a First Hill tunnel station would need to be approximately 160 feet deep, while the Westlake station is approximately 50 feet deep. Commissioners followed up with a question whether there were safety concerns related to deep tunnel stations. Mr. Endlich stated that the primary concern associated with the First Hill tunnel is constructability.
- Commissioners asked whether there are any alternatives that present safety issues based on climate change or earthquake risk. Ron Endlich stated that because our region is prone to earthquakes, all of Sound Transit's designs address earthquake hazards. He noted that Interbay may be an area prone to sea level rise, but Sound Transit has not studied that in detail at this point in the process.
- Commissioners asked for more information on one of the downtown alternatives that is proposed to come out of a tunnel on park property on the lower west side of Queen Anne. Mr. Endlich noted that the location is undeveloped park land on an unstable slope. Mr. Ridge stated that property would most likely be subject to Section 4(f) requirements for impacts to park properties.
- Commissioners asked how land use was considered in the evaluation process and how it will be considered moving forward from this point in the process. Mr. Dawson noted that the Level 1 analysis was mostly qualitative, as the concepts are more abstract at this point. He stated that Sound Transit engaged in a high-level evaluation exercise earlier in the process with all alternatives. The evaluation process will become more detailed during Level 2 and 3. Sound Transit will be looking at development potential as the process moves forward.
- Commissioners inquired whether members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group have had the opportunity to tour the areas surrounding each of the alternatives. Mr. Ridge stated that Sound Transit provided opportunities to tour the areas. He noted that members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group represent the various communities along the alternatives and already know those areas well.
- Commissioners requested clarification on Sound Transit's comments that certain alternatives may require 3rd party funding, asking if that meant additional funding from the City. Mr. Ridge stated that no specific funding entities have been identified at this point. Sound Transit is not sure that these alternatives will be more expensive but is identifying the potential at this point in the process.

Comments on Alternatives

West Seattle:

- Commissioners expressed support for the Pigeon Ridge alternative, especially in light of concerns about impacts to the Delridge community. Commissioners encouraged Sound Transit to work with the City to address displacement risk.
- Commissioners inquired whether Sound Transit had investigated the potential for a station at Pigeon Point. Mr. Ridge stated that they had not specifically explored that possibility, as the proposed Delridge station are nearby. He noted that Sound Transit received comments expressing interest in moving the Delridge station to the south.

SODO:

- Commissioners encouraged Sound Transit to maximize seamless transfers between the new and existing Chinatown/International District stations.
- Commissioners asked for clarification on whether the cost of grade separation at Holgate and Lander Streets is included in the ST3 package or would require additional funding. Mr. Endlich replied that those costs are included in the current project.

Downtown:

- Commissioners expressed support for further study of the First Hill alternative, noting that area is very densely populated and has been underserved by transit.

Interbay/Ballard:

- Commissioners requested additional information about one alternative's alignment that avoids the Dravus interchange, specifically why this was listed as a positive benefit of the alternative. Mr. Ridge stated that it would be a challenge to build an elevated structure over an existing interchange at that location.
- Commissioners asked if Sound Transit ever considered an additional station in Interbay to capture potential growth in Magnolia. Mr. Ridge stated that this was not considered. The Smith Cove station location was mostly intended to serve the future Expedia campus and surrounding area.
- Commissioners noted the mostly industrial nature of the Interbay area and asked if Sound Transit considered land use when creating the alternatives. Commissioners also noted the potential for transit-oriented development at the Armory site. Mr. Dawson noted that the Armory site is still owned by the government and no future plans have been discussed. He stated that future land use policy discussions will influence the development potential in that area. He also acknowledged the potential for sea level risk in Interbay.
- Commissioners stated that Sound Transit's decision-making should align with the City's direction on industrial lands and the City's future growth strategy.
- Commissioners stated opposition to a movable bridge over Salmon Bay and encouraged Sound Transit to consider incorporating pedestrian and bike lanes into the design of a fixed bridge. Mr. Ridge stated that the ST3 Plan approved a rail-only bridge and noted that additional elements would require budget discussions and potential 3rd party funding.

General:

Commissioners noted that major institutions such as South Seattle College and the major hospitals are underserved by transit and should be considered in the alternatives evaluation process.

Commissioners noted the application of the 'inconsistent with Sound Transit 3 Plan' criteria against the alternatives was arbitrary.

Commissioner Michael Austin summarized the discussion for the benefit of all Commissioners.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 am.