



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Tim Parham, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, March 08, 2018
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Michael Austin, Eileen Canola, Sandra Fried, David Goldberg, Grace Kim, Ellen Lohe, Rick Mohler, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Patti Wilma
Commissioners Absent:	Kelly Rider, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Katy Haima, Planning Analyst
Guests:	Susan McLain, Chief of Staff, Office of Planning and Community Development; Carrie Avila-Mooney, Cathal Ridge, and Chris Rule, Sound Transit
In Attendance:	Thomas Whitemore, Department of Neighborhoods

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 Parham called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. He provided an overview of the meeting agenda and upcoming Commission meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner Eileen Canola moved to approve the February 22, 2018 meeting minutes. Commissioner Michael Austin seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Executive Director Vanessa Murdock informed the Commissioners of several upcoming community events. She thanked the Commissioners for attending the recent annual retreat.

Update: Office of Planning and Community Development

Susan McLain, Chief of Staff, Office of Planning and Community Development

If you would like to view the presentation from the Office of Planning and Community Development, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Susan McLain from the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) provided an overview of the department's ongoing operations, major projects, and new initiatives. She described OPCD's organizational structure, which includes the following three divisions:

- Citywide Initiatives
- Community Planning
- Placemaking

Ms. McLain listed the Mayor's priorities and additional OPCD workplan items under each of these three divisions. Commissioners asked clarifying questions and provided comments on several of the OPCD workplan items. These are summarized in the Commission Discussion section below. Ms. McLain ended her update with an overview of OPCD's Strategic Plan goals, which are:

- Lead Collaborative Planning
- Advance Equitable Development
- Create Great Places

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for more information on OPCD's work on impact fees. Ms. McLain stated that OPCD will begin work this year studying the potential for impact fees for education, transportation, and parks. Potential impact fees would not apply to housing.
- Commissioners asked if any of the projects listed on the OPCD workplan are on hold. Ms. McLain answered that the scope of some of the listed projects are close to being finalized. OPCD's industrial lands work will include a study of industrial lands in SODO and Interbay, as well as the potential overlap of commercial and industrial land uses citywide. OPCD has not received full funding for the SODO work yet, but this project will begin with an Environmental Impact Statement. She added that it is not known where the Sound Transit West Seattle Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) stations will be yet, so the Ballard/Interbay Manufacturing and Industrial Center is not included in the industrial lands study at this point.
- Executive Director Murdock noted that work on the Comprehensive Plan indicators is ongoing. The Planning Commission's annual review of indicators is referenced in a resolution on the indicators. The Commission will be briefed on the draft indicators in late spring/early summer.
- Commissioners asked for more details on OPCD's Community-Based Planning work. Ms. McLain stated that initial priority areas for this work include the NE 130th Street and Graham Street future station areas, Crown Hill, Chinatown/International District (C/ID), and Sound Transit WSBLE station area planning. Commissioners were pleased to hear that the Graham Street station area is included and encouraged OPCD to engage the community from the beginning when critical decisions are being made.
- Commissioners inquired about the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) fund. Ms. McLain stated that the first round of EDI funding is targeted for 6 projects. As OPCD provides funding, those projects enter subsequent capacity building and capital development phases.

- Commissioners requested additional information on the South Park Neighborhood Center Disposition project. OPCD is working with the community to own and operate a permanent facility.
- Commissioners asked for details on OPCD's new partnerships for community engagement. Ms. McLain stated that OPCD conducts their own community engagement on community planning projects and partners with the Department of Neighborhoods on larger citywide issues such as Mandatory Housing Affordability and Sound Transit.
- Commissioners noted the potential for cross-departmental collaboration and asked if OPCD has a good working relationship with Seattle Parks and Recreation. Ms. McLain answered that yes, OPCD has a good relationship with Parks. Parks maintain their own assets but are also open to looking at different ways to provide open space. The Outside Citywide project is taking a look at diverse ways to provide public spaces. Parks has been engaged in that project.
- Commissioners highlighted the Racial Equity Toolkit in OPCD's Strategic Plan goals and asked for more information on its use. Ms. McLain noted that the Office of Civil Rights created the toolkit framework. OPCD applies it to different policies or planning initiatives.
- Commissioners noted the potential tension between siting transit stations and the surrounding land use and highlighted this as a concern related to the Graham Street station area and the future Sound Transit WSBLE stations. Ms. McLain replied by stating that although it is not currently known where the WSBLE stations will be, OPCD has a good working relationship with Sound Transit and will work with them on station area planning. Sound Transit will do the initial assessments and planning. OPCD will engage with communities at a different level when the station locations are decided. Adjustments to zoning, streetscapes, and open spaces are all possible after 2019. OPCD will take a deeper dive on this subject after the station areas are clearly identified. Commissioners expressed interest in engaging on this subject when the timing is appropriate.

Briefing: Sound Transit 3 West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Representative Alignment

Carrie Avila-Mooney, Cathal Ridge, and Chris Rule, Sound Transit

If you would like to view the presentation from Sound Transit, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Carrie Avila-Mooney, Cathal Ridge, and Chris Rule from Sound Transit provided background information on the planning studies and analyses that were considered to develop the Representative Alignment for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project. Chair Parham noted that presentation is for informational purposes only and is not an opportunity to comment on the representative alignment and stations or recommend alternatives for consideration. This briefing is intended as an opportunity for the Commissioners to learn how Sound Transit arrived at the Representative Alignment. This information will inform the Commission's future comments as Sound Transit develops a preferred alternative by April of 2019.

The Sound Transit presenters provided an overview of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) Representative Alignment. Mr. Rule highlighted several previous studies that went into determining the representative project. These included the Ballard to Downtown Transit Expansion Study and the South King County High Capacity Transit Corridor Study. Information from these studies was

incorporated into Sound Transit's 2014 Long Range Plan. He described the candidate project options that were considered for the Ballard to Downtown and West Seattle to Downtown corridors. He noted that Sound Transit's planning included hybrids of multiple options and highlighted some of the differences between the ST3 Draft Plan and the ST3 Final Plan, which went to the voters and ultimately passed in 2016. Mr. Ridge provided an overview of the project timelines, including the alternatives development process and ongoing community engagement efforts. He described the next steps in the alternatives development process and identified opportunities for Planning Commission input.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for clarification on how many lines would use the SODO station. Mr. Rule stated that 2 lines would use the SODO station, while 3 lines would connect through the Chinatown/International District station.
- Commissioners inquired about the potential for ridership at the Smith Cove station and expressed concern that the proposed station location relies heavily on ridership from the Expedia campus. Mr. Rule stated that the proposed location may also provide benefits such as valuable bus connections to neighborhoods including Magnolia.
- Commissioners asked for more information on the proposed movable bridge over Salmon Bay. Mr. Rule stated that the existing Ballard bridge has 44 feet of clearance, while the new movable bridge is assumed to have about 70 feet of clearance. The existing bridge opens more than 20 times per day in the peak season now. Sound Transit previously estimated that the new bridge for light rail would only require opening approximately two to four times per day, and will collect more data moving forward.
- Commissioners inquired about the pros and cons of the various alignments that were considered. Mr. Rule stated that a potential tunnel under Queen Anne would have been very challenging to construct and there was not enough growth projected in the area to justify that location. He said that there was broad support from the City and the neighborhoods for a South Lake Union-Seattle Center-Interbay route. A South Lake Union station was added in. The City asked for an Interbay station near Whole Foods, but there was not enough projected ridership. Sound Transit looked at many options through Interbay, including at-grade, tunnel, and elevated alignments, and ultimately selected an elevated alignment due to traffic concerns raised by the community.
- Commissioners requested more information about the obstacles to a route through Fremont. Mr. Rule stated that their analyses and community feedback steered Sound Transit toward serving Uptown and Seattle Center. He stated that they had difficulty determining a potential station location in Fremont, and the agency saw higher growth potential in Ballard and Uptown.
- Commissioners requested additional information about the growth potential in Interbay, where the majority of land is zoned for industrial uses. Mr. Rule stated that Sound Transit hopes to site the Interbay station in a specific area around Dravus Street that would serve riders from both Magnolia and Queen Anne.
- In West Seattle, Sound Transit considered two route options and selected the representative alignment based on the City's planned growth in the vicinity of the West Seattle junction. Commissioners asked why did neither West Seattle alignment go further south through the Delridge community to South Seattle College. Mr. Rule replied that he was not sure why, but it could be a result of the alignment's geography.

- Commissioners inquired about the data that Sound Transit used for its ridership projections. Mr. Rule stated that regional population projections for the year 2040 inform their ridership models.
- Commissioners asked for more information on Sound Transit's Level 1 screening criteria. Mr. Ridge stated that the Level 1 evaluation will use fairly standard criteria such as ridership, travel time, and population served. The Level 1 will be high level and mostly qualitative at this point. Level 2 and 3 screening will be more quantitative as the design work progresses. Commissioners expressed interest in reviewing the screening criteria.
- Commissioners inquired about what effect an elevated alignment has on other decisions. Mr. Ridge replied that similar tradeoff analyses happen frequently in Sound Transit planning. For example, the alignment was initially planned to be at-grade through Interbay, but there were a lot of concerns about traffic impacts. When Commissioners asked for more details about this decision, Mr. Rule stated that there were community concerns about an at-grade alignment taking away general traffic lanes on 15th Avenue. Sound Transit did not model the operations, but travel time and reliability were used as criteria.
- Commissioners noted that there have been a lot of discussions about tunneling under Salmon Bay and noted that it is more difficult to transition into a tunnel from an elevated alignment. That kind of transition takes a lot of space and requires certain land uses around the alignment.
- Commissioners noted that the proposed alignment in Delridge and the cut-and-cover station in Chinatown/International District raised race and social justice concerns. Mr. Rule stated that he was not sure what went into the engineering concepts for the Delridge alignment, but the representative project reflects a general effort to provide light rail service to that community. Mr. Ridge commented that the geometry of the alignment is very challenging in West Seattle. Regarding the C/ID station, he said that the current assumption at this location is cut-and-cover construction immediately adjacent to the existing station. Sound Transit has heard concerns from the community about the potential impacts from opening up the street at that location. They will look at ways to construct that station without as much disruption.
- Commissioners asked if the existing C/ID station can be expanded to include the new line. Mr. Ridge replied by stating that a new downtown tunnel is a critical piece of the regional system. East Link will connect into the existing tunnel. Sound Transit needs the capacity at that location that warrants a new station.
- Commissioners inquired about funding for the West Seattle and Ballard extensions, asking if there are any potential funding concerns that could throw the projects off budget or schedule. Mr. Ridge stated that the alternatives screening process will analyze the fundability of the various alternatives. Commissioners followed up by asking if any potential funding changes would need to go to Sound Transit Board. Mr. Ridge replied by saying that all input on these projects will go through the Stakeholder Advisory Group to the Elected Leadership Group, and then on to the Sound Transit Board. Ms. Avila-Mooney noted that the Stakeholder Advisory Group is made up of diverse community members
- Commissioners asked if there are any significant differences in this process from the Sound Move and Sound Transit 2 processes. Mr. Ridge showed a slide demonstrating Sound Transit's new approach to project development for these projects. The most significant difference is identification of the Preferred Alternative earlier in the environmental review process. Specific elements of Sound Transit's community engagement and collaboration processes, including neighborhood forums, the

Stakeholder Advisory Group, and the Elected Leadership Group, are new. Sound Transit is taking a more proactive approach to understanding the project from the start.

- Commissioners asked if Sound Transit is working with the City on community engagement. Ms. Avila-Mooney stated that their external relations plan involves working with OPCD, the Department of Neighborhoods, and other City departments. The Early Screening process was fairly general, but subsequent phases will get more specific and may get into design, transit-oriented development potential, and other issues. Mr. Ridge stated that Sound Transit is working with OPCD and other departments on a station planning work group and can provide a briefing to the Commission when that process is further along.
- Commissioners asked if the West Seattle and Ballard Extensions will require an additional maintenance facility. Mr. Ridge stated that the ST3 plan includes new maintenance facilities in the north and south corridors, which serve cities including Lynnwood and Tacoma. These will need to be completed before the West Seattle and Ballard lines.
- Commissioners noted the potential for cuts in federal funding available for these projects and asked whether Sound Transit has additional contingency plans if necessary. Mr. Ridge stated that a certain amount of federal funding is assumed for these projects. However, if the current political climate persists, Sound Transit would need to look at what that means in terms of scope and schedule.
- Commissioners asked if Sound Transit will give priority to hiring local trades and construction firms. Mr. Ridge stated that is an issue identified in the ST3 system plan. A number of new initiatives in anticipation of construction have been considered.

The Commissioners thanked the Sound Transit team for their presentation and encouraged them to return as the environmental review process moves forward.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.