



Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

David Cutler
Planning Commission, LRRP Chair

Bernie Alonzo
Design Commission

Brodie Bain
Design Commission

Catherine Benotto
Planning Commission

Lee Copeland
Design 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

Tom Nelson
Design Commission

Martin Regge
Design Commission

Osama Quotah
Design Commission

Ellen Sollod
Design Commission/
Public Art Advisory Committee

Ross Tilghman
Design Commission

Michael Jenkins
Design Commission Director

Valerie Kinast
Coordinator

Nicolas Welch
Planner

Joan Nieman
Administrative Staff

APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING

March 6, 2014
Convened 8:30 am
Adjourned 11:30 am

Project Reviewed
Northgate Light Rail Station – 90% Design

Panel Members Present

David Cutler, Chair
Catherine Benotto
Jerry Garcia
Megan Groth
Laurel Kunkler
Martin Regge
Ellen Sollod
Ross Tilghman

Non-Voting Panel Members Present

Lee Copeland

Panel Members Excused

Bernie Alonzo
Brodie Bain
Jay Deguchi
Brad Khouri
Shannon Loew
Kevin McDonald
Tom Nelson
Osama Quotah

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins
Valerie Kinast
Nicolas Welch
Joan Nieman

March 6, 2014 9:00 – 11:30 am	Project:	Northgate Station	
	Phase:	90% Design	
	Previous reviews:	11/3/2011; 11/1/2012; 12/20/2012; 5/16/2013; 11/7/2013	
	Presenters:	Ron Endlich David Hewitt Barbara Swift Cris Bruch MaryAnn Peters	Sound Transit Hewitt Architects Swift Company Artist Artist
	Attendees:	Debora Ashland Gordon Clowers Jan Eklund Andrew Engel Leah Ephrem Michael James Gareth Loveridge Barbara Luecke Bob Nichols Mylinda Sneed Gary Prince Sally Turner Fred Wilhelm Mary Wyllie Ruri Yampolsky	Sound Transit DPD Hewitt Architects Jacobs Associates Hewitt Architects SDOT Swift Company Sound Transit Sound Transit Sound Transit King County Metro King Country Metro Sound Transit Hewitt Architects Office of Arts & Culture

Recusals and Disclosures

Panel member Quotah was recused. Panel member Groth disclosed that her employer, GGLO, has worked with Sound Transit on projects other than the ones this panel is reviewing. Panel chair Cutler disclosed that his employer, GGLO, is exploring potential stations in other jurisdiction and would be a sub-contractor on any contract that might result.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of this meeting was to review the 90% design of the Northgate Light Rail Station. The project has come for review by the Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP) five previous times. The 60% design was denied approval in November 2012 and approved in May 2013. Most recently, the LRRP reviewed and approved the 60% design of the artwork and guideway walls, a contingency of the 60% design approval. 90% design is the last stage of station design reviewed by the LRRP.

Summary of Proposal

Sound Transit's Northgate Light Rail Station is the northernmost station of Northgate Link, a 4.3-mile extension of light rail from the University of Washington. The Northgate Station will be the northern

interim terminus until light rail is extended further north. The Northgate Station will open in 2021; Link light rail service will extend to Lynnwood by 2023. Construction of the Northgate Station and elevated tracks will begin in 2016, construction of the tunnel portal began in October 2013, and tunneling to Roosevelt Station will start by June 2014. The tunneling contract is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

The Northgate Station encompasses an elevated station located on a transit island with public plazas, art, and rain gardens among other ground-level improvements. It also includes 0.6 mile of guideways and a portal where the tracks enter a tunnel at NE 94th St. The guideway walls and operations facility at the portal are within the scope of LRRP review. A parking garage may be located near the north entrance to the station on the Northgate Mall property. The new light rail station will be constructed on land obtained from King County and Northgate Mall.

The elevated station will be located east of 1st Ave NE, spanning NE 103rd St. It will have two entry areas, one north of NE 103rd St on Northgate Mall property and one south of NE 103rd St near the current location of the Northgate Transit Center. Each will have elevators, escalators, and stairs.

A pedestrian and bike bridge across I-5 is an affiliated project managed by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and will be reviewed separately. SDOT is also planning a cycle track along 1st Ave NE.

The property immediately east of the station is being planned by the City of Seattle and King County as a transit-oriented development (TOD) site. The primary expected uses are residential and retail, though some portion may be suited for office. The Northgate Urban Design Framework completed in 2013 recommends an east–west pedestrian street through this site and encourages ground-floor retail along 3rd Ave NE. Existing zoning for this site is NC3-125.

Summary of Presentation

Ron Endlich introduced the project team and the 90% design of Northgate Station. He noted that construction of the Maple Leaf portal site has begun and the first tunnel boring machine for Northgate Link is likely to launch in the next two to three months. He discussed Sound Transit's obligation to replace parking lost during construction and mentioned the ongoing design of the Northgate pedestrian and bicycle bridge.

Debora Ashland stated that Sound Transit is seeking approval for the station and not for the garage or TOD.

David Hewitt shared the 90% design of the station and gave the presentation dated March 6, 2014, and available on the [Design Commission website](#). Mr. Hewitt oriented the Panel to the site, the alignment of the tracks as they emerge from the Maple Leaf portal and enter the station, and the overall design intent.

Mr. Hewitt gave a brief overview of each component of the station. The station itself occupies roughly half of the site. There is a 20-foot grade difference between the north and south entries to the station. He pointed out the location of art components and noted the asymmetry of the site, its west side subject to highway noise, and the east more open and oriented to future TOD. Renderings of the plaza

showed the bicycle cage and lockers; ticketing; elevators, escalators, and stairs; and underside of the mezzanine.

Mr. Hewitt pointed out the important connections with bicycles, vehicles, and transit at the site. The transit roadway east of the station plaza accommodates southbound buses; northbound buses will be on 1st Ave NE. The northbound lanes of the roadway are planned to allow private vehicles, and has space for vehicle parking and station patron drop off. Paratransit moves diagonally across the south end of the plaza through a roadway, running clockwise from NE 100th St to the new transit roadway.

Barbara Swift then discussed the approach the design team has taken to topography. With only one curb at the paratransit lane, the plaza has been designed to be planar and flat, with lines of trees as an organizing element for the space. The rain garden along the southwest corner of the plaza is intended to enhance the pedestrian experience and guide users to the station entrance.

Ms. Swift shared two diagrams. First, Sound Transit's approach to water management at the station. Second, the urban elements of the site, including weather protection, light poles, bus shelters, benches, ticketing machines, and bicycle infrastructure. Ms. Swift then showed a series of sections through the site. For landscaping, certain trees are intended to provide color year-round and line the east side of both the south and north entrances. The paving pattern is intended to reinforce pedestrian movements through the site and into the station.

Cris Bruch described the structure and vision of his art piece, which consists of nine metal "trunks" with blooms or clouds at their ends. The piece is currently undergoing structural analysis. Due to engineering requirements, the trunks will have a 4.5" outer diameter, giving it more of a presence than indicated in the model presented to the LRRP in November 2013. Mr. Bruch spoke to previous comments on the color and lighting of the sculpture. The design team is considering lighting the piece with several high-intensity, narrowly focused LED spots. He intends the sculpture to be subtle, integrated into the overall vocabulary and trees of the station. The bloom/cloud elements will have movement.

Mr. Hewitt detailed several sections of the station itself with particular attention to the structure of the mezzanine and platform levels, the guideway, and the canopy. Clerestory glazing on the west side of the platform level contains the art piece by MaryAnn Peters. The mezzanine is protected with windscreens. The design of the platform strives to be open and visible.

MaryAnn Peters discussed her artwork. She passed around a drawing at quarter-scale of the Green Darner dragonfly that will be used at the mezzanine level of the station. The imagery and color palette is based on the dragonfly for two reasons: first, it preceded humans in this area by several thousand years and, second, schoolchildren voted that the Green Darner dragonfly should become the state insect of Washington. Graphs of ambient noise at the site, specifically from the freeway, are another inspiration of the artwork. The art glass within the clerestory glazing draws more abstractly on the dragonfly concept; Ms. Peters shared a quarter-scale painting sample of the colored art glass for the center of the west clerestory at the platform level.

Summary of Discussion

The LRRP was very pleased with the design of the ground plane and the pedestrian experience for the south entry. The landscaping plan, rain gardens, and surface treatment and ease of wayfinding through

the pedestrian plaza all received high praise. Likewise, the LRRP was very impressed by the evolution of the two art pieces for the station, particularly MaryAnn's work. Panel members appreciated the chance to see a quarter-scale example of her piece. That said, they worried that the roof overhang above MaryAnn's clerestory piece will become its backdrop when viewed from the platform. Along with the resolution of lighting on Cris's piece, this was a primary concern.

The aesthetic of the station was another topic of discussion. There was lingering concern over the muted color palette, an issue raised at earlier reviews. Though the LRRP appreciated the intentionality of a subtle approach given the visual and auditory stimuli of the facility and site, the Commissioners did not see an exploration of targeted use of color as previously requested. Another remaining issue was the architecture at NE 103rd St and its interface with the public realm. Two other concerns were the contrast between transparent and opaque elements, specifically in the east elevation, and the incongruous array of materials at the north side of the south entry, where a mix of masonry, concrete, white panel, and glass disrupts the hierarchy of steel and concrete found elsewhere in the station. The LRRP felt that element needed simplification.

Panel members were also interested in the resolution of several elements outside the station itself. Given its charge to review the station in context, the LRRP paid close attention to the transit roadway and plans for the potential adjacent TOD site and parking garage. There was concern that circulation for paratransit customers, who ought to be prioritized, had instead been subordinated to vehicle needs. Panel members also felt the design of the transit roadway, the safety of people crossing it, and connections from the north entry to Northgate Mall and NE 103rd St merited further attention.

Agency Comments

none

Public Comments

none

Action

The Light Rail Review Panel thanked the team for the presentation of the 90% design of the Northgate Light Rail Station. They commended the resolution of the ground plane and the attention given to creating a rich, functional pedestrian environment. They also applauded the development of the art, expressing appreciation for the fantastic mockup that MaryAnn displayed and the interesting structural quality and motion Cris had produced with his piece.

With a **vote of 8 to 0**, the Light Rail Review Panel approved the 90% design of the Northgate Light Rail Station with the condition that the team return for administrative review of the following eight items:

1. Further refinement of the art lighting
2. Design details for the north entrance
3. Use and placement of materials to screen support spaces designed to enhanced overall station design
4. Design of the structural overhang and its impact on the lighting of the clerestory artwork
5. Refinement of horizontal planes at south entrance
6. Stairway access from NE 103rd St to north entry plaza

7. Relationship of station to transit roadway
8. Connections across NE 103rd St

The approval had the additional condition that the project return when the parking garage is resolved for review of that connection.

The Panel also provided the following recommendations:

1. **Further refine the visual experience of the station, especially where it impacts the public realm at NE 103rd St.** Small issues remain, such as glazing on both sides of the north stair, materiality, visual separation, and lack of coherence in the design of ancillary spaces. Some of these elements need simplification. The choice to pursue a subtle and muted color palette given the visual and auditory “noise” surrounding the site makes sense, but now that the art is developed, opportunities for small moments of stronger color should be explored and pursued, as recommended at previous reviews. The use of white panels on the outside of a building so near the freeway and at the center of a transit island also raises the concern that the structure might look dirty if not well maintained.
2. **Ensure the north entry is commensurate in design and importance with the south entry.** The mall will be a major destination for this station, so creating a visual and physical connection between the two is imperative. Also, the urban center extends northwest of the station, so significant pedestrian flows are anticipated from that direction. The north entrance must consider and respond to this condition. The connection from the north entry building and plaza to the transit island also deserves closer consideration. The stair at NE 103rd St has been a persistent concern; the issue came up at both 30% and 60% reviews and needs further refinement. While the pedestrian experience has been resolved well in other parts of the site, this area warrants further simplification of the numerous competing and distracting structural elements.
3. **Resolve how the clerestory artwork is viewed and lit.** Consider in particular how this piece is lit in the evening and how those lights fit into the overall station lighting scheme. The need to mitigate glare will require these lights to be low to the ground, but the transit user’s experience has to remain a safe one.