Seattle Design Commission

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APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
March 20, 2008

Convened: 8:30am
Adjourned: 4:30pm

Projects Reviewed
Urban Mobility Plan
Fire Station 35 – Crown Hill
Fire Station 30 – Mount Baker
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Capitol Hill Station ST University Link

Design Commissioners Present
Karen Kiest, Chair
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Mary Johnston
Juanita LaFond
Dennis Ryan
Norie Sato
Darrell Vange
Darby Watson

Staff Present
Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Ian Macek

Additional Light Rail Review Panel Members
Present for Capitol Hill Station
Richard Andrews, Arts Commission
Catherine Hillenbrand, Arts Commission
Mahlon Clements, Planning Commission
Kevin McDonald, Planning Commission
Kirsten Pennington, Planning Commission

20 March 2008	**Project:**	**Capitol Hill Station ST University Link**
	Phase:	Design Development
	Last Reviews:	**9-20-2007, 8-16-2007**
	Presenters:	Greg Ball, Northlink Transit Partners, JV
		Ron Endlich, Sound Transit
		David Hewitt, Hewitt Architects
		Mike Ross, Capitol Hill Station Artist
		Barbara Swift, Swift Company LLC
	Attendees:	Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
		Ernesto Dominquez, Northlink Transit Partners
		Michelle Grinder, Sound Transit
		George Hanna, Hewitt Architects
		Sarah Hill, Hewitt Architects
		Betsy Hunter, Capitol Hill Housing
		Mark Jammal, Hewitt Architects
		Rich Johnsrud, Sound Transit
		Barbara Luecke, Sound Transit Art
		Joe Mathieu, SDOT
		Christine Scharrer, Hewitt Architects
		Allison Maitland Scheetz, Swift Company, LLC
		Tina Vlasaty, Office of Economic Development
		Ruri Yampolsky, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs
Time: 1.0 hours		(SR 121/RS02032)

ACTION

For the record, the Design Commission is conducting University Link review with representatives of the Arts Commission and Planning Commission in a modified version of the Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP).

The LRRP thanks the team for its comprehensive presentation, and approves design development with a vote of 10-4, conditional on seeing the project again.

The LRRP recommends conditioned approval of the 60% design development plans and would like the team to return for one more visit. The presentation should focus on character of surface buildings, incorporation of the signage and lighting programs, and responses to the other issues and concerns raised during the presentation.

The LRRP offers the following comments:

- **As TOD opportunities evolve, keep the options open and/or craft the RFP for the inclusion of arts organization spaces as they are currently being priced out of area.**
- **Suggest the TOD RFP materials encourage the development of Nagle as a pedestrian access way at a minimum, or combining parking and service access with a semi-public alley.**

- **Wayfinding and signage will be important; would like to see more details at the next review meeting.**
- **Incorporation of other high traffic transit connectors should be considered in the design.**
- **Appreciate the widened sidewalks around the station area, responding to both the station needs as well as the active pedestrian nature of Capitol Hill.**
- **Concern that the station entrances do not have a strong presence on Broadway, especially since two are recessed from Broadway. It will be important for people driving down Broadway to quickly recognize the location of the station entrances. The design guidelines for the TOD projects may be able to help, but the private development should certainly not overshadow the transit station entries.**
- **Suggest the widening of the openings into South and West Entries.**
- **Suggest the South Entry may work better if opened to Nagle to address users coming from the south. The sidewalk may also be widened and the street trees shifted away from the entry.**
- **The materials palette seems reserved and somewhat institutional and may benefit from a more dynamic color scheme.**
- **Some panel members expressed a concern for the use of warplanes in art piece in the context of a light rail station. While we appreciate the artist's intention of expressing fluid movement and natural forms, the relationship between natural form and a fighter plane as presented is questionable. A solution may be an artist statement prepared for the next presentation to clarify the appropriateness of the art in the station.**
- **The pedestrian tunnel is another area that could be oppressive, but the design appears to use all the tools available to activate and lighten the space. There may be a way to express the passage from under the street to under the buildings. The segmentation described appears to address some of these issues.**
- **The station interior and the artwork show a vibrant and engaging character, and it would be good if some of this character could be exported to the surface buildings. Recommends a more engaging and inviting architectural presence in the surface component of the station.**

Note: Preliminary vote included four dissenting votes based on the character of the surface buildings, the dislike of the art piece, and the unclear relation of the project to the future TOD.

Disclosures:
Commissioner Watson disclosed her firm is working on the University Station.
Commissioner Sato disclosed that she has a current contract with Sound Transit Central Link.
Commissioner Kiest disclosed that she works with Sound Transit South of the City.
Commissioner Hoffman disclosed that his firm is the on-call consultant for Sound Transit's TOD program.

Planning Commissioner Kirsten Pennington disclosed that she works for CH2M Hill, which has contracts with Sound Transit. She is not involved with this project for them.

Proponent's Presentation

Project Background

This project consists of three points where the station is coming to grade. This creates the need to think of the Capitol Hill district and build upon its characteristics. A variety of people inhabit this neighborhood, which always lead the social curve, have high vitality, and are risk taking. The public realm in this area supports this social function and should continue to do so. Previous efforts have created an extraordinary canopy of trees throughout the neighborhood.

The scale of the buildings will have a high degree of presence to the street. The green walls will become signifiers of the stations, as each station incorporates one. A lot of work continues that will save current trees. The stations should offer an important element of spatial form.

Establishing a scale at the North Entry will accommodate the large bus function that currently, and will continue to take place there. The adjacent TOD would share the plaza created at the station. With the eclectic nature of Broadway and Capitol Hill the entrance should be simple and incorporate natural light. The mezzanine level will receive light from the clerestory above.

The South Entry is at Nagle Place and Denny Way. It will be a simple entry that contains the elevator descending directly to the platform. On the south side of Denny a rain garden is proposed that goes down to the station entrance. It is being designed so taller material mark where the rain garden starts and the other side will have low pavement that one can sit on.

Figure 6: Entry Elevations

The West Entry is at Broadway and south of Denny Way. It offers a generous bicycle storage area. A clerestory runs to the rear of the building offering daylight onto the stair and escalator landing.

The simplicity of the entries set users up for the interior of the station. At the mezzanine level one still does not appreciate the full extent of the station.

The art piece will focus on the box portion of the interior of the station. The frequency of the beams limits the sightline from the mezzanine to the platform level. Traveling on escalators through the station is therefore like going through layers of clouds. As one descends through the station the art piece will reveal itself. The challenge is how to use the space, but still keep the general sightline open to see people coming and going. This can be achieved by carefully locating the pieces of the sculpture towards the edges of the volume of space so they don't obstruct the sightline to the opposite end of the platform.

The piece will include two fighter jet planes, deconstructed, hanging above the platform. The parts of the planes will hang separately in an arrangement that lends the piece an organic form drawn from the natural qualities of the city and its surroundings. Warm, soft tones will be used to enhance the sense of flow through space. The art will address deep and complex themes, but is as dynamic, exciting and forward thinking as the neighborhood and city it will be a part of.

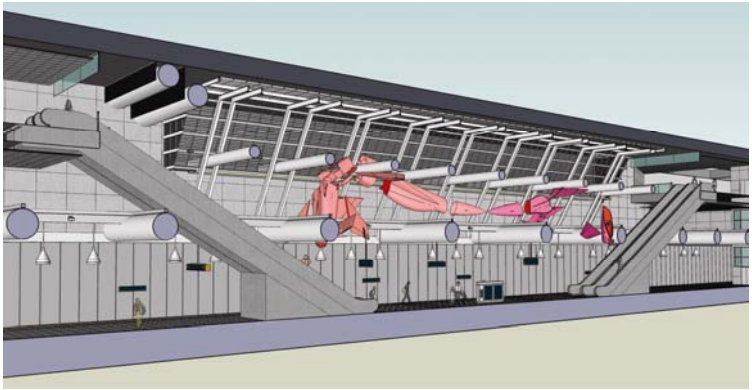

Figure 7: Art piece

It also looks like there will be funding to engage the 1st runner-up artist, Ellen Forney, a Capitol Hill resident and graphic novelist, on the pedestrian tunnel portion of the station.

Public Comments
Tina Vlasaty, Seattle OED

- Early in the station design there was concern that the box structural design may not be substantial enough to incorporate the structural loads of the full zoning potential above. However, after review, it has been determined that it is able to support the current zoning.
- Keeping Nagle Place open will be important. Engage the community in the design process in what elements should be included in the TOD RFP making the station and the TOD help with the revitalization of the area. The work will include streetscape as well.
- Does any possibility exist to incubate artists in the area?

    - Performing space, artist housing, farmer's market permanent space are many of the elements that can be engaged by the community through the RFP.
- Is the arts overlay plugged into this process?
    - There is conversation amongst artist groups about an art district overlay for the area. Thinking about zoning regulations and how they would affect different groups.

Commissioners' Comments

- Can you describe the schedule of construction to phasing to opening?
    - Hope to be at 90% design completion by fall. Initial demolition contract awarded this fall with construction for excavation work to take place in 2010 so the station can be completed by 2015 and the U-Link line open in 2016.

Above Grade Comments:

- Where is street level signage in this process?
    - It's at about 60%. Have general locations, as there is a station marker at the north entrance and signs at every entrance per the standard. The stations have more clarity than the images show. Between the three they will be noticed. Wayfinding had been incorporated.
- Does the project meet SDOT sidewalk requirements?
    - Yes
- Is the general pedestrian ROW east of Nagle extension being widened?
    - The sidewalk width on the south side of E. John St. between Broadway Ave. and Nagle Place extension is 20 ft wide. East of Nagle on John it will not be widened. The sidewalk will not be part of this project, but left to TOD development.
- Could colored lighting be used to bring aura of artwork to the surface?
    - White light is used during the day with some down lights to warm the space. The clerestories will have fritted or frosted glass. There are opportunities for both up and down lighting, all of which will be accessible for replacement.
- Much of the streetscape is being done adjacent to where the TOD is located. How do you protect it during the TOD construction?
    - Where the streetscape is being replaced, the design is being assessed to anticipate the impact of future TOD construction.
- Can the team explain the arguments for/against expanding Nagle Place?
    - It is currently shown with a dashed line, could be open to different ways to make it public. There is also a zoning change in this area.
- Is it currently a designated city ROW?
    - Not between Denny and John. Whether the Nagle Place extension will be public or private has not been determined, pending the TOD proposals. The final outcome must address the fact that it will be over the roof of the station box.
- Why reservations?

    - To maintain the most flexibility in the TOD until the community has been engaged. Some City staff has said they want to think about development of the entire block and other possibilities, such as developing the TOD across from Cal Anderson Park. Will have a better sense at the end of the year after community engagement.
- Is there a remainder parcel at the west entry to be developed as a TOD?
    - Yes
- There is also an important bus stop near the west entry. Will there be integration among transit services?
    - The building is set back to provide a wider sidewalk at this location but will be looked at further by the design team.
- Commissioners acknowledge that the station is long in the making and will be a catalyst for new development and a changing face for Capitol Hill.
- Commissioners appreciate the larger sidewalks and encourage the TOD proposals follow suit.
- Hope to continue to show Nagle Place extension as dashed line. If not, assumption is that it is a closed alley and the scale is a large box. Supports scale of area and pedestrian connections.
- Worried that the team is trying to do too much with the rain garden on Denny. Concerned about space issues.
    - The team feels there is a reasonable width to incorporate the rain garden and is striving hard to meet the green factor. Green walls are a tool the team is using, but will look at the spatial issues
- Green screens are a great idea. Although they seem applied and not extending the architecture.
- It is not just about the vegetation. Looking at the texture of the block as well, the screen is stainless, then the green over it. Add interest to those walls that serve utilitarian purposes. Also a horizontal green trellis above the sidewalk on north and east side of north entry.
- Fear that green walls are the way to figure out how to comply with the green factor. What is their long term viability? Also adjacent to areas where buildings will be built.
    - There are many extraordinary walls covered with planting material across the world that add to the urban environment. They bring an important element to sites where there isn't much surface space to work with.
- Bring Green Factor into the station design as much as possible.
- Recall images of Westlake entrances, which have the standard pylon. These entrances don't have a strong presence on Broadway, a street that has a strong presence of its own. Make the stations visible to people who are not wise to the ways of the neighborhood. The north station entry is hidden on both Broadway and E. John by the TOD. TOD limits should be thought through.
- The architecture blends in as opposed to standing out.
- If the design of the entrances is relying only on pylons only to get people in, then the design should incorporate them now.
- The circulation works well as a transit station.
- Entries at south and west seem small, it may be better if they could be opened up.

    - Small mainly due to security reasons. Can still be explored.
- Bring attitude of below to the surface.
- Need to articulate the language of the entries more clearly.
- Can the station entrances be built over?
    - No, they cannot.
- North Entry: What is the transparency on the north elevation wall?
    - 80% glass
- Appreciate the transparency due to the bus stop location and added visibility.
- South Entry: Everything is tight and a street tree may not be necessary.
- Is there a building between the vent stack and the North Entry?
    - The space is available for incorporation into the TOD build-out.
- It could be an open space.
    - The potential for courtyards off Nagle will be explored as the dialog continues
- What other sustainable design elements will be included?
    - Stormwater, daylighting in above ground areas, energy efficient lighting inside. Everything is made in America and will be local when possible.
- Any consideration for green roofs?
    - Maintenance issue with Sound Transit.
- Pleased to hear of the conservation that has been ongoing concerning the future of Capitol Hill.
- Should be considering the permeability of buildings and that multiple entrances may be more viable in the future. Keep this in mind while determining design guidelines in the area.
- Appreciate the long-term viability in the colors of the materials. Using lighting to play in the space would be good.
- How to support the policing of transit spaces?
    - The police department does have input into the station design.

Below Grade Comments:

- How far above the ground are the large braces?
    - 15 feet high and 6.5 feet in diameter.
- Appreciate muscularity of structure.
- What is the floor surface?
    - Tiles. Need to take the sight impaired into account. Have chances for contrast between 'ribs' and art piece.
- What are the sides of the tunnel?
    - Won't see through to the lighting. Will be a balance of materials
- How does the station deal with the noise?
    - The concrete structure above the perforated ceiling panels will be sprayed with acoustical insulation.
- Appreciate the showcase of space and the inclusion of the art in the space.
- Why fighter jets?
    - The jets convey the sense of strength and power, and the peace that happens after war. There is no tension with other types of planes, or

aesthetic interest. The piece gives grace and femininity to the strength and masculinity of the planes.

- Other ways planes penetrate architecture that is not so offensive?
    - Urge great care in emphasizing poetry of forms in people's minds. Notion of destruction is there in the fighter jets, but the entire form after deconstruction of the pieces is holistic. The piece is not meant to convey aggression.
- Will Boeing Jets be used?
    - Interested in finding Boeing jets, in the process of searching for them. Not looking for useable jets, only using the airframe.
- Appreciate the element of tension in the public art, which is scarce these days.
- Fact that it is a fighter jet may stop some people from interpreting it as art.
- Love the idea of the pink muscular object. Could emphasize the nature and poetry side of the piece more.
- Appreciate interpretation of tunnel space as descending through clouds.
- Chosen a provocative art piece. Planes may be appropriate with everything that is going on in area and the neighborhood.
- Concern over violent ramifications of art piece. Appreciate that the art seeks to connect important "Seattle qualities" of nature and technology into this piece, but question the use of a fighter jet as the manifestation of those ideas. Encourage further reflection on this, and preparation of an artist's statement for review next time.
- How will it be suspended?
    - Not sure yet, still exploring the possibilities.
- The pedestrian tunnel could be more direct, but appreciate the entrance on the western side. Perhaps it could be wider.
    - The pedestrian tunnel will be about 200ft long and built in three 45ft sections with a series of landings. The space has been expanded to feel bright.
- There may be a way to express the fact that the tunnel is going under both a building and a street.
- The exterior architecture is not provocative and has no relation to the interior.