



May 2, 2016

Members of the Seattle City Council
600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 2
Seattle, Washington 98124-4025

Dear Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your letter of April 25, 2016 on the Sound Transit 3 draft plan. For ease of reference, your questions are repeated here, followed by answers in italics. We welcome the opportunity to have staff present at your Council discussion on May 3 in case additional clarifications are needed, or if more questions arise. We look forward to a continued dialogue about Sound Transit's partnership with the City on Sound Transit 3.

West Seattle Alignment:

- In advance of formal study, we've regularly been asked about consideration of tunneling in the West Seattle alignment. In developing the draft plan, was tunneling on the West Seattle portion of the alignment (through Genesee Hill to the West Seattle Junction) considered or priced?
 - If tunneling was considered, what is the cost difference from the proposal in the draft plan?
 - If tunneling was screened out, what considerations led to that decision?

In 2014, Sound Transit completed a series of High-Capacity Studies to help inform the Sound Transit Regional Long-Range Plan. One of these studies focused on light rail connections to West Seattle and points south and served as the basis for our ST3 Candidate project development. A tunnel connection to the West Seattle Junction was examined and found to add additional cost and operated at the same travel time.

The options for the ST3 Draft Plan were drawn from the ST3 Candidate Projects information presented on December 4, 2015 to the Sound Transit Board. There were three options for connecting to West Seattle Junction from Downtown Seattle and one from along Delridge Ave. to White Center from Downtown Seattle. Based on the results of the HCT Study, an elevated option was included to West Seattle Junction. As a result, the representative project in the Draft Plan includes an elevated alignment. As a representative project, a project-level environmental review would be required following a successful ST3 vote. In the environmental process, a reasonable range of profile and alignment alternatives in the corridor will be analyzed. At the same time, the further we get from the representative alignment and the more alternatives we are asked to evaluate, the longer and more time-consuming the environmental process will be.

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Peter M. Rogoff

It is estimated that a tunnel to the West Seattle Junction through Genesee Hill would cost approximately \$500 to \$600 million more than an elevated alignment.

- We have also heard comments on the fate of the Delridge option listed as a Candidate Project in December 2015. Could you explain the rationale for not including the option in the draft ST3 package? Would a Delridge option still be eligible as a candidate project if ST3 were to pass with the current language?

Ridership to the West Seattle Junction has higher ridership than the Delridge corridor. The Junction has higher density of residential and commercial land uses. It is also centrally located to serve the whole peninsula. The ST3 Draft Plan representative project includes a station on Delridge that can service as an important bus/rail transfer center with connections from King County Metro (KCM) service. The draft KCM Long Range Plan includes frequent bus routes in the Delridge corridor that would connect at the proposed Delridge station.

The Delridge option would not be an eligible candidate project because it is a different alignment with different station locations than the representative alignment included in the ST3 Draft Plan.

Ballard Alignment:

- We understand that for cost assumptions the draft alignment in the ST3 proposal runs in a mixture of elevated and at grade right of way along 15th Ave. We know there are trade-offs in cost, speed of construction, and speed and reliability of performance to be considered under any alignment scenario. Could you provide an estimate about the cost implications, project delivery impacts, and any other tradeoffs from an alignment that ran west of 15th and east of the current BNSF line?
- Could you also provide an estimate of the cost implications, project delivery impacts, and any other tradeoffs from a tunnel alignment under the canal?

The two questions above are related to each other. The cost implications of a line that would run west of 15th and east of the current BNSF line have more to do with the differences in how these lines would then cross Salmon Bay than how they travel through Interbay. An initial concern is that there is very limited right-of-way available between the BNSF tracks and the existing golf course and playfields. The narrow strip of right-of-way between these two uses includes an underground sewer line. That right-of-way ends alongside the playfield, at which point the playfield and BNSF right-of-way are adjacent to one another. Therefore, construction of a light rail line would require difficult negotiations with BNSF or potential park acquisitions. If it is possible to position a light rail alignment through this corridor, the BNSF tracks and active freight uses, as well as Fisherman's Terminal, would likely require a tunnel alignment. Along with the extremely limited right-of-way availability, this is the main cost implication to this alignment as compared with an option that could travel on 15th and use a bridge structure. The cost difference with a tunnel under Salmon Bay is estimated at approximately \$600 million dollars. Additionally, a tunnel to cross Salmon Bay could require a year to two years longer to construct than a bridge, and could affect the overall delivery time of the project, depending on overall project sequencing. More analysis would be required to fully identify the time impact.

- If the city wants to support an alignment that is west of 15th Ave and crosses under the canal, what are actions the city could take to make this alignment more likely?

Sound Transit and City of Seattle could work together to explore options for grade separation in the representative alignment and laying the groundwork for future project development work. We could also work to identify provisional facilities that could be considered in the representative project. The other assistance that would be helpful to consider is participating financially in the project if there is a delta between what would be preferred in the project and the financial constraints of the overall plan.

Construction schedules:

- We would all like to see the timelines accelerated for construction of the Ballard and West Seattle lines in particular. Three areas are often mentioned that impact time of delivery. We'd like your thoughts on what the city can do in each of the areas to streamline the process and accelerate construction:
 - Design and outreach: Are there ways the city could partner with ST to accelerate and streamline this process?
 - Permitting: Can you provide some suggestions about ways the city could streamline its permitting process to create more certainty for ST and accelerate construction?
 - Financing: We understand that debt coverage ratio rules within ST are one constraint. Are there ways the city could use its bonding capacity to accelerate the funding of these projects in a way that would accelerate the completion dates? Are there other ways the city could contribute financially to these projects to accelerate construction?
- Beyond the items mentioned above, are there any additional steps that Sound Transit or the City can take to accelerate construction timelines?

Please find attached to this document a number of changes to City code and options on how the City could streamline permitting and collaborate on project delivery to reduce costs. In addition, as the Board works to finalize the ST3 plan, the agency welcomes the opportunity to discuss financing and financial contributions.

Graham Street Infill Station:

- It appears in the delivery schedule very late in the timeline. Is this merely a financing challenge or are there other constraints that push it out? What would it take to make this an "Early win" project?

This is an element that could be looked at within the financial plan to determine if the timeframe could be advanced.

NE 130th Street Station:

- The ridership projections for the NE 130th Street Station assume current land use patterns. The City anticipates adding zoning capacity in the North Seattle neighborhoods of Bitter Lake and Lake City, and is considering adding an urban village at NE 130th Street and I-5. How would those land use changes affect the ridership model?

As a regional agency, Sound Transit relies on the population and employment projections provided by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). This practice is in line with requirements from the Federal Transit Administration. The decisions regarding allocation of these figures within cities are determined by the PSRC in concert and coordination with jurisdictions across PSRC's four county area. The model does not take into account potential land use and zoning changes, but what has been identified in the PSRC process. If the city changes land use and works with PSRC to have those changes recognized in the regional growth plan, this could affect forecasting of station performance in the future.

- We understand that the NE 130th Street station was included as a provisional station in the Federal Transit Administration's Lynnwood Link Extension Record of Decision dated July 2015 on pages 2, 4, 5 and 7 as follows: "The project includes infrastructure to support a potential future elevated station at NE 130th Street." Can you please outline what steps the Sound Transit board and/or the Federal Transit Administration would need to take to remove the provisional distinction from the Record of Decision and make the 130th station permanent?

There are several items that come together in this question. At the time of the completion of the Lynnwood Link Record of Decision, the 130th station was not voter approved. Because of this, it was not possible to include in the Lynnwood Link project. The Lynnwood Link project without inclusion of the 130th Station has advanced within the Federal New Starts process following a lengthy application, review and approval process and is now eligible to receive over \$1 billion dollars to complete the project. Changing the scope of the project at this date could put that funding at risk.

Including the 130th Station in the ST3 Plan would then make this a voter approved project following a successful vote, allowing it to be built as an infill station based on available funding. If federal grant funding was pursued for the station, the Federal Transit Administration likely would require either a new environmental process and/or a process to amend the Record of Decision.

- How soon after Lynnwood Link opens would it be possible to add NE 130th as an infill station?

Lynnwood Link is scheduled to be open in 2023. Adding it as an infill station after this date within ST3 is a question of available financial resources balanced with other priorities included in the plan.

- Would adding a NE 130th St station after the completion of Lynnwood Link result in closures to the light rail spine?

A construction schedule would have to be completed to determine this answer fully, but there is potential that weekend or night service interruptions could be required to complete construction of the station. There could also be single tracking restrictions that may reduce service frequency.

- What would be the relative cost differential of constructing the NE 130th Street station during Lynnwood Link compared to adding a station after the Lynnwood Link project is completed?

The Lynnwood Link Extension EIS completed last year placed an additional cost of completing the station during construction of the project at between \$30-\$50 million. This cost did not include vehicle costs. The total cost for the 130th Station in the ST3 Draft Plan is \$79-85 million, which includes vehicle costs (\$16 m - \$17 m) and station allowances for Sustainability, TOD planning and due diligence, and Non-Motorized access (totaling \$7.36 to \$7.88 million).

In order to provide a more direct comparison, the table below shows cost of the station only (no vehicles) over the development of the 130th station in the Lynnwood Link process and ST3. However, please note that, consistent with the budgeting methodology for all ST3 projects, the amount added to finance a new station must include the concomitant costs for vehicles, sustainability, TOD, etc. Note: these are conceptual engineering costs; additional design and engineering would occur to refine the cost estimate and operational impacts of adding the station if the station is included in the ST3 package.

Planning Phase	Station Cost Only (No Vehicles)	Station Description
November 2013: Lynnwood Link Alternatives Development	\$24 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs based on at-grade station built with Lynnwood Link alignment
April 2015: Lynnwood Link Final Environmental Impact Statement	\$30-\$50 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment in the FEIS is elevated; Costs based on elevated station built with Lynnwood Link alignment
March 2016: ST3 Draft Plan	\$63-\$68 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs based on elevated station built after Lynnwood Link alignment

Ballard Sounder Station:

- This is a station that has been discussed for a number of years. Will you provide some analysis on the trade-offs of making this station a reality?

This stop would provide a connection from Ballard to the King Street Station. The westerly location of this station and lower density of surrounding land uses could affect overall ridership. Bus connections could be coordinated to provide access to the station to improve ridership. It should be noted that this station would have cost implications for the North King sub-area to pay for a portion of operations and maintenance cost of the North Sounder system.

C and D line improvements and Madison BRT:

- We appreciate these early investments in infrastructure to support bus service. Please provide some specifics as to the dollar amount committed to and the projects or project types that could be funded through this line item.

The Early Deliverables as currently included in the ST3 Draft Plan include approximately \$50 million dollars that can be used for capital projects on the Rapid Ride C and D lines to improve travel times and reliability in advance of light rail coming to these corridors. Coordination will be required with the City of Seattle, including the Seattle Department of Transportation, and King County Metro to fully evaluate and determine specific projects. Likely candidates include transit signal priority, queue jumps, and Business Access Transit (BAT lane improvements). The Early Deliverables in the ST3 Draft Plan does not currently include funding for the Madison BRT project.

Thank you again for your interest and attention to Sound Transit 3. We look forward to our continued partnership with the City.

Sincerely,



Peter M. Rogoff
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment

cc: Sound Transit Board of Directors

Attachment to Sound Transit Response to Seattle City Council letter of April 25, 2016

The City Council is interested in accelerating times for delivery of Ballard and West Seattle light rail lines as well as other ideas to streamline project delivery and reduce costs. Below are changes to City code and options on how the City could streamline permitting and collaborate on project delivery to reduce costs:

Seattle City Code Changes

Amending the City's code would streamline the delivery of high capacity transit investments within the City of Seattle. Here are recommendations on code amendments:

1. *Use the EIS as is for substantive and procedural SEPA compliance to support all City permits without requiring additional environmental review.*
2. *Use the mitigation commitments described in the FEIS and/or ROD during permitting for mitigating potential environmental impacts of a project, rather than using the City's substantive SEPA authority to impose additional mitigation measures.*
3. *Allow Sound Transit (ST) facilities as permitted uses outright, and remove the City's alignment approval step and rely upon the Sound Transit Board's alignment decision.*
4. *Allow permits to be issued based on the work described in the master use permit application without requiring ST to confirm it has sufficient funding to complete the work described in the master use permit application.*
5. *Establish a "Fast track" permit process for approval of Master Use Permit's, including shoreline MUPs, within 3 months of complete application submittal and specific agreed upon timeframes for approval of all other permit applications.*
6. *Eliminate the Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP) and exempt light rail stations from design review during the permit process and instead rely on the design and milestone review processes outlined in #8 of the section below (proposed Administrative Actions).*
7. *Forego MUPs or building permits for facilities within WSDOT right-of-way.*
- 8.
9. *Issue a major public project construction noise variances for night time construction activities as a matter of right based on a demonstration by ST that it is taking reasonable measures to limit the duration and volume of the noise.*
10. *Eliminate administrative appeals to the Hearing Examiner for MUP's, temporary use permits and construction noise variances issued to ST, so that appeals would be brought in superior court instead.*
11. *Waive permit fees and enter into agreements to provide dedicated staff to include permit and inspection fees in an agreed upon lump sum.*

Administrative Actions to streamline permitting and collaborate on project delivery

The following administrative actions will expedite project delivery and save costs by streamlining the permitting processes and collaborating with Sound Transit (ST) in a variety of ways:

During environmental review:

1. *Execute a term sheet at project initiation, memorializing the basis of understanding between ST and the City on the environmental review process and other subjects as appropriate.*
2. *Concur on the Preferred Alternative and a narrow range of reasonable alternatives after EIS scoping and do not expand the review with new alternatives or stations after this alternative concurrence point.*
3. *Concur on EIS scope, analysis assumptions and methodologies after EIS scoping and proceed without further revisions during EIS process.*
4. *Agree to and adhere to a schedule for the City to provide technical information and feedback necessary for preparation and completion of the EIS.*
5. *Forego review of preliminary versions of the draft and final EIS (ST will coordinate with the City to resolve issues and obtain input as necessary during environmental review).*

During project development and design:

6. *Provide early coordination and resources to partner with ST on project development before project enters final design.*
7. *Require City departments to design street improvements for the immediate station area early in project development and design.*
8. *Commit City departments and resources to participate in ST's milestone review process, and require departments to contribute during the ST's design process via "over the shoulder" reviews and design milestones.*
9. *Coordinate as early as possible any future City street plans and design with ST alignment, station, and/or guideway design, and absorb cost impacts on ST facilities attributed to those design adjustments.*
10. *Prioritize use of City right-of-way to minimize private property takes.*
11. *Take on ownership and financing of utility relocations within City right-of-way.*

During construction:

12. *Authorize ST to self-certify, self-evaluate, and label electrical installations to be compliant American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association (AREMA) standards.*
13. *Eliminate construction services fees that pay for the coordination of City staff.*
14. *Eliminate or pay for City infrastructure enhancement/betterment requests including SPU stormwater capacity or line improvements, SCL power grid or powerline capacity upgrades/improvements, SDOT roadway pavement, walkway or bike facility upgrades, and pay for the incremental maintenance of enhanced/betterment infrastructure.*
15. *Manage and implement all station access improvement projects outside ST's station construction area work zones.*
16. *Establish through agreement that the Seattle Fire Department will provide and fund tunnel rescue services for future ST underground construction projects.*
17. *Assign single point of accountability/team lead for each project to ensure streamlined communications and accountability*