

BALLARD-INTERBAY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Tuesday, January 28, 2020 | 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. | Ballard Public Library

Meeting Notes

Welcome and Attendee Introductions

Diane Wiatr, the Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation (BIRT) System project manager at the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), welcomed attendees to the meeting. A show of hands indicated that most attendees were Ballard residents. Diane introduced the project team in attendance including Chisaki Muraki-Valdovinos, Jonathan Lewis, and Andres Arjona from SDOT; Samantha Stork from the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON); and Jennifer Wieland and Michael Randolph from Nelson\Nygaard. Sam Stork from DON and Leda Chahim from Sound Transit also gave a presentation on the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions light rail project.

Diane gave an overview of the BIRT, including legislative language authorizing the project, the planned technical study, and a description of agency partners.

SDOT Presentation

Jennifer Wieland of Nelson\Nygaard began a presentation further discussing the BIRT System study. She discussed the project area's context and neighborhood growth, coordination with other projects happening in the study area such as new Sound Transit 3 (ST3) light rail investments, the technical scope elements, and a project timeline. Diane Wiatr of SDOT then wrapped up by discussing the details about future meetings, outreach plans to date, how the public can get involved and stay informed, and next steps in the project process.

Q&A

Roughly 20 minutes were available for questions from the audience and responses from the project team:

- Is it a misnomer that this is a regional study? Is this only focusing on the bridges?
 - No, the bridges are just a piece of the system, and this project is studying the entire area. The BIRT project team is looking at the replacement of the Ballard and Magnolia bridges in the context of the broader transportation system, including regional access and connections for people and goods.
- Are there non-governmental studies being looked at for this project? – thinking specifically of *Connect Ballard*.
 - Yes, *Connect Ballard* is included on a list of 25 studies that is currently growing. Contact us if there are any, especially new studies, you'd like us to look at.
- Will there be feedback from organizations representing bicyclists, transit riders, pedestrians, and residents in this scope? Are community organizations part of this plan?
 - Tonight is the beginning of this project's public outreach program. The BIRT project team is currently working on our public involvement plan. There are points in the timeline where technical work will be shared with the public. There will be a continuous opportunity to stay

Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System Community Meeting Summary
Seattle Department of Transportation

- informed and share ideas, but at this moment the project team is doing briefings to inform people about the project purpose, goals, and timeline.
- Is the goal of this project just to amass information? After the November deadline, will others have a vision for the study area?
 - This is just the first phase, afterwards there is a transportation forecasting task. The BIRT project team will study how to fill gaps in the mobility system, and recommendations will have associated plans and next steps. The state legislature can make the decision to act if they desire.
 - Will the project team be reviewing the forecast modeling and other technical methodologies with the local community? Local knowledge could be useful in this case.
 - Public input will be accepted at the Interagency Team (IAT) meetings that cover this topic.
 - This goes to 2040, how does this project fit with the city's climate goals? Does it look to climate goals/forecasting to 2050?
 - The BIRT project team may not have climate forecasting information for 2050 soon enough to take advantage of it for this project and if so, will default to the 2035 baseline. SDOT is very cognizant of the climate and environmental implications of projects like BIRT and the opportunities associated with creating a multimodal environment.
 - Will the project look at restoring habitat and environmental effects of the area? This is a corridor with potential for the restoration of natural habitats.
 - This is not a part of the scope that the legislature has given us. Recommendations from the public can be made to take the environment and natural habitat into consideration for this project.
 - IAT meetings are open to the public; is equitable access for the public being considered, such as evening time slots?
 - Yes, this was part of some previous brainstorming. The project team is considering evening meetings, different locations, and livestreaming among other options.
 - This project is on a very fast track for November 2020. For comparison, how many other similar studies were authorized in the same legislative session and what are their timelines?
 - The project team will need to look into that. The BIRT project is unusual as there isn't another project with a comparably sized study area, interagency cooperation, and bridges component.
 - ESHB Sec. 309.6 is the closest capital project which is about electrifying the WA state ferry fleet with a June 6, 2020 deadline. However, this project is a long range implementation plan, not a regional transportation recommendation study.
 - Did this grow out of previous Armory study discussions?
 - No, this grew out of studies of the bridges. However, the BIRT study does not fund the design or engineering for the bridges. Alternatives for the bridges have not been discussed yet. No agency alone will be able to fund the bridge improvements/replacements.
 - Will the outcome of this project be a list of projects to fund? What will the implementation of those projects look like? What will be the public process for those projects?
 - Usually the state legislature authorizes a separate study of those projects in a future phase. A lot of the recommended projects will fall under the responsibility of the City and SDOT. If those projects were to be built, the City will work closely with the communities impacted by any changes.
 - Does the study area include the Ballard locks and certain east-west corridors?

- Yes.

Comment: The BIRT project team needs to be aware of various community visions. Thoughts on how the Vancouver freeway project was stopped by community advocates and how money was not wasted building something that communities didn't want. Diane Wiatr closed the Q&A by acknowledging that SDOT and the project team are taking comments now and will be back in the early summer with an update on the project.

Sound Transit Presentation

Sam Stork of the City of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods and Leda Chahim of Sound Transit began a presentation on ST3 light rail developments for Ballard. The presentation discussed system expansion, the Ballard Link extension, project timelines, a brief description of alignments, the City of Seattle's guiding principles for light rail development (dependable transit, vibrant communities, climate action, equity), and the community outreach timeline for the next year.

Q&A

- Why is the Department of Neighborhoods involved?
 - The DON works on connecting communities and thinking innovatively about how major projects like Sound Transit expansion can help do so.
- With the redevelopment of Interbay, the Smith Cove Park development, and Terminal 91, how are you making sure that the park is accessible?
 - This is a great example of the connectivity challenges Sound Transit is thinking about, requiring the collaboration of many different agencies. It is important for us to understand what the most important destinations are. Sound Transit will be doing a community workshop on stations and access in the summer.
- A lot of the transit stations in Seattle do not have amenities. As Sound Transit plans, what is the philosophy about amenities?
 - Sound Transit is doing station planning work a lot earlier than in past projects and is hearing this theme come up a lot; Sound Transit is looking for opportunities for these stations to best serve communities and riders.
- Comment: The Roosevelt process with Land Use Academy lessened a lot of fears and allowed people to have a foundation in planning. Suggestion to copy this process as much as possible.
 - Sound Transit appreciates the comment and has received a lot of positive input about the Land Use Academy.
- Once the system is built, what proportion of the maintenance and operation comes from fares? Is anyone considering no fare transit, especially considering recent findings about inequitable fare enforcement?
 - Sound Transit needs to check and follow up.
- There is uncertainty around I-976; how does it affect the process?
 - Sound Transit is continuing with the current timeline with the understanding that there is ongoing litigation and conversations in the State Legislature. The Sound Transit Board direction is to continue as planned and will reassess as more information comes to light. .
- Access to Stations – Are the stations being designed to accommodate loading and unloading (taxis, ride-hailing)?
 - Yes, loading and kiss-and-rides are considered. Sound Transit is looking into multimodal connections.

Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System Community Meeting Summary
Seattle Department of Transportation

- Access to Stations – Is Sound Transit making sure that the elevators work?
 - Yes, Sound Transit has updated standards on elevators and escalators. Access is important to make sure people of all abilities have good access to transit.
- Access to Stations – Comment: Pedestrians should not have to cross major arterials at grade ; this was done poorly in the past. In South Lake Union, Harrison is superior than Mercer as an alignment. Access should mean pedestrians are crossing safely, below/above grade.
- Is Metro Transit working with Sound Transit to coordinate service?
 - Yes
- What about property owners? What is your plan? Is it too early to talk to someone?
 - Sound Transit is open to talking any time - it is not too early to explain the overall process and timeline. Given the focus of this meeting, happy to follow up on the question after the meeting.
- Comment: Sound Transit needs to rethink what is a “connected community” and look at areas that have poor access now.
- Is Sound Transit coordinating construction with things like the Ballard Bridge?
 - Sound Transit and the City are working closely together to take construction and other projects into consideration. I’d just note that the Ballard Bridge does not have a construction plan or timeline at this time.
- Is Sound Transit thinking about parking near stations?
 - Given the urban context, Sound Transit’s focus is to make it as easy as possible for people to connect to stations other ways. The Sound Transit team is also considering regional destinations and context of parking and connections within a larger system.
- What about Ballard’s Vibrant Communities investment in green space? Will there be an opportunity to create more green space with the stations?
 - DON has heard a lot of interest in this idea and is considering it moving forward.
- Comment: Sound Transit ought to consider how the decision to drive or ride transit may be influenced by people having dogs.

Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System Community Meeting Summary

Seattle Department of Transportation

Figure 1 Boards from the Community Meeting

Welcome to the Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System (BIRT)

Public Meeting #1

Agenda

- 6:00 PM - Welcome and Sign-in
- 6:15 PM - BIRT Presentation
- 6:35 PM - BIRT Q&A
- 7:00 PM - Sound Transit 3 Presentation
- 7:15 PM - Sound Transit 3 Q&A
- 7:25 PM - Closing and Next Steps

Project Summary

The Washington State Legislature asked SDOT to develop a report on how to improve travel for people and goods in Ballard-Interbay. BIRT is a technical transportation study. BIRT will:

- Evaluate and recommend future improvements for a reliable transportation system to serve the Ballard, Magnolia, and Interbay neighborhoods
- Address all types of travel, considering movement of people and goods
- Develop a timeline for the replacement of the Ballard and Magnolia Bridges

Project partners include the City of Seattle, the Port of Seattle, Sound Transit, King County, the Washington State Military, and Washington State Department of Transportation.

Project Timeline

WE ARE HERE! (JAN - APR): Kickoff (Public Meeting #1), Convene Project Partners (FEB), Review Previous Plans (MAR), Traffic Analysis & Forecasts (APR).

ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS (MAY - JUL): Evaluation Framework & Impacts Analysis (MAY), Draft Project Lists & Traffic Management Strategies (JUN), Finalize Bridge Alternatives & Traffic Management Strategies (JUL).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY (AUG - OCT): Develop Timeline & Funding Strategy (AUG), Draft Report (SEP), Final Report to WA Legislature November 1, 2020 (OCT).

To stay updated sign-up on our listserv at seattle.gov/transportation/birt

Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System
January 2020

Where did you come from and how did you get here today?

Select a sticker to indicate how you traveled here today and place it where you live.

Walk

Bicycle

Transit

Taxi/Uber/Lyft

Drive

Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System
January 2020

Ballard-Interbay Regional Transportation System Community Meeting Summary
 Seattle Department of Transportation

Figure 2 Stickers Representing Attendee Origins and Travel Modes on January 28, 2020

