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## **APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**February 19, 2009**

Convened 8:30 am  
Adjourned 4:30 pm

### **Projects Reviewed**

Rose Street – Wolcott Ave. S  
Seattle Trade Center Skybridge over Elliott  
SR 519 Phase II Grade Separation  
University of Washington Light Rail Station

### **Commissioners Present**

Mary Johnston, Chair  
Andrew Barash  
Brendan Connolly  
John Hoffman  
Julie Parrett  
Nathan Polanski  
Dennis Ryan  
Norie Sato

### **Staff Present**

Guillermo Romano  
Valerie Kinast  
Tom Iurino  
Jeff Arango

**Celebrating 40 Years 1968-2008**



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**February 19, 2009**      **Project:**      **Rose Street – Wolcott Ave. S. - Street Vacation**

**Phase:**              Briefing

**Presenters:**        Scott Starr, SMR Architects

**Time:** 1 hour

(170)

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## **ACTION**

The Commission thanks SMR Architects for their presentation of the Rose Street and Wolcott Ave. S. street vacation proposal and approves the first step of the vacation process, urban design merits, by a vote of 6-1 with the following comment:

- The development will greatly enhance the neighborhood. Vacating the street allows the aggregation of the property necessary for the development to occur.

The Commission approves the second step of the vacation process, the public benefit package, by a vote of 5-2, with the following comments and recommendations:

- The Commission appreciates the proposed public improvements, which include bike racks along Rainier, the provision of a curb bulb that extends north from the triangular traffic island south of the site, and a bus bulb along Rainier extending from the triangular traffic island. It is especially appreciated that the applicant designed these solutions in partnership with the City and Metro.
- There is concern about the timing for the development of the northern part of the site and the condition of the site in the interim. The Commission recommends maintenance of the undeveloped part of the site until it too is developed.
- Commissioners encourage considering aspects of connection between the northern and southern parts of the site, primarily the location and quality of open space. The developer is asked to think about how the north and south phases of the project will interface and complement each other.
- The driveway that intersects the site from west to east holds the potential for a woonerf type design solution, where cars and pedestrians share the space. This might allow for the play area to spill out a little more into area that receives more sunlight. A 60-40 ratio of open space and hard surface is recommended.
- Commissioners have concern about the commercial aspect of the development, which may be risky. They recommend supporting the commercial use by providing service access and loading that is easy to use. Plans for the north part of the site should provide for uses in a location that supports the commercial in the south half of site.
- Encourage including sustainable features, such as natural drainage solutions, throughout the site.

## **Project Presentation**

The site is located in Southeast Seattle. The Housing Resources Group (HRG) is a non-profit organization that has been in Seattle since 1980. The organization owns, develops and manages properties. The target population for this property is 60% median annual income.

## Site

The site is located on Rainier and Rose Street in Southeast Seattle, south of Columbia City. Wolcott Avenue cuts through the property at an angle. There are several urban design implications for vacating the right-of-way (ROW) including:

- The ROW is not used for pedestrian circulation or utilities.
- The site is flat and undeveloped.
- On one side of the alley there are single family homes.
- There are some apt buildings and one-story businesses in the vicinity.
- There is also a bus stop nearby serving three routes.
- The main routes are Rainier Ave S and Seward Park.
- The east-west route streets are small neighborhood circulators. The pedestrian and vehicle traffic is mainly on Rainier.

The proposed building is 4 stories with a total of 71 unit apt building, with retail space on the ground floor facing Rainier Ave S. There will be parking and trash pick-up in the alley. A second phase of the project to the North is being considered.

There is a traffic island to the South with a bus stop. Since there are single-family homes blocking the route, it is assumed that Wolcott Avenue S will not be connected in the future.



**Northwest Corner of the Building; South from Rainier**

## Public Benefit

There are two public benefits associated with the site. To replace the function, there will be a one-way driveway with parallel parking spots, and a pedestrian path, which is lit at night. This will benefit traffic as well as the building residents. On S Rose Street there will be a south-facing courtyard and seating area, which will be open to the public. It will look into both residential and retail space. There will be decorative bicycle parking on Rainier Avenue S, with bike racks designed with an artistic element.

The bus island and traffic curb cut to the South is the major public benefit. A 91-foot pedestrian crossing currently exists, which is dangerous due to oncoming traffic from Rainier Avenue S. The corner is not currently developed and does not feel like a pedestrian space.

There are two proposed solutions for this pedestrian safety problem, one proposed by SDOT and the other by the Rainier Beach neighborhood plan. They are both very similar. The design team decided to pursue the option identified in the neighborhood plan, which does not close off Wolcott Ave. S. It decreases the ROW to approximately 32 feet, with a 25 foot crossing. From Rose Street, it will be a one-way exit only onto Rainier Avenue S. The team is working with SDOT on the design and looking at adding bus bulbs on Rainier Avenue S. on the traffic island; the proposal includes a 60 foot bus bulb. Both the neighborhood and SDOT have identified pedestrian safety as a need, and it will serve the building residents as well. It will be a fairly costly improvement, but it fits within the project budget.

The first floor plan shows the building uses. There is retail space, common space, a play area, a manager's office, and a one-way drive along with interior bicycle storage. The garage is accessed from the sidewalk and leads to underground parking for 71 vehicles.

The zoning does not require a building set-back. However, a modest front setback has been incorporated into the project design to provide some privacy for the ground level residents. Along Rainier Ave S. there is a 14-foot sidewalk, with larger paved areas at the commercial entries.

## Public Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT

- The project has been under review for a couple months, and no issues have been discovered. Wolcott Ave. S. was previously approved for another project a few years ago. It does not have utilities or a clear public function. The pedestrian developments off site are an important contribution to the public benefit. It is a thoughtful job, and a generous landscape. There are no red flags.

DPD

- DPD commented on the vacation proposal, and saw nothing that conflicted with the neighborhood plan. The public benefit proposal is in keeping with the neighborhood plan and is an addition to the neighborhood.

## Commissioners' Comments & Questions

*What is the commercial service?*

It will be serviced from the one-way driveway.

*Concerned about the functionality of the commercial space.*

*Are there any crosswalks across Rainier Ave. - North of the project site?*

There is one to the south, near the bus stop. The next one to the north is at Kenyon Street, which is one block, but is a long walk. To the south, there is a quarter mile walk to the next bus stop.

*Describe the rechannelization of Rainier.*

Currently Rainier Ave. S. has parking on both sides, and two lanes of traveling. One lane of parallel parking will be removed, and replaced by four travel lanes, bus bulbs, and one row of parallel parking.

*For this proposal, I have reservations about the narrow definition of the urban design merits. See the value of the open space of the undeveloped ROW. Concerned about the loss of open space for the neighborhood. There will be tremendous appreciation of the land value with the development to the north. Seattle just passed a significant bond issue to acquire the property, and this neighborhood is targeted for that need. If, however, the public benefits could somehow be assigned to the future development of a park, would be comfortable with the proposal.*

The last property tax bill showed the land value had increased \$50/square foot, which surprised HRG.

*It is unfortunate that the proposal does not start with the design of the northern parcel. However, I hate to pit public safety against open space; that is a conundrum. Also, the neighborhood has a lot of open space parcels that offer opportunities.*

*Question whether or not the parcel on Rainier is the best place for open space in this neighborhood; is this the space to fight for open space in this neighborhood?  
Frustrated by desire to see more of context.*

*Where is the closest open space near the site?*

The closest open space is Pritchard Park on Lake Washington. Othello Park is to the north, and Rainier Beach is to the south. The Rainier Beach Community Center is also located to the south. As far as the Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan, it targets housing, apartments, and commercial space for this particular node along Rainier Avenue S. To the north and south of the site the zoning is low-rise residential. This may not be the best area along Rainier Ave S. for public open space use, as there are safety concerns. The neighbors may consider it as a nuisance. It is currently treated as a dumping ground, and has been the site of violent crime because there is no one watching it.

*The Buddhist Association will benefit too; they have a plan for a garden?*

Yes, it is intended as a meditation garden.

*Will that garden be open to the public?*

The intended public use of the garden is not known at this time.

The Buddhist Temple's focus has been on renovation of the monastery. They will develop a campus plan and intend to work with HRG to approve that part of the vacation and make it well landscaped. They have strict rules about public access to the monastery, but their attention to quality and access to funding is a good aspect of the neighborhood.

*What is the plan for the parcel to the north?*

It is still being developed, and uncertain due to financing. Lower density townhomes and flats are being considered, with more landscape space

*Is the time frame known for its development?*

The design permitting process will probably be started at the end of 2009.

*The driveway between the two properties hold a lot of potential for a usable open space with identifiable character, possibly a woonerf-like community space.*

*Concerned about maintenance on northern portion of site, to avoid it becoming a dumping ground.*

*In keeping with the woonerf idea, recommend looking at sustainability issues as part of the design, to lead the way in the neighborhood. They need more demonstration of sustainability.*

One obstacles to implementing bioswales on this site is the existing soil is damp, so bioswales or and the stormwater collection system may not be effective, and may in fact lead to possible problems for the building or surroundings. The sustainability features focus mostly on the building and residents, such as sun/shade studies.

*Does live-work meet the guidelines for commercial space?*

Yes, and that is being explored.

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**February 19, 2009**      **Project:**      **Seattle Trade Center Skybridge over Elliott Ave.**

**Phase:**      Skybridge Permit

**Presenters:**      Roger Pearce, Foster Pepper PLLC

**Time:** 1 Hour

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## **ACTION**

The Commission thanks Foster Pepper PLLC for their presentation of the Seattle Trade Center Skybridge and recommends denying issue of a 30 year skybridge permit with the following comments and provisions:

At 16' 6" in height, the skybridge clearly does not meet the current city standard of 20' 0". Although the area is a busy vehicular corridor, it is changing rapidly with more residential and commercial activity anticipated. It is suggested that the presence of the skybridge has had a negative effect on Elliott Ave and its removal will help the street evolve into a more friendly pedestrian environment.

The long term development of the area depends a great deal on the future of the Alaska Way Viaduct. Traffic patterns, commercial patterns, pedestrian patterns and residential development will all change and it is within our prevue to look at the long range goals of the city. Thirty years is a long time to commit to a structure that may not fit our evolving cityscape.

Although we agree with the city's long term goal of discouraging most skybridges, we realize that the skybridge does serve a purpose for the tenants of the Trade Center Building and we are not insensitive to the practical day to day needs of the employees trying to cross a busy street. We understand that it may not be practical to remove the skybridge at this time and suggest a shorter term extension. In five to ten years conditions will change and we will better understand the context that the skybridge is part of.

If the City Council allows this grace period, we urge the proponents to consider the following measures to improve the pedestrian environment at the site while the skybridge is in place:

- Provide or restore a "green wall" on the parking garage street frontage
- Improve lighting around the skybridge
- Look at improvements in lighting and landscaping in the surrounding immediate neighborhood
- Improve ADA access to non-Real Networks employees or visitors
- Encourage more transit use strategies to reduce dependence on the parking garage like carpools, rideshare and bicycle parking.
- Provide visual amenities and mitigation like street landscaping, color and material upgrades and additional overhead weather protection.

## **Project Presentation**

Roger Pearce, Foster Pepper, gave the presentation. Real Networks leases 80% of the building. The existing skybridge has been in place for 30 years. The applicants are seeking a skybridge permit for an existing skybridge. The skybridge connects the Seattle Trade and Technology Center Building with the parking garage on the east side of Elliott Ave.

The skybridge is located between Alaskan Way and Western Ave. at Cedar Street, which was vacated west of Elliott. Elliot Ave. is a major truck route through Seattle. The street is busy with trucks during the main part of the business day. Truck traffic headed southbound gets backed up. The garage is on the east side of Elliott. The garage and skybridge were sited where they are because the area was originally a manufacturing area and operated as such until 1978 when the use was changed to an apparel design use. The skybridge and garage were permitted and constructed together in 1978.

In 1998 the use of the Seattle Trade and Technology Center was changed to an office use, consisting mostly of Real Networks (80%). The Seattle Art Institute uses most of the remainder of the building. The skybridge is used exclusively by Real Networks with approximately 1200 trips per day. The skybridge is used exclusively to get Real Network employees and visitors to and from the accessory-parking garage on the east side of Elliott Avenue.

In terms of pedestrian circulation, the applicant performed a study. The study concluded that most of the traffic is too and from the car and it provides the only good access to the Real Network Offices for mobility disabled persons. A transportation consultant found no retail or bus routes on Elliott Ave.. There is retail along First Ave. and a small amount on Alaskan Way. Use as a transportation corridor has probably limited the induction of retail into Elliott Ave. Truck traffic along Elliott is likely to increase after the Viaduct is replaced, depending on the final plan.

Elliott Ave. is one-way going south. Minimal accidents have occurred, possibly as a result of traffic congestion and slow speeds. Elliott Ave. is not within an established view corridor, which generally run east/west.

If the sky bridge is removed, significant changes would be required to the garage because access at the ground level is sub standard. An additional elevator would be required to provide access to the ground level.

## **Public Comment**

### **SDOT Skybridge Review Committee – recommendations**

The committee is against granting the permit. Since the application is for a new permit, and not a renewal, it needs to be treated as a new application. 16 ft. 6 inches would never be approved under current standards in which 20 ft. would be required for a new permit. Issuing the permit would have long term consequences and significant changes are occurring in the area with the addition of Olympic Sculpture Park and the viaduct solution still pending. The reduction of natural light at street level and the fact the skybridge is for the exclusive use of Real Network employees constitutes an exclusive private use within a public ROW.

## Commissioners' Comments & Questions

### Comments

- In consideration of public realm, skybridge should be gone. Complex issue, but will keep it there for some time until a better solution can be developed.
- Combination of height issue and the negative impact on the street it's better for the city to not have the bridge there, but willing to allow for a shorter-term permit. Consider the permit an adjustment period to consider more factors, such as habit.
- Only going to entertain a shorter permit, but doesn't believe the conditions will change that much. Policy is to remove skybridges because they cause harm. Doesn't make sense to remove it in 2009, but might in 2014. Given the frail economics, extension will be entertained until the context is better understood including the viaduct.
- Most of the conversation has been relative to context. Given the environment now, not much sense in taking it out now. Supports five -year extension.
- Agree long-term public realm, it's not that best place. Given unknowns, supports five to ten year range approval of skybridge.
- Disinclined to keep the sky bridge. One of the criteria is a public benefit or value, of which this does not have and no additional measures have been taken to mitigate the affects of the skybridge. Supports a five-year extension, but also would like to consider mitigation efforts relative to the pedestrian experience.
- Public benefit of having a vibrant city, including economic benefits from companies. 30-year existence of the bridge has designed the corridor. Supports mitigation efforts from skybridge impacts, which should be explored during a shortened permit length.
- Chair – recommendations of commissioners forms basis of decision:
  - Cities change, but especially this city. When you look at the uses and change of the building from industrial to semi-commercial to office and it could be residential in the future.
  - Must assess future, not just what is there now. City is dedicated to sustainability including using transit.
    - Commission recommends against a 30 year permit for the sky bridge, but we're realistic of the economics and practicality of the use of the sky bridge
    - Recommend a delayed negotiation, around three to five years
    - Urge proponents to consider elements to improve the pedestrian experience

### Questions

*Original building permit included the garage and the sky bridge, is that correct?*

Yes

*Was the skybridge accessible to the public during the apparel use?*

It's never been completely publicly accessible. A key card is required for access.

*Is there any accessibility to Elliott Ave. for handicap persons and what is the width of the bay at the entrance of the parking garage?*

10' wide entrance, with a 2' striped pedestrian access way to Elliott Ave. Access for handicap persons is not sufficient.

*Considering the uncertainty of the final viaduct proposal, what evidence supports the claim that truck traffic will increase with the final alternative. If the tunnel happens, more trucks will utilize the tunnel and reduce the truck traffic along Elliott. What evidence supports your claim that the traffic will increase?*

Traffic is likely to increase during construction, but the tunnel will likely decrease truck traffic along Elliott Ave.



*Are there any policies or incentives in place that encourage employees to use transit or ride share?*

Real has an active trip reduction program with metrics generated each year. The metro run is along 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. requiring employees to walk down and up steep hill. 250/800 buses rides. Incentives include van and carpool as well as bikes available for employees to use at lunch.

Real has spent 20 million dollars renovating buildings in the CBD area. Our position is that the skybridge is critical to the efficiency of the company. Real would reconsider lease if it's not approved and concerned about safety at street level. Economic distress is also a consideration and spending 1.5 million would be difficult.

*In regards to the study of the intersection of Cedar and Elliott, Do you know pedestrian counts at any other nearby locations?*

Anecdotally, it is a major crossing as is Broad.

*If the sky bridge was kept, it would still be 16'6" and a new application would require 20', perhaps there's no way around it.*

SDOT traffic engineers have stated the existing bridge has no impact on traffic functions along Elliott Ave.

*Could the Sky Bridge be approved for 5 years to allow more time to determine the needs in that area based on changing conditions?*

Real strongly supports the sky bridge and believes it's necessary for efficiency.

*More trips on the skybridge means less pedestrian traffic and vitality along the street, which may restrict street level retail.*

*What is the difference between the Olympic Sculpture Overpass that is larger and blocks more light than the existing sky bridge?*

The Olympic Sculpture Park overpass is for public use is a major difference.

*Will the absence of the sky bridge and the resulting need for employees to cross the street to Real Networks Office cause Real Networks to fail?*

Real Networks leased the building specifically because of the use of the sky bridge and it is critical to the businesses function. It's not so much about the success of Real Networks, but it's also about recruiting talent.

*What are some other conditions of the permit that might improve the streetscape, particularly if the permit were issued for a shorter term?*

There is a limited ability to get employees to utilize the street and park amenities. No restaurants or bars in the area.

More bicycle amenities could be added to mitigate the transportation impact from Real Network Employees. Real is open to adding publically accessible bike racks.

Visual amenities could be added including lighting and plantings although the 6' wide sidewalk is limiting. Green wall treatments or public art are also options, although public art may have minimal impact on an otherwise unattractive streetscape.

*Would oversized traffic increase if the sky bridge were removed?*

The alternative route for oversized vehicles is Alaskan Way as it was used during the construction of the Olympic Sculpture Park overpass.

*If one of the options is to re-permit the sky bridge, how do you feel about a - year term?*

Our lease expires in 2014, five years from now. If the permit was co-terminus with the lease, it is more desirable than having the permit rejected now.

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**February 19, 2009**      **Project:**      **SR 519 Phase II Grade Separation**  
**Previously seen:** January 15, 2009  
**Phase:**      Design Development  
**Presenters:**      Mike Johnson, SDOT  
                          Juliet Vong, HBB  
                          Oz Wagner, Aecom Design  
                          Gavin Wong, Aecom Design

**Present:**      Katherine Claeys, SDOT  
                          Susan Rawk, Mariners  
                          Shane Dewald, SDOT  
                          Ann Hegstrom, Kiewit Pacific

**Time:** 1 Hour

(169)

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## **ACTION**

The Commission thanks SDOT, HBB and Aecom Design for their presentation SR 519 Phase II Grade Separation project and unanimously approves the project, with the following comments:

- The use of glass on the elevator is a great opportunity to integrate an art project without significant extra cost.
- Concern was expressed for the dead end space at the base of the elevator. Explore the development of a through connection to eliminate the dead end space and potential safety concerns, but be aware of the possibility of creating a hiding spot unless opened widely.
- The columns supporting the bridge are under construction. The Commission sought previously for them to be better integrated into the overall design of the project, but does not recommend applying tile or other surface treatment.
- The bridge spur that serves as the upper elevator landing is part of the elevator structure and it should be expressed more in relation to the elevator.
- Commissioners recommend using similar plant species in east and west plazas to tie the areas together. Also, consider integrating the use of river rock in various locations to reduce perception that it is only being used in “dead” spaces under overpass.
- The Commission asks the team to please respect the integrity of the existing artworks.
- Commissioners prefer the idea of integrating signage in proposed walls, groundsurfaces etc. as opposed to separate and freestanding signs. Consider vehicular signage, which can have a great impact on the design and the overall clarity of wayfinding. Vehicular signage should be minimized wherever possible.
- Several types of fencing and railings are required. The Commission encourages the design of these objects to be kept simple in terms of the materials used, such as using galvanized steel for the mid-stair railing.
- Commissioners point out that simple is good for bike racks and asks the design team to further investigate the efficiency of the proposed serpentine racks.

## Project Presentation

The project has an anticipated completion date of June 2010. This is the third presentation to the Design Commission (DC) of the project. Details within the plaza spaces will be emphasized during the presentation in addition to wayfinding. The site is located south of downtown in stadium district. The project includes pedestrian access to the plaza level from the garage adjacent to the West Plaza. A series of vibrant colored patterns in the concrete itself have been added to the design. Otherwise, the design is basically the same as the last presentation to the DC.

### West Plaza

The west plaza elevator and stairway structure provide access to Safeco Field. The elevator structures at two existing locations are similar to the proposed elevator. The elevator structure will use diagonals for structural support behind the glass to prevent climbing of the structure. The foundation wall will come up to a point with the stair structure abutting it.

From the lower level, clear glazing on the structure with clear panels to hide the elevator cab components are incorporated into the design. Enclosure adjacent to the bottom of the elevator shaft will serve as the elevator equipment room. The railing system includes pedestrian handrails, vehicle railings, and a simple galvanized metal railing along stairs. Bike racks are tucked adjacent to stairway structure.



### East Plaza

#### East Plaza Improvements

Plaza paving patterns are blended between the east and west. They considered bringing the dark concrete element of the West Plaza to the East Plaza. There is a simple dark band along one side to reinforce the circulation route and may be extend along the overlook area. Basic 2 ft. by 2ft.. 12 ft. by 12 ft. on an angle along plaza while the pedestrian connections have a 2 ft. by 2 ft. pattern (city standard).

Seat walls are part of the plaza in areas where people are waiting to meet and they frame the planting areas. Many railings are included in the East Plaza such as vehicle railings, pedestrian railings (same design as vehicular, but with hand rail). Standard galvanized railings also used along the stairs.

Plans include the standard Seattle wayfinding sign in the East Plaza, which is two-sided. There are three major decision points for the wayfinding system:

- ADA access route needs additional sign, beyond Seattle wayfinding sign
- Need an additional wayfinding sign in other key location approaching the plaza from the south

- Options are standalone size or an integrated sign on the seat wall or on the ground.

In terms of plantings, there is a strong vegetative band along the North side of the East Plaza as well as on the South side and within the Plaza. Large street trees (London Plane) are proposed along Third Avenue. River rock is proposed under the plaza where there is inadequate light for plantings. Grown plantings are also proposed within the East Plaza.

## **Commissioners' Comments & Questions**

*The 3' between the stadium and the elevator (gap) will be fenced, but why can't it be connected?*

The location of the foundations limits the ability to connect them.

*In terms of arts, could the glass on the elevator be used for artwork?*

The glass, as designed, could have artwork or graphics added to the elevator. The side panels (opaque) could be incorporated into the art design.

*Did the stair always turn, or has it always turned?*

Because of the mass exodus at the end of games, they didn't want the stairs any closer to the stadium.

*Is there any way to get between the elevator and the wall of the stairs?*

A gap exists, but it will be sealed with a sealant to close the gap.

*Is there an opportunity to give a second outlet from the enclosure surrounding the elevator entrance? Perhaps a walkway could be integrated into the stair case design to allow movement underneath the stairs and prevent the dead end entrance to the elevator.*

*Cars stop to the east of West Plaza?*

Regular passenger vehicles do, but the plaza area does allow trucks for deliveries, players and maintenance vehicles although most traffic will be at off-peak times. It operates similar to a woonerf.

*Have any changes been made to the column designs, still just brown?*

They're already under construction, so they will be round. Decorations could be added, but the attention was shifted to the grown features rather than emphasizing the columns with tiles, paint, etc..

*Should the entrance walk to the elevator (upper) on the West Plaza speak more to the language of the elevator tower than the rest of the plaza area?*

*Are landscaping features carried through between both the east and west plaza's?*

*Don't just use river rock underneath the East plaza, but integrate it through out so it doesn't appear as leftover dead space.*

*The artwork on the Qwest Field side, did you speak with the owner about it?*

No, but we did try to blend it with the plaza canvas, but only brought it up to the property line.

*I appreciate incorporating signs into the horizontal/vertical surfaces, have you decided a preferred alternative?*

The project designers welcome input from the DC, no decision has been made, but they prefer the integrated approach as opposed to stand alone signs. However, ADA requirements may be a factor in the decision.

*There are many different types of fencing, perhaps more options should be considered? Don't overuse the green color for the fence and integrate another color into the fencing design. Recommends more study on what types of bike racks are most efficient. The bike racks in the current design are not very efficient.*

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**February 19, 2009**

**Project: Sound Transit UW Light Rail Station**

**Phase:** 90% Design Development

**Last Reviewed:** December 6, 2007; September 4, 2008

**Presenters:** Barb Luecke, Sound Transit  
Barbara Swift, Swift Company  
Leo Berk, UWS Artist  
Ron Endlich, Sound Transit  
Howard Fitzpatrick, LMN Architects

**Present:** Kevin McDonald, Seattle Planning Commission

**Time:** 2 Hours

(121/RS0613)

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## **ACTION**

The Light Rail Review Panel thanks the Sound Transit team for the thorough presentation on the 90% Design Development stage of the plans for the University of Washington Station, and with a unanimous vote recommends approval with the following recommendations and comments:

- Continue to strengthen the correspondence between the art and architecture of this project. The art component provides vibrant expressive qualities to the station experience, which can be reinforced by the materiality and colors of the architecture. Take another look at the relationship of the somber, somewhat heavy qualities of the architecture's colors and the art elements in the chamber structure. Wishes the art could have been manifested to the outside or that the architectural expression could have been more iconic and strong.
- The lightness qualities sought in the design of the head house are good objectives. The iconic qualities, signaling the locus of a significant transit exchange point, are important and vital design objectives. The large portal form, in the rendering, appears over powering and imposing. The vertical elements of the building's façade planes should read as more pronounced than the horizontal ones, although the rendering does not convey this.
- The bridge is achieving a good strong articulation of structure. Long term durability is an essential quality to be achieved in fabricating the elegant ribbon hand rail and other components. Design choices for this station rely on the minimally sized, high-quality, yet strong elements.
- Be attentive to what could be an over-reliance on the gray palette.
- The landscape design has advanced in strong and appropriate ways. The vista analysis work is admirable. The integration and extension of the qualities inherent in the different zones abutting the project is noteworthy. The choice of large-scale landscape materials in selected locations is a good one; it is essential to the success of this station design. The resolution of the parking lot - topographic form, edges and internal landscape qualities and continuity with related movement patterns - is skillful and noteworthy. Continue to seek sustainable practices consistent with serving the game-day functions of this space.
- The proposed green wall seems a bit alien. It comes across as a device to obscure or cover up which is in dramatic contrast to the overall sensitivity and integrated qualities of this landscape design.
- The diagonal allee of trees from the head house to the intersection holds good promise but take another look at the termination qualities of this design element. The large vent shafts, oval in plan, are significant elements. Continue to explore ways to reduce their visual impact. For example, the juncture of the plinth to the metal-clad shaft could hold potential for a distinct shadow line to lighten the form.

- **Signage should be designed to be an important contribution – not detractor – from the overall experience, both functional and aesthetic.**
- **The support for bicycle users, appropriate storage facilities, logical movement patterns continues to be an important and valued objective in this design of an urban, multi-modal facility. Similarly, ensuring overall quality of the pedestrian experience is absolutely indispensable to the success of this station. Attention to way finding, pedestrian comforts from the elements – it can be extremely windy in this location! , personal safety, appropriate lighting, and long term durability of the facility’s components are all crucial matters to attend to as the design is finalized.**
- **Vandalism, as noted by the team, is another continuing issue to be addressed as final design decisions are made.**

## Project Presentation

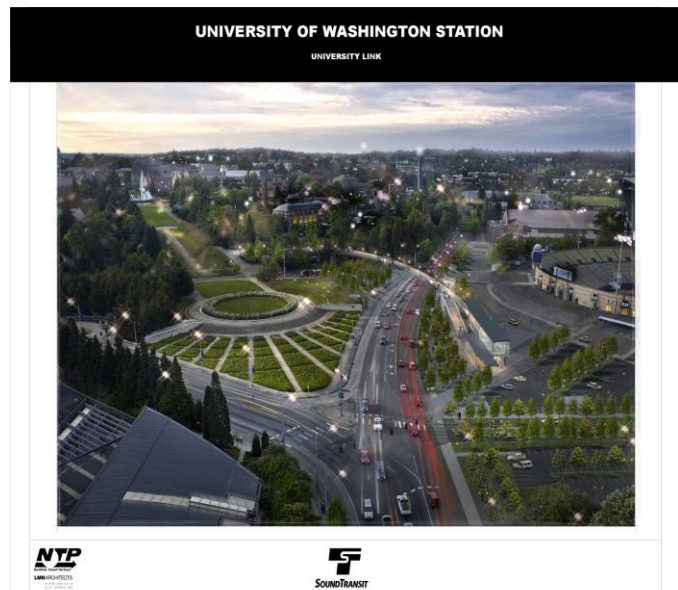
The project is at the 90% design stage for the University of Washington Link Light Rail Station. The station will serve as the second stop on the light rail line, with the first being the Capital Hill Station. September 2008 was the last review by the Design Commission (DC).

The station will go out to bid in the fall of 2010. Groundbreaking for the overall light rail project will be on March 6<sup>th</sup>. Since the last review by the DC there will be minimal differences in the site plan. However, hardscape, tree plan, irrigation, curtain wall details and underground systems integration work have been done. More refinements in the art installations have also been done. Last November included a big milestone, the Board of Regents approved the project for construction to begin. The UW Architecture Committee and the President’s Office, have reviewed the plans, and there is a meet the artists event, and 90% open house meeting next Wednesday.

The presentation will cover all the comments from the previous review. One of the issues with the last review was that the graphics were too illustrious. A quick overview of the project for new members of the commission will be provided.

Station head house is located just west of Husky Stadium and north of the Montlake Bridge. Montlake is a significant boulevard and provides an important theme for the project. If Montlake Blvd. is widened the station would still be functional.

The major part of the composition of the bridge is the axis of the vista. Maintain the infrastructure of trees adjacent to the Vista and bridge. Bike parking also exists in this area. Triangle includes two bus stops and the plan includes a significant plaza area with trees and pervious pavement and stairs from the bridge over Montlake Blvd.



**Northerly view of the Light Rail Station Improvements**

The pedestrian connection issue is important in the context of the mobility function that Montlake Blvd. serves for cars. A buffer planting is proposed along Montlake Blvd. adjacent to the station to reduce jaywalking across Montlake Blvd. Three access points from the station to the campus exist. A 20’ sidewalk is proposed along Montlake Blvd. adjacent to the station. There is a 3 ft. to 3.5 ft. grade change from the station to Montlake Blvd.

The project is using trees of significant scale to tie into larger trees on important boulevards in and around the University of Washington.

Parking areas to the south of the station will be accessed off of Montlake Blvd. This allows them to restructure an existing parking lot which is currently in poor condition. The area has served as a residual arboretum in the past. The tree canopy will help to frame the Rainier Vista. 140 trees will be lost, 250 will be planted.

In terms of crossing to the medical center, the existing crossing is narrow, but the proposal is to widen it to 20' or 30 ft.

The lighting plan includes between one and five foot-candles in the immediate area, five near the station and one in the parking lot.

Tree coverage was more important over parking lot than long straight views as long as it didn't block Rainier Vista. Study showed that the vent in view disappears as trees matured, but vista is preserved.

Since the September meeting, most of the time has been spent refining the design at the architectural scale. The bridge design has been revised. The bridge features gradually come into play. First the concrete, then the hand-rail, kick-plate and full guard-rail system. A green-wall is utilized under portions of the bridge. Once the bridge gets over the Burke Gillman trail the bridge transitions to a steel box beam, with cast in place steel columns. This constitutes a move from monolithic design in June to more of a steel bridge. The welded aluminum bar rail is a very simple ribbon that follows the bridge direction. The bridge has a concrete deck with drainage in the middle.

The stair elevator combination within the triangle (opposite Montlake blvd. from the head house) is a very simple structure, similar to the head house. The head house is an open structure with a series of glass walls and protects the series of vertical elements. There is a grand stair coming down from the bridge level to the head house. Multiple routes through the head house are feasible with elevators, stairs and escalators to get to different areas of the head house and surrounding site.

The head house is to be as light and minimal as possible while providing the necessary weather protection. The head house design considered bird perching and to minimize it by reducing or eliminating horizontal surfaces. The primary horizontal feature is the bridge connected to the slope of the stairs to grade.

The vent structures are elliptical and function with part in-take and part exhaust. It is challenging architecturally to create something visually interesting but unobtrusive. The proposed design includes concrete below with bar grating and a reflective layer behind to create a sense of depth and movement.

The bridge structure will be light gray. The Seattle sky (cloudy) will bring less prominence and lightness to the bridge. The platform sits 110' below grade. From grade, the head house design ties the upper mezzanine to the lower mezzanine and platform with a series of criss-crossed escalators. The controlling part of the design was to keep the outside of the site as simple and understated as possible with the focus of the art piece being inside.

The upper mezzanine materials include black expanded metal screening for the ceiling, but allows for people to see the interior of the structure and lighting. Tile wall runs the full length of the upper mezzanine including black, red and dark blue designed to imply a moving train. Floors have gray and a darker gray tiles along with tactile grade and the warning paver at where the doors open.

The form of the interior chamber punches through the floor and is perceptible at all levels. It is still a couple feet below the ceiling of the upper mezzanine and provides areas for a perforated ceiling that provides lighting.

The public art is within the interior of chamber in head house. The artist started with the geo-tech survey done for the station. The piece is a reflection of the ground that is being removed for the station. The artist reflected the geo-tech survey onto a mass and created a patch pattern to be integrated into the wall panels. The art can be seen in the chamber between the upper and lower mezzanines. Art appears on panels as hatched patterns and used as the shell for the chamber. Hatched areas are semi-translucent and the panels themselves are metal. Solid color on the outside of the chamber, but can be seen in the escalator.

## Commissioners' Comments & Questions

*Very excited about the art, beautiful piece, but it should inform the architecture more. It would be nice to borrow some of the inspiration from the art for the architecture. The dark tiles seem somber and clash with the light and more vibrant artwork. Open to comments.*

*Appreciates the care of the architecture, but more opportunity for energy between the art and architecture. The ribbon handrail is elegant, but durability is a question. The structural chamber, is the engineer done? The somber tone of the tile feels a little heavy.*

The railing has been engineered and durable.

*In terms of plant pallets in the different areas and gathering spaces. What is the theme experientially in these spaces?*

The bridge areas are drawing from the subdued theme of the campus. In the triangle area low shrubs are being used along with gravel near trees. Tree grates will also be used. The design brings the scale and feel of NE Pacific to the entrance of the parking areas just south of the head house. Order and frame is given to the entry spines. Masses or bands of lower level plantings are to be utilized in the parking lot south of the head house. Sequoia's will be used along the Husky Stadium boundary east of the stadium house. On the 20' sidewalk adjacent to the head house on Montlake Blvd. switch-grass will line the sidewalk in layers. The Montlake Blvd. triangle has significant grade changes. The existing path will be left at the current grade. A retaining wall will be used to define the path and allow for flatter areas below. The triangle improvements will add weight to the sides of the vista and help to frame it.

*I like the overall slick and urban feel of it, but concerned about the light levels and whether or not it's too dark. Lighting is about 20 footcandles, but model might not be showing it accurately.*

*Where is the bike storage at the head house?*

Bike storage at the bridge terminus, about 130 rack spaces.

*Is there a kiss and ride drop off?*

No, only for van drop-off's.

*The bridge is quite grand and I compliment them on the careful analysis of the impact on the Rainier Vista. One criticism is the head house, which was intended to be as light as possible, but the pattern betrays that goal. The pattern is very strong and not light.*

Standard grazing sizes and cost considerations were a major factor. The horizontal supports are narrow, but vertical supports are about 7 inches. More elegant ways are cost prohibitive.

*The art should drive the architecture and there is an elegance missing in the head house. The portal on the side seems very overpowering. The dark tile colors need to work with the art.*

*Is sound transit redoing UW's parking lot?*

Yes.

*I am curious about the green wall coming down from the vista. Is it going to feel like it belongs there?*

No, it will feel like an extension of the bridge. Two things are important, it's important it doesn't become a living place (safety) and it comes to the question of how you will visually perceive the area and we felt you should feel the line of the bridge as it hits the ground should be extremely light.

*I also want to reiterate the mezzanine issue with color and the art. The area before you get into the art experience fights a bit with the tile choices.*

*The diagonal tree line that goes in from Montlake Blvd. should be either ended at the path or make sure the entrance to the head house is visible.*



*The station vents are not tied well to the head house, was this considered?*

Durability to fire was a consideration in design and incorporating transparency was difficult. The easiest and cost effective way to do it is the one proposed.

*Was there consideration for more sustainability features in regarding of the parking area and work adjacent to the Rainier Vista corridor?*

Rain gardens were considered, but the size of them and the potential use for tailgating were a deterrent.

*Consider painting the bridge blue, overuse of gray may create a bland environment.*

*The head house will not be air-conditioned?*

No, but the air circulation features will allow it stay relatively cool even on hot days. A wind consultant has not been used.

*Considering the other sides of the head house, which we haven't seen. Is there any signage near the Rainier Vista side of the ramp?*

There is one sign, but we're working with UW to integrate any signage into the wayfinding system at UW. Signs are located throughout the head house area at key pedestrian entrances along with the bridge landing and triangle area. Signage should be incorporated into the existing signage system.

*Back to the green-wall. So many efforts at integration of the landscape and views, but the green-wall seems like an alien species and not well integrated. Appears as though its landscape to hide something.*

*Are there seating opportunities at the three different areas?*

Seating at the head house in the form of walls and benches. The triangle has one or two benches. At the landing there isn't anything at all.

*One of the 520 options has a crest, if it happens do you see the bridge still being there are in addition the depression of Montlake Blvd. or could it go away?*

Worked with WSDOT to not preclude any of the 520 options. The bridge was designed so if funding becomes available it could be reoriented at a future date. We've depressed the box to allow for the K and L options for 520. The building setback was also done to allow the potential widening of Montlake Blvd.