



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Rick Mohler and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Approved Meeting Minutes

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<b>Commissioners Present:</b>	McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble
<b>Commissioners Absent:</b>	Mark Braseth, Patience Malaba, Alanna Peterson, Julio Sanchez
<b>Commission Staff:</b>	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

*Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.*

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Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Jamie Stroble called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm. Co-Chair Stroble offered the following land acknowledgement:

*'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, we'd like to actively recognize that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people who have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time and continue to do so today. We offer land acknowledgement because Native land was taken by force and colonized to form the United States as we know it today. Through this process, which is ongoing through systematic oppression, Native identity, history, and land ownership has been ignored by colonizers and attempted to be erased. Land Acknowledgement is the first step in opposing the systematic oppression and historic erasure of Native people and Native Land ownership.'*

Co-Chair Stroble also offered the following statement:

*'As an advisory body to Seattle elected officials and staff, we have no jurisdiction, purview, nor say over the many wars that we see around the world that are leaving our fellow human beings murdered and displaced. We cannot however conduct a public meeting without acknowledging this.'*

Co-Chair Stroble asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms. She reminded the Commissioners that they have collectively agreed to abide by these norms.

**ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the February 24, 2022, meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.**

### **Announcements**

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least eight hours before the start of the Commission meeting.

### **Anti-Displacement Issue Brief**

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the anti-displacement issue brief in its final layout formatted with graphics. She highlighted several changes that have been made since the Commission's last discussion of this issue brief.

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners suggested adding a bulleted summary of the issue brief recommendations at the top of the document or including a reference to the page number with recommendations.
- Commissioners expressed concern that the issue brief contains a lot of detailed background that many readers may have seen in previous documents and encouraged providing a summary of the key recommendations in a separate text box.
- Commissioners recommended reformatting or reorganizing the title page layout to emphasize a hierarchy of information.
- Commissioners noted that this issue brief should not be the only opportunity to provide comments on anti-displacement strategies in the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- Ms. Murdock stated that this issue brief will be shared with the Mayor's Office, City Council, and Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) staff and will be posted on the Commission's website and in the OPCD blog. Planning Commission staff have received two inquiries from City Councilmembers who appreciated receiving the previous Growth Strategy issue brief. Staff will be organizing meetings with individual Councilmembers this year. These meetings will include opportunities to discuss the issue briefs.

### **Discussion: Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions DEIS Comment Letter**

**DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS: Commissioner Dhyana Quintanar disclosed that her employer, WSP, supports the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project through a general engineering contract with Sound Transit. She recused herself from the discussion. Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson disclosed that her employer, Jacobs Engineering, is part of the team producing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. She recused herself from the discussion. She stated that she can respond to technical comments not related to the content of the EIS.**

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the Commission's timeline for preparation of a comment letter on Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Commission will review a draft letter at its March 24 meeting and take action on a final draft letter at the April 14 meeting. Sound Transit's 90-day comment period ends on April 28. Mr. Hoey reviewed a draft outline of the comment letter as follows:

- I. Introduction (Over-Arching Comments)
  - a. SPC recognizes that additional analysis is needed by agencies including Sound Transit and the City of Seattle to best leverage this significant investment to benefit all community members.
  - b. The EIS should clearly identify how the many factors considered in the EIS will be weighed and balanced in the final selection of the preferred alternative and other alternatives.
  - c. In areas where mitigation measures are explained by referring to a policy or document external to the EIS, greater detail should be included within the body of the EIS to summarize the measures that result from the referenced policies or regulations.
  - d. The EIS should clarify what thresholds were used to determine what was considered an impact to be raised in the analysis.
- II. Equity and Environmental Justice
  - a. The Racial Equity Toolkit conducted for the project is a valuable tool and more of the RET content and ideas should be represented in the EIS.
  - b. Recognizing the legacy of environmental injustice for the Chinatown/International District and the Duwamish Valley, Sound Transit must approach engagement, design, construction, and operation of facilities in these neighborhoods in a way that prioritizes the concerns of BIPOC communities.
  - c. Sound Transit should identify how the project will restore impacted areas and repair harm.
- III. Climate Change
  - a. Given that the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions will be a key component of Seattle's transportation network for the next 50-100 years, SPC encourages Sound Transit to include an analysis of the forecasted impact of climate change on the stations and guideways.
  - b. EIS should include a clear section that summarizes both big-picture and smaller scale climate considerations related to mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency. Climate impacts should also be included in the high-level summary tables of impacts.
  - c. EIS discusses efforts to maximize energy efficiency for the project, but Sound Transit should also identify efforts taken to maximize the sustainability of the project such as the use of low-impact materials and stormwater management.
- IV. Transit-Oriented Development
  - a. The ability to maximize equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD) should be considered in the selection of final preferred alternatives for station alignment.

- b. Opportunity to develop excellent urban spaces post-construction should be part of the evaluation for a preferred alignment. The EIS should analyze how each alternative will impact the urban fabric when compared to the current and future land use maps.
- V. Stations in Industrial Areas
  - a. Stations in industrial areas include SODO, Smith Cove, Interbay, and Ballard.
  - b. Land Use analysis in WSBLE DEIS is based on current zoning and does not reflect the proposed zoning changes studied in the Industrial and Maritime Strategy DEIS.
  - c. EIS should analyze and consider development potential around the stations.
  - d. Balance use of arterial streets around future stations in industrial areas for freight mobility and multi-modal transportation for workers connecting to job centers.
  - e. EIS does not recognize impacts of climate change and environmental health in industrial areas.
  - f. SPC has significant concern about business displacement in industrial areas, particularly for small businesses and businesses that have limited options for geographic location.
- VI. Transportation, Transit, Multi-Modal Connections
  - a. SPC views the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions as a critical component of Seattle's growth strategy.
  - b. Light rail extensions will replace or restructure existing bus routes and change access to the 15-minute transit network.
  - c. EIS requires robust analysis of impacts on freight traffic.
  - d. Consider potential increase in rideshare use to access light rail stations.
- VII. Housing and Displacement
  - a. Displacements measured in the DEIS only include direct displacement of homes and businesses that will be relocated due to the purchase of parcels for the project which does not present the full picture of potential displacement.
  - b. The numbers provided for business displacements does not provide a clear picture of the economic and social impact of the businesses that will be closed or relocated.

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners noted that the outline refers to equitable transit-oriented development, but the sub-bullets do not expand on the concept. The letter should focus more on equity when discussing opportunities for transit-oriented development.
- Commissioners recommended adding the State of Washington to the section on joint station area planning efforts, as the State owns approximately twenty-five acres of land in Interbay.
- Commissioners asked if the City will be including consideration of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy in its comment letter to Sound Transit. Mr. Hoey stated that the WSBLE DEIS does not reference the Industrial and Maritime Strategy because it has not been officially adopted by the City. He indicated that he would ask OPCD staff for more information on this issue.
- Commissioners recommended that the Equity and Environmental Justice section identify the need for better integration of the Racial Equity Toolkit into the DEIS.
- Commissioners recommended using some of the language from the Commission's previous letters on the need for thorough consideration of racial equity issues in specific areas such as Chinatown/International District and Delridge.

- Commissioners inquired about the potential for writing an additional comment letter on this project to the City of Seattle. Ms. Murdock stated that this comment letter will not only go to Sound Transit but will be sent to City elected officials and staff. The Commission can reiterate its interest in the City and Sound Transit working together on issues including station area planning. This comment letter will acknowledge the need for interagency cooperation and coordination. The Commission can follow up with a letter to the City and copy Sound Transit.

### **Public Comment**

The following public comment was submitted in advance of the meeting and read by Ms. Murdock:

*We reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Study for West Seattle to Ballard. We believe none of the alignments meet Seattle's needs:*

- *Many stations are too far below the surface or too high above ground which increases cost and risk, may cause crowding and reliability issues, and cancels out any travel time advantage.*
- *As peak commute traffic has dropped during the pandemic, a single downtown tunnel may be all that is needed if signaling is improved.*
- *The proposed stations in West Seattle do not meet the most current equity goals. More diverse and lower income neighborhoods such as High Point, Westwood, White Center, the Duwamish Valley, and South Park should be served directly. The DEIS fails to address this. The current alignments will also cause major housing, retail, and greenspace displacement.*

*We ask the Planning Commission to work with Sound Transit to delay the selection of plans for West Seattle/Ballard until traffic patterns have recovered from the pandemic – and to use this time to consider alternative alignments and technologies such as higher frequency automated trains or gondola systems which could help reduce station size and align with equity goals.*

*Martin Pagel on behalf of WestSeattleSkyLink.org*

*PS: By combining light rail with gondola technology Sound Transit could serve more neighborhoods and increase capacity to SeaTac for about the same cost as currently planned. It would also allow for extending the Rainier Valley line to Renton in the future.*

**The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 pm.**