



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, November 18, 2021

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst

Guests: Vera Giampietro, Office of Planning and Community Development

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

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 3:07 pm. Co-Chair Stroble made the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, we would 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 acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities. We commit to identifying racist practices and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'

Co-Chair Stroble asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

<p>ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the October 14, 2021 meeting minutes. Co-Chair Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.</p>
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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. She acknowledged that this meeting may be the last for Get Engaged Commissioner Kelabe Tewelde, as the Get Engaged program typically goes from October-October. The program's usual recruitment efforts have been affected by the pandemic and it is unclear when a new Get Engaged Commissioner may be appointed.

Update: West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Station Area Planning

Vera Giampietro, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

DISCLOSURES:

Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson disclosed that her employer, Jacobs, is under contract with Sound Transit to provide engineering support services.

Commissioner Alanna Peterson disclosed that her employer, Pacifica Law Group, provides land use legal services for both Sound Transit and the City of Seattle and has done some work in support of station area planning.

Commissioner Dhyana Quintanar disclosed that her employer, WSP, is not under contract with the City of Seattle but has a general engineering consulting contract with Sound Transit.

Commissioner Radhika Nair disclosed that her employer, Berk Consulting, often works with the City of Seattle and may pursue station area planning work.

Commissioner Lauren Squires disclosed that her employer, Nelson Nygaard, often contracts with the City of Seattle and Sound Transit.

Ms. Giampietro provided a brief overview of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) project, including a summary of the various route alternatives being studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Sound Transit has identified preferred alternatives, preferred alternatives with third party funding, and other alternatives. The route alternatives being studied include tunnel, elevated, and at-grade sections. She described the City's guiding principles and the City and Sound Transit's joint Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) outcomes. She stated that the joint RET process is a first of its kind in which a city and outside agency have agreed to terms and joint outcomes and are working toward those.

Ms. Giampietro described the City's and Sound Transit's respective roles in WSBLE project planning. The two entities have agreed to overlap in two areas: centering racial equity for better outcomes, and co-planning stations with communities. She stated that the two entities' project organization generally mirrors each other. City staff mostly interfaces with Sound Transit corridor staff. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is the lead agency for the City. The Mayor has appointed a designated representative for high-level discussions with Sound Transit. That position is currently filled by a consultant. The City Planning Work Group, one of six WSBLE work groups, is an interdepartmental team led by OPCD and supported by staff from SDOT, the Department of Neighborhoods, Office of

Housing, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, Parks and Recreation, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Fire Department, and others. This group's core functions are station context planning and station area planning. Its support functions include RET support, alternatives analysis, reviewing and commenting on environmental analyses, and partnering with other WSBLE work groups (Permitting, Engineering, Racial Equity & Engagement, and Environmental).

The project is currently in the planning phase (2017-23). After the Record of Decision is issued at the end of this phase, the design process will commence (2023-2027). The construction phase is anticipated to last from 2026-2036, with the West Seattle segment scheduled to open in 2031 and the Ballard segment scheduled to open in 2036. These dates may be affected by the Sound Transit Board's recent realignment process to respond to pandemic-related revenue shortages and cost estimate overruns.

Ms. Giampietro provided additional details about the near-term timeline. The DEIS is expected at the end of January 2022. Sound Transit recently announced that the comment period has been extended from forty-five to ninety days. The City will be working alongside Sound Transit to inform affected communities and talk with them about which alternatives they prefer. City staff will be actively reviewing the DEIS and submitting a comment letter. Sound Transit has identified a preliminary Preferred Alternative, but it is possible that those preferences may change. Once the Sound Transit Board selects its Preferred Alternative, the City will help to develop design guidelines for the new stations and development regulations to facilitate permitting through the various affected zones. There is potential for the City to enter into agreements with Sound Transit on the new station designs. WSBLE is the most ambitious project that Sound Transit has delivered. The project has a very ambitious timeframe. The City and Sound Transit has a mutual goal of speeding up the project by finding permit efficiencies wherever possible.

Ms. Giampietro described the City's approach to station context planning and station area planning. These are two separate zones of engagement and discussion, as the station context is the area within one or two blocks around the station, while station area planning considers the ten-minute walkshed or half-mile depending on topography. Station context planning is taking place now through 2024, and some early station area planning is taking place now. Other station area planning will take place after the Record of Decision. Sound Transit has moved station design into the environmental process. The City is engaging Sound Transit in the station context planning process. The two organizations will focus on the Preferred Alternative when it emerges. Sound Transit has criteria for designing stations and typically lead that process. The City is a partner advising on the process. King County and the Port of Seattle are also involved. The process began with bringing together different City departments to identify issues and processes to focus on.

The first focus in station context planning is planning for optimal station siting and design. This process is led by Sound Transit. The City is co-planning with Sound Transit per the two organizations' 2017 Partnering Agreement. Sound Transit will release a Station Context Framework Progress Report for the public to review and provide feedback alongside the DEIS. The second focus of station context planning is developing regulatory tools and design guidance. This process is City-led. The City Planning Work Group is working alongside the project Permitting Work Group to develop alignment-wide Station

Design Guidelines (to be shared with the public for review in 2022), alignment-wide Light Rail Development Standards, and Concurrence Agreements for site-specific outcomes. The City will engage community members and stakeholders during development of each deliverable.

Ms. Giampietro described the City's approach to station area planning. The City-led planning efforts are co-developed by community, individuals and organizations and coordinated with Sound Transit, King County Metro, Port of Seattle, and other agencies. Station area planning has goals for racial equity, sustainability & climate change resilience, affordable housing and equitable transit-oriented development (TOD), community benefits, urban design and placemaking, station access and public realm, economic development, active transportation and transit integration. She then described the \$1.75 million TOD Pilot grant that OPCD was awarded by the Federal Transit Administration for WSBL in 2019. That grant will fund programs related to racial equity accountability, an equitable TOD framework, a remnant parcels framework, station access and public realm strategy, and community involvement task forces.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked who has jurisdiction over planning related to Sound Transit's impacts during construction. Ms. Giampietro stated that the Chinatown/International District (C/ID) station is currently receiving the most attention during the planning process, as the City recognizes the history of harm to the neighborhood and small businesses caused by continuous construction. Sound Transit and the City are starting to develop a mitigation approach. The City was able to review an early draft of the EIS last year and was disappointed by the potential mitigation identified for the C/ID. The Mayor's office, the director of SDOT, and others are actively discussing how to involve community to prevent further disruption. This requires everyone who has an interest in seeing the C/ID thrive and survive through additional construction.
- Commissioners noted that one of the goals in the RET is to avoid disproportionate impacts and suggested that the RET language could be more ambitious to reflect that goal. Commissioners asked if the Equitable TOD program includes a strategy for acquisition of parcels in advance of the project. Ms. Giampietro stated that that OPCD's Equitable Development Initiative is working on this. The Office of Housing is working to apply resources to immediate housing needs. It may be a challenge to redirect funding from immediate needs to a later project, as the mechanism to do this has not yet been identified.
- Commissioners asked how the Planning Commission can be involved in ongoing station area planning and station context planning. Ms. Giampietro stated that it would be helpful to have the Planning Commission's input on zoning, TOD, and station access issues.
- Commissioners encouraged the City to think creatively about land banking and other innovative approaches in responses to escalating land costs. Ms. Giampietro stated that the Sound Transit Board's recent realignment process was designed to respond to cost escalation. Federal money may help with that issue.
- Commissioners asked if the new infrastructure bill will provide new resources that affect how the City approaches planning work. Ms. Giampietro stated that it is still too early to know if the City will receive planning support resources from the infrastructure bill. That funding may only flow to Sound Transit.
- Commissioners inquired if the joint RET process will address potential mitigation. Ms. Giampietro stated that the RET process is meant to evaluate alternatives but also identify impacts. For

example, the C/ID RET process could not conclude which alternative was more harmful. Sound Transit did not establish a preferred alternative for that station. Mitigation will be negotiated through the environmental process, and the RET will advise on that.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Giampietro for her briefing.

Review and Discussion: Draft Growth Strategy Issue Paper

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an update on the Commission's draft Growth Strategy issue paper. He highlighted several questions and comments identified by Commissioners and encouraged them to propose additional revisions to the draft by November 29th.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners requested clarification on the intended audience for this issue paper. Ms. Murdock stated that the primary audience is City staff that will be working on the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. The secondary audience is members of the public. She stated that the desired outcome from this paper is to ensure that a range of alternatives are studied in the Comprehensive Plan EIS.
- Commissioners suggested that this issue paper should be framed in an inclusive way that everyone can see a bit of themselves in it, is commonly understood, and represents common values.
- Commissioners stated that the "network of neighborhoods" concept is not highlighted in the current draft as well as it could be.
- Commissioners suggested that all housing issues in this draft issue paper could be moved to another future issue paper.
- Commissioners inquired about the timing of this issue paper in relation to the Comprehensive Plan EIS process. This issue paper should be timed intentionally to inform the EIS. Commissioners suggested highlighting specific alternatives to be considered in the EIS. Commissioners acknowledged that there will be an opportunity to provide scoping comments.

Public Comment

The following public comment was submitted by email and read by Ms. Murdock:

Since ST3 was formulated and approved, significant events have catapulted two issues to the forefront: the ENVIRONMENT and EQUITY. One such opportunity is the West Seattle extension. Rather than only serving some of West Seattle's most affluent sections, light rail should be extended to serve the portion of the Duwamish peninsula with the highest diversity while a gondola could serve the stations promised to voters in ST3. A light rail line through South Park would avoid the topographical challenges of serving the Junction and require far less carbon during construction. Together, this light rail line and a gondola to the Junction could provide grade separated, high frequency transit much sooner, reducing traffic and carbon YEARS EARLIER.

Other advantages of a gondola over light rail include mitigating concerns raised in the Commission's April 2019 letter, specifically: the disruption of industrial lands and maritime operations, the aesthetics and quality-of-life of traversed neighborhoods, and the adverse impact on the West Duwamish Greenbelt, Duwamish River ecology, and Duwamish tribal resources. In fact, the SkyLink gondola could benefit the Duwamish Tribe by providing a connection to their Longhouse.

King County Executive Dow Constantine, Mayor elect Bruce Harrell, and State Senator Joe Nguyen have all voiced support for a study of SkyLink's proposal for a West Seattle gondola and we are hopeful that the Sound Transit board will authorize a study soon. We are available to answer questions or make a presentation at one of your meetings should you wish.

*Best regards,
Joyce Hengesbach and Martin Pagel on behalf of West Seattle SkyLink.*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.