



## Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

**Julie Bassuk**  
Design Commission, LRRP Co-Chair

**David Cutler**  
Planning Commission, LRRP Co-Chair

**Catherine Benotto**  
Planning Commission

**Shannon Loew**  
Design Commission

**Kurt Kiefer**  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Brad Khouri**  
Planning Commission

**Laurel Kunkler**  
Design Commission

**Perri Lynch**  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Kevin McDonald**  
Planning Commission

**Tom Nelson**  
Design Commission

**Julie Parrett**  
Design Commission/  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Osama Quotah**  
Design Commission

**Norie Sato**  
Design Commission/  
Public Art Advisory Committee

**Debbie Harris**  
Design Commission

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

## November 1, 2012

Convened 8:00 am  
Adjourned 12:30 pm

## Project Reviewed

Northgate Light Rail Station

## Panel Members Present

Julie Bassuk, Chair  
David Cutler (excused from 8:00-10:00am and 12:00-12:30pm)  
Julie Parrett  
Shannon Loew (excused from 8:00-8:15am)  
Tom Nelson  
Catherine Benotto (excused from 11:45am-12:30pm)  
Kurt Kiefer  
Norie Sato (excused from 8:00-8:15am)  
Debbie Harris (excused from 8:00-8:45am)  
Brad Khouri  
Kevin McDonald (excused from 10:30am-12:30pm)  
Perri Lynch (excused from 8:00-8:15)

## Incoming Panel Members

Ellen Sollod (excused from 8:00-9:30)  
Seth Geiser

## Excused Panel Members

Osama Quotah  
Laurel Kunkler

## Staff Present

Valerie Kinast  
Tom Iurino

**November 1, 2012**

**Project:**

**Northgate Light Rail Station**

**Phase:**

60% Design

**Last Reviewed:**

Nov 3, 2011

**Presenters:**

Ron Endlich, Sound Transit  
David Hewitt, Hewitt  
Barbara Swift, Swift Company  
Barbara Luecke, Sound Transit  
Gordon Clowers, Department of Planning and Development  
Gary Prince, King County Metro

**Attendees:**

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit  
Andy Engel, Hewitt  
Fred Wilhelm, Sound Transit  
Cris Bruch, project artist  
Bob Nichols, Sound Transit  
Mary Ann Peters, project artist

**Time: 8:30am – 12:30pm**

## Disclosures

Panel member Parrett works for the University of Washington.

Panel member Sato coordinated and completed artwork for Sound Transit's Central Link.

Panel member Kiefer's firm is working on a small database application for the Sound Transit Art Program. His firm has presented the appropriate disclosure forms to the Ethics Commission.

Panel member Benotto is working with King County on a TOD project.

Panel member McDonald is working with Sound Transit on its east link alignment and station planning.

## Presentation

### STATION CONTEXT

Gordon Clowers of DPD, Gary Prince of KCM, and Ron Endlich of Sound transit presented information on area around the station. The City of Seattle is developing an urban design framework for Northgate based on five urban design principles: human scale places; fill in the gaps; neighborhood connections; establish a neighborhood Main Street; and to buffer the freeway. The urban design framework will also include health and equity planning, and study both the entire urban center and the detail at the station and its immediate surroundings. The concepts for the urban design framework will be developed by early next year.

King County Metro is developing a plan for transit-oriented development adjacent to the Northgate Light Rail Station. Metro is working to insure there will be good connections to transit during and after construction of both the light rail station and the TOD. The TOD will include a new north-south street and bus layover on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and south of Thornton Place. The first phase is being studied for the SE corner of the site, assuming a building height of 85 feet and 414 units. The remaining phases have not yet been fully studied, but Metro will be exploring concepts for buildings to fit within the zoning envelope of 125 feet. Transit service will be restructured for the light rail station when it comes online in 2021, and planning for that will start in 2019.

Sound Transit's elevated Northgate Light Rail Station is the last stop on a 4.3 mile extension of light rail, and will be the northern interim terminus until light rail is extended further north. The Northgate Station will open in 2021; Link light rail service will be extended to Lynnwood by 2023. Managers from Sound Transit, King County Metro and the City of Seattle intend to fully integrate the inter-modal transit facilities, develop TOD, and achieve ridership goals during and after station construction. Sound Transit is negotiating to build a shared-use parking garage on the southwest corner of the Northgate Mall site, west of the existing shared-use garage, before station construction begins. Also, Sound Transit is studying and prioritizing opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle access in the immediate station area. Sound Transit has adjusted the design of the guideway and station to accommodate SDOT's proposed cycle track on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE and is contributing \$10 million, to be matched by the City, toward the construction of a pedestrian bridge over I-5 and other ped and bike improvements in the station area. How the bridge connects to the station is yet to be determined and, in part, depends upon the bridge placement. At this point the station is being designed under the assumption the pedestrian bridge will connect at the mezzanine level at the south end of the station. The City (SDOT) is the lead on designing the I-5 bridge and finding the remaining funding to complete the construction of the bridge.

## STATION, PORTAL and GUIDEWAYS

The design team presented the 60% design for the Northgate Light Rail Station and its associated portal and guideway. The station will be the end of the line until light rail is extended to Lynnwood, and includes track to store trains north of the station.

### Portal and Guideways

The portal is at NE 94<sup>th</sup> Street, where the track emerges out of the ground and onto a guideway. The guideway runs at-grade within the WSDOT right-of-way until it rises and veers east toward the elevated station, crossing 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE south of NE 100<sup>th</sup> St. The design of the guideway and station accommodates a cycle track along 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE. The cycle track is being designed by SDOT and is planned to run along the west side of 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE from NE 92<sup>nd</sup> St to NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St., then cross to the east side and continue as a multi-use track toward the north. The design of the portal and at grade guideway section screens the operations facility, and includes sound walls and an acoustical barrier along both sides of the track. There is a sequence of various wall solutions visible from 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE, where the cycle track runs directly adjacent to the wall. The landscape is designed to appear as a cohesive whole despite the numerous property owners and the progression through a full spectrum of hydrological conditions.

### Station

The station is oriented north-south along the east edge of 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE, with the track floor cantilevering over the sidewalk. It spans NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St approx. 35 ft above grade. Since the last review a proposed parking garage has been added north east of the north end of the station, at the south-west corner of the Northgate Mall property. There is a series of open spaces along the east side of the station and south of it under the elevated guideway.

Since the last review, a mezzanine was added to the south end of the station, which can be accessed by stairs, escalators or elevators from the ground plane. The mezzanine now includes the ticketing machines and ancillary spaces and is 25 ft above grade. The ground plane consists of: a system of diagonal paths to splay the circulation through a rain garden and underneath the guideway at the southern end of the site; a rain garden which is defined by gabion walls and includes storm water detention; low vegetation and columnar trees, allowing good site lines; and a pair of angled escalator and stair structures connect the mezzanine with the ground plane and frame an outdoor room. The program under the station includes bicycle cages, lockers, racks, as well as an elevator, ancillary spaces, and a passage to the street. At the north entry, across NE 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, the entrance is at grade and connects to the proposed new parking garage through a small pedestrian zone that has not been fully defined. The north entry building holds the corner at NE 103<sup>rd</sup> and has vines along the façade. The station's mezzanine includes ticketing, restrooms, and a possible connection to a pedestrian bridge over I-5. The platform is covered almost entirely by an arched tensile structure roof. A windscreen is at the western edge, and is a continuous glass wall. The team is considering adding colored elements to give relief to the gray concrete.

The artists are just starting to work with the team to develop a scope of work and plans for design coordination.

### **ACTION (by Bassuk)**

The Light Rail Review Panel thanks Sound Transit and its design team for its presentation of the 60% design of the Northgate Light Rail Station. By a vote of 0-10, the panel did not approve the design, and also expects to review the art, garage and north plaza again before 90% design review. The commission made the following comments:

#### **Overall**

- Develop a plan for the interim condition of the TOD site during and after construction of the station and before the construction of the transit-oriented development.
- Coordinate the design and development of the garage and the associated plaza on the mall site with King County, DPD and SDOT.
- Develop a physical model. Conduct more 3D lighting studies of the station and the station area.

#### **Guideway**

- Further explore the doppler pattern or other interesting pattern ideas for the walls that will be seen by transit riders.
- Refine the screening of the service buildings located at the portal. Choose a height for the screening that's most appropriate to the rest of the design. Consider patterns and layers as a method to develop screen concepts. Also, the service buildings will be visible from above, and through the screening, so refine their design as an element of the overall portal.
- Develop more detailed drawings and models of the at-grade section of guideway to express and explore design ideas. Study and refine the design of the guideway's transition points. At the same time, look at the full length of the guideway and develop a more cohesive language for it.
- Refine the design of the retaining wall; further study and refine the details and patterning.
- Consider all users on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE when designing the guideway and walls. Develop eye level perspectives from the perspective of a variety of users.
- Examine whether and how much additional space can be given to a buffer between the cycle track and the acoustic wall along the west side of 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE. In places there is zero buffer which may present a hazard to cyclists. Work with SDOT to reexamine 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE comprehensively to this end, with the goal to provide the standard 2-foot buffer.
- Further study and refine SDOT's cycle track design, including the track's details and transitions.

#### **Architecture**

- Simplify the design, especially as seen in elevation; it appears as a cacophony of pieces. Also develop a design that is more dynamic and energetic. For example, explore more verticality with the glass, rather than the sedimentary quality it now shows. The design as shown is made more static because the glass is very orderly.
- Develop a better, more unusual design for the roof. The roof design dampens the station rather than uses the tensile structure's playful possibilities to its benefit. Better connect the roof to the underlying structure. Study the horizontal and vertical planes and structural elements and how they integrate and create a rhythm with the roof forms. Consider how lighting could be used to attenuate the sculptural form of the roof. Extend the roof to cover the area over platform and stairways, anyplace where people are expected to walk or wait. Consider the roof's acoustics, and the placement of the public address system speakers.
- Consider the view from I-5. This view can be an advertisement for the station and for riding light rail. Create something more expressive.

- Make every effort to move the escalator north to avoid the triangular piece extending over the roadway. If it must remain in its current position, don't wrap the escalator that crosses NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St. It is an anomaly so treat it specially; don't just treat it like the rest of the building.
- The "dog leg" entry stair structures on the plaza could become more sculptural and inspirational to announce the entries into the station.
- The decision to turn this station into a mezzanine station creates another plane and space to design that has yet to be fully explored. The architecture for it seems too tentative.

#### Ground plane

- Develop a more unified composition for the open space; the design feels like a cacophony of pieces in the same way the stations feels disparate. The open space is an important spine along the east edge of the station, which must work with the station and, as yet undefined, future development.
- Retain the sculptural quality of the rain gardens.
- Refine and resolve the design of the escalators and stairways. The open space room they create is intriguing, but its design and materials are not yet fully developed and integrated with the station.
- Study and develop a design concept for the underside of the station and guideways.
- Develop the design of the garage facades and the associated plaza, and how they relate to one another, the station, and overall open space concept for the facility.
- Connect the plaza between the parking garage and north entrance toward the south, as one element of the overall series of open space along the east side of the station. Study how pedestrians will cross NE 103<sup>rd</sup>. Consider the desire lines to and from the station, and use them to inform the programming of the spaces. For example, the garbage area may be exchanged for a use that pedestrians would find more compelling and attractive.
- Add a modest bicycle fixit station.

#### Artwork

- Need to see art again before 90% review, as there is not enough to show at a 60% review.
- Integrate the art and the architecture; as of yet, there is no interplay between them and the possibilities are great. Artists should work more closely with architects so the art has as much dynamic presence as possible.
- If possible, increase the art budgets as they are small.
- Explore transparency in the artwork, and the interplay of opacity and transparency. Study the role of repetition in creating a form. Transparency and opacity are viewed differently night and day, so the interplay could be important in how the station is viewed at different lighting conditions. The artwork should amplify the dialogue with the form, and is not simply more repetition or too "coordinated" with the architecture.
- Enable the artists to focus on their tasks; allow the artists maximum flexibility in pursuing these tasks.

Panel co-chair Bassuk voted no, as did the other panel members, because so many design elements were either not resolved to the extent they should be at this stage, or were not sufficiently presented. She and the other panel members expressed doubt that the team would resolve these problems by the 90% review without an interim review. She stated the team needs to make significant changes to the design and present it again to the panel.

**Panel member Harris voted no because, in addition to the items listed above, she saw a significant lack of unity in the design of the station and of the guideway wall. She stated that the amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists need more definition and resolution, and the team should provide more views from 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE.**

**Panel co-chair Cutler voted no because, in addition to the items stated above, revising the design to include a mezzanine causes a big change to the perception of spatial enclosure at the ground plane and the character of the underside of mezzanine hadn't been developed. Cutler also communicated that the overall architectural composition of the station enclosure lacked a coherent, clear, and symbiotic relationship to the guideway and support structures; even at 60% design, it appeared to be, as other panel members stated, "a visual cacophony."**

**Panel member Khouri voted no because, as stated above, the presentation and the design are not at 60 percent design.**