



I-5 Corridor Northgate to Everett HCT Assessment

Sound Transit Long-Range Plan – Time for an Update

Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan update is being supported by two efforts: a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), which updates the 1993 EIS, and several issue papers addressing specific long-range planning issues. These issue papers provide a level of detail beyond what is considered in the EIS, and are designed to help the Sound Transit Board and the region identify any needed additions to the existing Long-Range Plan. All of this information will be reflected in a draft Long-Range Plan, scheduled for public review in late spring this year. For a list of all the Long-Range Plan issue papers, please see the reverse.

What is the question?

Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan calls for continuing the Link light rail line north from Northgate to downtown Everett, generally following the I-5 corridor. This issue paper takes a fresh look at the corridor to provide updated information on it. Route variations have also been suggested that would take light rail out of the I-5 right of way to serve SR-99 or 15th Avenue NE in Shoreline, and to serve the Paine Field area and Evergreen Way in Everett. The paper considers those options, and provides preliminary cost and ridership information to help the Sound Transit Board with its discussion.

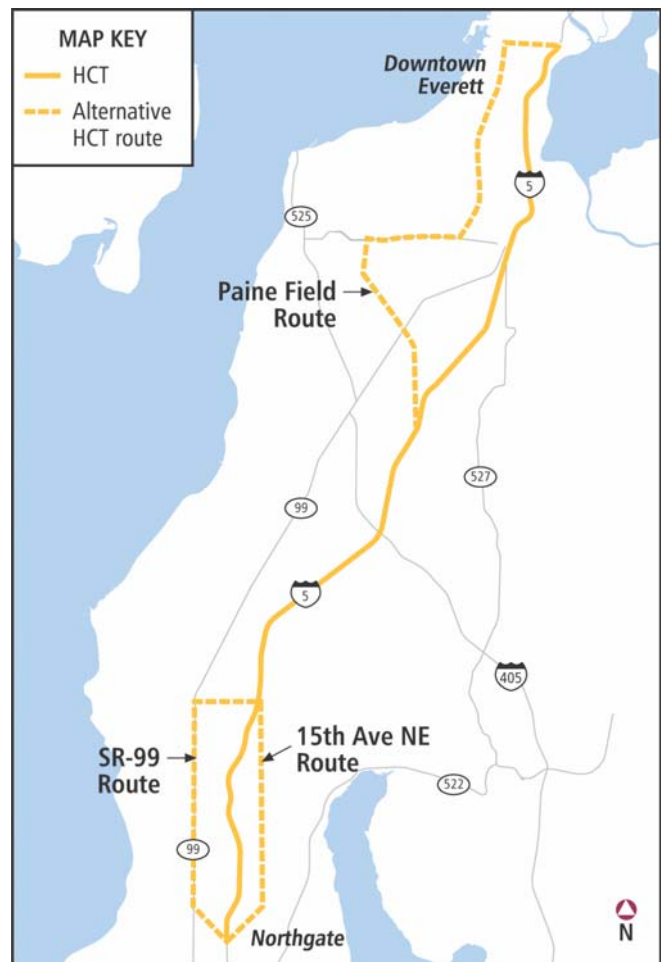
What was studied?

The map right illustrates where light rail is planned to run in the I-5 corridor, and the options studied for serving other areas along the way. Ridership and travel times are updated to reflect forecasted population and employment growth through 2030, right of way issues are considered, and design issues are reviewed. The issue paper also

estimates capital and operating costs for the I-5 alignment and the variations.

What did we learn?

- **Light rail along I-5 between Northgate and Everett would have high ridership and is projected to cost from \$3.3 to \$4.2 billion in 2005 dollars.** The light rail route assumed in the current Long-Range Plan would carry up to 38,000 daily riders near Ash Way and up to 66,000 daily riders near 175th Street in Shoreline. This route would allow a rider traveling from Everett to downtown Seattle to do so in about 50 minutes. Within the I-5 alignment, the line could be built as a mix of surface and elevated rail.



- **The loss of highway right of way may be a factor in building light rail in the I-5 corridor.** Road expansion since 1996 has used some highway right of way, and plans for further expansion will use even more. This will continue to be an issue in the period leading up to rail construction in this alignment. Close coordination with WSDOT will be necessary if light rail is planned in the I-5 alignment.
- **Compared to the Long-Range Plan route, routing light rail via Paine Field adds riders along some parts of the line, but also adds cost.** This route would add up to 6,000 daily riders near Ash Way, ridership in Shoreline would be comparable to the Long-Range Plan route. The deviation would add about 10 minutes to trips between Everett and downtown Seattle, and could cost up to \$760 million more than the Long-Range Plan route, primarily because it would be almost entirely grade-separated.
- **Compared to the Long-Range Plan route, routing light rail via either SR-99 or 15th Avenue NE through Shoreline slightly increases ridership in some places, and slightly decreases it in others, but adds costs.** Both deviations would produce slightly more riders than the Long-Range Plan route near Ash Way, but slightly fewer near 175th Street. These deviations could also add one to four minutes additional travel time between Everett and downtown Seattle, and \$200 - \$760 million in capital costs, again primarily because they would be almost entirely grade-separated.
- **Depending on specific alignment, annual light rail operating costs between Northgate and Everett would range between \$90 and \$116 million.**

- **The potential alternate routes would serve different ridership markets than the I-5 route.** The I-5 route assumed in the Long-Range Plan would operate separated from other traffic, providing fast, direct trips between centers along the I-5 corridor – Everett, Lynnwood, Shoreline, Northgate, University of Washington and downtown Seattle. It would be supported by park and ride lots at many of the stations, and would serve current commuting patterns between King and Snohomish counties, potentially replacing many current commuter bus routes. The alternate alignments, though also entirely separated from other traffic, would rely more heavily on activity centers being within walking distance of the stations rather than park and rides. Bus services designed to serve current commuting patterns along I-5 would likely continue to operate as today in mixed HOV traffic along I-5.

As issue papers are presented to the Sound Transit Board, they will be available at: www.soundtransit.org/projects/longrange/issuepapers.asp

See other Long-Range Plan Issue Papers

- I-90 Corridor/East King County High Capacity Transit Analysis
- SR-522 Corridor HCT Assessment
- Convertibility of BRT to Light Rail
- Seattle Streetcar Options
- Rail between Burien and Renton
- HCT System Development Issues in the South Corridor
- Potential Rail Extensions to Frederickson and Orting
- Potential Tacoma Link Extension – East
- Potential Tacoma Link Extension – West
- Tacoma Link Integration with Central Link
- BRT in SR-99 Corridor