



SR-522 Corridor 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?

Today’s transit service in the SR-522 corridor includes ST Express, local and commuter buses. Sound Transit’s existing Long-Range Plan calls for continuing this service out to 2030. This paper examines the costs and benefits of upgrading to rail along the corridor.

What was studied?

The paper evaluates an elevated rail route going north from Northgate on I-5, turning east on NE 145th Street, and joining SR-522 for the remainder of the distance to the UW Bothell campus (see map at right). It forecasts the number of riders and estimates travel times on a monorail or light rail system. It also assesses how such a system might be built within the corridor. Monorail and light-rail technologies are reviewed, and comparative cost estimates provided. Finally, the paper outlines another possibility – upgrading the corridor to arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) service.

What are the key findings?

- **Adding light rail or monorail in the corridor would add some riders.** In 2030, bus ridership on SR-522 at Lake Forest Park Town Center is forecast to total about 2,700 passengers per day. If light rail or monorail replaced bus, ridership could rise to between 3,600 and 6,700 daily passengers at the same spot.
- **Building light rail or monorail in the SR-522 corridor could cost between \$1.3 and \$1.9 billion in 2005 dollars, plus \$3-\$4 million annually for operations and maintenance.** Light rail could be somewhat less expensive if some sections were built at-grade instead of on elevated structure.
- **Travel time from UW Bothell to downtown Seattle would be reduced by 22 minutes with rail.** Under the existing plan, travel time in 2030 from UW Bothell to downtown Seattle would be about 56 minutes by bus, including a transfer at Northgate to Link light rail. Light rail or monorail in the corridor would cut that time to about 34 minutes.

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- **Elevated rail would generally fit within existing right of way except in a couple of areas.** Additional right of way would be needed along NE 145th Street and along SR-522 in Bothell.
- **Bus Rapid Transit might be a viable alternative to rail.** Transit service in the corridor could improve with a series of upgrades designed to improve speed and reliability for buses, though likely with lower ridership potential and longer travel times than fully grade-separated rail. Completing transit lanes, prioritizing traffic signals for buses, providing real-time customer information, improving pedestrian access, and running distinctive buses – all these are improvements that, when made together, could provide substantial transit improvement at less expense than the rail options. The cost of implementing BRT is estimated at \$94-\$125 million, with operating costs of \$5-\$6 million annually.

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
- BRT in SR-99 Corridor
- I-5 Corridor Northgate to Everett 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