

East Link Light Rail

112th Avenue Options Community Workshop Summary Report

Workshop 1 – June 15, 2010

Workshop 2 – June 29, 2010

Workshop 3 – July 7, 2010

DRAFT



Workshop Overview

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue hosted community workshops on June 15, June 29 and July 7, 2010 to present information and gather community input on the six design options for light rail on 112th Avenue in Bellevue. All workshops were held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Bellevue City Hall.

Format

Workshop 1 – Understanding 112th Avenue Options and Community Interests

The purpose of workshop 1 was to introduce the new 112th alignments to the community and gather community input. The workshop began with a 30 minute open house for participants to view drawings of the options, speak with staff and provide initial comments. Next, Sound Transit and the City provided a presentation describing the decision process, reasons for re-evaluating the preferred alternative, a brief overview of the six 112th Avenue alignment options, and highlighted next steps. After the presentation, attendees participated in break-out sessions. During these sessions, technical staff from Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue reviewed the options and took questions and comments on flip charts.

A total of 102 community members signed in.

Workshop 2 – Evaluating the 112th Avenue Options

The purpose of Workshop 2 was to present the evaluation results in the *112th Avenue Alignment Options Concept Design Report*, which provides information about each of the design options being considered for 112th Avenue and will help decision-makers identify an option that balances costs and potential impacts.

From 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Sound Transit staff presented the key findings of the Concept Design Report. Presentation topics included cost, visuals (conceptual illustrations), transportation, displacements, noise, wetlands, park, and construction impacts. A question and answer session followed the presentation of each topic area.

Information boards were on display for the duration of the meeting in an adjacent room in an open house format. Technical staff were available to help review the 112th Avenue options and take public comment.

A total of 96 community members signed in.

Workshop 3 – Identifying Community Preferences on 112th Avenue

The third workshop provided community members an opportunity to compare and analyze key features of the six East Link 112th Avenue design options, share preferences for light rail options on 112th Avenue, and engage in small group discussions with project staff and community members on the key features and trade-offs for each option under review.

The workshop utilized a combination of formal presentation and small group discussions. During the presentation, Sound Transit staff presented a slide show containing illustrations of different sections and viewpoints of the 112th Avenue alignments. Participants indicated their preferences at each viewpoint using an Audience Response System. The system was employed as another way of gathering input and taking a pulse of community views. After responding to a set of questions through the Audience Response System, participants discussed key features, trade-offs and preferences in small groups.

Information boards were on display in the concourse throughout the workshop where technical staff were available to help review the 112th Avenue options and take public comment.

A total of 105 community members signed in.

Public Comments

Sound Transit received verbal comments at the workshops in small group discussions and during the open house portion of the workshops. Participants also provided written comments using workbooks and comment forms as well as emails to project staff members. The comments summarized below were submitted at the workshop or by email or mail following the meeting. Verbatim transcriptions of all comments are available upon request.

The following highlight the type of comments provided at the workshops, and in comment forms and emails.

Workshop #1

- No clear preferred alignment, but common likes and dislikes included:
 - More support for a retained cut / grade separation along 112th Avenue (Option 4), though some concerns exist about safety and visual impacts
 - Concerns regarding property acquisition of a westside running alignment, though some preference for the buffer that would be provided for the adjacent neighborhood. (Option 2)
 - Preference for NE 2nd Street portal into downtown (Option 3 and 4)
 - Little support for the at-grade alignment on 108th (Options 5 and 6)
 - Little support for an elevated track (Options 5 and 6)
 - Little support for a center-running alignment (Options 1, 3, 5)
- Opposition to at-grade crossings
- Mixed support for proposed SE 8th Street Station

- Concerns about traffic impacts, especially with at-grade alignments
- Concerns about noise in residential neighborhoods, especially from warning bells and from track “wheel squeal,” especially on elevated structures
- Concerns about access restrictions to and from streets connecting with 112th Avenue
- Desire for more information about cost and associated tradeoffs between different options
- Concerns about impacts to community assets such as Winters House, Blueberry Farm, Mercer Slough and to businesses along the alignment
- Concerns about inadequate parking at stations and therefore, parking impacts on surrounding neighborhoods
- Concerns about visual impacts to homes and businesses on 112th Avenue
- Concerns regarding disruptions from construction, especially noise
- Some interest in creating a hybrid alternative with the best features of the six options under consideration
- Notwithstanding Sound Transit’s preference for the 112th Avenue route, continued though not unanimous support for the B7 alternative

Workshop #2

The following highlight questions provided during the question and answer portion of the presentation as well as comments provided via comment forms.

Visual

- Interest in seeing rendering of stations, SE 8th in particular
- Desire for analysis of visual impacts of noise walls
- Questions about safety and visual impact of barriers with retained cut options

Cost

- Interest in cost comparison between the 112th Avenue and B7 alternatives
- Request for cost information to be presented as absolutes instead of as cost reductions

Transportation

- Question about traffic capacity/level of service on 112th Avenue
- Concerns about neighborhood access as a result of right-in/right-out restrictions (specific questions asked about SE 4th St, SE 1st St)
- Concerns about safety at track crossings and along at-grade alignments
- Concerns about emergency vehicle and commercial vehicle access on 112th Avenue

Displacements

- Concern about level of uncertainty for property owners until final decision on alignment
- Concerns about negative impact on property values, especially on homes that Sound Transit will not acquire for the project
- Legal questions about disclosure requirements for property sales
- Questions about impact of business displacements on city tax revenue
- Questions about the property acquisition process and Sound Transit communication with property owners regarding property acquisitions

Noise

- Questions about frequency of trains and resulting noise
- Questions about noise measuring methodology, estimates and allowable noise levels
- Desire for information about available mitigation strategies and effectiveness
- Interest in using cost savings from less expensive alternatives for additional noise mitigation
- Request for indoor and outdoor noise measurements, as well as measurements during winter months

Wetlands and Parks

- Concerns about impacts to Surrey Downs Park and wetlands
- Questions about effect of high water table on construction

Construction Impacts

- Questions about duration of construction, especially the differences between alignment options

General Comments

- Interest in workshop focused on B7
- Questions about the decision-making process and coordination between Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue
- Notwithstanding Sound Transit's preference for the 112th Avenue route, continued though not unanimous support for the B7 alternative
- Questions about City of Bellevue representation on the Sound Transit Board
- Interest in an alignment that best supports future expansion of light rail

Workshop #3

The following highlight the type of comments provided in comment forms submitted at the workshop and summary of participant responses to the small group discussions.

Tunnel Options (Options 1-4)

- More support for Option 4 and for an east-running alignment in general, although some requested starting the retained cut south of SE 8th Street in order to mitigate SE 8th traffic impacts. Supporters of Option 4 indicated their preference for Option 4 due to the following:
 - Fewer residential, business, noise, visual, and traffic impacts
 - Preserves vegetation in median on 112th Avenue
 - Support of below grade/retained cut design
- Some support for west-running alignment. Those in support of this alignment commented that it would have fewer impacts to the Bellevue Club and hotel properties along 112th Avenue.
- Least support for a center-running alignment (Options 1 and 3), though cost-savings of Option 3 was viewed as a benefit
- Opposition to proposed SE 8th Street Station
- Opposition to at-grade crossings
- Concern regarding high number of displacements and proximity of light rail to neighborhoods for Option 2

- Concerns about noise and visual impacts

At-Grade Options (Options 5 and 6)

- Little support for the at-grade alignment in downtown Bellevue, including a lack of participation using the audience response system and during the table discussion
- Concern regarding segment of elevated track needed to reach 108th Avenue
- Concern about traffic impacts
- Concern about pedestrian safety
- Concern regarding the high number of displacements and access impacts at SE 4th Street (Option 6)

Tunnel Location (Main Street or 2nd Street)

- More support for a NE 2nd Street portal into downtown. Supporters indicated their preference for the 2nd Street Portal due to the following:
 - Fewer impacts to neighborhoods, businesses, and parks
 - Less disruptive to traffic
 - Provides for a better pedestrian experience
 - Avoids impacts to Main Street character and access
- Those in favor of the Main Street location commented that it was a less costly option and that it allowed for a westside running alignment

General Comments

- Concerns about traffic impacts on 112th Avenue and neighborhood access
- Concerns about noise, safety, and visual impacts
- Concerns about crossing gates, bells, and signals
- Concerns about impacts to wetlands from stormwater runoff

- Requests for full noise mitigation, including noise insulation and window replacement, use of quieter trains or rubber wheels, sound absorbing barriers, and below grade track design
- Some interest in considering an alignment on 116th Avenue instead of 112th
- Residents at Carriage Hills Condominiums expressed specific concerns with any center or east side running alignment due to visual, noise and access impacts as well as the affect to property values
- Notwithstanding Sound Transit's preference for the 112th Avenue route, continued though not unanimous support for the B7 alternative

Audience Response System Results

Sound Transit staff presented a slide show containing illustrations of different sections and viewpoints of the 112th Avenue alignments. Participants indicated their preferences for key features of each viewpoint using an Audience Response System. However, some participants indicated that the choices were not presented clearly enough in order to make an informed response, while others declined to participate in the exercise. Other considerations include that the results should be viewed as representing only a small segment of the community and not a community "vote." The system was employed as another way of gathering input and taking a pulse of community views. Following is a summary of participant responses.

1. What is your preference looking northeast from Bellevue Way and 112th Ave SE?

Side Running
 Switch to Center Running
 No preference

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
Side Running		62.24%	61
Switch to Center Running		21.43%	21
No preference		16.33%	16
Totals		100%	98

2. What is your preference looking South at 112th Ave SE and SE 15th St?

At grade to Center Running
 Side Running
 Grade Separated to Center Running
 No preference

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
At grade to Center Running		7.37%	7
Side Running		66.32%	63
Grade Separated to Center Running		15.79%	15
No preference		10.53%	10
Totals		100%	95

3. What is your preference looking North at 112th Ave SE from SE 6th St?

West Side Running
 Center Running
 Retained Cut
 No preference

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
West Side Running		37.11%	36
Center Running		7.22%	7
Retained Cut		53.61%	52
No preference		2.06%	2
Totals		100%	97

4. What is your preference looking North East from SE 1st Place?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Center Running to At Grade Downtown	27.91%	24
Westside Running to At Grade Downtown	47.67%	41
No preference	24.42%	21
Totals	100%	86

5. Which At-Grade option do you prefer?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Center Running to At Grade Downtown	25.81%	16
Westside Running to At Grade Downtown	54.84%	34
No preference	19.35%	12
Totals	100%	62*

*Note – some participants abstained from selecting a preference for the at-grade alternatives in downtown Bellevue.

6. What is your preference looking Northeast from SE 1st Place?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Center Running to Main St Tunnel	33.33%	24
Westside Running to Main St Tunnel	56.94%	41
No preference	9.72%	7
Totals	100%	72

7. What is your preference looking Northeast from SE 1st Place?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Center Running to 2nd St Tunnel	16.25%	13
Retained Cut to 2nd St Tunnel	73.75%	59
No preference	10%	8
Totals	100%	80

8. What is your preference looking Northwest at 112th Ave and 2nd Street?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Center Running to 2nd St Tunnel	11.11%	8
Retained Cut to 2nd St Tunnel	80.56%	58
No preference	8.33%	6
Totals	100%	72

9. Do you prefer...?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Main Street Tunnel	30.38%	24
2nd Street Tunnel	67.09%	53
No Preference	2.53%	2
Totals	100%	79

10. Which Tunnel option do you prefer?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Center Running to Main St Tunnel	4.82%	4
Westside Running to Main St Tunnel	37.35%	31
Center Running to 2nd St Tunnel	3.61%	3
Retained Cut to 2nd St Tunnel	54.22%	45
No preference	0%	0
Totals	100%	83

Next Steps

The Sound Transit Board is expected to use both public input and the technical report findings to identify the preferred 112th Avenue design option at its meeting on July 22, 2010. Sound Transit will hold its last public meeting as part of the outreach for the 112th Avenue alignments at an open house on July 14. In addition, a City of Bellevue City Council briefing is scheduled for July 19.

Sound Transit will release a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the fall of 2010, which will evaluate new alternatives developed since publication of the Draft EIS in late 2008, including the preferred 112th Avenue design options.

Sound Transit will release the Final EIS in 2011. The Final EIS evaluates the preferred alternative and all alternatives considered in the EIS, responds to Draft EIS comments and describes proposed mitigation commitments. The Sound Transit Board will make a decision on the project to be built in 2011. Construction will begin in 2014, with service beginning in 2021.