

East Link light rail:

Downtown Bellevue Open House Summary



March 2010

 **SOUNDTRANSIT**
RIDE THE WAVE

East Link Light Rail Project Overview

East Link is Sound Transit's voter-approved project to build light rail between Seattle and Overlake Transit Center in Redmond via I-90. East Link will connect the Eastside's biggest population and employment centers, serving 45,000-50,000 riders daily.

In May 2009, the Sound Transit Board identified a preferred alternative. In downtown Bellevue, the preferred alternative included an at-grade couplet along 108th Avenue NE and 110th Avenue NE (C4A).

A tunnel alternative was also identified on 108th Avenue NE (C3T) for future consideration if additional funding is found.

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue have analyzed four new alternatives for the East Link project in downtown Bellevue. The new alternatives are based upon outside expert reviews and requests from the Bellevue City Council. The four new alternatives are evaluated in the Downtown Bellevue Concept Design Report that evaluates cost, ridership, traffic operations, environmental impacts, plan consistency, construction effects and risk. The Sound Transit Board will use the report and public comments to determine if reconsidering the preferred alternative is needed in downtown Bellevue. Sound Transit Board action is scheduled for April 2010.

East Link Timeline

2009–2010 Preliminary Engineering



2011–2013 Final Design



East Link Preferred Alternative

Identified by Sound Transit Board of Directors, May 2009



2013/2014 Construction

2020/2021 Service Begins





East Link Open House Overview

On Tuesday, February 18, 2010, Sound Transit hosted an open house to present information on four new alternatives for the East Link project in downtown Bellevue and to solicit community feedback. The new alternatives are based upon outside expert reviews and requests from the Bellevue City Council. The Sound Transit Board will use the outcomes of the expert review and public comments to determine if they will reconsider the preferred alternative in downtown Bellevue. The meeting was held from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Bellevue City Hall. Approximately 168 community members attended the open house.

This open house was part of a comprehensive public involvement program Sound Transit has developed to support the East Link project. Throughout the course of the East Link project, Sound Transit has offered opportunities for the public to learn information about the project and encouraged community feedback. Community outreach events and activities for East Link have included:

- Project update mailings, email updates, and project Web site
- A series of public scoping meetings in November 2006
- Five route and station workshops in spring 2007
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement hearings in early 2009
- A series of neighborhood workshops in fall 2009
- Ongoing community briefings
- Informational project booths at community events and festivals

Purpose

- Present updated information on the downtown Bellevue alternatives including cost and ridership estimates
- Provide information about the East Link project status and next steps
- Offer an opportunity for public comment and engagement

Format

At the beginning of the open house, participants signed in as they arrived and Sound Transit staff informed them of the open house purpose and agenda. Each participant received a copy of the Downtown Bellevue Concept Design Report. Participants also received a comment workbook that provided information about the new alternatives and a place for feedback about the overall East Link project and issues specific to the new downtown Bellevue alignments.

After signing in, Sound Transit staff encouraged participants to view display boards around the room to learn about the Link light rail system, public involvement process and upcoming opportunities to get involved. Display board stations also included detailed information about the C9T, C9A, C11A and C14E alternatives in downtown Bellevue, including cost and ridership information. Members of the East Link project team staffed stations to answer questions and take down comments.

At 5 p.m. Sound Transit staff invited participants to listen to a brief overview presentation. The presentation highlighted the open house purpose and goals and provided a report on the current project status. After a review of outreach activities for the downtown Bellevue segment, the project team discussed the downtown Bellevue alternatives and reviewed simulations. The presentation concluded with a question and answer session. The open house continued after the conclusion of the presentation.

Participants were invited to submit their comments in the comment workbook, by mail or email, or by communicating directly with Sound Transit staff. The comments provided are highlighted in this summary. A full record of transcribed comments from flip charts, comment workbooks and emails are documented in Appendix B and C.




Public Notification

Sound Transit notified citizens who live or work in the East Link corridor of the Downtown Bellevue Open House through a variety of methods including the Sound Transit Web site, an electronic newsletter sent to listserv subscribers, news releases, a postcard mailing, and display advertisements in local newspapers. Translation services were also advertised and available as needed.

Sound Transit mailed a postcard announcement to 14,845 businesses and residents within an approximate two mile radius of Bellevue City Hall. Sound Transit ran display ads announcing the workshops in the following publications: *The Seattle Times*, *Russian World*, *Bellevue Reporter*, *La Raza Del Noroeste*, and *The Chinese Post*.

In addition to notifying the general public, Sound Transit requested participation from business owners in the corridor, stakeholder and neighborhood groups, as well as residents who attended previous meetings, submitted comments, or asked to be added to the project mailing list. A copy of the postcard announcement and other notifications is included in Appendix G.




East Link light rail

Sound Transit is currently analyzing four new alternatives for the East Link project in downtown Bellevue. The new alternatives are based upon outside expert review and requests from the Bellevue City Council. **At the Open House, Sound Transit's East Link project team will report on conceptual designs and analysis of the following alternatives** as directed by the Sound Transit Board of Directors:

C9T – 110th NE Tunnel Alternative	C11A – 108th NE At-Grade Alternative
C9A – 110th NE At-Grade Alternative	C14E – 114th NE Elevated Alternative

The **Downtown Bellevue Concept Design Report** evaluates cost, ridership, traffic operations, environmental impacts, plan consistency, construction effects and risk for each of the new alternatives. The Sound Transit Board will use the report and public comments to determine if reconsidering the preferred alternative, the C4A At-Grade Couplet, is needed in downtown Bellevue. Sound Transit Board action is scheduled for Spring 2010.



DOWNTOWN BELLEVUE Public Open House

*Open House will be from 4 to 7 p.m.
(presentation begins at 5 p.m.)*

Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010
Bellevue City Hall Concourse
450 110th Ave. NE, Bellevue

Getting there:

Bellevue City Hall is located near the Bellevue Transit Center, which is served by regional and local buses. City Hall parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis, and is free to those doing business with the City or attending meetings at City Hall. Visitor parking entrance is located on 110th Avenue.

To review the Concept Design Report:

Please visit www.soundtransit.org/eastlink, or contact Katie Kuciemba, Community Outreach Specialist at 206-398-5459 or katie.kuciemba@soundtransit.org. The fastest and most reliable way to receive information about the East Link project is to sign up for e-mail updates at www.soundtransit.org/subscribe. For information in alternative formats, call 1-800-201-4900/TTY Relay: 711 or e-mail accessibility@soundtransit.org.



Public Comments

Sound Transit received a total of 70 public comments as of March 12, 2010. The public comments summarized below were submitted at the open house, via email or mail following the open house. Verbatim transcriptions of all comments are provided in Appendix B and C. All appendices are available to download online at <http://www.soundtransit.org/eastlink>.

Key Themes

- The tunnel alternative (C9T) garnered the most positive comments, followed by the at-grade alternatives (C9A and C11A). There were slightly fewer positive comments on the elevated alignment along 114th Ave (C14E) than the at-grade options.
- Opinions varied about the best alternative, but common interest in making the right decision that is in the community's long-term best interest.
- Build a system for maximum ridership, and place stations closest to where people live, work, and shop, with easy connections to transit.
- Concern that budget constraints would force decisions that may not be in the best interest of the community or the long-term success of Link light rail.
- Interest in making a decision within a reasonable timeframe in order to keep the project moving forward – comments expressed the sentiment that Sound Transit needs to “do it right, but do it fast.”
- Support for providing adequate parking to allow for greater ridership and use of East Link.
- Provide frequent service, especially in the evenings.





Alternative C9T Comment Highlights

Among participants who submitted comment forms, there was more support than opposition for Alternative C9T. Those in favor of this alternative indicated that it provided the best long-term solution with the least negative impacts, including less impact on traffic, downtown streets and residences. The higher ridership estimates and close proximity to downtown were other benefits cited by those in favor of C9T.

- *“Put the tracks underground so they can put people close to where they live, work, or shop now, not where they might go sometime in the future. Every surface option C4A, C9A, and C11A will negatively affect Bellevue businesses far more than not having any rail at all.”*
- *“Best long-term solution for Bellevue.”*
- *“I favor option C9T as it will promote maximum ridership and keep congestion to a minimum. The other alternatives are compromises we might regret later.”*
- *“Bellevue needs a tunnel! Any at-grade alternative will be a nightmare for downtown streets. Remember to build it right the first time.”*
- *“A tunnel would serve the public better for the Downtown Bellevue area because it does NOT impact the traffic on the road and has the highest system-wide ridership. The tunnel option has 100% support from the City of Bellevue, who will HOST and give permits to the construction of the East Link in Bellevue.”*
- *“The February 2010 Sound Transit Downtown Report on Bellevue Light Rail Alternatives Concept Design Report shows the strongest East Link Ridership (51,000) using the C9T alignment. Should Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue be unable to agree on an acceptable means of funding this alternative, the recently proposed C14E alternative becomes the obvious best choice as it is \$80 to \$120 million less expensive than C9A and C11A and has the same ridership as the two at-grade alternatives.”*

Several participants expressed concern about the higher cost of constructing Alternative C9T. A few participants raised concerns about the alternative’s impact on neighborhoods, especially to the historic district and to local businesses on Main Street.

- *“\$900 million, too much money for not enough benefit.”*
- *“Too expensive and not required.”*
- *“Too expensive. Cost risks are higher due to tunneling.”*

Participants suggested alternative alignments for C9T including locating the tunnel on 108th Avenue NE instead of 110th Avenue NE. Other suggestions included ways to minimize the cost of the tunnel.

- *“Over \$75 million can be saved from C9T costs by moving the East*

Link passenger terminal from underground to partially at-grade onto NE 6th Street (East of 110th) adjacent to bus terminal. If ST adds the \$100 million cost savings of the 112th routing suggested for B-Route alternative, the C9T becomes viable for similar cost compared to original downtown preferred route budget.”

Another participant suggested that the east portal should be located on the Red Lion property to minimize impacts to Main Street and the Surrey Downs neighborhood. Some were concerned with the impacts to the adjacent homes and businesses.

- *“Options C9A, C11A, and C9T negatively impact neighborhoods south of Main and the businesses on Main.”*

Alternative C9A Comment Highlights

Among participants who submitted comment forms, opinion was divided about Alternative C9A. A few participants noted that while they preferred other alternatives, this was still a good option to consider.

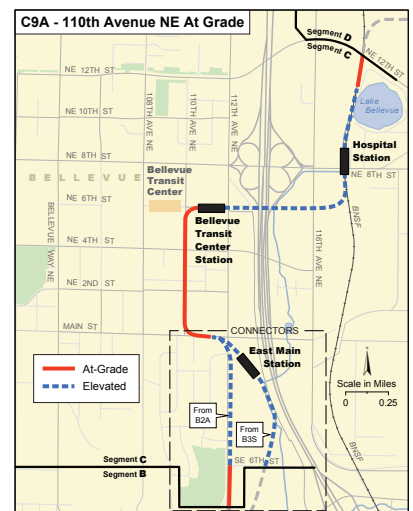
Participants who supported Alternative C9A liked the proximity to businesses, shopping and the Bellevue Transit Center. Participants also liked that this option would not require rebuilding the existing Bellevue Transit Center.

- *“Good connections to Bellevue Transit Center – not disturbing existing Bellevue Transit Center is a plus. A little far from downtown, but not too bad compared to C11A.”*
- *“Minimal impacts to city traffic grid, only 4th and Main Street have impacts. Easiest and quickest to construct. Close to jobs and shopping and transit center.”*

Several participants expressed concern about constructing an at-grade alignment. The primary concerns cited were potential for traffic disruption, negative impacts to local businesses, and the potential to increase congestion in downtown Bellevue.

Participants identified concerns about C9A’s impact on specific locations and neighborhoods, including Main Street, the Surrey Downs neighborhood, and McCormick Park.

- *“No. We need to plan for the future. Our traffic will get worse, and trains do not belong on the road. This is a subway, not a streetcar.”*
- *“Too much interaction with traffic and congestion. Large impact on Main Street and Surrey Downs neighborhood.”*





Alternative C11A Comment Highlights

Opinion was divided on Alternative C11A, with approximately equal support and opposition for this alignment among participants who submitted comments.

Those in support of Alternative C11A liked the access to businesses and shopping, the higher ridership estimates, and that the alternative provides two downtown stations.

- *“More central, better access to businesses and shops. More disruption to city street grid.”*
- *“Two stations in downtown, use of existing Bellevue Transit Center, elimination of j-walking in Bellevue Transit Center are all great. I have concerns about bicycle access on 108th – be sure to give us some path through 108th or 110th.”*

Those opposed to Alternative C11A expressed concern about impacts to surface streets and the potential for increased congestion, noise and visual impacts, impacts to businesses and neighborhoods, and the distance from downtown Bellevue. Others did not like that this alternative would require rebuilding the existing Bellevue Transit Center. Participants identified concerns about C11A's impact on specific locations and neighborhoods, including Main Street, the Surrey Downs neighborhood, and NE 4th Street.

- *“C11A has too many impacts on surface traffic.”*
- *“Not acceptable. Higher cost, substantial higher travel time, displaces and disrupts businesses and homes, noise and visual blight that cannot be mitigated.”*



Alternative C14E Comment Highlights

Those in support of Alternative C14E liked the faster travel time and lower cost. Participants also felt that this alternative had the least neighborhood and business impacts. Others who liked this alternative commented that Alternative C14E supports future development opportunities to the east and along I-405.

- *“C14E is the preferable route. It is faster than street alternatives, lowest cost per rider, no substantial variation in overall system ridership and the least impact on eligible historic neighborhood properties.”*
- *“Substantial benefits in regard to travel time and cost. No substantial decrease in overall system ridership. Fastest of all the alignments... substantial benefit of being fully grade separated.”*
- *“Very progressive, avoids the already congested downtown core. A “shuttle people mover” can circulate on secondary streets through the downtown core.”*
- *“This is the most logical. Eventually Bellevue will be growing to the east.”*
- *“I have spoken with many people over the past few weeks who share my belief that the C-14 alignment or the Vision Line Concept is the best route. Main Street is a very busy arterial and should not be compromised by light rail construction or design.”*

“The proposed “Vision Line” is the most direct route without the sharp bends needed to do the surface and tunnel routes.”

Among participants who submitted comment forms or emails, there was more opposition than support for Alternative C14E.

Participants opposed to Alternative C14E expressed concern about the lower ridership estimates of this alternative compared to the other alternatives under consideration. Others commented that the alignment was located too far from the population it would serve and that it offers poor connectivity to downtown Bellevue and the Bellevue Transit Center. Participants also commented that C14E is not accessible to the elderly and mobility impaired, in addition to being difficult for bicycles to access. A few participants expressed concerns about potential conflicts with future development along I-405 and with the I-405 master plan.



- *“Very poor connectivity to the existing Bellevue Transit Center making connection to the feeder bus system extremely difficult. Also way too far from downtown activity centers and residences to be of any use.”*
- *“C14E is by far the least desirable route – too far from the Bellevue Transit Center, businesses and shopping, potential conflicts with future I-405 development.”*
- *“C14E does not make any sense to me. Part of the motive should be to deliver shoppers to downtown Bellevue.”*
- *“C14E appears to be the least practical alternative. It has lower ridership, worse accessibility, more inconvenience and sacrifices long-term benefits for short-term financial gains.”*
- *“Horrible pedestrian access. Horrible for cyclists. Maybe good for East Bellevue/Redmond folks since it would cut time off trip.”*
- *“Light rail needs to serve the neighborhoods of Bellevue, and to do so it needs to serve the downtown. It is an asset to our community and will give residents new transportation options. There is no point of building a major transit system if it does not serve the most number of jobs and residents.”*
- *“I have been dismayed by the shift in City Council guidance to Sound Transit, specifically the new majority’s preference for route B7 along the BNSF rail route, and the related advocacy for a new downtown alternative C14E. “*



Other Comment Highlights

Access and Mobility

The Bellevue Network on Aging submitted a formal letter outlining their priorities for East Link. Their foremost concern was access to the hospitals and medical centers. The letter specifically requested a hospital station at NE 10th Street and stations near the medical facilities on 116th Ave NE and 112th Ave NE. The group encouraged Sound Transit to build at-grade stations to improve access for riders with limited mobility.

- *“Ease of access – whether the commuter walks [most people are quite capable of walking 10 minutes], bikes, drives or transfers from other means of public transportation.”*
- *“As many people as possible should be within easy walking distance of a station. Access convenience is a major factor in attracting new riders.”*

Congestion

Several participants indicated congestion related to the at-grade alternatives as a significant concern.

- *“The At-Grade options will simply kill the traffic in Downtown Bellevue.”*
- *“Light rail tracks must be separated from streets to avoid the congestion [current or future] it is supposed to alleviate. Tracks must be either elevated, placed in tunnels, or if at grade – be completely separated from streets.”*

South Bellevue Preferred Alternative (Segment B)

Participants also indicated their preferences for the East Link alignment in South Bellevue.

- *“Were a station to be built where the existing Wilburton Park and Ride, as proposed by B7, traffic on 118th Ave SE could not be mitigated. Indeed, the city cannot mitigate current traffic problems on 118th Ave SE, and the impacts on various stakeholders.”*
- *“As evidenced by almost 250 comments in the DEIS supporting the B7 alignment compared to 70 opposing it, there is overwhelming support in Bellevue for the B7 alignment as the route that would have the least harmful impacts to neighborhoods, businesses and the city of Bellevue in general.”*
- *“The light rail line running across I-90 must stop at South Bellevue Park & Ride. This is a major connection point for commuters originating in the local community, as well as commuters using the I-90 corridor east and commuters living in Newcastle.”*
- *“We agree with the City Council that the South Bellevue P&R MUST be a destination of the East Link line as it is the largest P&R anywhere along the East Link line (contributing to increased ridership), which is why we fully support the side-running B-3 alternative.”*

Mercer Slough

Several commenters voiced concern about any alignment that would significantly impacted the Mercer Slough.

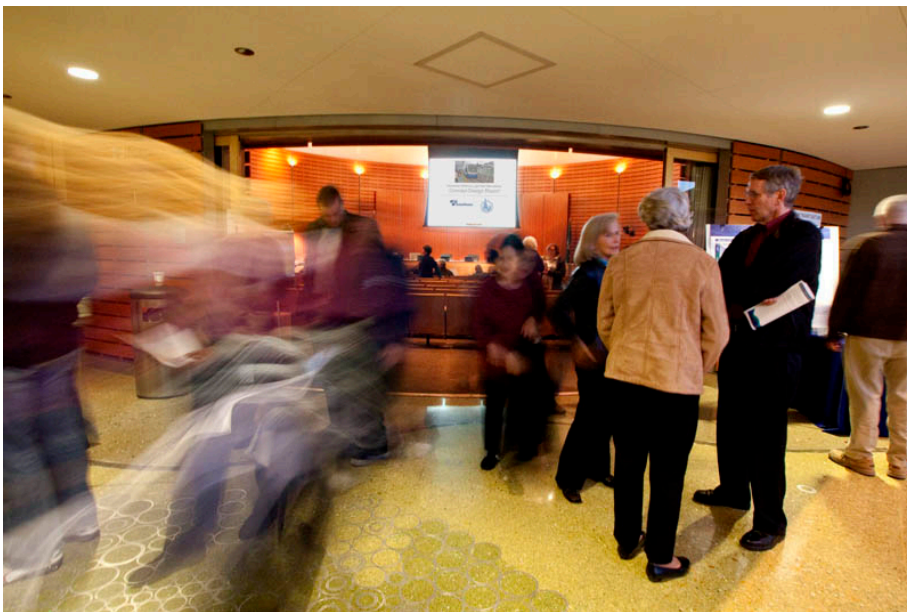
- *“Avoid the Bellevue wetlands and slough. “*
- *“Do NOT change the Eastside route to go through Mercer Slough. Protect this rich area in spite of the wishes of the Bellevue Council.”*

Timeline

- *“Our region cannot afford these delays and should continue to move forward, not backwards. Trust the decisions of your past colleagues trust your analysis supporting the preferred alternative and let’s keep this region moving!”*

Miscellaneous

- *“Each local community and neighborhood will voice its own narrow definition of system requirements, needs and desires. From a system’s stand point these are frequently completely at odds with the greater objectives listed above. Sound Transit is the only agency that can maintain focus on the larger picture.”*
- *“Light rail, transit, and other vehicles should all be integrated together into a well planned total transportation system.”*
- *“The Sound Transit Board must also take into account that the Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation determined during the East Link DEIS process a large, contiguous section of North Surrey Downs is eligible to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as a potential historical district.”*



Next Steps

The community feedback provided during this downtown Bellevue Open House is important to Sound Transit and regional decision-makers. Sound Transit will weigh this feedback, along with cost, ridership, service quality, environmental impacts, land use impacts, and service efficiency. The Sound Transit Board is expected to re-evaluate the downtown Bellevue preferred alternative in April 2010. The East Link project team also plans to continue outreach efforts by scheduling community briefings, hosting community open houses and providing ongoing project updates through the mail, email, and the project Web site.

Sound Transit is also preparing a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that is planned to be published in late 2010, which will evaluate the preferred alternative and other alternatives from the Draft EIS. After the Final EIS is completed, the Sound Transit Board will make a final decision on the project alignment and stations locations.

In order to address frequently asked questions raised during the workshops, Sound Transit will update the East Link Web site to answer these and other questions we hear from the public. We are always interested in hearing your thoughts about the East Link project!

Contact

Please submit comments or questions to:

Katie Kuciemba
Community Outreach Specialist
(206) 398-5459
eastlink@soundtransit.org
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

For information in alternative formats, call:
TTY: Relay: 711 or
email accessibility@soundtransit.org

To speak with Sound Transit about the proposed Link light rail mass transit project in East King County call 1-800-823-9230 during regular business hours.

Para hablar con Sound Transit acerca del propuesto proyecto de transporte público de Link Light Rail en el este de King County, llame al 1-800-823-9230 durante horas normales de oficina.

要向 Sound Transit 瞭解或討論擬在 East King County 進行的 Link light rail 公共交通項目，請在正常的工作時間致電 1-800-823-9230。

Upang makipag-usap sa Sound Transit ukol sa iminungkahing Link light rail na proyektong sasakyang pangmasa sa Silangang King County tawagan ang 1-800-823-9230 habang sa karaniwang mga oras ng pangangalakal.

Если вы хотите высказать сотрудникам Sound Transit свои соображения по поводу предлагаемого проекта линии общественного транспорта Link light rail в восточной части King County, звоните по телефону 1-800-823-9230 в обычные рабочие часы.

Muốn nói chuyện với Sound Transit về đề án chuyên chở công cộng đường ray xa nhẹ Link tại Phía Đông Quận King, hãy gọi số 1-800-823-9230 trong giờ làm việc thường lệ.

در مورد مسیر پیشنهاد شده برای پروژه ترانزیت سبک راه اهلی در کینگ شرقی با شماره 1-800-823-9230 در ساعات کاری تماس بگیرید برای گفتگو با سوند ترانزیت.