

Resolution No. R2024-05

Selecting the Project to be Built for the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements Project and Amending the ST2 Plan

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
System Expansion Committee	03/14/2024	Recommend to Board	Don Billen, Executive Director, PEPD
Board	03/28/2024	Final action	Chelsea Levy, Deputy Executive Director – Capital Project Development, PEPD Melissa Flores Saxe, Project Development Director, PEPD Zac Eskenazi, HCT Development Manager, PEPD

Proposed action

Selects the non-motorized and transit improvements to be built to improve access to the South Tacoma Station as part of the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements Project, amending the ST2 Plan.

Key features summary

- This action defines and selects the bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and station area improvements to be built for the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project. The ST2 Plan originally defined the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements Project as structured parking, but authorized the Board to construct these alternative improvements.
- The proposed scope is a permitted plan amendment to ST2 because, due to changed ridership patterns following the Covid-19 pandemic, the originally contemplated parking garage is impracticable to meet the stated project purpose of enhancing rider access to the station, and structured parking is unaffordable within the allocated project estimate in the financial plan. The proposed scope was included in the voter-approved plan as alternative improvements which still fulfill the stated purpose of enhancing rider access to the station area.
- Sound Transit has completed the conceptual design and engineering of these proposed improvements and an opinion of probable cost, and that information helped inform the staff recommended set of improvements to advance through this action to final design and construction.
- Sound Transit completed environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). As the SEPA lead agency, Sound Transit has determined the project does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment and issued a SEPA Determination of Nonsignificance in February 2024.
- The City of Tacoma has agreed with the approach, documented in a Letter of Concurrence signed in January 2024, to perform preliminary engineering, final design and construction for all the improvements located in City right-of-way. The City would own and maintain all improvements located in the City right-of-way. This will be administered through a funding agreement to be

approved by the Sound Transit Board of Directors through a future Board action targeted for Summer 2024.

- Sound Transit will perform final design and construction of the improvements located in the Sound Transit right-of-way.

Staff Recommendation

- Additional parking: Project staff are recommending that surface parking not advance further. The global pandemic has changed travel patterns and reduced ridership on existing transit service and demand for parking at some transit centers. There were 250 average daily Sounder boardings at South Tacoma Station in 2019 and 92 in 2023. Ridership decline has had a corresponding impact on parking demand. While the station's 220 surface parking spaces were nearly filled to capacity most weekdays in 2019, today it is only about 23% full midweek, and less full on Mondays and Fridays, due to work-from-home and hybrid schedules.
- Compared to a weekday average utilization rate at Kent Station of 57% and at Auburn Station at 67% this further demonstrates that parking demand at the South Tacoma station is unusually low and has not reached close to pre-pandemic levels. A surface parking lot near the station was identified as a potential improvement and was studied in Phase 2 but at this time that investment is likely to simply yield additional unused parking.
- These changed conditions in ridership are the primary justification for the recommendation to amend the project scope to build the non-parking alternatives identified as part of the ST2 Plan. Because the current parking facilities are already substantially underutilized, construction of additional parking is impracticable to deliver the enhanced access benefits to riders identified prior the global pandemic. Accordingly, building these alternative access improvements is in the best interest of Sound Transit to deliver the benefits contemplated by the ST2 plan.
- Sound Transit staff recommend that the following non-motorized and transit stop improvements be carried forward for further design and construction and that the surface parking lot not advance:
 - **Station accessibility and safety upgrades** – includes curb ramp retrofits, shelter retrofits, a public address system, addition of bird deterrents and improvements for enhanced accessibility including additional tactile wayfinding at South Tacoma Station. This also includes improvements of the railroad crossing for pedestrians at S 60th and S 56th streets.
 - **S 58th St connections** – adds sidewalks, curb ramps, and protected bike lanes from S Washington St. to South Tacoma Way. Improves bicycle and pedestrian crossing at the intersections of South Tacoma Way and S Puget Sound Ave. Provides sidewalks, curb ramps, ADA improvements and bike boulevard treatments from South Tacoma Way to S Lawrence St. Includes wayfinding signage on South Tacoma Way to the South Tacoma Station.
 - **S 60th St connections** – adds protected bike lanes on the north side of S 60th St. from S Adams St. to South Tacoma Way and then transitions to a bike boulevard from South Tacoma Way to S Puget Sound Ave. The intersection of S 60th St. and South Tacoma Way will be upgraded to a signalized pedestrian and bike crossing. The intersection of S 60th St. and S Puget Sound Ave will also be upgraded with pedestrian and bicycle safety treatments. Includes wayfinding signage on South Tacoma Way to the South Tacoma Station.
 - **S Adams St connections** – adds a protected bikeway from S 66th St. to S 60th St. by installing a 2-way protected bike lane on the west side of S Adams St. that transitions to a shared use path located on the Metro Parks Tacoma SERA Campus. Completes sidewalks and upgrades curb ramps on the east side of S Adams St. from S 66th St. to S 56th St. and improves the intersection

of S 60th St. and S Adams St. Upgrades bus stops (serving Pierce Transit Route 53) at the intersection of S 66th St. and S Adams St.

- **S Pine St protected bike lanes** – provides protected bike lanes on both sides of S Pine St. between S Center St. and S 47th St. by removing a travel lane in each direction.
- **S 56th St walking and bicycle connections** – provides a connection from S 56th St. bike lanes (which end just west of S Tyler St.) to SERA Campus and South Tacoma Station.
- Additionally, if funding remains after the above improvements are designed and constructed, the following set of non-motorized improvements would be delivered:
 - **S 54th St & S Washington St connections** – provides curb ramp and sidewalk improvements at spot locations on S 54th St. and S Washington St. within a half-mile of the station.
 - **S Puget Sound Ave connections** – enhances bike lanes on S Puget Sound Ave. between S 54th St. and S 58th St. including bicycle detection at the intersection of S 56th St. and S Puget Sound Ave.
 - **S Sprague Ave bicycle connections** – adds bicycle facilities on Sprague Ave. between South Tacoma Way and S 37th St. and bike lanes west on S 37th St. to S Steele St.
- The following improvements were studied in Phase 2 as part of the South Tacoma Access project and staff recommend not to advance:
 - S Fife St. bike boulevard
 - S 35th St. bike lanes
 - S 60th St. connections
 - S 66th St. protected bike lanes
 - S Tyler St. protected bike lanes
 - S Washington St. sidewalks
 - S 45th St. and S Union Ave. bike sharrows
 - Transit Signal and street lighting improvements
 - Surface parking lot located at an existing Metro Parks Tacoma facility
- The current Financial Plan estimate for the project is \$56 million (2023\$). A conceptual engineering opinion of probable cost was developed during Phase 2 of the project and a Quantitative Risk Assessment was conducted. The number of proposed improvements, including surface parking, exceeded the Financial Plan estimate. Therefore, the proposed improvement list outlined above was developed to fit within the Financial Plan estimate. While the list of proposed improvements does not exceed the Financial Plan Estimate, the list is further broken down to show a prioritization of improvements to be delivered should actual costs exceed the conceptual cost estimate. A funding agreement will be developed with more details on the approach for the City to deliver the majority of the proposed improvements. This funding agreement will be brought to the Board later along with a budget amendment and baseline action.

Equity considerations

During Phase 1 Alternatives Analysis, equitable access was built into all evaluation criteria. The three key criteria were:

- Providing a benefit to underserved communities

- Address a major barrier to access
- Proximity to the station

In Phase 1, staff held two online open houses to engage the community in identification of improvements. We also met with other community stakeholders. This resulted in the identification of improvements in underserved communities in Tacoma including many improvements proposed in the South Tacoma neighborhood, which is a low-income neighborhood south of downtown Tacoma. These improvements will create better non-motorized access to the South Tacoma Station and surrounding amenities for this neighborhood. Extensive external engagement was conducted during Phase 2 of this project (see more detail in the Public Involvement section below), including online open houses in Fall of 2022 and 2023, as well as in-person events. The online open houses were translated into Spanish and Vietnamese.

During both phases, staff met with the City of Tacoma Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group (BPTAG) and Tacoma Area Commission on Disabilities (TACOD), as well as the community organization Asia Pacific Cultural Center (APCC), and others to share information and solicit input. From TACOD members, staff heard that more tactile pavers at the station could be used to help better direct people with disabilities. APCC members brought up an interest in measures to improve security at stations, such as cameras and lighting, as well as signage to increase awareness of the station and high-quality sidewalks; staff confirmed that these elements were included in our proposals. From BPTAG, staff heard about the need for safety upgrades to existing bicycle facilities in the South Tacoma community.

Additionally, the project team completed an abbreviated Racial Equity Toolkit analysis. The outcomes confirmed that the South Tacoma community is historically underserved and further supported the decision to site most of these non-motorized investments in this part of Tacoma.

Background

In November 2008, voters approved access improvements to South Tacoma Station as part of the ST2 ballot measure to expand mass transit throughout the region. Subsequently, the Sounder Station Access Study was conducted to identify potential access improvements at Sounder stations. However, funding for the South Tacoma access improvements was suspended due to reduced revenue during the great recession. The Sound Transit Board restored funding for the Sounder South Tacoma Station Access Improvements in January 2020. Later in 2020, the agency went through a process to realign the capital program due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The South Tacoma Station project was able to begin Phase 1 – Alternatives Analysis starting in March 2021. At the conclusion of the realignment process, the project was identified as a Tier 1 project, and staff were able to complete Phase 1 as well as all future phases of the project.

During Phase 1 – Alternatives Analysis, Sound Transit, in collaboration with City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and Pierce County, assessed current conditions for walking, rolling, and taking transit to and from South Tacoma Station. A list of improvements was identified and evaluated, including pedestrian, bicycle, pick-up/drop-off, parking, and transit integration improvements. Equity was emphasized in the goals and criteria used in the evaluation of the proposed improvements. The three key criteria were:

- Providing a benefit to underserved communities
- Address a major barrier to access
- Proximity to the station

At the conclusion of Phase 1, two groups of improvements were identified to take into further study:

- Priority 1 (higher performing) – these improvements scored high on the 3 key criteria with a focus on providing connections to underserved communities
- Priority 2 (middle-performing) – these improvements scored high on at least 2 of the key criteria with a focus on providing connections to underserved communities

In March 2022, the Sound Transit Board was consulted on the identified list of improvements to bring forward in to Phase 2 – Conceptual Engineering and Environmental. During Phase 2, a conceptual design and conceptual cost estimate were completed on all the proposed improvements on the Priority 1 and 2 list. A Quantitative Risk Assessment was conducted on the conceptual cost estimate. A Value Engineering Workshop was also conducted. Sound Transit evaluated these improvements and issued a Determination of Nonsignificance and supporting environmental documents under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) in February 2024.

Project status

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Project Identification	Project Refinements	Conceptual Engineering/ Environmental Review	Preliminary Engineering	Final Design	Construction

Projected completion date for Phase 2 – Conceptual Engineering and Environment: 1Q 2024

Project scope, schedule and budget summary are located on page 165 of the January 2024 Agency Progress Report.

Fiscal information

The current cost estimate for the Sounder South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project is \$55,887,675 in 2023\$ with an assumed in-service date of 2032. As this project is pre-baselined, both the authorized project budget for project development work and a forecasted cost estimate for the remaining project delivery and construction work are reasonably assumed in the existing Long Range Financial Plan forecast.

As described in the Staff Recommendation section, the proposed improvements list has been developed to fit within the Financial Plan estimate. Additionally, there is prioritization of these items should actual costs exceed the conceptual cost estimate. As a result, the defined and selected improvements in this action are affordable within the financial plan.

Disadvantaged and small business participation

Not applicable to this action.

Public involvement

Sound Transit conducted two rounds of outreach during Phase 1 to introduce the project to the public and solicit input. In April of 2021, staff held an online open house to gather ideas for improving station access. In October of 2021, staff released additional detail on the proposed improvements under study for feedback in an online open house and held a Virtual Question and Answer Session and an information table at the South Tacoma Station. The online open house was translated into two languages; Vietnamese and Spanish. Staff also gave briefings to local public organizations, including the South Tacoma Neighborhood Council, South Tacoma Business District Alliance, and the Asia Pacific Cultural Center. Staff also briefed the City of Tacoma Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group and

the Tacoma Area Commission on Disabilities. All presentations given during this time included accessibility features.

Staff conducted two rounds of outreach during Phase 2 to continue to share updates with the community and solicit input as designs advanced. In fall 2022, staff held an online open house with detailed information on four key proposals, staffed an information table at the STAR Center, and held walking and biking tours of the proposed improvement corridors in South Tacoma in partnership with Downtown on the Go. In late 2023, staff solicited input on how to prioritize among the Priority 2 proposals through an online open house. Staff also staffed information tables at the STAR Center and South Tacoma public library. All online open house materials were translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. While the number of survey respondents was small, there was a preference expressed for more non-motorized improvements over surface parking. This helped inform staff's recommended set of improvements to carry forward.

Time constraints

A one-month delay would not create a significant impact to the project schedule.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Motion No. M2022-19: Authorized the chief executive officer to execute a contract modification with David Evans & Associates to exercise a contract option for consultant services for the South Tacoma Access Improvements Project and Lakewood Access Improvements Project in the amount of \$4,759,995 with a 10 percent contingency, for a new total authorized contact amount not to exceed \$9,389,853.

Resolution No. R2020-20: Amended the Adopted 2020 Budget to create the South Tacoma Access Improvements project by (a) establishing an authorized project allocation in the amount of \$1,534,000 and (b) establishing a 2020 annual project budget of \$189,000.

Motion No. M2020-68: Authorized the chief executive officer to execute contract modifications with David Evans & Associates Inc. for Phase 1 Alternatives Analysis for the Lakewood Station Access Improvements project and the South Tacoma Access Improvements project in an amount of \$1,448,853 with a 10 percent contingency of \$144,885 totaling \$1,593,738, for a new total authorized contact amount not to exceed \$3,312,627, contingent upon Board approval of Resolution No. R2020-19 and Resolution No. R2020-20.

Motion No. M2018-120: Authorized the chief executive office to execute a Sounder Planning and Preliminary Engineering consultant contract with David Evans & Associates to provide planning and engineering consultant services for the Sounder South Capacity Expansion program in the amount of \$1,562,626, with a 10% contingency of \$156,263, for a total authorized contact amount not to exceed \$1,718,889 plus applicable taxes, and contingent on Board approval of Resolution No. R2018-36 authorizing the Sounder South Capacity Expansion program and establishing program allocation and a 2018 annual budget.

Environmental review – KH 2/28/24

Legal review – MT 3/7/24



Resolution No. R2024-05

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority amending ST2 and selecting the project to be built for the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project.

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, commonly known as Sound Transit, was formed under chapters 81.104 and 81.112 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties region by action of their respective county councils pursuant to RCW 81.112.030;

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is authorized to plan, construct, and permanently operate a high-capacity system of transportation infrastructure and services to meet regional public transportation needs in the Central Puget Sound region;

WHEREAS, in general elections held within the Sound Transit district on November 5, 1996, November 4, 2008, and November 8, 2016, voters approved local funding to implement a regional high-capacity transportation system for the Central Puget Sound region;

WHEREAS, the ST2 Plan included access improvements to the South Tacoma Sounder Station which primarily consisted of a parking structure but the improvements were suspended due to reduced revenue during the great recession;

WHEREAS, funding was restored for the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project in 2020, and the project was identified as Tier 1 in the 2021 Realignment process;

WHEREAS, a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS) was issued by Sound Transit on February 14, 2024 for the project;

WHEREAS, the System Expansion Committee and Board were briefed on the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project in March 2022;

WHEREAS, the Board's action to select the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project to be built identified in this resolution is informed by review of the SEPA analysis, comments and input from the public, the City of Tacoma, Metro Parks Tacoma, and Pierce Transit;

WHEREAS, the ST2 Plan authorizes the Board to amend the ST2 Plan and the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project to construct identified alternatives to the parking structure to meet rider access demands and needs if the original scope is deemed impracticable or unaffordable;

WHEREAS, due to changed ridership patterns following the Covid-19 pandemic, the originally contemplated parking garage is impracticable to meet the stated project purpose of enhancing rider access to the station, and structured parking is unaffordable within the allocated project estimate in the financial plan;

WHEREAS, after due consideration of the environmental, social, economic and other relevant factors, including public and agency comment and environmental review, the Board finds that it is in the best interest of and will best serve the people in the Sound Transit district to amend the ST2 plan to select and implement the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project described below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that ST2 is amended as follows:

Section 1: The South Tacoma Station Access Improvements project to be built is adopted as follows (as described in the SEPA Environmental Checklist and DNS):

The project would be located along and near the Sounder South Tacoma Station.

The proposed project would involve construction and operation of the following non-motorized and transit stop improvements:

- **Station accessibility and safety upgrades** – includes curb ramp retrofits, shelter retrofits, a public address system, addition of bird deterrents and improvements for enhanced accessibility including additional tactile wayfinding at South Tacoma Station. This also includes improvements of the railroad crossing for pedestrians at S 60th and S 56th streets.
- **S 58th St connections** – adds sidewalks, curb ramps, and protected bike lanes from S Washington St. to South Tacoma Way. Improves bicycle and pedestrian crossing at the intersections of South Tacoma Way and S Puget Sound Ave. Provides sidewalks, curb ramps, ADA improvements and bike boulevard treatments from South Tacoma Way to S Lawrence St. Includes wayfinding signage on South Tacoma Way to the South Tacoma Station.
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Additionally, if funding remains after the above improvements are designed and constructed, the following set of non-motorized improvements would be delivered:

- **S 54th St & S Washington St connections** – provides curb ramp and sidewalk improvements at spot locations on S 54th St. and S Washington St. within a half-mile of the station.
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ADOPTED by a supermajority vote of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on _____.

Dow Constantine
Board Chair

Attest:

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator