



West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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January 28, 2022

Dear Recipient:

The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Sound Transit (the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority) have prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project. Sound Transit is the project proponent.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (42 United States Code 4321 to 4370e) and the State Environmental Policy Act (Chapter 43.21C Revised Code of Washington) to inform the public, agencies, and decision makers about the environmental consequences of building and operating the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions in the city of Seattle. In May 2019, the Sound Transit Board identified the alternatives for study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including preferred alternatives for the majority of the West Seattle Link Extension and Ballard Link Extension segments. The Sound Transit Board identified additional alternatives for study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in October 2019.

The major choices for the project involve the route of the light rail line and station locations. The Sound Transit Board will consider the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, public and agency comments, and other information before confirming or modifying the preferred route and station locations. FTA and Sound Transit will prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement, which will respond to comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and include an evaluation of impacts and mitigation for the preferred alternative and other alternatives considered. After completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Sound Transit Board will select the project to be built. FTA will also issue a Record of Decision, which will state FTA's decision on the project and list Sound Transit's mitigation commitments to reduce or avoid impacts.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement includes appendices and technical reports, which can be found on the flash drive included within the Executive Summary and online at www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/west-seattle-ballard-link-extensions. Please see the Fact Sheet of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding availability of appendices and technical report hard copies, information about public meetings, how to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and whom to contact for further information about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Lauren Swift'.

Lauren Swift, AICP
Corridor Environmental and Business Operations Manager

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West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement

January 2022

Sound Transit
and
Federal Transit Administration

Commitment to Accessibility

Sound Transit and the United States Department of Transportation - Federal Transit Administration are committed to ensuring that information is available in appropriate alternative formats to meet the requirements of persons who have a disability. If you require an alternative version of this file, please contact FTAWebAccessibility@dot.gov.

WEST SEATTLE AND BALLARD LINK EXTENSIONS

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Submitted pursuant to
the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 United States Code 4322(2)(c))
and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Ch. 43.21C Revised Code of Washington)
by the

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION**

and

CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

(Sound Transit)

in cooperation with

UNITED STATES ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

PORT OF SEATTLE

CITY OF SEATTLE

December 21, 2021

Date of Approval

**LINDA M
GEHRKE**

Digitally signed by
LINDA M GEHRKE
Date: 2021.12.21
11:55:02 -08'00'

Linda M. Gehrke, Regional Administrator
NEPA Responsible Official
For Federal Transit Administration, Region 10

December 21, 2021

Date of Approval

Perry Weinberg

Digitally signed by Perry Weinberg
DN: cn=Perry Weinberg, o=Sound Transit, ou,
email=perry.weinberg@soundtransit.org, c=US
Date: 2021.12.21 14:30:39 -08'00'

Perry Weinberg
Deputy Director, Office of Environmental Affairs
and Sustainability
SEPA Responsible Official
For Sound Transit

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Fact Sheet

Proposed Action

The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) is proposing to expand the regional light rail system south and west from Downtown Seattle to West Seattle and north from Downtown Seattle to Ballard. The proposed light rail extensions, called the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE), would be within the city of Seattle in King County, Washington. The proposed project is part of the Sound Transit 3 Plan, funding for which was approved by voters in 2016 (Sound Transit 2016).

The WSBLE Project is an 11.8-mile corridor through the city of Seattle, the most densely populated city of the Puget Sound region. The West Seattle Link Extension would be about 4.7 miles and includes stations at SODO, Delridge, Avalon, and Alaska Junction. The Ballard Link Extension would be about 7.1 miles from Downtown Seattle to Ballard's Northwest Market Street area and includes a new 3.3-mile rail-only tunnel from Chinatown-International District to South Lake Union and Seattle Center/Uptown. Stations would serve the following areas: Chinatown-International District, Midtown, Westlake, Denny, South Lake Union, Seattle Center, Smith Cove, Interbay, and Ballard.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluates multiple Build Alternatives in the project corridor, including different alignments and station options. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement also includes a No Build Alternative. This allows an analysis of the potential impacts of not building the WSBLE Project and provides a basis for comparing the Build Alternatives to a future baseline condition.

In May 2019, the Sound Transit Board of Directors (Board) identified one or more preferred alternatives for most of the project segments. A preferred alternative is not a decision on the project to build; instead, it is a statement of preference based on currently available information. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluates all alternatives, including a No Build Alternative. The Board is not bound by its identification of a preferred alternative. After completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and review of public and agency comments received, the Board will confirm or modify the preferred alternative. However, the Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. At that time, the Board may select from among any of the alternatives evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement.

Project Proponent

Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit)
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826
www.soundtransit.org

Dates of Construction and Opening

The West Seattle Link Extension is expected to open in 2032 and the Ballard Link Extension is expected to open in 2037 or 2039, depending on funding availability. Due to steeply rising real estate prices and other construction expenses, Sound Transit projects currently in early

planning and design, including the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project, are seeing significant cost estimate increases. To ensure that funding remains available to complete all voter-approved projects, the Board conducted a “realignment” process that established a program schedule that is affordable, utilizing current financial projections and cost estimates to set the general order in which projects will advance. This “affordable” schedule established an approach to prioritize, fund, and manage program work over time (Resolution 2021-05). In addition, the Board adopted a “target” schedule for priority projects, reliant upon reductions in the affordability gap. To reduce the affordability gap, Sound Transit will pursue expanded financial capacity (Motion M2020-37); develop and implement a cost savings plan; identify cost savings for the Sound Transit budget outside of the capital program; identify opportunities to reduce cost and planning delays; and engage project stakeholders in discussions to address the trade-offs between project scope, schedule, and new financial resources to inform Board decision-making on project schedule.

Sound Transit proposes to begin building the proposed project in 2026. Based on realignment, the West Seattle Link Extension would begin operations in 2032 under both the affordable and the target schedule. The Ballard Link Extension is anticipated to begin operations in 2037 under the target schedule. Under the affordable schedule, the Ballard Link Extension from SODO to Smith Cove Station is anticipated to begin operation in 2037, and from Smith Cove Station to Ballard Station in 2039. The affordable schedule would implement the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Minimum Operable Segment (M.O.S.), as described in Section 2.4.2.1, West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Minimum Operable Segment.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Lead Agency

Federal Transit Administration
915 2nd Avenue, Suite 3192
Seattle, Washington 98174-1002
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/regional-offices/region-10/region-10>

NEPA Responsible Official

Linda Gehrke, Regional Administrator for Region 10
Federal Transit Administration
915 2nd Avenue, Suite 3192
Seattle, Washington 98174-1002

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Responsible Official

Perry Weinberg, Deputy Director, Office of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability
Sound Transit
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826

Contacts for Additional Information

Sound Transit

Lauren Swift, Central Corridor Environmental Manager (206) 398-5301
Alexis Lair, Community Engagement Specialist (206) 689-4825
Sound Transit
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826

Federal Transit Administration

Mark Assam, Environmental Protection Specialist (206) 220-4465
Federal Transit Administration, Region 10
915 2nd Avenue, Suite 3192
Seattle, WA 98174-1002

Anticipated Permits and Approvals

Federal

Federal Transit Administration:

- NEPA Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision
- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review
- United States Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund 6(f) (if needed)

Federal Emergency Management Agency:

- Conditional Letter of Map Revision (if needed)
- Letter of Map Revision (if needed)

United States Army Corps of Engineers:

- Clean Water Act, Section 404 (if needed)
- Rivers and Harbors Act, Section 10 (if needed)
- United States Code Title 33 Section 408 Review (if needed)

United States Coast Guard:

- United States Coast Guard Bridge Permit (if needed)

United States Fish and Wildlife Service:

- Federal Endangered Species Review

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service:

- Federal Endangered Species Review
- Essential Fish Habitat Review
- Marine Mammal Take Incidental Harassment Authorization (if needed)

United States Department of the Interior:

- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review
- United States Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f)

- Land and Water Conservation Fund 6(f)

State, County, and Regional

Sound Transit:

- SEPA Project Approval

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:

- Hydraulic Project Approval (if needed)

Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation:

- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review

Washington State Department of Ecology:

- Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification
- Dam Safety Permit
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Discharge Permit, Clean Water Act Section 402
- Underground Storage Tank 30-day Notice
- Wastewater Discharge Permit
- Water Quality Certification: Clean Water Act Section 401

Washington State Department of Ecology and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency:

- Notice of Construction (Air Quality)

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

- Aquatic Lands Lease

Washington State Department of Transportation:

- Air Space Lease
- Utility Franchise

Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund 6(f)

City of Seattle

- Master Use Permit, which includes building permits
- Environmentally Critical Area Review, including wetlands, streams, steep slopes, critical habitat, and buffers
- Shoreline Substantial Development Permit
- Noise variances for construction
- Permanent, interim, or temporary street use permits
- Access or use easements for city-owned properties
- Reviews and approvals: Planning, Design, and local Landmark Districts
- Street or alley vacations

Utility Providers:

- Pipeline and utility crossing permits
- Easements and use agreements

Principal Contributors

This Environmental Impact Statement was prepared by consultants at the following firms: Jacobs Engineering Group, HNTB, Fehr and Peers, Heffron Transportation, Cross-Spectrum Acoustics, Michael Minor and Associates, Turner Engineering Company, ECONorthwest, Irwin Writing/Editing, and EnviroIssues. See Appendix A for a detailed list of preparers.

Date of Issue of Draft Environmental Impact Statement

January 28, 2022

Commenting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available for a comment period of 90 days. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement can be made in writing, by email, or at the public hearings. All comments are due by close of business on April 28, 2022. Send written comments to the following address:

WSBLE Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comments c/o Lauren Swift
 Sound Transit
 401 South Jackson Street
 Seattle, Washington 98104

Email comments should be sent to: WSBLEDEIScomments@soundtransit.org. Comments may also be submitted online through <https://wsblink.participate.online/> or left as a voicemail at the following number: 1-800-471-0879. Written or emailed comments should include the commentor’s name and return address or email address. All comments may be submitted in languages other than English and will be translated. Comments may also be offered at a public hearing or open house:

Date	Location	Type of meeting
March 15, 2022; 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Virtual, focus on Interbay/Ballard	Presentation and public hearing, court reporter available
March 17, 2022; 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. ^a	Union Station, 401 South Jackson Street; corridor-wide focus	In-person open house, no hearing, court reporter available
March 22, 2022; 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Virtual, focus on Downtown	Presentation and public hearing, court reporter available
March 24, 2022; 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Virtual, focus on Chinatown-International District and SODO	Presentation and public hearing, court reporter available
March 30, 2022; 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Virtual, focus on West Seattle	Presentation and public hearing, court reporter available

^a In-person open house is planned subject to state and local guidelines regarding social distancing due to COVID-19. Please check the Sound Transit website at <https://wsblink.participate.online/> or call 206-903-7229 to confirm in-person meeting. If the in-person event cannot be held due to COVID-19 concerns, a virtual event will be held in its place. Hours may differ if this becomes a virtual event.

All virtual meetings can be accessed via the following website: <https://wsblink.participate.online/>.

Next Actions

Following publication of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the close of the public comment period, the Board is expected to consider the comments received and then identify a Preferred Alternative for each of the project segments. In some segments, the Board may confirm or modify the Preferred Alternative identified in this Draft Environmental Impact Statement. In other segments the Board will identify a Preferred Alternative for the first time. The Final Environmental Impact Statement will analyze the Preferred Alternative in all segments along with the other proposed light rail alternatives and the No Build Alternative. The Final Environmental Impact Statement will also respond to the public and agency comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Following issuance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Board will make a final decision on the alignment and station locations to be built for each extension.

The Federal Transit Administration will then issue a Record of Decision describing the project Sound Transit will build and how it will avoid, minimize, and mitigate environmental impacts.

Related Documents

- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Long-Range Plan Update (Sound Transit 2014)
- Sound Transit 3 Plan (Sound Transit 2016)
- WSBLE Early Scoping Information Report (Sound Transit 2018a)
- WSBLE Early Scoping Summary Report (Sound Transit 2018b)
- WSBLE Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 Alternatives Development reports (Sound Transit 2018c, 2018d, 2019a)
- WSBLE Scoping Information Report (Sound Transit 2019b)
- WSBLE Scoping Summary Report (Sound Transit 2019c)
- WSBLE Initial Assessment Results (Sound Transit 2019d)

All the above Sound Transit documents are available on the Sound Transit website, www.soundtransit.org.

Cost of Document and Availability for Review and/or Purchase

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is available for public review in a variety of formats and locations. It is available on the Sound Transit website (<https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/west-seattle-ballard-link-extensions>) and <https://wsblink.participate.online/>. It is also available on flash drive at no cost. Paper copies are available for the cost listed below, which does not exceed the cost of reproduction:

- Executive Summary - free
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement - \$25.00

- Technical Reports - \$15.00 each
- Conceptual Design Drawings - \$15.00

Paper copies of these documents are available for review or purchase at the Sound Transit offices, Union Station, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington, 98104. To request any of the documents, please contact Dominique Jones at (206) 689-4783 or Dominique.jones@soundtransit.org. To review them, please call the Sound Transit librarian at (206) 398-5344 weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to arrange an appointment.

Paper and flash drive copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement documents are also available for review at the following public places:

- Alliance for Pioneer Square, 105 South Main Street, Suite 201, Seattle, WA 98104
- Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association, Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, 4408 Delridge Way Southwest, Seattle, WA 98106
- King County Library System:
 - Burien Library, 400 Southwest 152nd Street, Burien, WA 98166
 - White Center Library, 1409 Southwest 107th Street, Seattle, WA 98146
- Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority, Hing Hay Coworks, 409B Maynard Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98104
- Seattle Public Libraries:
 - Ballard Branch, 5614 22nd Avenue Northwest, Seattle, WA 98107
 - Beacon Hill Branch, 2821 Beacon Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144
 - Central Library, 1000 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104
 - Columbia City Branch, 4721 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118
 - Delridge Branch, 5423 Delridge Way Southwest, Seattle, WA 98106
 - Greenwood Branch, 8016 Greenwood Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98103
 - High Point Branch, 3411 Southwest Raymond Street, Seattle, WA 98126
 - International District Branch, 713 8th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98104
 - Magnolia Branch, 2801 34th Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98199
 - New Holly Branch, 7058 32nd Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118
 - Queen Anne Branch, 400 West Garfield Street, Seattle, WA 98119
 - Rainier Beach Branch, 9125 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118
 - Southwest Branch, 9010 35th Avenue Southwest, Seattle, WA 98126
 - West Seattle Branch, 2306 42nd Avenue Southwest, Seattle, WA 98116
- University of Washington-Suzzallo Libraries, 4000 15th Avenue Northeast, Seattle, WA 98195

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Appendices †

Appendix A – List of Preparers

Appendix B – Distribution List

Appendix C – Acronyms and Abbreviations

Appendix D – Glossary

Appendix E – References

Appendix F – Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

Appendix G – Environmental Justice

Appendix H – Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation

Appendix I – Reserved for Mitigation Plan

Appendix J – Conceptual Design Drawings

Appendix K – Present and Future Development, Transportation, and Public Works Projects in
the Study Area

Appendix L – Chapter 4 Supporting Information on Affected Environment and Environmental
Impacts

L4.1 Acquisitions, Displacements, and Relocations

L4.2 Land Use

L4.3 Economics

L4.4 Social Resources

L4.6 Air Quality

L4.8 Water Resources

L4.11 Geology and Soils

L4.12 Hazardous Materials

L4.13 Electromagnetic Fields

L4.14 Public Services, Safety, and Security

L4.15 Utilities

L4.17 Parks and Recreational Resources

Appendix M – Summary of Alternatives Development and Initial Assessment Process

Appendix N – Technical Reports

N.1 Transportation Technical Report

N.2 Visual and Aesthetics Technical Report

N.3 Noise and Vibration Technical Report

N.4 Ecosystems Technical Report

N.5 Historic and Archaeological Resources Technical Report

† Provided on flash drive with the Executive Summary and available on the project website at <https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/west-seattle-ballard-link-extensions>. Printed versions are available on request.