

Meeting Overview

Subject: Everett Link Extension - Elected Leadership Group Meeting 5
Date: September 28, 2022
Time: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Location: Zoom
Attendees: See list on page 5

Meeting Purpose: Review technical findings and provide direction on evaluating new alignments

Agenda

Time	Topic
3:00 p.m.	Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening Remarks• Brooke Belman, Sound Transit Chief of Staff
3:10 p.m.	Meeting purpose and background <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share Sound Transit Phase 1: Alternatives Development process findings• Confirm Elected Leadership Group’s direction
3:20 p.m.	Initial findings for new alignments
3:40 p.m.	ELG discussion and direction
4:25 p.m.	Next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedule look ahead

Handouts

- [Everett Link Extension Elected Leadership Group Meeting 5 PowerPoint presentation](#)
(distributed in advance)

Summary

Welcome and introductions

The fifth Elected Leadership Group (ELG) meeting began with opening remarks from Sound Transit (ST) Chief of Staff Brooke Belman. She shared with ELG members that Sound Transit (ST) is taking steps to better communicate with ELG members ahead of the meetings. ELG Co-Chairs Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, and City of Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin, thanked everyone for attending and told the group they would hold any additional commentary until the presentation began. With former ELG member Stephanie Wright stepping down from her position at the Snohomish County Council, her alternate Councilmember Megan Dunn was introduced to the group along with other ELG members.

Meeting purpose and background

Eric Widstrand, North Corridor Development Director, shared the progress on the Phase 1 Alternatives Development process and recapped the schedule. The purpose of the meeting is to share ST's findings of initial Level 2 alternatives evaluation and for the ELG to provide direction on whether the I-5 and/or SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments move forward for further study in Level 2.

Eric described the I-5 and SR99/Evergreen Way alignments for the Everett Link Extension (EVLE) corridor that Sound Transit evaluated in response to comments received from the public during early scoping and to explore cost savings options. Consistent with prior evaluation approaches, the project team compared these new alignment and station options with the ST3 Representative Project using key criteria (current population, minority and low-income populations, forecast 2040 population and jobs, potential right-of-way and capital costs, station access considerations, opportunity for OMF North sites).

Initial findings for new alignments

Eric reviewed the performance of I-5 and SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments compared to the ST3 representative project. The I-5 alignment performed much worse than the representative alignment for total population, historically underserved communities, forecasted population and jobs served. The I-5 alignment also has greater station access challenges, very limited OMF site opportunities and does not serve regional employment centers. At the same time, the I-5 alignment has much lower comparative potential cost due to its shorter distance, fewer stations, and potential for utilizing WSDOT right of way.

The SR 99/Evergreen Way alignment performed worse than the ST3 representative alignment for total population, historically underserved communities, forecast population and jobs served. It has comparable station access considerations; limited OMF site opportunities; and does not serve regional employment centers. Like the I-5 alignment, the SR99 alignment has lower comparative potential cost, due to its shorter distance and fewer stations.

Eric then reviewed the alternatives the ELG had previously identified to move into Level 2 analysis.

Elected Leadership Group discussion

Angie Thomson, facilitator, summarized that neither alignment performed as well as the ST3 representative alignment in this initial evaluation and that ST is now asking for the ELG's direction whether to advance the I-5 and/or SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments for further study in Level 2.

Executive Somers expressed his interest to move forward with what voters had approved in ST3 and remove the I-5 and SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments from further study. He stated that he would like to discuss how to enhance the representative alignment rather than look at new alignments. Executive Somers discussed letters the project received advocating for an I-5 alignment, including those

expressing concerns about gentrification in the Casino Road area. He also noted that many letters about the new alignments were sent from people outside of Snohomish County.

Christine Frizzell, Mayor of Lynnwood, agreed with Executive Somers and noted that ST needs to focus on the original alignment, which voters approved, that includes a station at Southwest Everett Industrial Center and serves historically underserved neighborhoods. She also made the point that the representative alignment is better suited for a range of possible OMF locations.

Mayor Franklin noted that some people advocating for other alignments live outside of Snohomish County and/or Everett. Mayor Franklin clarified that South Everett has the most diverse and transit-oriented communities as well as the largest regional job center. She emphasized that Everett Link should not serve as a fast track to King County and Seattle, but instead provide service for people to travel within Everett and Snohomish County. She added that the representative project provides opportunities to work with and invest in the community, and they will continue to work on issues like affordable housing and gentrification.

Megan Dunn, Snohomish County Councilmember, stated that she is hearing from south Everett communities concern about light rail in their neighborhoods, including Casino Road. Councilmember Dunn shared that these communities would prefer improved Bus Rapid Transit and investment in strategies to prevent displacement of residents. Councilmember Dunn stated that residents in South Everett need more information, data, and study to understand which alternatives have the greatest effect on climate change, cost, and ridership implications. Councilmember Dunn advocated for continuing to study the I-5 and SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments.

Ben Zarlingo, City of Everett Councilmember shared his experience living on Casino Road and stated that investing in reliable light rail is important for lower-income residents in the Casino Road area. Councilmember Zarlingo noted that Sound Transit should not deviate from the representative alignment approved by voters. Such a deviation might require another public vote or legislative action but would not improve the service of Everett Link Extension.

Councilmember Dunn expressed concern about the City of Everett and ST's experience in preventing gentrification and noted that Casino Road residents have similar concerns.

Erik Ashlie-Vinke, ST's Government and Community Relations Manager for the North Corridor, stated that ST met with the Connect Casino Road group to discuss the project that very week and during that conversation focused on ways that ST and the Connect Casino Road group can work together to improve the project and support the community.

Chelsea Levy, ST's Acting Deputy Executive Director of Capital Project Development, shared that ST is striving to work earlier with jurisdictions and host communities to explore opportunities for transit-oriented development. Local plans and policies can prioritize community needs so that—as the project develops—strategies can be put in place to address gentrification.

Mayor Franklin commented that the project team should focus resources on enhancing and refining the Everett Link Extension project. Continuing to study the I-5 and SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments would not guarantee a faster commute to North Everett and would not prevent gentrification. Mayor Franklin stated that the new alignments would offer less investment in Everett and the most underserved communities. Additionally, she stated these new alignments would all but guarantee that people will use Everett Link solely to commute from Snohomish County to King County, rather than people throughout the Puget Sound utilizing Everett Link in a variety of ways as intended

Shannon Sessions, City of Lynwood Councilmember shared support for moving forward with the representative project route, noting that it is disingenuous to study more alternatives if the project team knows they do not perform as well.

Nancy Backus, City of Auburn Mayor, reminded the group that Boeing wrote a letter expressing their desire for the representative project. Mayor Backus stated that Boeing has already moved some of their business out of the state and the project team needs to provide every opportunity for Boeing to stay in the region.

Executive Somers noted that the SW Everett Industrial Center continues to be a vital and active industrial center. Executive Somers shared their commitment to working with the City of Everett on equity issues and that it is possible to both address gentrification and support the SW Everett Industrial Center.

Councilmember Zarlingo reported that the station location on Casino Road is near a training facility that provides opportunities for students. Serving this area would provide access to jobs and housing for communities that have been historically underserved. This opportunity would be lost if Everett Link Extension follows one of the alternative alignments.

Julie Meredith, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Assistant Secretary stated that WSDOT is interested in the alignment that provides the best value and serves neighborhoods, with a focus on connecting communities.

Councilmember Dunn reminded members that the Community Advisory Group (CAG) recommended continuing to study the I-5 alternative alignment and if the ELG removed it from the table, then members would be rejecting the CAG's recommendation.

Eric Widstrand clarified that the ELG has the responsibility to make final recommendations to the ST Board regarding which alternatives to continue studying in the next phase of work.

Mayor Franklin stated that the project team has a lot of time to make the best station for every host neighborhood and that much of this conversation is coming from a place of fear of change and misinformation. Mayor Franklin reminded the group that the representative alignment would serve a large population center in Everett that is very important and growing. Design of the project will continue for several years, during which ST can work with host neighborhoods to create the best

station for the community. Mayor Franklin supports no longer studying the I-5 and SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments.

Brooke Belman stated that ST's goal is to help communities thrive through Transit Oriented Development and by infusing equity into decision-making. This work is ongoing, and ST is poised to continue that work as part of the Everett Link Extension.

Councilmember Dunn suggested that voters were asked if they wanted light rail to Everett and were not given a choice of alignment options. In fact, ST is already behind schedule for what they offered to voters. Councilmember Dunn also noted that the ST Board is appointed rather than directly elected, and the community is pushing back on the representative alignment because they do not have direct representation on the ST Board. Eric clarified that ST gathered public feedback before identifying the representative project that was included in the ST3 package that voters ultimately approved. Executive Somers clarified that all ST Board members are elected officials.

Councilmember Zarlingo shared community concerns about gentrification and noted that members have a responsibility to increase housing supply. Councilmember Zarlingo suggested that the decision on alignments to study will not affect housing supply and that affordable housing will continue to be limited.

Angie Thomson reviewed the ELG's discussion and confirmed with the ELG that they were able to come to a general consensus to no longer study the I-5 and SR 99/Evergreen Way alignments while continuing to discuss and address gentrification, community impacts, Transit Oriented Development, and other underlying issues.

Next steps

Eric Widstrand shared the upcoming schedule for the project. During winter 2022:

- ST will continue evaluation of Level 2 alternatives
- CAG and ELG will review Level 2 analysis findings
- ST will continue to brief members
- The scoping period for agency, tribal, and public input will take place

In early 2023, the CAG and ELG will share their Level 2 recommendations and the ST Board will decide on a preferred alternative and other alternatives to study in environmental review.

Angie Thomson asked members if they had concerns about scheduling the scoping period over the end of year holiday activity. Executive Somers recommended that the group stays on schedule. After inquiry from Mayor Backus, Erik Ashlie-Vinke shared that ST would connect with the FTA regarding the comment period.

Executive Dave Somers and Mayor Cassie Franklin thanked members for collaboration and conversation and ST staff for their work on the project.

The sixth ELG meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, December 7.

Meeting Attendees

Elected Leadership Group

- Dave Somers – Snohomish County Executive
- Cassie Franklin – Everett Mayor
- Christine Frizzell – Lynnwood Mayor
- Nancy Backus – Auburn Mayor, Sound Transit Non-Subarea Board member representative
- Megan Dunn – Snohomish County Councilmember, District 3
- Ben Zarlingo – City of Everett Councilmember, District 5
- Shannon Sessions – City of Lynnwood Councilmember, Position 7
- Julie Meredith – WSDOT Assistant Secretary

Sound Transit

- Brooke Belman, Chief of Staff
- Chelsea Levy, Acting Deputy Executive Director of Capital Project Development
- Eric Widstrand, North Corridor Development Director
- Erik Ashlie-Vinke, Government and Community Relations Manager
- Angie Thomson, Thomson Strategic Consulting, Facilitator
- Brittany Quale, EnviroIssues, Notetaker