

Everett Link Extension

Property acquisition and relocation process: One homeowner's journey

Major public transportation projects sometimes require the purchase or use of private property. At Sound Transit, we work hard to keep our project footprints as small as possible.

But when impacts to private property are unavoidable, our dedicated and experienced support agents work closely with owners, as well as tenants, to address their unique needs, minimize hardships, and answer all their questions along the way. Sound Transit follows all state and federal regulations throughout the property acquisition and relocation process.

The timeline and details look different for every property based on individual circumstances, but the general process is similar.

To shed light on the experience, we're following one homeowner's journey through Sound Transit's property acquisition process along the Everett Link Extension project corridor.

Meet Sofia, a homeowner in the project area.

Sofia lives with her cat in a house near the Ash Way station area.

In 2016, Puget Sound voters approved the Everett Link Extension project to expand light rail to Everett as part of the ST3 initiative. Sofia heard about Everett Link in her local newspaper shortly after the 2016 election. Knowing Everett Link would run very close to her house, Sofia visited the project website to learn more and subscribe for email updates. She also chatted with Sound Transit staff at a few summer festivals and stayed up to speed on project news.

1. Planning and Design begins



Sound Transit began planning for Everett Link in 2021. By mid-2023, they narrowed down the options, or alternatives, for the light rail stations, routes, and Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) North locations. To better understand the area around the planned route, Sound Transit needed to gather information about the properties along the corridor.

Starting in 2024, they began sending "Right of Entry" requests to many property owners, including Sofia. She gave Sound Transit permission to come by and learn more about her property. They took some measurements, including the distance from her house to the current road, as well as some soil samples to help inform their early designs.



2. Environmental review conducted



The environmental review phase includes preparing both a Draft and a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Before the Draft EIS is published, Sound Transit sends a letter to Sofia inviting her to an informational webinar to learn more about what it means to have her property listed in the Draft EIS. Sofia signs up online for one of these sessions.



The project team explains that her property is one of the many properties being studied in the EIS, but it does not mean that Sound Transit has determined her property or a portion of it will be needed for the project. Sofia is able to ask the team general questions.



After reviewing the data and feedback, Sound Transit determines the preferred alternative, which includes the Ash Way station option closest to Sofia's house.

Sound Transit continues to be in contact with Sofia about field work happening near her property to inform the design work.

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3. Project to be built identified



After the Final EIS is published, the Federal Record of Decision is published and the Sound Transit Board makes their official decision about which route, stations, and OMF North location to build.

With finalized route and station designs, Sound Transit better understands which nearby properties will be affected.

The team identifies Sofia's home as one of the properties the project will impact. As



they finalize the project design, the team confirms what the impacts to her property will be, including the amount of property the project needs to acquire.

4. Acquisition process begins



Sofia attends, and the Board grants the project team the authority to acquire her property. Soon after, Sofia meets with Toshiko, a Sound Transit acquisition agent assigned to support her through the process.

The first step in the formal property acquisition process is the Sound Transit Board approving the acquisition of properties for the project.

After the project team finalizes the project footprint, they submit the request to acquire Sofia's property to the Sound Transit Board and send Sofia a notice and invitation to the Board meeting.

Toshiko walks Sofia through the next steps:

First, Sound Transit would hire an **independent appraiser** to produce a fair market analysis of Sofia's property value.

Sound Transit would then hire a **second independent firm** to **review the first appraisal** and determine just compensation.



Next, Toshiko would make **Sofia an in-person offer**. Sofia would then have time to consider, seek her own appraisal and any legal or financial advice, and respond to Sound Transit's offer. Sound Transit is often able to reimburse property owners for some or all these expenses.

5. Relocation process begins

Because the **project footprint impacted Sofia's house and relocation was necessary**, Toshiko also introduced Sofia to Theo, the Sound Transit relocation agent assigned to help her with the relocation process.



Theo and Toshiko explained:

"We know this experience can be difficult and daunting, but we're here to address your needs. Our team works to minimize hardships, ensure property owners and tenants are treated fairly, and keep you informed every step of the way."

They also explain to Sofia that she would get certain relocation costs covered based on her situation.

These costs include moving expenses, temporary storage, and increased mortgage differential payment.

They also provide referral to comparable properties for Sofia to consider for purchase. During this time, They help Sofia find a new home, and she moves in shortly after negotiations conclude.



6. Project completion

Soon after Sofia moves, Sound Transit begins construction on the light rail extension near her old house.



Sound Transit launches its expanded light rail service to Everett in 2037/2041*, bringing reliable transit to communities in Snohomish County.

Remember: no two properties are the same.

Sofia's story illustrates steps many property owners may experience as they move through the process, but the process is different for everyone.

Experienced agents work hard to address property owners' and tenants' unique needs and minimize hardships for residents as well as businesses.

* Service to Southwest Everett Industrial Center is planned to open for service in 2037, and service to Everett Station in 2041.