



Everett Link Extension

Scoping Information Report

January 2023

Acronyms

EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EVLE	Everett Link Extension
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
OMF	Operations and Maintenance Facility
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
SEPA	Washington State Environmental Policy Act
ST2	Sound Transit 2
ST3	Sound Transit 3

1 INTRODUCTION

This Scoping Information Report provides context for the Everett Link Extension (EVLE) Project scoping process. Scoping is being conducted by Sound Transit in anticipation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the EVLE Project. For purposes of scoping and the EIS, the project consists of the Link light rail extension route and stations, as well as the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) North.

The EVLE Project is part of the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Plan that voters approved funding for in 2016. Over the past two years, Sound Transit has worked with partner agencies¹ in the region to refine the potential project route and station locations and OMF North sites. This refinement work has resulted in alternatives for public consideration and feedback during scoping. The input received during the scoping period will help the Sound Transit Board (Board) identify alternatives to study in an EIS. The Board may also identify a preferred alternative for the route and stations and the OMF North to be studied along with other alternatives.

This report describes:

- The scoping process
- The draft purpose and need for the project
- Alternatives to be evaluated
- The topics proposed for study in the EIS
- The history of regional light rail and the process that led to the alternatives being presented during scoping
- The project timeline and next steps

Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Plan

The ST3 Plan is Sound Transit's plan for regional transit system expansion. In summer 2015, thousands of people commented on a Draft Priority Project List, which was used to develop the Draft ST3 Plan. The public commented on the Draft ST3 Plan from March 29 through May 2, 2016. Sound Transit received 2,320 written comments and engaged with more than 1,250 attendees at seven open houses. The agency received 34,706 responses to an online survey. Public input was used in the development of the Final ST3 Plan and representative project list. Voters approved funding for the plan in November 2016.

¹ Partner agencies include City of Everett, City of Lynnwood, Snohomish County, Community Transit, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Puget Sound Regional Council, and Washington State Department of Transportation.

2 SCOPING

Sound Transit is conducting scoping under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Sound Transit is the lead agency for the project under SEPA. Sound Transit intends to coordinate with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on potential federal funding for the project and review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This SEPA scoping process and resulting decisions and analyses are part of local planning and may be adopted or incorporated by FTA under 23 USC 168 or other authority in a subsequent NEPA EIS. Decisions made in this local SEPA scoping process may be revisited in the subsequent federal NEPA process. The project EIS will be prepared in compliance with both NEPA and SEPA.

2.1 About Scoping

Sound Transit has determined the need to prepare an EIS under SEPA to examine how the project could negatively or positively affect the community and the environment. Scoping provides an opportunity for the public, Tribes, and agencies to learn about and comment on the EVLE Project and inform which aspects of the environment will be analyzed in the environmental review process.

You are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on the project's draft purpose and need, the alternatives to be studied in the EIS, probable significant adverse impacts, potential mitigation measures, and licenses or other approvals that may be needed.

Following scoping, Sound Transit will review and summarize comments received. After considering the scoping comments, the Board is expected to identify alternatives to study in the EIS. The Board may identify a preferred alternative for the route and stations and the OMF North to be studied along with other alternatives.

2.2 Scoping Period

The scoping period for the project extends from January 23 through March 10, 2023. Comments must be received by Sound Transit by 5:00 p.m. on March 10th in order to be included and considered as part of scoping. To start the scoping period Sound Transit posted a Determination of Significance (DS) in the Washington State Department of Ecology SEPA Register and on Sound Transit's website on January 23, 2023. Sound Transit also provided notice of the scoping period via email notifications, mailings, digital ads, social media, posters and a press release.

2.3 Scoping Meetings

The scoping process will include both online and in-person meetings and an online open house.

The public scoping meetings will be held at the following times and locations:

- **Virtual meeting #1**
Tuesday, February 7, 2023
5:30-7:30 p.m.
Join at everettlink.participate.online

- **In-person meeting**
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
5:30-7:30 p.m.
Cascade High School cafeteria
801 E Casino Road, Everett WA 98203
- **Virtual meeting #2**
Wednesday, March 1, 2023
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Join at everettlink.participate.online

The online open house is available at everettlink.participate.online.

A separate Tribal and agency scoping meeting will be conducted to present project information and receive comments. Individual meetings, either in-person or virtually, will be offered to interested Tribes.

2.4 Ways to Provide Comments

Written scoping comments are requested by March 10, 2023, and can be mailed, emailed, provided via the online comment form, or left as a voicemail:

Mailing Address: Everett Link Extension
Kathy Fendt
Sound Transit
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Email Address: everettlinkcomments@soundtransit.org

Online comment form: everettlink.participate.online

Voicemail Phone Number: 425-492-7218

3 DRAFT PURPOSE AND NEED

To guide decision-making during the Alternatives Development process and to support the project's state and federal environmental reviews, Sound Transit drafted a statement of why the project is being proposed and the needs to be addressed. This is known as the project's purpose and need. The purpose and need statement establishes the basis for developing and evaluating a range of reasonable alternatives for environmental review, and it assists with the identification of a preferred alternative.

The purpose of the EVLE Project is to expand the Link light rail system from the Lynnwood City Center Link Station to the Everett Station area and provide an OMF in order to:

- Provide high quality, rapid, reliable, accessible and efficient light rail transit service to communities in the project corridor as defined through the local planning process and reflected in the ST3 Plan.

- Improve regional mobility by increasing connectivity and capacity in the EVLE corridor from the Lynnwood Transit Center to the Everett Station area to meet projected transit demand.
- Connect regional centers as described in adopted regional and local land use, transportation and economic development plans and Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Implement a system that is technically and financially feasible to build, operate and maintain.
- Expand mobility for the corridor and region's residents, including explicit consideration for transit-dependent, low-income and minority populations.
- Encourage equitable and sustainable growth in station areas through support of transit-oriented development and multimodal integration in a manner that is consistent with local land use plans and policies, including Sound Transit's Equitable Transit Oriented Development Policy and Sustainability Plan.
- Encourage convenient, safe and equitable non-motorized access to stations, such as bicycle and pedestrian connections, consistent with Sound Transit's System Access Policy and Equity and Inclusion Policy.
- Preserve and promote a healthy environment and economy by minimizing adverse impacts on the natural, built and social environments through sustainable and equitable practices.
- Provide an operations and maintenance facility with the capacity to receive, test, commission, store, maintain and deploy vehicles to support the intended level of service for system-wide light rail system expansion.
- Develop an operations and maintenance facility that supports efficient and reliable light rail service and minimizes system operating costs.

The project is needed because:

- Chronic roadway congestion on Interstate 5 and State Route 99 – two primary highways connecting communities along the corridor – delays today's travelers, including those using transit, and degrades the reliability of bus service traversing the corridor, particularly during commute periods.
- These chronic, degraded conditions are expected to continue to worsen as the region's population and employment grow.
- Puget Sound Regional Council (the regional metropolitan planning organization) and local plans call for high-capacity transit in the corridor consistent with PSRC's VISION 2050 and Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Snohomish County residents and communities, including transit-dependent residents and low-income or minority populations, need long-term regional mobility and multimodal connectivity, as called for in the Washington State Growth Management Act.
- Regional and local plans call for increased residential and/or employment density at and around high-capacity stations and increased options for multi-modal access.

- Environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region, as established in Washington state law and embodied in Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2050 and Regional Transportation Plan, include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by prioritizing transportation investments that decrease vehicle miles traveled.
- The current regional system lacks an operations and maintenance facility with sufficient capacity and suitable location to support the efficient and reliable long-term operations for system-wide light rail expansion, including the next phase of light rail expansion in Snohomish and King Counties.
- New light rail maintenance and storage capacity needs to be available with sufficient time to accept delivery of and commission new vehicles to meet fleet expansion needs and to store existing vehicles while the new vehicles are tested and prepared.

4 POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES

As part of the ST3 ballot measure in 2016, a representative project was approved that established the transit mode for the corridor (light rail), an approximate route, the number and general locations of light rail stations, and passenger access improvements, including parking facilities. The project will connect to the regional light rail system that will extend east to Bellevue and Redmond, and south to Seattle, West Seattle, and Tacoma, and it will provide an OMF to serve the broader light rail system. Figure 4-1 shows the project in the context of Sound Transit's current service and other future projects. Figure 4-2 shows the Representative Project for the Everett Link Extension.

Sound Transit started with the Representative Project and, through the Alternatives Development process described in Section 6.3, identified additional alternative route, station, and OMF North locations that could meet the project's purpose and need. This section describes the alternatives that were developed as a result of that process and that are being presented for comment during the scoping period.

The light rail alternatives currently being considered are fully separated from traffic and include six new stations in the West Alderwood, Ash Way, Mariner, SW Everett Industrial Center, SR 526/Evergreen and Everett Station areas, plus one provisional (unfunded) station at SR 99/Airport Road. Under the ST3 Plan, provisional stations are those where planning, preliminary engineering and environmental review are funded, but where design and construction are not. This early planning and engineering work will help ensure minimal delay in building the provisional station and serving future riders if funding becomes available to construct the station.



Figure 4-1 Sound Transit System Map

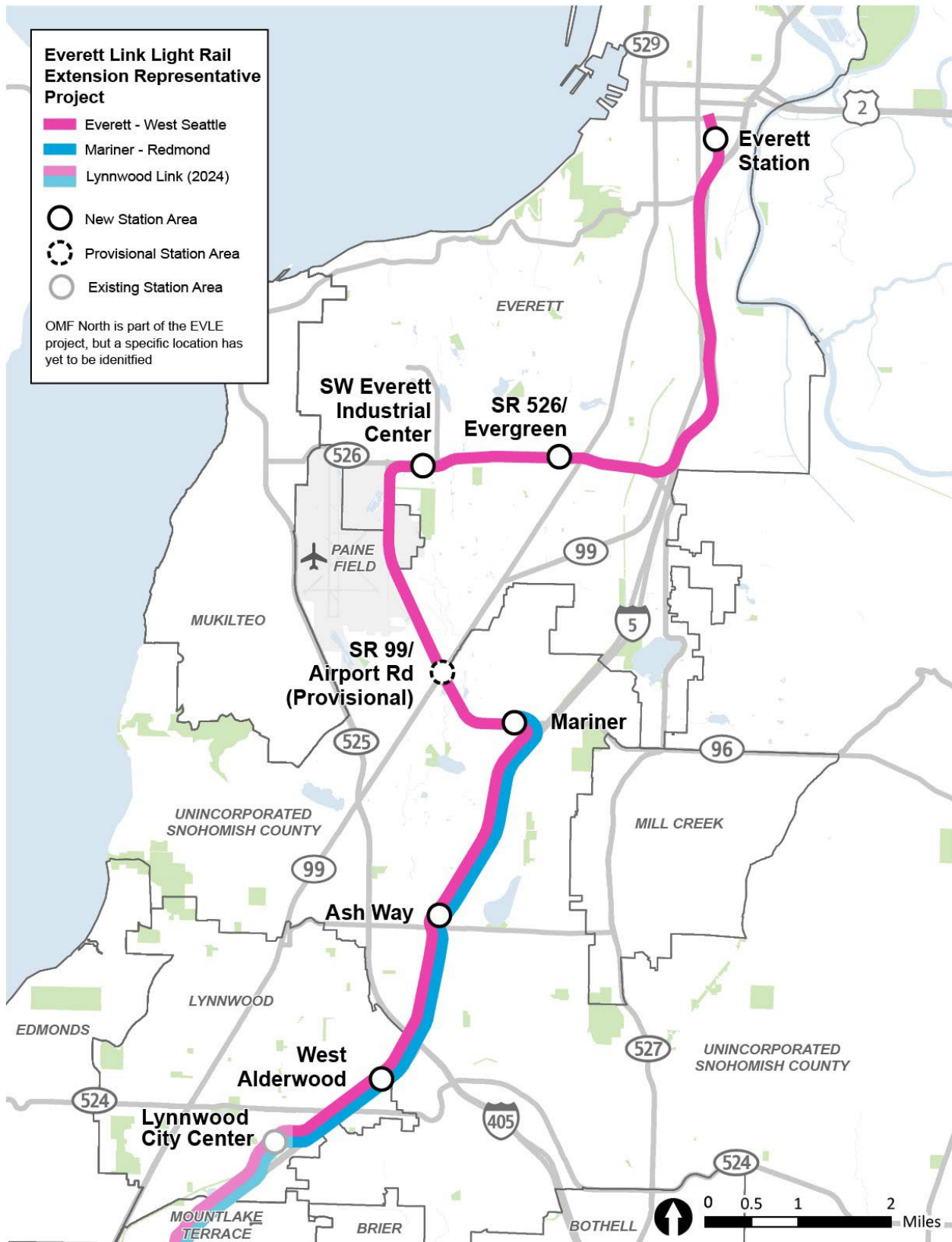


Figure 4-2 ST3 Representative Project for the Everett Link Extension

The station and route alternatives being considered for further study in the EIS are illustrated in Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4. Figure 4-5 through Figure 4-11 show each station area in more detail. The station alternatives are indicated by letters, and the route alternatives are indicated by colors. Because the stations and routes are associated with one another, the combined station/route alternatives are presented as station letter/route color (e.g., A/pink).

- The **West Alderwood** Station area includes three alternatives: B/pink, D/brown and F/brown (see Figure 4-5).
- The **Ash Way** Station area includes two alternatives: A/pink and D/blue (see Figure 4-6).
- The **Mariner** Station area includes three alternatives: A/pink, B/gold and D/purple (see Figure 4-7).
- The provisional **SR 99/Airport Road** Station area includes two alternatives: A/pink and B/gold (see Figure 4-8).
- The **SW Everett Industrial Center** Station area includes three alternatives: A/pink, B/pink and C/pink (see Figure 4-9).
- The **SR 526/Evergreen** Station area includes five alternatives: A/pink, B/purple, C/purple, D/green and E/blue (see Figure 4-10).
- The **Everett** Station area includes three alternatives: A/pink, C/brown and D/teal (see Figure 4-11).

In addition to the light rail station and route alternatives, four OMF North site location alternatives are being considered for further study in the EIS:

- The **SR 99 & Gibson Road** site is in unincorporated Snohomish County.
- The **Airport Road & 100th Street SW** site is in the city of Everett and unincorporated Snohomish County.
- The **SR 526 & 16th Avenue** site is in the city of Everett.
- The **75th Street SW & 16th Avenue** site is in the city of Everett.

These OMF site location alternatives are illustrated in Figure 4-12.

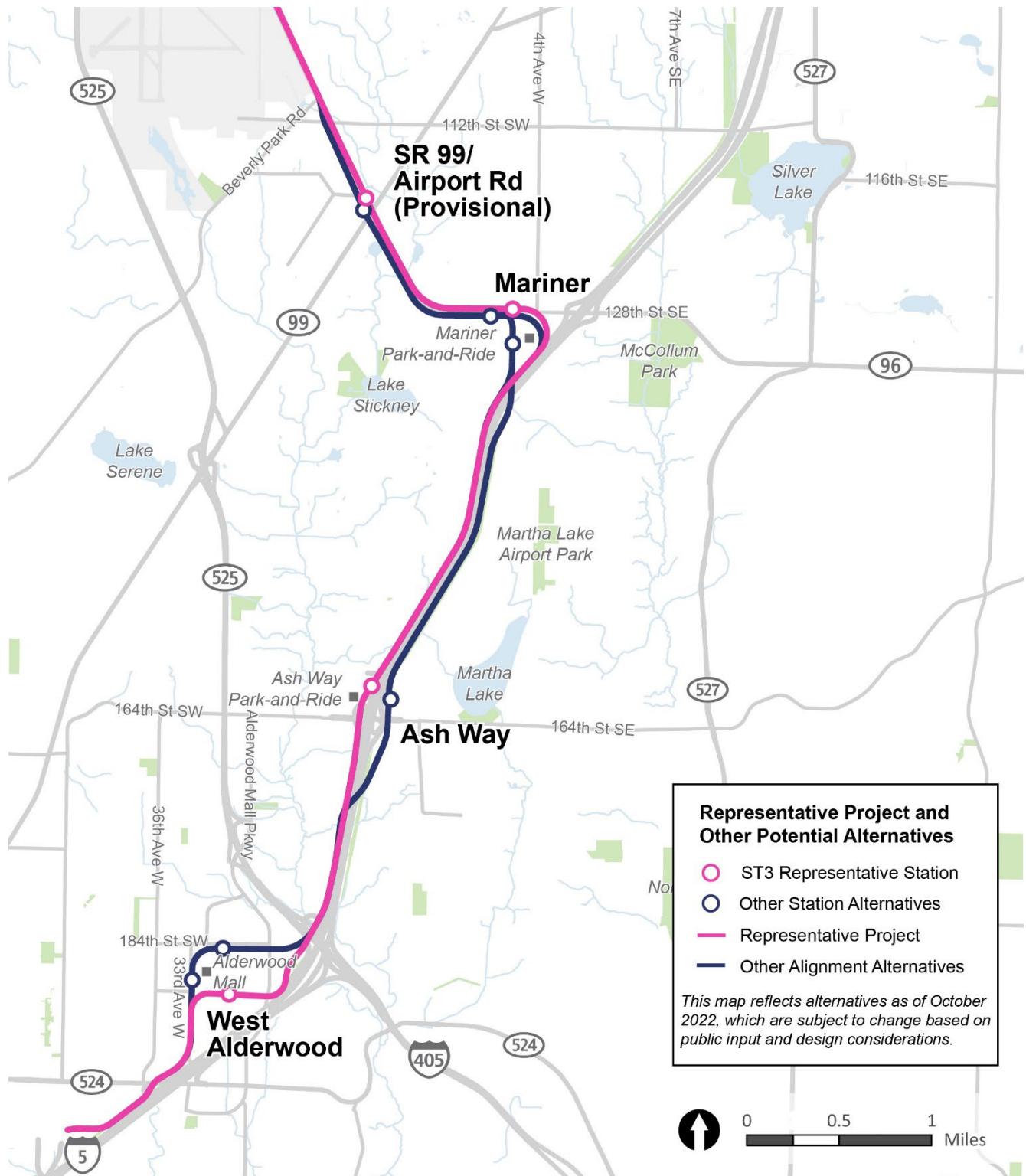


Figure 4-3 Representative Project and Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – South Section

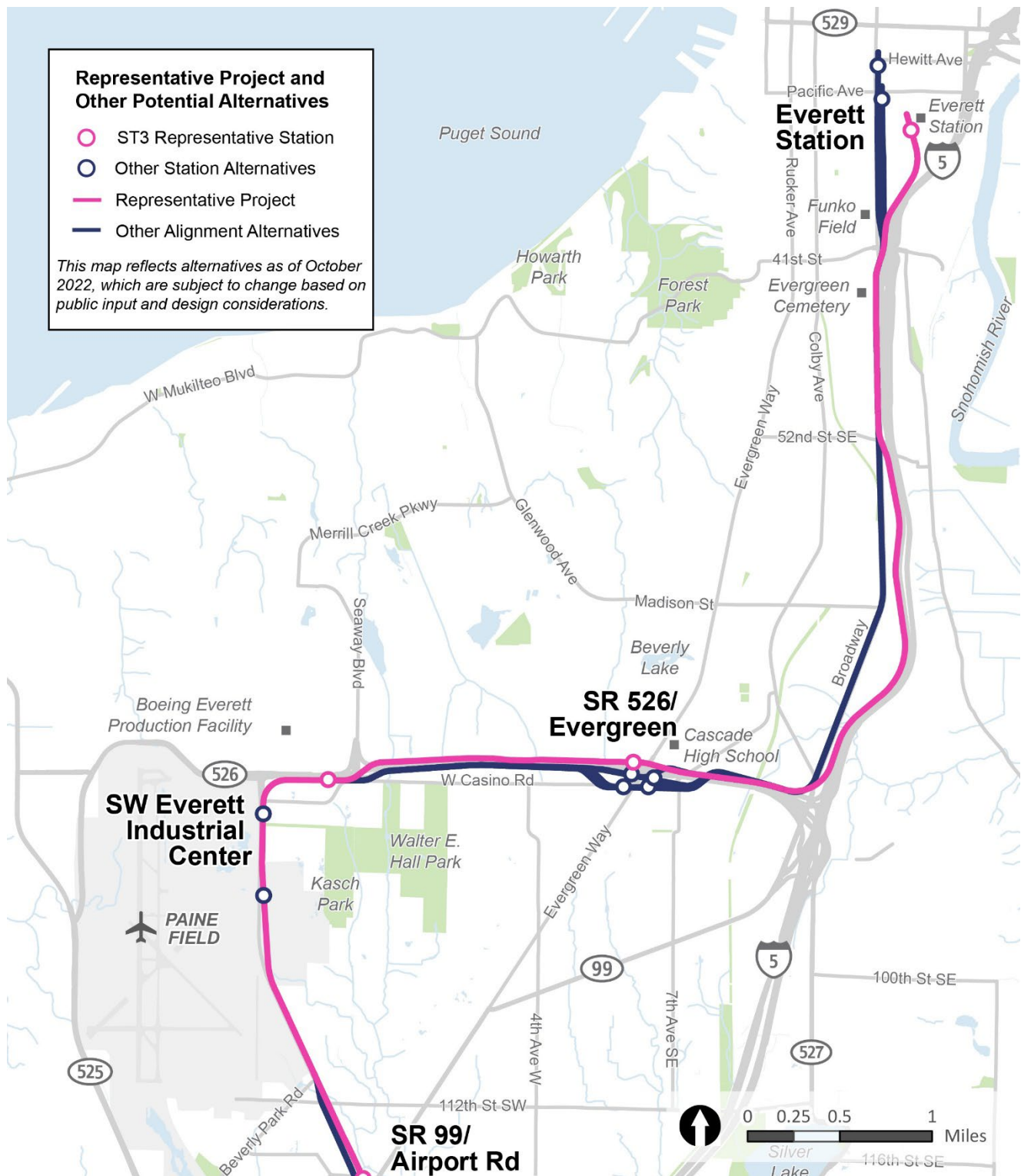


Figure 4-4 Representative Project and Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – North Section



Figure 4-5 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – West Alderwood

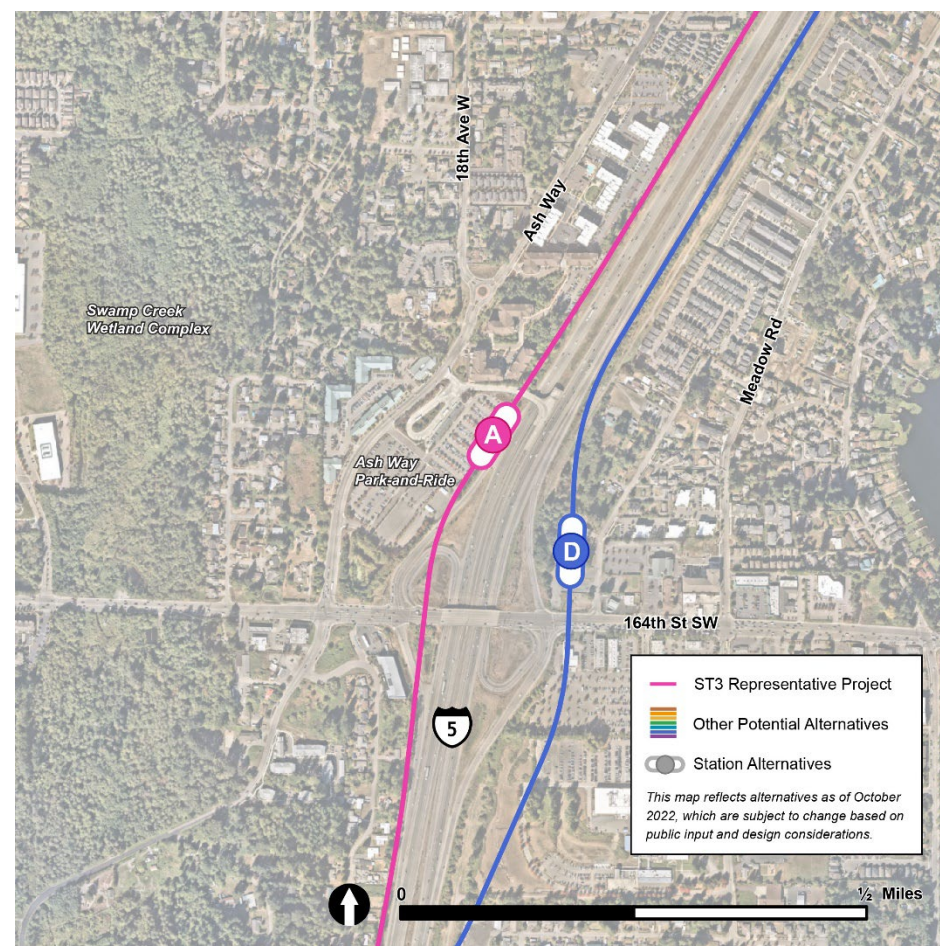


Figure 4-6 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Ash Way



Figure 4-7 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Mariner

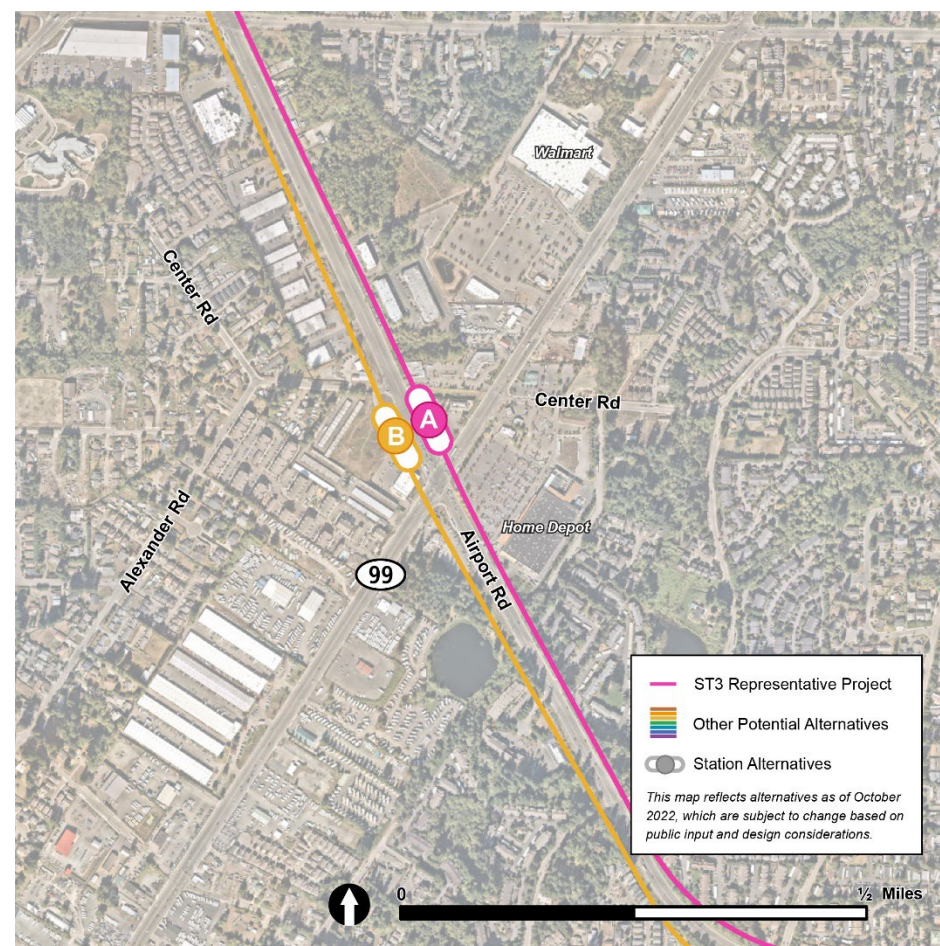


Figure 4-8 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – SR 99/Airport Road (Provisional)



Figure 4-9 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – SW Everett Industrial Center

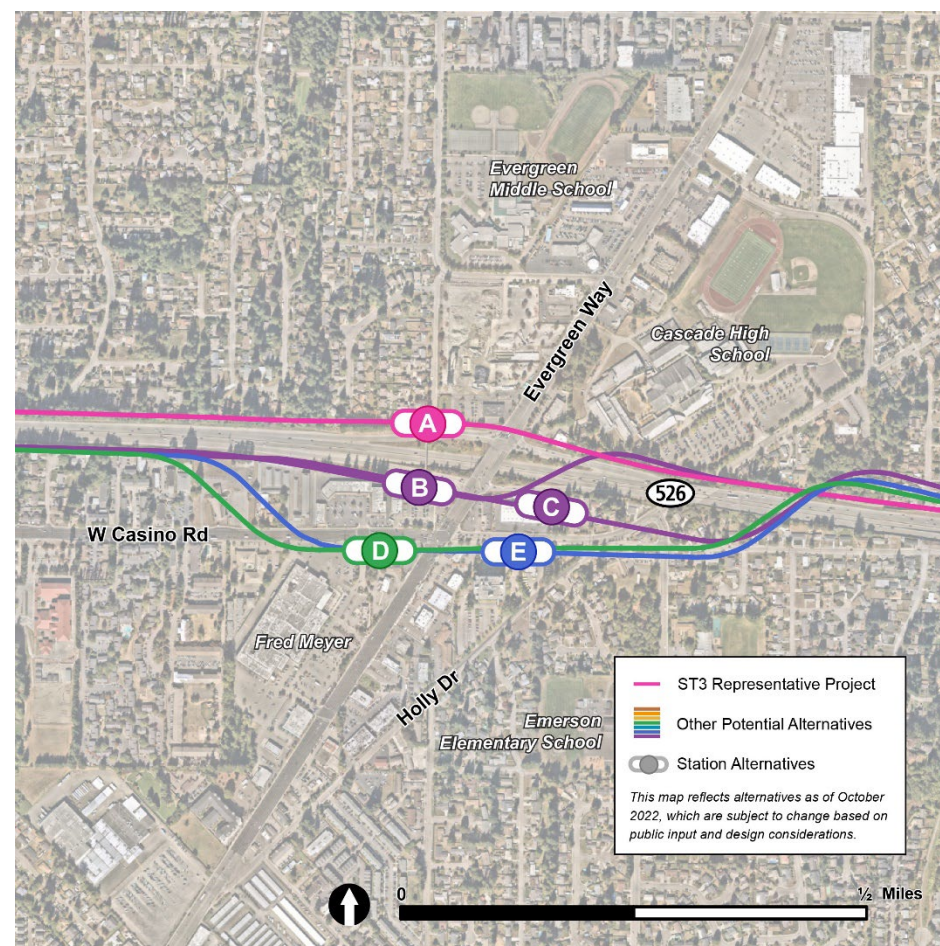


Figure 4-10 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – SR 526/Evergreen



Figure 4-11 Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Everett Station

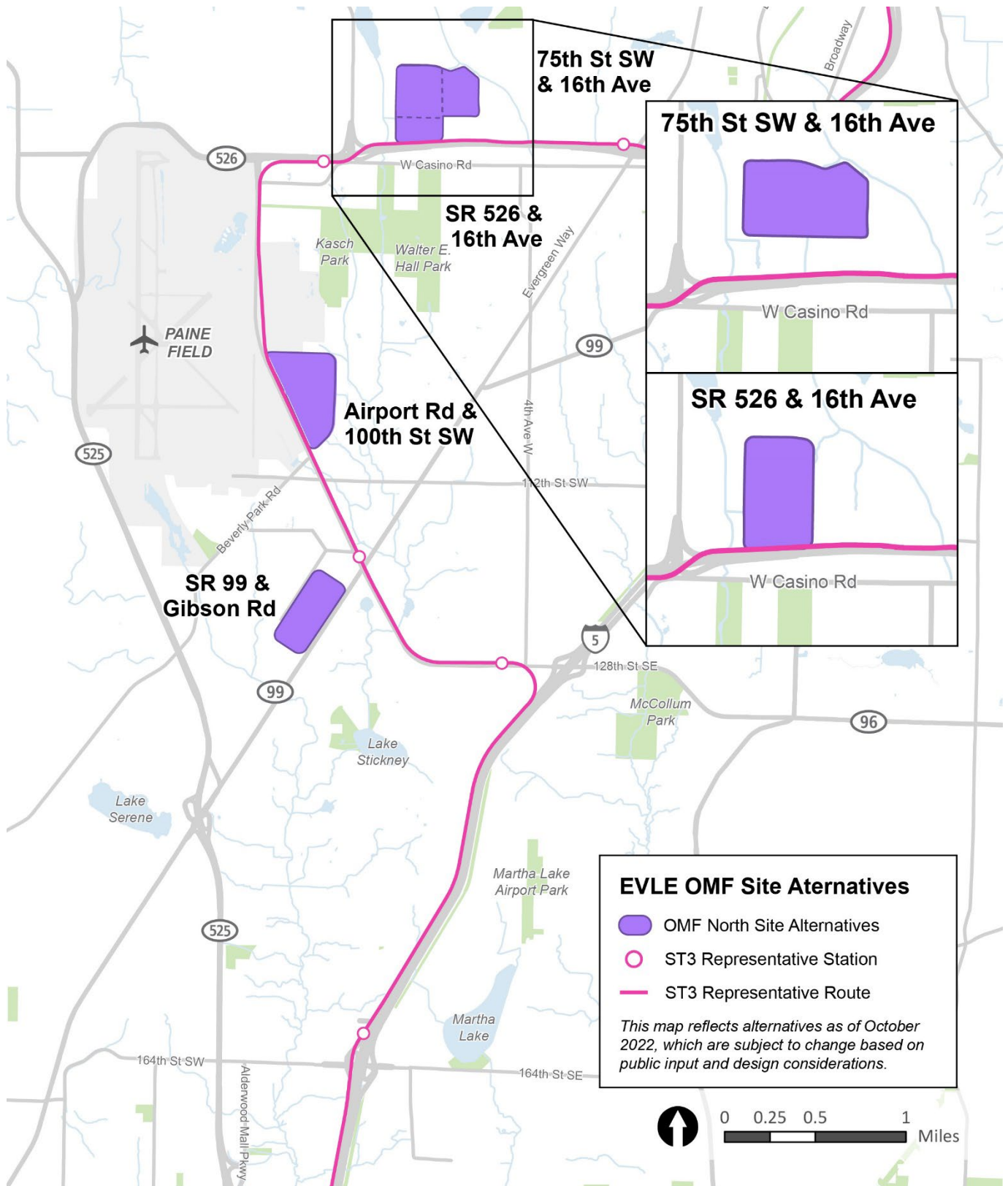


Figure 4-12 OMF North Location Alternatives

5 TOPICS TO STUDY IN THE EIS

Sound Transit will follow federal and state regulations and guidance to identify and address the potential for significant environmental impacts caused by the construction or operation of the project alternatives. Public comments during the scoping process help Sound Transit to define the scope of analysis and identify potential significant impacts to be avoided, minimized, or mitigated. The following environmental resource categories are anticipated to be studied in the EIS:

- Transportation
- Acquisitions, Displacements and Relocations
- Land Use
- Economics
- Social Resources, Community Facilities, and Neighborhoods – including Environmental Justice
- Visual and Aesthetic Resources
- Air Quality
- Noise and Vibration
- Water Resources
- Ecosystems
- Energy Impacts
- Geology and Soils
- Hazardous Materials
- Electromagnetic Fields
- Public Services, Safety and Security
- Utilities
- Historic and Archaeological Resources – including Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Parks and Recreation – including Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act

6 THE EVERETT LINK EXTENSION AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

6.1 Sound Transit and the Region's Mass Transit System

Sound Transit has been building out the region's mass transit system since voters approved funding for Sound Move in 1996, followed by Sound Transit 2 (ST2) in 2008. In 2013, Sound Transit began planning for the next phase of investments to build on ST2. This work involved studying several possible high-capacity transit corridors and updating Sound Transit's *Regional Transit Long-Range Plan* in 2014. The planning process culminated in voters authorizing funding for the ST3 Plan in 2016. The ST3 Plan includes light rail extensions east to Issaquah and South Kirkland, south to Tacoma Dome, and north to Everett, including the Everett Link Extension.

Figure 6-1 shows regional transit planning that has occurred over the years.

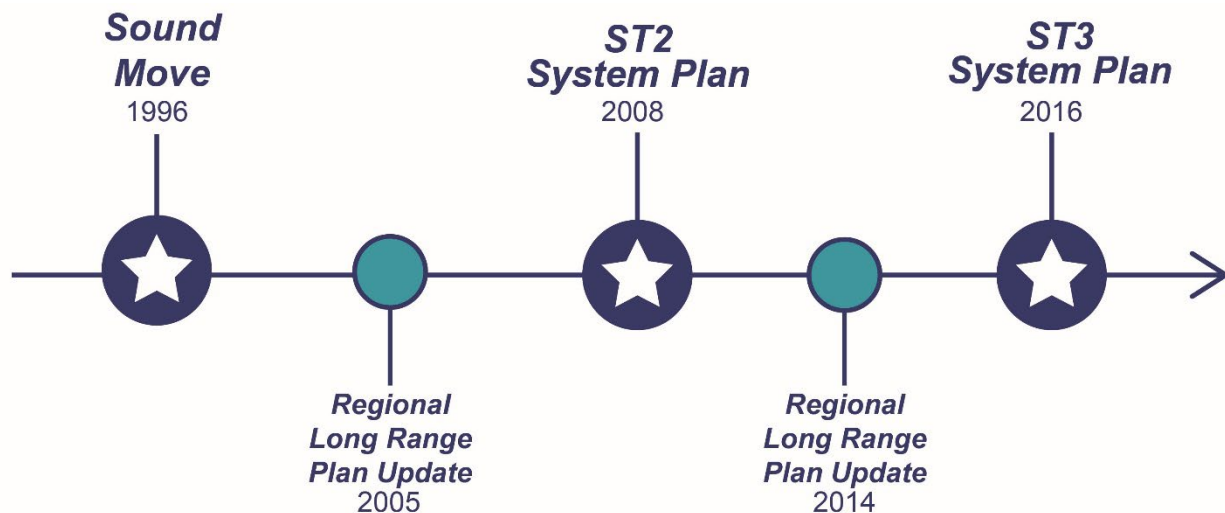


Figure 6-1 Regional Transit Planning Over the Years

6.2 Previous Planning Studies

Light rail expansion to Everett has been contemplated since the *Regional Transit Long-Range Vision* in 1996, but more focused planning occurred with the *Lynnwood to Everett High-Capacity Transit Corridor Study* and the *Regional Transit Long-Range Plan Update Environmental Impact Statement*, both published in 2014. These studies looked at numerous modes and routes to connect Lynnwood and Everett, culminating in the Representative Project presented in the ST3 Plan.

Local jurisdictions have also conducted independent studies that led to local decisions related to Everett Link Extension station locations. To learn more, see [Snohomish County's Light Rail Communities](#) and the [Metro Everett Subarea Plan](#). Sound Transit has considered this work during the Alternatives Development process, and these station locations are reflected in the alternatives shown in Section 4.

6.3 Alternatives Development Process

In the spring of 2021, Sound Transit started to explore refinements to the route, station and OMF locations included in the Representative Project. This work was conducted in coordination with local jurisdictions and the FTA, and it included alternatives developed through local planning efforts described in Section 6.2. Potential alternatives under consideration were presented to the public, Tribes and agencies during an early scoping period, which extended from November 1 through December 10, 2021. Two virtual public meetings and a Tribal and agency meeting were held during the comment period along with an online open house that was available throughout the comment period. Comments were requested on the project's purpose and need, the Representative Project, other potential route and station alternatives, OMF North sites, and the transportation, environmental and community impacts and benefits to consider when evaluating alternatives. Sound Transit received 317

comments from the public via the comment form on the online open house, email and voicemail, one comment from a Tribe, and nine comments from agencies. These comments were summarized in an [Early Scoping Summary Report](#). Input received during the early scoping comment period was considered by Sound Transit and the FTA in refining the list of potential alternatives and evaluating how well they met the project's draft purpose and need.

In Level 1 of the Alternatives Development process, Sound Transit evaluated the Representative Project and other potential alternatives for route, station locations and OMF sites. The Level 1 evaluation included conceptual design and high-level analysis of potential environmental impacts or benefits, as well as coordination with Sound Transit's Elected Leadership Group, Community Advisory Group and Interagency Group. Alternatives were evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative measures using criteria (such as opportunities for historically underserved populations, land use plan consistency, and quality of bicycle and pedestrian connections) that reflect the project's purpose and need. At this level of evaluation, alternatives were analyzed in discrete sections to help evaluate tradeoffs in various locations. The Level 1 analysis was available for public review and comment from March 14 through April 4, 2022. Sound Transit provided notice of this review and comment period via email notifications, digital ads, radio ads, social media and a news release. Comments received were shared with the Interagency Group and agency partners, the Community Advisory Group, and with the Elected Leadership Group. These comments helped to inform recommendations for the alternatives to advance to the Level 2 analysis.

In Level 2 of the Alternatives Development process, Sound Transit further refined the conceptual design of the alternatives that moved forward. These refined alternatives were again evaluated in discrete sections using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative measures to help evaluate tradeoffs in various locations. Criteria specific to a full-corridor scale, such as travel

Elected Leadership Group

The Elected Leadership Group is composed of Sound Transit Board members and other local elected officials in the corridor. Its purpose is to build consensus around key decisions and work through project issues as needed.

Community Advisory Group

The Community Advisory Group is a forum for community members to inform the development of alternatives for EVLE. The Community Advisory Group provides valuable input to elected leaders as they make project decisions.

Interagency Group

The Interagency Group provides a platform for Sound Transit to work closely and coordinate with multiple agencies and local governments as the project moves forward.

time and ridership, were also added to the evaluation. The results of the Level 2 evaluation are being presented to the public, Tribes and agencies for comment during this scoping comment period.

At the end of the Alternatives Development process, the Board is expected to identify the route, station, and OMF North alternatives to study in the EIS. The Board may also identify a preferred alternative to be studied along with the other alternatives. The alternatives identified will be based on all the work conducted to date, including the results of the Level 1 and Level 2 evaluations, recommendations from the Elected Leadership Group and Community Advisory Group, and scoping comments received from the public, Tribes and agencies.

Figure 6-2 shows the Alternatives Development process for the EVLE Project.

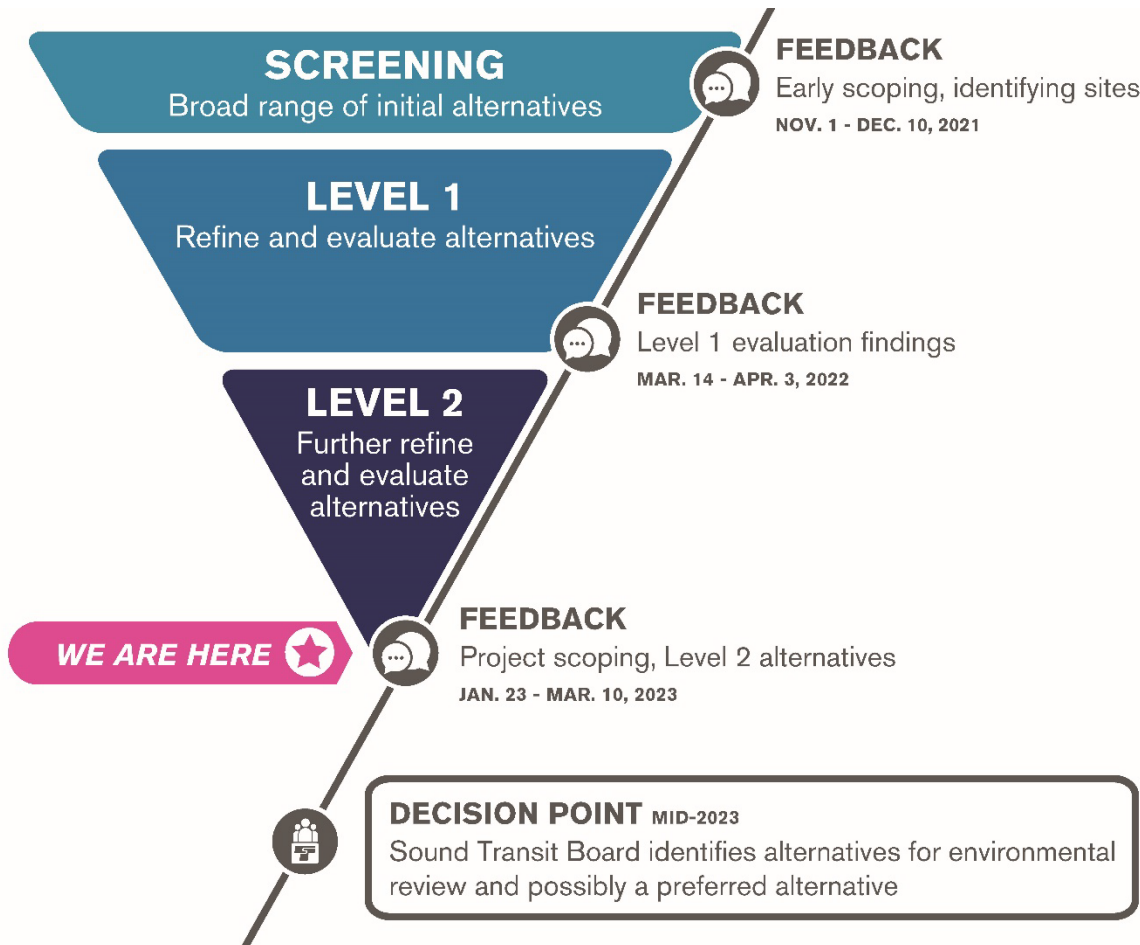


Figure 6-2 Alternatives Development Process

7 PROJECT TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

The Board is expected to identify the route, station, and OMF North alternatives to study in the EIS in summer 2023. The Board may also identify a preferred alternative to be studied along with the other alternatives. The alternatives identified will be based on all the work conducted to date, including the scoping comments received. Sound Transit will conduct further engineering, environmental impact analysis, and public involvement work on the project. A Draft EIS will be prepared and another opportunity will be provided for formal public, Tribal and agency comment. After considering the Draft EIS and comments received, the Sound Transit Board will confirm or modify the preferred alternative for the Final EIS. Sound Transit will then publish a Final EIS that includes responses to the comments received on the Draft EIS. After publication of the Final EIS, the Sound Transit Board is expected to select the project to be built. Figure 7-1 shows the project's current general timeline.



Figure 7-1 EVLE General Timeline

Sound Transit's target schedule for extending light rail to Everett Station is 2037. Sound Transit is working to achieve this target and to close a forecasted affordability gap most recently forecasted at \$500 million. To reduce or eliminate this gap, Sound Transit seeks to increase funding and support at local, state and national levels, and work with partners and communities to reduce project costs. If it is not possible to close the gap, current financial assumptions reflect it will be affordable to open service to SW Everett Industrial Center by 2037 and to the Everett Station area by 2041. The OMF North is expected to open in 2034 under both the target and affordable schedules.

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Sound Transit connects more people to more places to make life better and create equitable opportunities for all.
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