

Chapter 5

Summary of Comments on the Draft SEIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the comments received on the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan Update Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and provides responses to the most frequently heard comments. Copies of all emails, letters, and comment sheets received during the formal comment period as well as transcriptions of verbal testimony provided during the public hearings are included in Appendix L of this Final SEIS. Appendix L also includes responses to substantive comments (i.e., raised specific issues, questions, or concerns). Appendix B of this SEIS provides an update of all public participation processes and activities since the release of the Draft SEIS for public and agency review. As part of these activities, Sound Transit invited the public to participate in an on-line survey related to the Long-Range Plan update. Over 12,000 online surveys were completed. A summary of the survey results is also included in Appendix B.

5.2 Overview of comments received on the Draft SEIS

The comment period for the Draft SEIS began on June 13, 2014, and closed on July 28, 2014. Verbal and written comments were received at the public hearings in the form of comment sheets or oral testimony. Written comments were also sent to Sound Transit via postal mail, and email. Sound Transit received comments from over 560 stakeholders, including public agencies, jurisdictions, tribes, elected officials, groups, and individuals as follows:

Table 5-1. Submissions received by stakeholder type

Stakeholder type	Number of submissions
Tribes	3
Federal Agencies	1
State Agencies and Representatives	3
Counties and Transit Agencies	4 ¹
Other Agencies and Institutions	3
Cities	23
Organizations	16 ²
Individuals	508 ³
Total	561

¹ One submission had three signatories

² One submission had two signatories and one submission had eight signatories

³ One submission included a petition with 776 signatures

Sound Transit received one submission from an individual stakeholder that included an on-line petition advocating for the addition of a light rail station at Graham Street in south Seattle.

In general, comments on the Draft SEIS echoed what was heard during the scoping period: an overwhelming majority of commenters supported expanding HCT. A summary of common themes is presented below.

- **The public wants more mass transit**
 - Commenters are frustrated with traffic throughout Puget Sound
 - There is strong support for transit and other alternatives to driving
 - People are using the system more, and in many cases therefore have specific suggestions to improve existing services
 - People want the system to be built faster than planned
 - There is strong interest in building out the current Long-Range Plan, and expediting the ST2 program
- **There is overwhelming public support for expanded light rail service**
 - Some three-quarters of public comments received asked Sound Transit to focus on light rail extensions as opposed to other transit modes
 - Separation from traffic was frequently mentioned as a key reason for preferring light rail over other modes, especially in fast-growing areas and regional job centers including Seattle, East King County, Tacoma and Everett
- **The region's population is growing and certain areas have transit needs now**
 - Commenters expect some areas will grow faster than what was forecasted in the SEIS; Sound Transit should study those areas more closely
 - Connections between fast-growing areas are needed now and will be more evident after 2023
- **Transit should be fast, reliable, and frequent**
 - Reliability, frequency and speed are very important to commenters
 - Public comments show interest in a system that is easy to use
 - If driving is easier, then people are going to stay in their cars
 - There is a perceived lack of efficient connections between trains and buses
 - Perception that better collaboration is needed between transit agencies to connect between modes/make transfers, and to reduce redundancies in service
 - Streamline the transit experience region-wide with upgraded technology (fare/ticket system, driverless vehicles, high-speed systems)

- **It needs to be easier to access and use transit**
 - Commenters suggested methods to improve user experience through station design, access and rider comfort
 - Connections to the system—particularly east and west—are important to maximize the regional spine
 - Parking availability is frustrating for riders of all modes
 - Many commenters want to access transit by walking and bicycling
- **People care most about the corridors near where they live**
 - Commenters consistently have views and priorities based on their own travel patterns
 - With the very high level of participation in North King County, the most frequently mentioned specific corridors were Ballard to downtown Seattle and West Seattle to downtown Seattle

5.3 Common topics and responses to common comments

This section describes commonly mentioned topics and presents responses to comments that were expressed by a number of individuals or organizations. It is not intended to be inclusive of all comment topics or responses. Please refer to Appendix L for a complete record of comments and responses to substantive comments on the Draft SEIS.

5.3.1 Requests for new HCT service to specific areas (e.g., Ballard or West Seattle) or interest in specific alignments (not corridors studied in the Draft SEIS)

Many commenters had comments regarding a specific light rail corridor or comments about an alignment that was studied as part of a high-capacity transit corridor study. In some cases, new alignments were suggested as modifications to alignments studied in one of the HCT corridor studies also completed by Sound Transit. Common responses to comments pertaining to these corridors are provided below.

Common comment 1—General Ballard

Numerous commenters requested that Sound Transit provide light rail service from Ballard, including downtown Seattle to Ballard and Ballard to the UW. These commenters often expressed a desire to see such service in the near future.

Response

For the Long-Range Plan Update SEIS, the downtown Seattle to Ballard and Ballard to UW corridors are included in the Current Plan Alternative as potential rail extension corridors F and G, respectively. Although these corridors are in the current Long-Range Plan and were among the HCT corridors recently studied by Sound Transit (see www.soundtransit.org/projects-and-plans/high-capacity-transit-corridor-studies), they have not yet been advanced into a system plan for implementation. Following completion of the Final SEIS, the Sound Transit Board will consider information from all these studies, together with input received from the public, and then update the Long-Range Plan by late 2014 or early 2015. As described in the Final SEIS, the Board may then also

initiate system planning which would result in a financially constrained system plan that could be presented to voters for financing approval as soon as 2016.

Common comment 2—East/West extension of Ballard to UW

Some commenters requested that Sound Transit also consider light rail corridors that extended light rail east/west of the Ballard to UW corridor.

Response

The Long-Range Plan Update SEIS examines several potential light rail extensions from the Ballard to UW corridor. For example, the Current Plan Alternative (see Figure 2-7 in the Final SEIS) includes an east/west high-capacity transit extension from the UW to Redmond via SR 520 corridor (corridor K). The Potential Plan Modifications Alternative (See Figure 2-9 in the Final SEIS) includes a light rail corridor from UW to Kirkland via a new crossing of Lake Washington (corridor 14—UW to Sand Point to Kirkland to Redmond). Other corridors extending north and south of Ballard were also evaluated. Detailed alignment decisions such as the western terminus of the Ballard to UW corridor would be made during system planning and project development for those corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan.

Common comment 3—Ballard to UW HCT Corridor Study option A3

Some commenters noted support for the “A3” route option studied by Sound Transit as part of the Ballard to U-District High-Capacity Transit Corridor Study.

Response

Sound Transit studied an “A3” alignment option between Ballard and the University of Washington as part of a high-capacity transit (HCT) corridor study. As described in Section 2.2.3 of the Final SEIS, the HCT corridor studies that were completed in fall 2014 will inform the Sound Transit Board’s consideration of potential updates to Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan. The Ballard to UW HCT corridor study considered various route options, including “A3” noted in the comment. While the HCT studies provide information on travel markets, mode and route options, potential ridership, and conceptual costs estimates, they do not recommend particular modes or alignments.

For the Long-Range Plan Update Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), the Ballard to UW corridor was evaluated broadly as part of the Current Plan Alternative (see Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS). Unlike the HCT corridor studies, the SEIS does not consider various route or alignment options for each of the corridors. All of the corridors studied in the Final SEIS are intended to reflect a general area within which high-capacity transit could be implemented. The current Long-Range Plan explicitly states that “the lines on the map representing future service investments are intended to show general corridors that would be served, and do not represent specific routings or alignments.” Similarly, specific alignments will not be identified in the updated Long-Range Plan. For those corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan, more detailed analysis of alignments and station locations will occur during system planning and project development. At that time, the public will have additional opportunities to provide review and comment.

Common comment 4—“Ballard Spur” (“A4” alignment)

Approximately 90 comments were received that supported an alignment referred to as the “Ballard Spur” or “A4.” This alignment was developed and discussed by the Seattle Subway (a volunteer group advocating for expansion of the subway system) in a guest post on the Seattle Transit Blog. It is a variation of route options studied by Sound Transit in the Ballard to U-District High-Capacity Transit Corridor Study.

Response

A “Ballard Spur” or “A4” alignment option between Ballard and the University of Washington (as developed and described by Seattle Subway) builds off of one of Sound Transit’s high-capacity transit (HCT) corridor studies. As described in Section 2.2.3 of the Final SEIS, the HCT corridor studies that were completed in fall 2014 will inform the Sound Transit Board’s consideration of potential updates to Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan. The Ballard to U-District HCT corridor study considered various route options. While the HCT studies provide information on travel markets, mode and route options, potential ridership, and conceptual costs estimates, they do not recommend particular modes or alignments.

For the Long-Range Plan Update Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), the Ballard to UW corridor was evaluated broadly as part of the Current Plan Alternative (see Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS). Unlike the HCT corridor studies, the SEIS does not consider various route or alignment options for each of the corridors. All of the corridors studied in the Final SEIS are intended to reflect a general area within which high-capacity transit could be implemented. The current Long-Range Plan explicitly states that “the lines on the map representing future service investments are intended to show general corridors that would be served, and do not represent specific routings or alignments.” Similarly, specific alignments will not be identified in the updated Long-Range Plan. For those corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan, more detailed analysis of alignments and station locations will occur during system planning and project development. At that time, the public will have additional opportunities to provide review and comment.

Common comment 5—Kirkland-Bellevue-Issaquah (“C4” alignment)

Seattle Transit Blog posts also encouraged readers to request that Sound Transit “study a better Eastside corridor” and “study ‘C4’ to Issaquah with a connection to East Link at I-90.” Similar to the “Ballard Spur” alignment above, the “C4” alignment on the Eastside was not developed by Sound Transit but is a variation of route options developed by Sound Transit as part of the Kirkland-Bellevue-Issaquah High-Capacity Transit Corridor Study.

Response

A “C4” alignment option between Kirkland, Bellevue and Issaquah builds off of one of Sound Transits high-capacity transit (HCT) corridor studies. As described in Section 2.2.3 of the Final SEIS, the HCT corridor studies that were completed in fall 2014 will inform the Sound Transit Board’s consideration of potential updates to Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan. The Kirkland-Bellevue-Issaquah HCT corridor study considered various route options on the eastside. While the HCT studies provide information on

travel markets, mode and route options, potential ridership, and conceptual costs estimates, they do not recommend particular modes or alignments.

For the Long-Range Plan Update Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), the Kirkland to Bellevue to Issaquah corridor was evaluated broadly as part of the Current Plan Alternative (see Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS). Unlike the HCT corridor studies, the SEIS does not consider various route or alignment options for each of the corridors. All of the corridors studied in the Final SEIS are intended to reflect a general area within which high-capacity transit could be implemented. The current Long-Range Plan explicitly states that “the lines on the map representing future service investments are intended to show general corridors that would be served, and do not represent specific routings or alignments.” Similarly, specific alignments will not be identified in the updated Long-Range Plan. For those corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan, more detailed analysis of alignments and station locations will occur during system planning and project development. At that time, the public will have additional opportunities to provide review and comment.

Common comment 6—General West Seattle

Numerous commenters requested that Sound Transit add high-capacity transit service to West Seattle in the Long-Range Plan and that implementation of service should be in the near future.

Response

The Long-Range Plan Update SEIS evaluates several light rail/high-capacity transit corridors in the West Seattle and Burien areas. For example, the Potential Plan Modifications Alternative (see Figure 2-9 in the Final SEIS) includes a light rail corridor between downtown Seattle and West Seattle (corridor 2) and a light rail or bus rapid transit corridor from Tukwila to Burien to downtown Seattle via West Seattle (corridor 23). The Sound Transit Board could potentially add these corridors to the Long-Range Plan as part of the Long-Range Plan update process. Please see Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS for the location and description of these corridors. In addition, this area was also studied in more detail as part of the South King County High-Capacity Transit Corridor Study. This study can be viewed online at: www.soundtransit.org/projects-and-plans/high-capacity-transit-corridor-studies.

Following completion of the Final SEIS, the Sound Transit Board will consider information from the SEIS and the high-capacity transit corridor study, together with input received from the public, and then update the Long-Range Plan by late 2014 or early 2015. As described in the Final SEIS, the Board may then also initiate system planning, which would result in a financially constrained system plan that could be presented to voters for financing approval as soon as 2016.

Common comment 7—Downtown to West Seattle (“A6” alignment)

In a guest post on the Seattle Transit Blog, the Seattle Subway group suggested that readers submit a comment on the Long-Range Plan Draft SEIS stating, “I want rail to West Seattle! Study “A6” to North Delridge and the Junction.” Numerous comments were received that included this statement.

Response

An “A6” alignment option between downtown Seattle and West Seattle (as developed and described by Seattle Subway) builds off of one of Sound Transits high-capacity transit (HCT) corridor studies. As described in Section 2.2.3 of the Final SEIS, the HCT corridor studies that were completed in fall 2014 will inform the Sound Transit Board’s consideration of potential updates to Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan. The South King County HCT Corridor Study considered various route options. While the HCT studies provide information on travel markets, mode and route options, potential ridership, and conceptual costs estimates, they do not recommend particular modes or alignments.

For the Long-Range Plan Update Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), the downtown Seattle to West Seattle corridor was evaluated broadly as part of the Current Plan Alternative (see Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS). Unlike the HCT corridor studies, the SEIS does not consider various route or alignment options for each of the corridors. All of the corridors studied in the Final SEIS are intended to reflect a general area within which high-capacity transit could be implemented. The current Long-Range Plan explicitly states that “the lines on the map representing future service investments are intended to show general corridors that would be served, and do not represent specific routings or alignments.” Similarly, specific alignments will not be identified in the updated Long-Range Plan. For those corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan, more detailed analysis of alignments and station locations will occur during system planning and project development. At that time, the public will have additional opportunities to provide review and comment.

Common comment 8—Business impacts along Evergreen Way

About a dozen commenters expressed opposition to light rail along Evergreen Way in the Ballard to Everett Station corridor (corridor 3) because they were concerned that construction and operation of light rail along Evergreen Way would negatively affect surrounding businesses, particularly the many auto dealerships in the area.

Response

Implementation of light rail could have long-term impacts on adjacent land uses including the displacement of residences and businesses. The extent of such impacts would be determined during any future project-level reviews that would occur if the Sound Transit Board were to select light rail on SR 99 through Everett. In general, implementing transit in any of the corridors would emphasize design, planning, and engineering to avoid or minimize such impacts to the extent practicable. Please see Section 4.9.5 of the Final SEIS for a discussion of potential mitigation measures in those instances where property acquisition and displacements would be unavoidable.

5.3.2 Requests for new or revised corridors that should be studied in the Final SEIS

Several corridors were revised and new corridors were added to the Potential Plan Modifications Alternative in response to comments.

Common comment 9—Sand Point crossing

The majority of comments related to a new corridor urged Sound Transit to study a new crossing of Lake Washington between Sand Point and Kirkland. In many cases, specific station locations and routes were suggested. In addition, commenters felt that Sound Transit should analyze a floating rail bridge, floating tunnel, and suspension bridge from Sand Point to Kirkland to supplement the analysis in the UW to Kirkland to Redmond portion of the Central and East HCT Corridor Study.

Response

In response to comments received, a UW to Sand Point to Kirkland to Redmond light rail corridor has been added to the Potential Plan Modifications Alternative. Please see Figure 2-9 in the Final SEIS for the location of corridor 14 (UW to Sand Point to Kirkland to Redmond). Chapters 3 and 4 of the Final SEIS present the analysis of impacts and mitigation of corridor 14 at the same level of detail as other corridors in the Final SEIS. All of the corridors studied in the Final SEIS are intended to reflect a general area within which high-capacity transit could be implemented. The current Long-Range Plan explicitly states that “the lines on the map representing future service investments are intended to show general corridors that would be served, and do not represent specific routings or alignments.” For those corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan, more detailed analysis of alignments and station locations would occur during system planning and project development. During system planning and project development, the public will have additional opportunities to provide review and comment.

5.3.3 Comments on representative projects, policies, and programs

A wide variety of comments pertained to projects, programs or policies that are included in the Long-Range Plan Update SEIS as “representative.” Topics frequently mentioned included access to transit, increasing or expanding Sounder commuter rail service, providing HCT service to areas outside the current Sound Transit District boundary, and adding more stations. In addition, Sound Transit received a petition with over 770 signatures advocating for the addition of a light rail station at Graham Street in south Seattle. The list of representative projects for the Current Plan Alternative and Potential Plan Modifications Alternative (Appendix A) have been updated in this Final SEIS based on comments received on the Draft SEIS. In response to comments, four representative projects were added to the Current Plan Alternative list and five projects were added to the representative projects list for the Potential Plan Modifications Alternative. Responses to common comments pertaining to representative projects, programs and policies are provided below.

Common comment 10—Bike and pedestrian access

Several jurisdictions and individuals commented on the need for improved pedestrian and bicycle access to existing transit facilities, as well as an interest in high-quality non-motorized access to future stations.

Response

As indicated in Appendix A of the Final SEIS, the Current Plan Alternative includes a number of access related representative projects, including many possible improvements to non-motorized access. In addition, Sound Transit's bicycle policy includes guidance on providing bike parking and accommodations on Sound Transit vehicles and at Sound Transit facilities. More detailed project-level analysis would be conducted in the future for projects that are advanced as part of a future system plan. The project-level analysis would include analysis of multi-modal access to stations, including non-motorized access.

Common comment 11—Providing HCT service to areas outside the current Sound Transit District boundary

A handful of comments were received with requests for Sound Transit to provide various forms of HCT service to areas located outside of the current Sound Transit district boundary.

Response

Sound Transit must follow legislatively mandated steps before annexing areas into the Sound Transit District or extending services beyond the current district boundary. Extensions of service can occur without changing or annexing the district boundary. The Final SEIS summarizes the process and requirements in Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2.

Common comment 12—Sounder service

About a dozen comments called for increasing the service frequency of Sounder. Several commenters noted that they would like to use Sounder service during non-commute hours or for special events and are not currently able to do so.

Response

Increased service levels (up to all-day service) for commuter rail were included in the Long-Range Plan Update SEIS for the Current Plan Alternative as described in Section 2.4.2 of the Final SEIS and is evaluated throughout the SEIS. Increased service levels are also described as representative projects in Section 2.4.5. These are projects that could be implemented along the corridors that comprise the Current Plan Alternative regardless of whether service is already in operation along those corridors. The list represents the types of projects or support facilities that could be implemented in the future if funding is identified. Representative projects (listed in Appendix A, Table A-6) include improvements to Sounder service, such as adding express service, increasing service frequency, and implementing all-day, two-way service. Specific improvements such as operating characteristics and levels of service would be determined and evaluated at the project level in the future as appropriate.

Common comment 13—Projects in Current Plan affected by ST2 realignment

Several commenters requested that unfunded ST2 projects receive priority for implementation over new projects. For example, one individual expressed support for a second parking garage in Auburn near the commuter rail station and suggested that “Before any additional expansion of the system is to be considered, previous commitments should be honored and built.”

Response

In 2008, with voter financing approval for Sound Transit 2 (ST2), Sound Transit began implementing a number of high capacity transit and supportive projects. Sound Transit, like other public agencies and private businesses, was then hit hard by the global economic recession. Consequently with nearly a third of Sound Transit’s revenues erased by the recession, the reality is that Sound Transit will not be able to build everything that was included in ST2 by 2023.

The Sound Transit Board has stated its commitment to complete as much of the ST2 program as possible within existing resources. The ST2 plan clearly identified the revenue assumptions it was based on, and options for responding when revenues were lower or higher than planned. In the event of lower revenues, the ST2 plan identified four options:

1. Correct the shortfall through use of the subarea’s uncommitted funds and/or available bond capacity; and/or
2. Scale back the subarea plan or projects within the plan to match a revised budget; and/or
3. Extend the time period of completion of the subarea plan; and/or
4. Seek legislative authorization and voter approval for additional resources.

Projected funding available for expanding regional mass transit service between now and 2023 has been reduced considerably by the recession, resulting in difficult decisions for the Sound Transit Board. In 2010 some projects were put on-hold when the Sound Transit Board realigned the ST2 program to correspond with updated revenue projections.

The Board will use the flexibility provided in the plan to continue working to deliver as many transit investments as possible within these parameters.

Common comment 14—Projects in Current Plan that were deferred

Some comments were about projects in either *Sound Move* or ST2 that have been deferred, particularly the Graham Street Station and Boeing Access Road Station. One commenter included a petition with more than 770 signatures in support of building the Graham Street Station.

Response

Some stations that were considered as part of implementing *Sound Move* were later deferred until adequate funds could be identified to build them. The South Graham Street Station and Boeing Access Road Station are two examples of stations that were deferred and the funding to build them has not been identified to date.

In the Long-Range Plan Update SEIS deferred stations are listed as representative projects under the Current Plan Alternative (see Appendix A of the Final SEIS, Tables A-1 through A-6). These are projects that could be implemented along the corridors that comprise the Current Plan Alternative regardless of whether service is already in operation along those corridors. The list for the Current Plan Alternative represents the types of projects or support facilities that could be implemented along a corridor if funding is identified.

The Sound Transit Board still has the option to build deferred stations and will continue to evaluate funding options, construction and operational impacts and other issues associated with implementing any particular deferred Station.

5.3.4 Transportation issues

Screenline locations

Several jurisdictions and groups requested that screenlines be added or adjusted to better capture ridership forecasts. In response to these comments, the following screenlines were added and the results presented in Section 3.4.1 of the Final SEIS (Impacts on Transit Ridership):

- West of SR 900 (Issaquah)
- West of S. Yakima Avenue (Tacoma)
- North of S. 128th Street (Tukwila)

Common comment 15—Use updated population and employment projections

Prompted by guest posts on the Seattle Transit Blog, approximately 60 comments were received requesting that Sound Transit review and update the population projections used in the analysis.

Response

Consistent with federal requirements for Metropolitan Transportation Planning, the travel forecasts prepared for the Long-Range Plan alternatives used the most current land use and demographic estimates provided by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the central Puget Sound region. PSRC has two future land use alternatives, (1) the Land Use Baseline, and (2) the Land Use Targets. Sound Transit's model uses the Land Use Targets, not the Land Use Baseline. As defined by PSRC, the Land Use Targets (originally named Local Targets Representation) is a long-range land use dataset designed explicitly to represent local growth targets that are adopted under state Growth Management Act requirements. It is developed using a set of allocation “decision rules” that distribute jurisdictional growth targets to sub-jurisdictional zones based on (a) available net development capacities (similar to what is used for the Land Use Baseline), as well as (b) a series of policy-based preferential weights for certain zones, such as designated regional growth centers and other locally-defined activity centers. The Land Use Targets utilizes local growth targets developed by counties and their municipalities to align with the VISION 2040 regional growth strategy. The forecasts for population and employment reflect the latest information as provided by local jurisdictions and published by PSRC as of December 2013. The 2013 Land Use Targets dataset represents a future land use scenario consistent with

the policy direction and planning objectives established via the growth targets. Modeling that may occur as part of Sound Transit's system planning in 2015 will include any updates to Land Use Targets published by PSRC in 2014.

Common comment 16—Increase parking availability at HCT stations

Many expressed concern over lack of sufficient parking at existing park-and-ride facilities and HCT stations. A few commenters were concerned about new parking facilities increasing traffic in surrounding residential areas.

Response

This plan-level SEIS broadly defines potential high-capacity transit corridors and programmatically evaluates the potential impacts of the stations, parking areas, operations and maintenance facilities, and other infrastructure needs that would be implemented along those corridors as necessary. Examples of such infrastructure improvements (referred to as “representative projects”) are provided in Appendix A of the SEIS, including additional parking at existing stations system-wide (Table A-6) and parking along new transit corridors (Table A-11). Given the broad scale of analysis for this SEIS, an assessment of the parking demand associated with each corridor is not feasible at this time. However, for corridors that are advanced as part of a future system plan, more detailed analysis of parking demand would occur during project-level reviews and would include coordination with local jurisdictions and other transit agencies as appropriate.

Common comment 17—Feeder bus service

Multiple commenters requested feeder bus service from surrounding communities to connect to transit centers.

Response

Sound Transit's legislative directive is to provide regional high-capacity transit. This service is typically over longer distances and connects to regional growth centers. Sound Transit also recognizes that regional transit is part of a larger transportation system that also includes local feeder bus and streetcar services, as well as non-motorized access on foot and by bike. For the system as a whole to achieve a high degree of efficiency, all of these systems need to be integrated. Towards that end, Sound Transit is working with its local partner agencies to develop and implement proposals to integrate transit service in concert with light rail expansion, to ensure that service is delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible to the public.

Common comment 18—Integration with local transit providers

Commenters frequently asked that Sound Transit coordinate with local transit providers.

Response

The Final SEIS has been modified to include a discussion about the June 12, 2014 Executive Order from King County Executive Dow Constantine and subsequent Sound Transit Board Motion #M2014-44 regarding the integration of transit services in the region. Sound Transit has been directed to plan and implement a higher degree of transit system integration in the near and longer terms to maximize the performance of all transit modes for the public; achieve a higher level of efficiency in the delivery of transit service and infrastructure; and provide a higher quality, more seamless experience for

transit customers. Sound Transit will continue working with King County Metro and other transit providers to develop and implement measures to effectively integrate transit services in the region. A report providing the details of this integration, *Getting There Together*, is available on Sound Transit's website at: www.soundtransit.org/Documents/pdf/about/201409_RPT_TransitIntegrationReport.pdf

Common comment 19—Reduce congestion on roadways

Some commenters expressed a desire for roadway congestion relief, including relief for commercial vehicles that cannot use transit facilities and for those who want or need to use their personal vehicles for transport.

Response

One of the goals of Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan is to provide a high-capacity public transportation system that enhances regional mobility. By providing alternatives to driving, the Current Plan Alternative and the Potential Plan Modifications Alternative would help remove vehicles from roadways. Increasing transit ridership benefits the regional transportation system through improved travel time and reliability and by providing an alternative to driving on congested roadways.

Common comment 20—Driverless technology

Approximately 80 comments were received requesting that Sound Transit specifically consider driverless technology.

Response

Driverless trains would require grade separation along the full length of the affected line(s). Currently, Sound Transit light rail transit trains use a mix of guideways, including on-street surface operations in some locations. As a result, using driverless technology would not be suitable for any light rail transit extensions that would also travel along the existing system.

Driverless technology could be considered for off-spine service (the “spine” of the system extends north-south from Everett to Tacoma, and east-west from Redmond to Seattle) that operates on principally exclusive rights-of-way but does not interline (i.e., use the same tracks) with the spine and is not intended to feed the spine. Driverless technology cannot be used on the spine itself, because the spine includes several at-grade signalized intersections, which are also used by passenger vehicles and pedestrians. Consideration should also be given to whether this technology would provide the cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and reliability to meet future needs. New transit technologies for Sound Transit would likely have different operations, power and other requirements, and would likely require additional (and separate) operations and maintenance facilities. In addition, using a different technology for off-spine service could preclude options for interlining transit lines with the spine (see description above) as the system is modified or expanded in the future.

Common comment 21—Alternative technologies, General

Approximately 50 comments were received requesting that Sound Transit generally consider alternative technologies, including monorail, heavy rail, Sky Train, or driverless technology.

Response

Section 2.6 of the Final SEIS has been revised to provide additional clarification. Alternative high-capacity transit technologies operating on principally exclusive rights-of-way, including some driverless technologies, could be considered for off-spine service but they could not interline (i.e., use the same tracks) with the spine. (The “spine” of the Link system extends north-south from Everett to Tacoma, and east-west from Redmond to Seattle.) Driverless technology cannot be used on the spine itself, because the spine includes several at-grade signalized intersections, which are also used by passenger vehicles and pedestrians.

Consideration should also be given to whether the technology would provide the cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and reliability to meet future needs. New transit technologies for Sound Transit likely have different operations, power, and other requirements and would likely require additional (and separate) operations and maintenance facilities. In addition, using a different technology for off-spine service could preclude options for interlining transit lines with the spine as the system is modified or expanded in the future.

Common comment 22—Provide grade-separated transit

Multiple commenters noted a preference for grade-separated rail facilities to increase reliability and speed, and to avoid taking traffic lanes on existing streets.

Response

Currently, Sound Transit’s light rail transit trains use a mix of guideways, including grade-separated and on-street surface operations in some locations. As described in Section 2.2 of the Final SEIS, Sound Transit would determine the profile of transit facilities during future project-level reviews based on criteria that consider (1) topography, (2) physical barriers, (3) available surface right-of-way, (4) operating needs, (5) development density, and (6) cost. Sounder facilities are grade separated as they operate on railroad tracks.

5.3.5 Level of detail in the SEIS

Common comment 23—Level of detail in the SEIS

Several commenters requested that additional information be provided in the SEIS, such as cost estimates for the alternatives.

Response

The Long-Range Plan is Sound Transit’s vision for the high-capacity transit system. As part of a phased environmental review process, this Final SEIS evaluates options to update the plan and is a plan-level (rather than a project-level) EIS. Accordingly, alternatives are defined and environmental impacts are evaluated at a broad level. More detailed project-specific environmental review will be completed in the future, as

appropriate, for projects that are advanced by the Sound Transit Board as part of a future system plan.

The Long-Range Plan is unconstrained financially and unconstrained by time; therefore, it is not reasonable to try to estimate its costs. Order of magnitude costs would, however, be prepared during future system planning efforts that are aimed at developing a fiscally constrained system plan (previous system plans are known as Sound Move and ST2).

5.3.6 Comments outside the scope of the SEIS

Common comment 24—Not related to SEIS

Some comments were not related to topics addressed in the SEIS and included a variety of topics, such as complaints about the comfort of existing trains, desire for luggage storage areas on ST Express buses serving the airport, and suggestions for amenities at existing stations.

Response

These comments are acknowledged but are not the subject of this SEIS. Please visit Sound Transit’s “contact us” page at www.soundtransit.org/contact-us for a list of contact options so we may best respond to you for your particular issue. Or alternatively, please direct your comment to main@soundtransit.org.

