

Motion No. M2019-75

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority identifying the preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives for study in the Tacoma Dome Link Extension Environmental Impact Statement, for all segments except the Tacoma Dome segment.

Background

Early scoping under SEPA for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) project was conducted from April 2 through May 3, 2018, and public comment was received. The TDLE project would expand Link light rail transit service from the Federal Way Transit Center to the Tacoma Dome Station. The project corridor is approximately 10 miles long and is part of the Sound Transit 3 Plan (ST3) of regional transit system investments, funding for which was approved by voters in the region in 2016.

The mode and corridor served for the proposed project were identified through a multi-year planning process, including the Sound Transit Regional Transit Long-Range Plan and ST3 Plan. Through the local alternatives evaluation and screening process, Sound Transit ultimately developed the representative project included in the ST3 Plan and, based on additional public engagement and technical analysis, advanced various light rail transit alternatives with design options for further study. Each light rail transit alternative includes four stations that serve the following areas: South Federal Way, Fife, East Tacoma (near Portland Avenue and Interstate 5) and Tacoma Dome.

Evaluation of the alternatives identified by the Board will be conducted in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Before committing federal funds to TDLE, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the project, Sound Transit is required to comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The FTA, as the federal lead agency under NEPA, and Sound Transit, as the state lead agency under SEPA, have determined that the proposed project may have probable significant adverse environmental impacts. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies are preparing a combined NEPA/SEPA EIS for the project.

The FTA and Sound Transit conducted Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping from April 1 through May 1, 2019, under SEPA and NEPA, for the TDLE project. Three public scoping meetings and a meeting for agencies and tribes were held during this period, as well as an online open house from April 1 through May 1, 2019. FTA and Sound Transit asked for comments on the draft Purpose and Need statement; the alternatives that should be evaluated in the EIS; and social, economic, environmental, and transportation issues to be evaluated in the EIS. Comments were accepted by mail, email, online comment forms, transcribed phone messages, and through comment forms and via a court reporter at the scoping meetings. Input from the EIS scoping period was documented in the *Tacoma Dome Link Extension Scoping Summary Report* (May 2019) and was made available on the project website.

The local planning and alternatives development processes included technical analysis, public engagement, and input from affected local, state, and federal agencies and tribes. Sound Transit developed an initial range of alternatives from agency and public input during the SEPA early scoping process held April 2 through May 3, 2018. The project's Elected Leadership Group (ELG), a comprehensive group of elected officials that represent the service corridor, and the Stakeholder Group (SG), an advisory group consisting of members of communities along the alignment appointed by the ELG, then recommended narrowing and refining these alternatives based on additional analysis and community, agency, and tribal input.

The ELG recommended the following alternatives for inclusion in the EIS:

- **South Federal Way** – SF2 West (preferred alternative) and SF 2 East, SF 8/9
- **Fife** – F3B, SR 99 alignment west of station (preferred alternative) and F3A I-5 alignment west of station
- **East Tacoma** – ET3A (preferred alternative) and ET3B, ET6
- **Tacoma Dome** - TD2 (preferred alternative) and TD2 cut and cover, TD3, TD4 East In-Street

Subsequent to the ELG recommendation, the City of Tacoma requested also evaluating cut and cover stations at TD3 and TD4 East In-Street.

Additionally, potential station locations at ET 6 and SF 2 East were included in the ELG recommendation, however the potential opportunities of these station locations can be accomplished through design refinements to stations ET3A/ ET3B and SF2 West respectively. Therefore ET 6 and SF 2 East have not been included as separate alternatives in the EIS.

On July 11, 2019, FTA as the lead agency for the NEPA EIS process provided the following to Sound Transit:

Tacoma Dome Station Area

- The cut-and-cover alternatives should be removed from going forward into the NEPA EIS, based on Sound Transit’s analysis, briefings, the alignment tour, tribal concerns, and conclusions described in the February 2019 technical memorandum...
- FTA concurs with TD2, TD3, and TD4 elevated alternatives moving forward into the NEPA EIS.

East Tacoma Station Area

- FTA concurs with preferred station alternative at ET3A, with ET3B elevated alternative moving forward into the NEPA EIS.

Fife Station Area

- FTA concurs with Fife 3 as a preferred station alternative.
- FTA does not concur with a “preferred” alternative alignment (I-5 vs. SR-99) identified for this location. Both alignment alternatives (I-5 and SR-99) should move forward into the NEPA EIS without one being identified as “preferred”.

South Federal Way Station Area

- FTA concurs with SF2 West as the preferred station alternative, and SF 8/9 elevated alternatives moving forward into the NEPA EIS.
- FTA concurs with the I-5 alignment.

Motion

Recognizing the objectives included in the System Expansion Implementation Plan (SEIP) of identifying a preferred alternative and other alternatives under SEPA and NEPA prior to preparing environmental documents in order to accelerate overall project delivery, and given the commitments to schedule and budget noted in the Partnering Agreements and Statement of Partnering Intent made by the jurisdictions along the project corridor, the Board will consider identifying a “Preferred Alternative” and “Other EIS alternative(s)”, for study within any given segment as follows:

- Preferred Alternative and Other EIS Alternative(s): Incorporates refinements to the representative project, consistent with the scope identified in the ST3 Plan, based on recommendations from the Elected Leadership Group and/ or input from the Stakeholder Group, scoping comments from the public, agencies and Tribes and Sound Transit’s technical analysis.

- As part of the EIS analysis, Sound Transit will establish estimates of the costs of delivering the Preferred Alternative and Other EIS Alternative(s). The estimates would include any necessary modifications identified during the EIS analysis that may be needed to meet ST3 voter-approved requirements and would be calculated based on delivering the full project, not individual segments. These estimates would reflect updates to the costs of construction, real estate, EIS mitigation requirements, etc.

After publication of the draft EIS and receipt of public comment, the Board intends to confirm or modify the preferred alternative.

As such, it is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that, based on Board's review of the findings from the alternatives development process; the identification of third-party funding consistent with the partnering agreements with local jurisdictions; public and agency scoping comments; tribal comments; input from the SG (May 29, 2019) and ELG (June 14, 2019); the Partnering Agreements with the Cities of Tacoma, Fife, Milton, and Federal Way; the Statement of Partnering Intent with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the System Expansion Transit Integration Agreement with King County Metro, input from FTA, and other information developed to date, the preferred alternative, and other alternatives for the TDLE Draft EIS are identified as follows for all segments except the Tacoma Dome station area:

East Tacoma

Preferred Alternative

- ET3A: Elevated station at East Tacoma in the vicinity of E 26th St. or E 27th St. near Portland Avenue and north of Interstate 5 with elevated guideway in the vicinity of E 25th St. or E 26th St. connecting to TD2 or TD3. Option for an elevated station spanning Portland Avenue should be studied.

Other EIS alternative

- ET3B: Elevated station at East Tacoma in the vicinity of E 26th St. or E 27th St. near Portland Avenue and north of Interstate 5 with elevated guideway in the vicinity of E 26th St. connecting to TD4. Option for an elevated station spanning Portland Avenue should be studied.

The Board also directs staff to work with the City of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribe, Port of Tacoma, local transit agencies, the City's TOD Advisory Group and other stakeholders to examine opportunities to ensure appropriate multi-modal access, particularly non-motorized, drop-off and transit access, to this station, as well as how the station location and design can best support appropriate transit-oriented development. A particular focus will need to be on connections between the station and the neighborhoods and key destinations on the south side of I-5, including exploration of a pedestrian and bicycle bridge.

Fife

Preferred Alternative

- Fife 3: Elevated station in Fife north of 15th St.

Other EIS alternatives

- Fife A (I-5 Alignment): Elevated guideway alignment to the north of the station in the vicinity of I-5 and to the west of the station in the vicinity of I-5.

- Fife B (SR 99 Alignment): Elevated guideway alignment to the north of the station in the vicinity of I-5 and to the west of the station on the south side of SR 99.

The Fife station includes approximately 500 park-and-ride spaces. Additionally, the Board directs staff to examine opportunities to establish appropriate non-motorized, drop-off and transit access to this station and work with the City of Fife and stakeholders to support transit oriented development around the station.

South Federal Way

Preferred Alternative

- SF2 West: Elevated station in South Federal Way along Enchanted Parkway near S 352nd St. in the vicinity of I-5.

Other EIS alternatives

- SF 8/9: Elevated station in South Federal Way along I-5 near S 356th St. in the vicinity of I-5.

The South Federal Way station includes approximately 500 park-and-ride spaces. Additionally, the Board directs staff to work with the City of Federal Way and stakeholders to support transit oriented development around the station and examine opportunities to establish appropriate non-motorized, drop-off and transit access to this station.

This motion also authorizes staff to complete the Draft EIS, using the preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives identified above. The Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after completion of the Final EIS, which is anticipated to be published in 2022.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on July 25, 2019.

Attest:

Kent Keel
Board Vice Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator