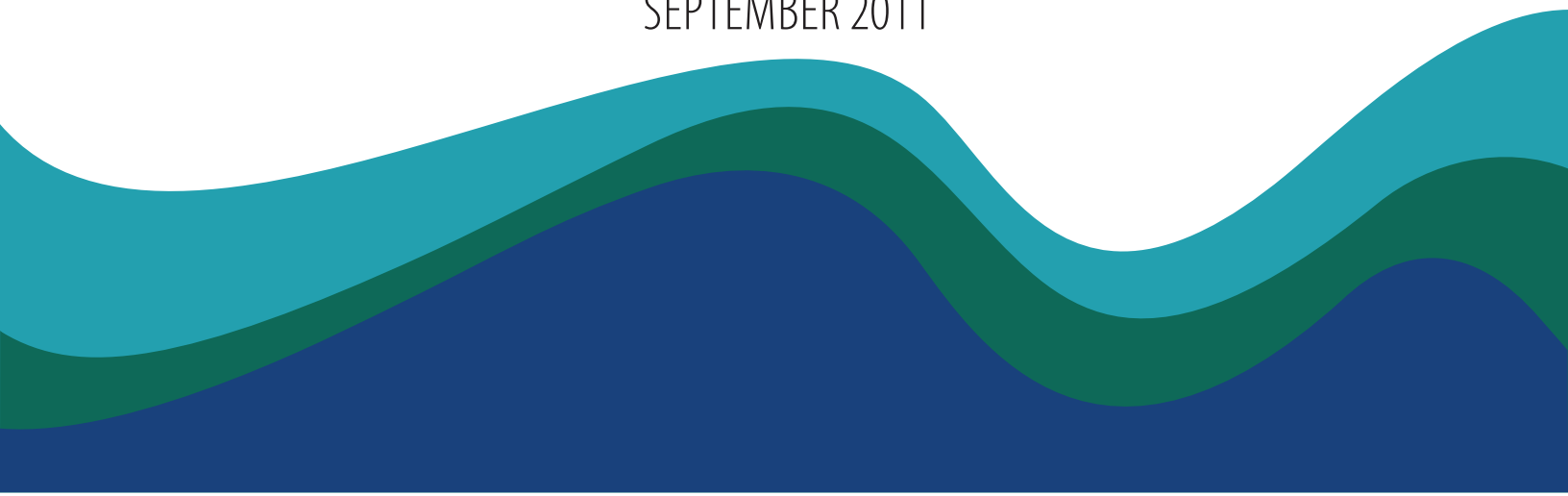




North Corridor Transit Project

Environmental Scoping Information Report

SEPTEMBER 2011



SCOPING NOTICE FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction

North Corridor Transit Project Scoping Period: September 30 to October 31, 2011

The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are announcing the start of scoping activities for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) they will prepare for the North Corridor Transit Project in King and Snohomish counties in the metropolitan Puget Sound region. The North Corridor Transit Project is part of the Sound Transit 2 (ST2) Plan approved by voters in 2008. The proposed project would start at the regional light rail system in the Northgate neighborhood of Seattle and would extend northward to the cities of Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood.

Figure 1-1 shows where the North Corridor is located, including where it would connect to the Sound Transit regional light rail system.

The North Corridor Transit Project is an element of Sound Transit's Long-Range Transit Plan and the Puget Sound Regional Council's *Transportation 2040*, which is the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan. These plans anticipate the eventual extension of mass transit service north to Everett. Figure 1-2 shows the regional transit system, including ST2 projects.

This environmental scoping information report describes:

- The scoping process
- Scoping meeting dates and locations
- How to provide comments
- The North Corridor and the regional transit system
- A preliminary statement of the project's purpose and why it is needed
- Potential North Corridor project alternatives
- Project background and the Alternatives Analysis (AA) findings
- Topics to be evaluated in the EIS
- Next steps and decision points
- Public and agency involvement

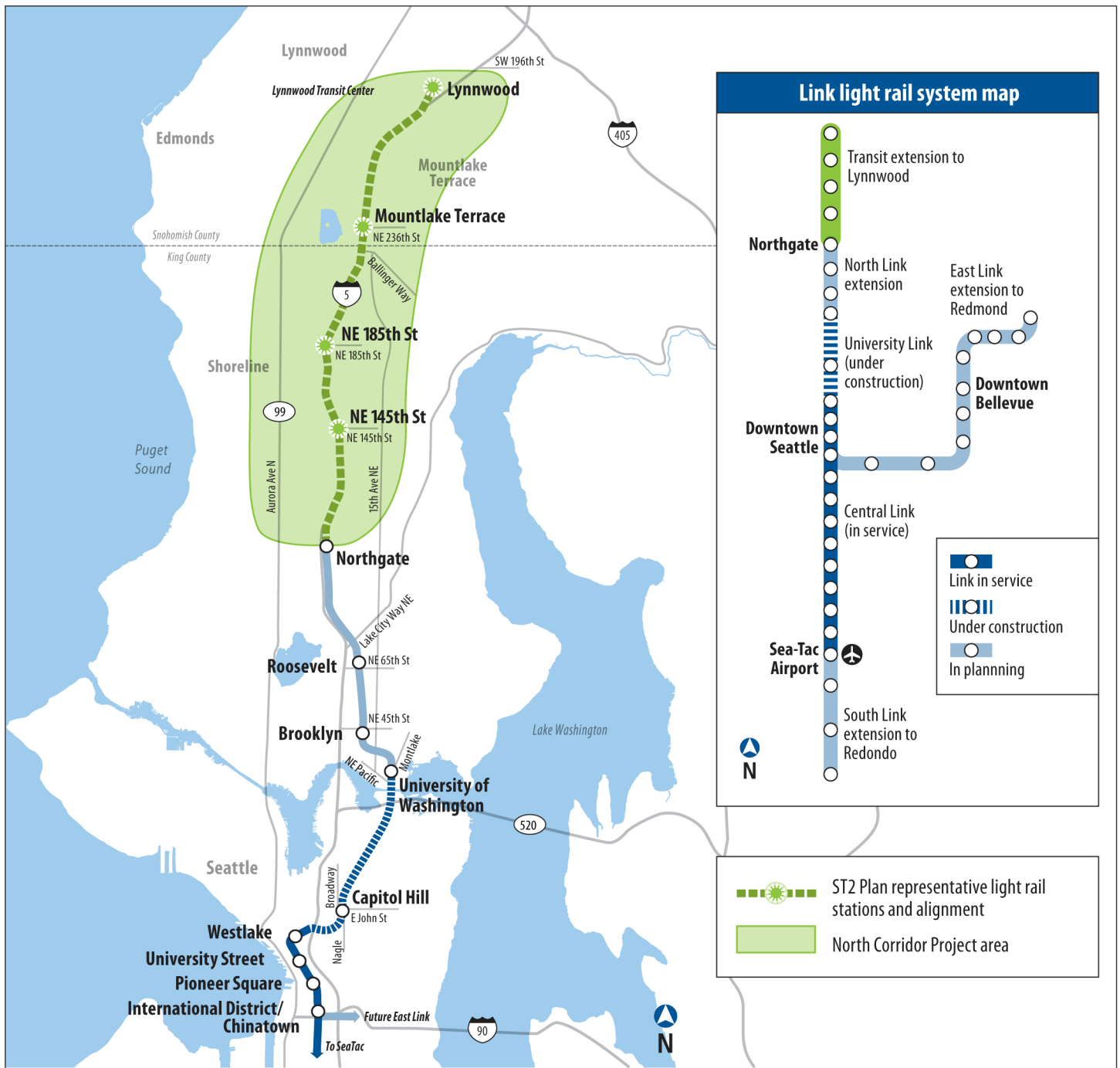


Figure 1-1. North Corridor Project Area and Relation to Link Light Rail System



Figure 1-2. Sound Transit 2 Regional Transit System Plan Map and North Corridor

The Scoping Process

Scoping provides an opportunity for the public to learn about and provide comments on the project as it begins its environmental review. Scoping is a public and agency outreach and involvement effort that supports the overall project planning, public involvement, and state and federal environmental processes for the North Corridor Transit Project.

FTA and Sound Transit have determined that the project has the potential to result in significant environmental effects, and an EIS is needed, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) and Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Alternatives being considered for evaluation in the EIS include a No Build Alternative and various build alternatives to develop light rail in the North Corridor. The light rail alternatives are based on the most promising alternatives identified through an Alternatives Analysis (AA) study recently completed by Sound Transit. More information on the AA is provided below.

A scoping notice for the EIS has been published in the Federal Register and the SEPA register. Links to the notices are provided at: www.soundtransit.org/NCTP.

Notices and project informational display advertisements announcing upcoming public scoping meetings have been placed in the Seattle Times and local North Corridor area newspapers.

Sound Transit and FTA are inviting the public to be involved in the ongoing EIS process. Through scoping, they are seeking comments on the proposed purpose and need for the transit project and the scope of the EIS. This includes the alternatives and the environmental topics to be considered in the EIS.

The scoping process is being conducted by Sound Transit and FTA in consultation with other agencies including the Washington State Department of Transportation; the Federal Highway Administration; the cities of Seattle, Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, Edmonds, and Lynnwood; King and Snohomish counties; Community Transit; affected tribes; and other regional state and federal agencies. A complete list of the involved parties to date is provided in the project's Draft Coordination Plan at the North Corridor Web site listed above.

Public Comments and Meetings

The public comment period is open until October 31, 2011. The project will hold three public scoping meetings and an interagency meeting as outlined below.

The public meetings will be held at the following locations from 6 to 8 pm:

- October 11, 2011: Shoreline Conference Center, 18560 1st Ave. NE, Shoreline, WA 98155
- October 13, 2011: Embassy Suites, 20610 44th Ave. W, Lynnwood, WA 98036
- October 18, 2011: Ingraham High School, 1819 N. 135th St., Seattle, WA 98133

A separate scoping meeting will also be held with agencies to present project information and receive comments. Sound Transit sent invitations for the meeting to local, state, and federal agencies as well as tribal governments.

All public meeting locations are accessible to persons with disabilities. Information in alternative formats as well as translation services can be requested by contacting Roger Iwata at (206) 689-4904 or by e-mail at Roger.Iwata@soundtransit.com. Requests should be made at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Persons who are deaf or hearing-impaired may call (888) 713-6030 TTY.

How to Provide Comments

Written scoping comments are requested by October 31, 2011 and can be mailed or e-mailed to the address below, submitted at the public meetings, or provided via the online comment form available at www.soundtransit.org/NCTP.

Comments can be addressed to:

Lauren Swift, North Corridor Transit Project, Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826, or by e-mail at northcorridorscoping@soundtransit.org.

How Public Comments Will be Used

After the end of the comment period on October 31, 2011, Sound Transit will collect and consider the comments received and will prepare a scoping report to summarize the comments and the results of the scoping process. The report will be made available to the public, the Sound Transit Board, and FTA.

In late 2011 or early 2012, in coordination with FTA, the Sound Transit Board is expected to confirm the purpose and need for the project, identify the alternatives to be evaluated in the Draft EIS, and also may identify a locally preferred alternative (LPA).

The comments received during the scoping period will also be considered as Sound Transit, FTA, and other participating agencies define the scope of the EIS and its related technical analysis, including any special issues to be addressed.

1.2 The North Corridor

The proposed North Corridor Transit Project would begin at Northgate in north Seattle and end at the Lynnwood Transit Center. The North Corridor includes the cities of Seattle, Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood.

The corridor generally follows Interstate 5 (I-5), the major north-south route through Washington State. The corridor serves a large commuter market traveling between Snohomish and King counties and the city of Seattle. It is within a geographically constrained urban area that lies between Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east, which limits transportation options. This is one of the densest urban areas in the Pacific Northwest, and it is among the region's most productive markets for transit.

The North Corridor is bounded by Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east. The limited routes and the north/south nature of most trips have helped make the North Corridor one of the region's most productive markets for transit. However, roadways in the North Corridor, including I-5, experience high levels of congestion throughout significant portions of the day, which creates long and unreliable travel times.

The North Corridor Transit Project would connect to North Link and University Link—the sections of the Central Link light rail system now being developed from downtown Seattle to Northgate. With the connection to Central Link, the North Corridor Transit Project would serve the large and growing travel market between Lynnwood, Snohomish County, and north King County and the other major activity and/or urban growth centers that are currently served by, or will be served by, regional light rail to the south and east—including Northgate, the University of Washington, Capitol Hill, downtown Seattle, South Seattle, Tukwila, and SeaTac, as well as Bellevue and Redmond to the east.

Sound Transit and the Region's Mass Transit System

Sound Move, Sound Transit's first phase of regional transit investments for urbanized Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties, was approved and funded by voters in 1996. The Sound Move program included light rail, commuter rail, and regional express bus infrastructure and service, including the Central Link light rail system connecting the University of Washington, downtown Seattle, Tukwila, and SeaTac.

Sound Transit began light rail operations between downtown Seattle and SeaTac in 2009. Link light rail north from downtown Seattle to Capitol Hill and the University of Washington is now under construction and is scheduled to open in 2016. The extension from the University of Washington to Northgate is now in final design and is planned to begin operation in 2021.

Planning for the second phase of investment to follow Sound Move began in 2004. This work included updating Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan and associated environmental review. In

2008, voters authorized funding for the extension of the regional light rail system in the North Corridor from Northgate to Lynnwood (Lynnwood Transit Center) as part of the ST2 Plan. The ST2 Plan also includes an East Link light rail line from downtown Seattle to Bellevue and Redmond to the east, and a South Link extension from SeaTac to Redondo/Star Lake in south King County.

1.3 The Alternatives Analysis

On September 27, 2010, FTA and Sound Transit issued an early scoping notice in the Federal Register for the North Corridor Transit Project Alternatives Analysis (AA). Sound Transit has now completed the AA, which provides the basis for identifying the most promising alternatives to be evaluated for the project. FTA and Sound Transit are now informing the public of their intent to initiate the NEPA and SEPA review and conduct scoping for the North Corridor Transit Project based on the findings of the AA.

The Alternatives Analysis Report and SEPA Addendum is available for review online at www.soundtransit.org/NCTP. The AA also serves as an addendum to Sound Transit's Supplemental EIS on the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan (June 2005). It adds information and analysis regarding the North Corridor transit alternatives and their environmental impacts. The addendum is issued pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) rules, WAC 197-11-600(4)(c) and WAC 197-11-625.

Federal law requires an alternatives analysis for major capital projects that will seek funding from FTA. The AA is a locally managed study process that helps local agencies and the FTA identify the problems to be solved for a corridor, their underlying causes, the viable options for addressing the problems, and the resulting costs and benefits. Through the AA process, Sound Transit developed and evaluated a wide range of potential transit investments, including the type of mass transit service that could be offered, as well as the routes, stations, and operating characteristics of transit improvements.

For the AA early scoping, Sound Transit and FTA held a public comment period from September 27 to October 28, with three public meetings and an agency meeting. The early scoping collected public comments on the scope of the AA study, including the transportation problems to be addressed (i.e., the project's purpose and need), range of alternatives, transportation and community impacts and benefits to be considered, capital and operating costs, financial plans, and other factors to be considered in the AA.

The AA used the public comments to develop and review a range of alternatives, including a transportation systems management (TSM) alternative to be used as a baseline, bus rapid transit (BRT) alternatives, and light rail alternatives. The BRT and light rail routes considered included I-5, State Route (SR) 99, and portions of 15th Avenue NE, along with a variety of station locations and alignments. As Sound Transit refined the concepts and alternatives, it

applied filters to avoid advancing alternatives that would not meet the purpose and need. Figure 1-3 shows the results of applying these filters at each step in the alternatives development and evaluation process. Figure 1-4 shows the variety of light rail concepts and alternatives considered in the AA and Figure 1-5 shows the BRT concepts and alternatives.

All alternatives assumed a start at the Northgate light rail station (now being developed by the North Link light rail project at the existing Northgate Transit Center) and ending with a station at the Lynnwood Transit Center.

Sound Transit conducted the AA in coordination with the jurisdictions and agencies with interests in the corridor, including the cities of Seattle, Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, Edmonds, and Lynnwood; King and Snohomish counties; Metro Transit, Community Transit, and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Results of the Alternatives Analysis

Through several stages of detailed study, Sound Transit evaluated light rail, BRT, and TSM alternatives, and considered their ability to meet the project's purpose and need. In its evaluation, Sound Transit weighed factors such as ridership and transportation performance, land use, community equity, environmental effects, cost, cost-effectiveness, and constructability, which helped measure the different aspects of the purpose and need.

The final round of evaluation focused on an I-5 light rail alternative, two SR 99 alternatives (one with at-grade sections and one fully elevated), and a BRT alternative with routes on I-5, SR 99 and 15th Avenue NE. Following FTA guidance, these alternatives were compared to a TSM/Baseline Alternative. Tables 1.1a and 1.1b summarize the final evaluation results for these alternatives.

The main findings from the AA are:

- Light rail transit is the only mode that fully satisfies the North Corridor Transit Project's Purpose and Need statement related to transportation effectiveness and the corridor's mobility, access, and capacity needs.
- Light rail must operate in an exclusive right-of-way with full separation from other traffic in order to provide the capacity, reliability, and travel time savings needed to address the growing demand for high capacity transit in the corridor.
- Light rail along the I-5 corridor offers the best overall performance across the broad set of evaluation criteria, including in the areas of ridership and transportation performance, consistency with regional land use plans, and cost-effectiveness.

Initial Concepts	Pre-Screening	Initial Concepts	Concept Screening	Level 1 Alternatives	Level 1 Evaluation	Level 2 Alternatives	Level 2 Evaluation
	OCT 2010		NOV 2010		FEB 2011		JUNE 2011
TSM/Baseline	➡		➡		➡		➡
I-5 Light Rail	➡		➡		➡		➡
Elevated	➡		➡		➡	Elevated and At-Grade, Separated from Traffic	➡
SR 99 Light Rail	➡		➡		➡		➡
At-Grade	➡		➡	SR 99 Mixed Profile	➡	SR 99 Mixed Profile	✖
Elevated	➡		➡				➡
Mixed Traffic	✖						
Interurban	➡		➡	Interurban	✖		
110th Connector	➡		➡		➡		➡
130th Connector	➡	130th Connector	✖				
Roosevelt Way Connector	➡		➡		➡	Roosevelt Way Variation	✖
SR 104 Connector	➡		➡		➡		➡
200th Connector	➡	200th Connector	✖				
208th Connector	➡		➡		➡	SR 99 North Variation	✖
15th Ave. Light Rail	➡		✖				
At-Grade	➡	At-Grade	✖				
Elevated	➡	Elevated	✖				
Mixed Traffic	✖						
Lake City Way LRT	✖						
I-5 BRT	➡		➡	I-5 BRT	✖		
Multi-Corridor BRT	➡		➡	Multi-Corridor BRT	➡	Multi-Corridor BRT	✖

➡ Alternative carried forward.

✖ Alternative dropped.

Figure 1-3. Summary of Alternatives Development, Screening, and Evaluation Process

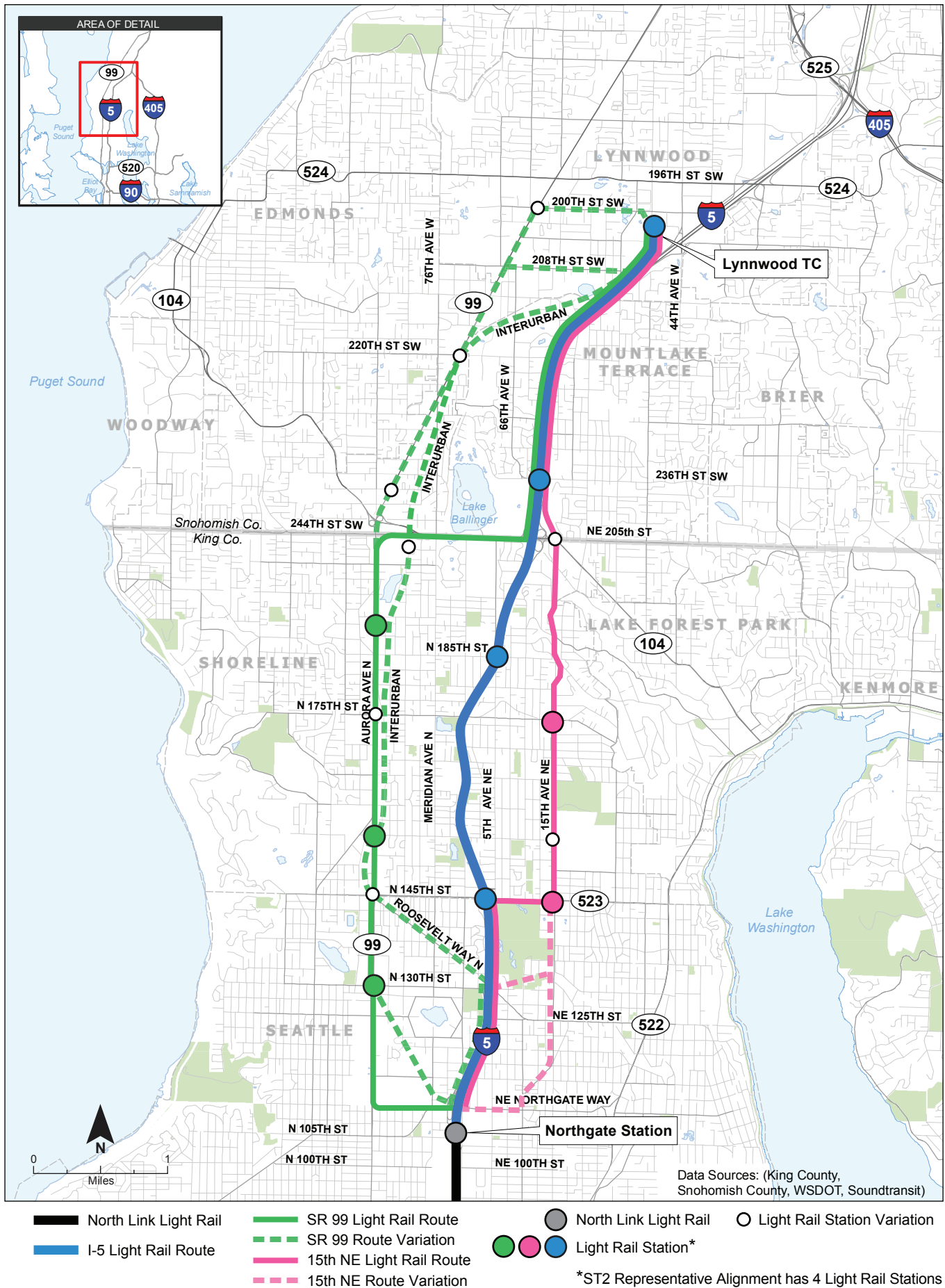


Figure 1-4. Light Rail Alternatives and Concepts Evaluated in the AA

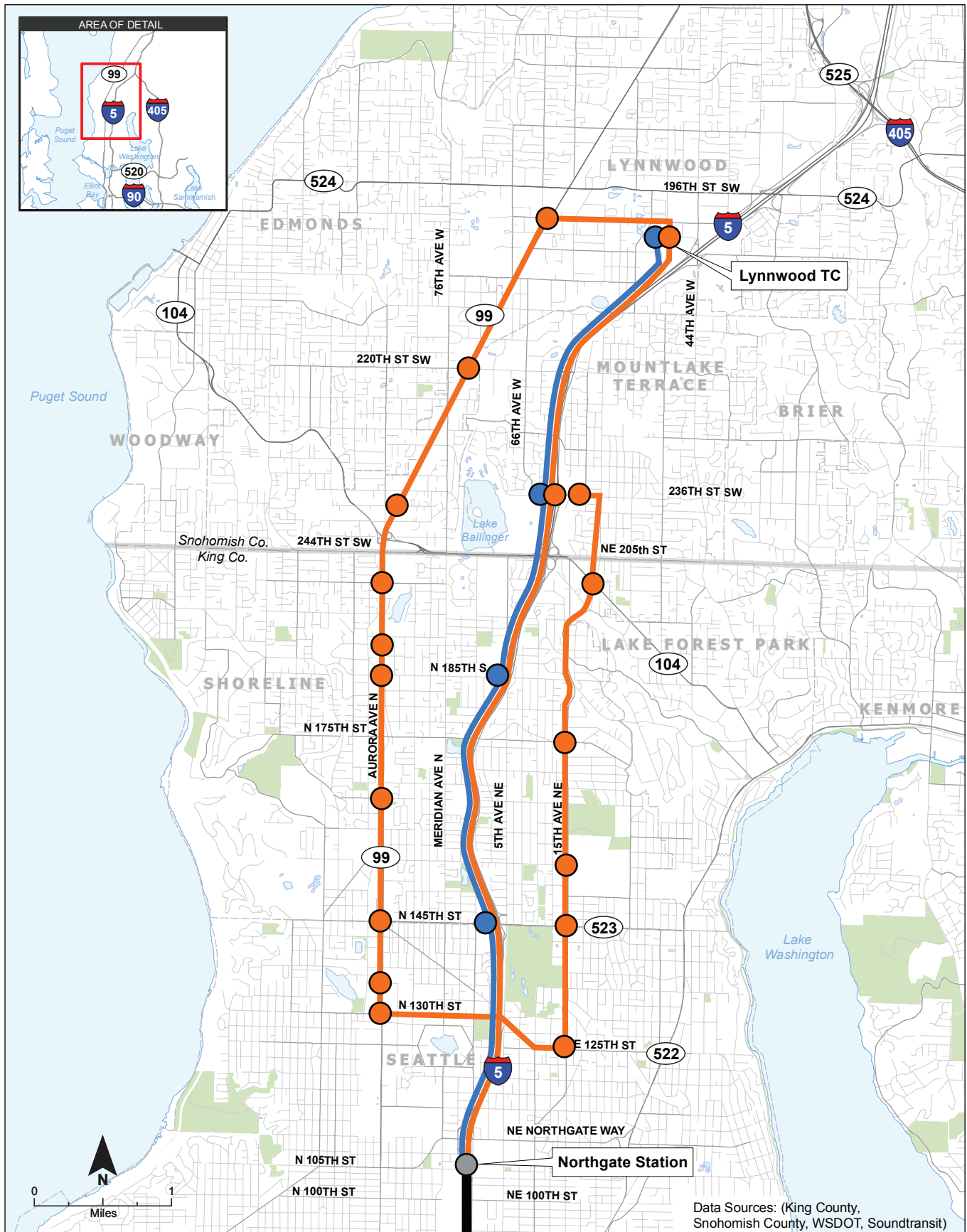


Figure 1-5. Bus Rapid Transit Alternatives and Concepts Considered in the AA

Table 1-1a. Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Summary
KEY TO RANKING


TSM	L1	L2	L3	B2
TSM/Baseline	I-5 Light Rail	SR 99 Mixed Profile Light Rail	SR 99 Elevated Light Rail	Multi-Corridor BRT

Purpose and Need: Transportation Effectiveness in Meeting Mobility, Access and Capacity Needs

2030 Project Daily Riders	21,000 <i>Daily Riders</i>	52,000 <i>Daily Riders</i>	41,000 <i>Daily Riders</i>	48,000 <i>Daily Riders</i>	24,000 <i>Daily Riders</i>
2030 Annual New Riders	0.64 million <i>New Riders</i>	4.5 million <i>New Riders</i>	2.5 million <i>New Riders</i>	3.9 million <i>New Riders</i>	1.1 million <i>New Riders</i>
2030 Annual Hours of Travel Time Saved	0.59 million <i>Hours Saved</i>	4.6 million <i>Hours Saved</i>	2.4 million <i>Hours Saved</i>	3.8 million <i>Hours Saved</i>	1 million <i>Hours Saved</i>
2030 New Weekday Transit Trips to Regional Centers	1,500 <i>More Trips</i>	10,400 <i>More Trips</i>	5,300 <i>More Trips</i>	8,400 <i>More Trips</i>	2,500 <i>More Trips</i>
Capacity in passengers per hour per direction (pphpd)	1,680 <i>pphpd</i>	8,880 <i>pphpd</i>	4,440 <i>pphpd</i>	8,880 <i>pphpd</i>	3,600 <i>pphpd</i>
2030 Peak Hour Passenger Demand/Capacity	At capacity	72%	95%	62%	86%
2030 Peak Transit Travel Time: Lynnwood to Northgate	30 minutes	14 minutes	21 minutes	18 minutes	24 minutes
2030 Transit to Auto Travel Time Comparison (Peak Lynnwood to Northgate)	4 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	20 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	13 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	16 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	10 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>
2030 Transit to Auto Travel Time Comparison (Peak Lynnwood to Downtown)	6 minutes <i>SLOWER than Auto</i>	10 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	3 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	6 minutes <i>FASTER than Auto</i>	Similar to Auto
Operations on Non-Exclusive Right-of-Way	23.8 miles	0 miles	0 miles	0 miles	25.8 miles
Signalized Intersections Traversed	30 <i>Intersections</i>	0 <i>Intersections</i>	5 <i>Intersections</i>	0 <i>Intersections</i>	50 <i>Intersections</i>
Number of Transfers to Reach Major Destinations	1 <i>Transfer</i>	0 <i>Transfers</i>	0 <i>Transfers</i>	0 <i>Transfers</i>	1 <i>Transfer</i>
2030 Reduction in Weekday VMT	16,900 <i>Fewer Miles</i>	191,500 <i>Fewer Miles</i>	85,200 <i>Fewer Miles</i>	160,700 <i>Fewer Miles</i>	33,100 <i>Fewer Miles</i>

Purpose and Need: Equitable Community Impacts and Benefits

Impacts on Affected Communities	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate to High	Low
Transportation Benefits to Affected Communities	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate to High	Low

Purpose and Need: Supportive Land Use and Economic Development Effects

Access to Regional Growth Centers	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate to High	Low
Station Areas with High TOD Potential	Not Applicable	1 <i>of 4 Station Areas</i>	2 <i>of 5 Station Areas</i>	2 <i>of 5 Station Areas</i>	2 <i>of 10 Station Areas</i>

Table 1-1b. Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Summary
KEY TO RANKING


	TSM TSM/Baseline	L1 I-5 Light Rail	L2 SR 99 Mixed Profile Light Rail	L3 SR 99 Elevated Light Rail	B2 Multi-Corridor BRT
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Purpose and Need: Preservation of a Healthy Environment

At this level of concept development and analysis, measures do not account for possible impact avoidance and mitigation.

Ecosystem Effects	Low	Possible High Effects on Several Sensitive Areas	Possible High Effects on Several Sensitive Areas	Possible High Effects on Several Sensitive Areas	Possible Moderate Effects on Several Sensitive Areas
Water Resources Effects	Low	Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low
Potential Park or Historic Resources Effects, Including Section 4(f) Properties	Low	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low
Daily Reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Similar to No Build	235 tons	33 tons	223 tons	Similar to No Build
Visual Impacts	Low	Moderate, with Localized High	Moderate, with Localized High	Moderate, with Localized High	Low
Potential for Noise Impacts Requiring Mitigation	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	Low
New Transportation Right-of-Way Required	5 Acres 0 to 5 Parcels	22 Acres 140 to 170 Parcels	44 Acres 320 to 370 Parcels	40 Acres 200-230 Parcels	8 Acres 20-30 Parcels
Traffic Impacts	Minimal	Minor Corridor-wide Improvements	Minor Degradation at SR 99 Intersections	Minimal	Minimal
Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel	Minimal	Improvements Possible Over Time Near Stations	Improvements Possible Over Time Near Stations	Improvements Possible Over Time Near Stations	Minimal
Construction Effects on Transportation System	Low Impacts	Low to Moderate Impacts over Long Duration	High Impacts over Long Duration	Moderate Impacts over Long Duration	High Localized Impacts

Purpose and Need: Cost and Constructability

Capital Costs (Millions of Mid-2010 Dollars)	\$200 to \$230	\$1,420 to \$1,640	\$1,830 to \$2,100	\$2,010 to \$2,310	\$640 to \$730
2030 Net Annual Operations and Maintenance Costs (Millions of Mid-2010 Dollars)	\$17.6	\$11.0	\$10.4	\$14.6	\$33.6
Cost per Hour of 2030 User Benefits (Mid-2010 Dollars)	\$60 to \$64	\$25 to \$28	\$61 to \$69	\$42 to \$48	\$91 to \$99
Incremental Cost per 2030 New Passenger (Mid-2010 Dollars)	\$55 to \$59	\$25 to \$29	\$58 to \$67	\$41 to \$46	\$83 to \$90

Purpose and Need: Consistency with Sound Transit's Long-Range Vision

Meets State Definition of HCT	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Consistent with ST Long-Range System Plan	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

The AA also evaluated other light rail alignments, including an elevated SR 99 alternative. While that alternative has the potential to meet the project's purpose and need, it does not perform as well as the I-5 alternative in most areas and would have substantially higher capital costs, property acquisitions, and community impacts during construction. At-grade or mixed-profile light rail along SR 99 are not recommended because they would not effectively address the project's purpose and need due to inadequate capacity, low reliability, and low travel time benefits. The SR 99 at-grade and mixed profile alternatives would also be less effective in supporting regional land use objectives than other available alternatives.

Elevated and at-grade light rail alignment alternatives along 15th Avenue NE were also evaluated in the AA process but not recommended for further consideration in the EIS, because they carried high levels of environmental impacts, particularly to property and neighborhoods, and had lower transportation benefits than other available alternatives.

Detailed AA findings can be reviewed in the Alternative Analysis Report and SEPA Addendum at www.soundtransit.org/NCTP.

The Project's Preliminary Statement of Purpose and Need

A purpose and need statement is required for the EIS and is used to help guide decisions about the project and its alternatives. As part of Early Scoping in preparation for the AA phase of the project, Sound Transit and FTA developed an initial statement of the purpose and need for the North Corridor project. They then considered the public comments received and developed the following preliminary statement for the EIS.

The *purpose* of the North Corridor Transit Project is to improve regional mass transit service from Seattle north into Snohomish County by:

1. Providing reliable, rapid, and efficient two-way, peak and off-peak transit service of sufficient capacity to meet the existing and projected demand between the communities and activity centers located in the North Corridor and the other urban centers in the Central Puget Sound area;
2. Providing a mobility alternative to travel on congested roadways, and improving connections to the regional multimodal transportation system;
3. Supporting North Corridor communities' and the region's adopted land use, transportation and economic development vision, which promotes the well-being of people and communities, ensures economic vitality and preserves a healthy environment; and
4. Supporting the long-range vision, goals, and objectives for transit service established by Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan for high quality regional transit service

connecting major activity centers in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties, including a connection between Seattle and Everett.

The project is *needed* to:

- Meet the rapidly growing needs of the corridor and the region's future residents and workers by increasing mobility, access, and transportation capacity to and from regional growth and activity centers in the North Corridor and the rest of the region, as called for in the region's adopted plans, including the Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, as well as related county and city comprehensive plans.
- Address the problems of increasing and unreliable travel times for transit users in the North Corridor, who are now dependent on the corridor's highly congested roadway and HOV systems.
- Address overcrowding facing current and future North Corridor transit riders due to insufficient capacity of the current transit system.
- Provide an alternative to automobile trips on I-5 and SR 99, the two primary highways serving the corridor, which are unreliable and over capacity throughout significant portions of the day.
- Implement the long-range vision for HCT service established by Sound Transit's Long Range Plan, with a regional transit investment that supports economic vitality, preserves the environment, preserves communities, and allows for the future extension of HCT north to Everett.
- Ensure long-term regional mobility, multimodal connectivity, and convenience for North Corridor citizens and communities, including travel-disadvantaged residents and low income and minority populations.
- Provide the transit infrastructure needed to support the development of Northgate and Lynnwood as designated regional growth centers providing housing, employment, public services, and multimodal transportation connections.
- Help support the environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region, including state regulations setting goals for reducing annual per capita vehicle miles traveled by 2050, in accordance with RCW 47.01.440, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (Limiting Green House Gas Emissions, Chapter 702.35)

1.4 Potential EIS Alternatives

The results of the AA have led Sound Transit and FTA to consider for inclusion in the EIS the following range of alternatives, on which Sound Transit and FTA request public and agency comments.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative is required under NEPA, and it represents the existing transportation system plus any committed transportation improvements. It does not include a major investment in the North Corridor. The committed improvements include the other highway and transit projects identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council (*Transportation 2040*, May 2010). These include Sound Transit's other investments in the ST2 program, including light rail to Northgate, the East Link extension to Overlake in Redmond, the South Link extension to the vicinity of Highline Community College, service enhancements to the Sound Transit express regional bus system in the corridor, King County Metro's BRT improvements along SR 99 in Shoreline and Seattle, and minor local bus service additions by both King County Metro and Community Transit.

Light Rail Alternatives

The range of light rail alternatives to be considered for further study in the EIS is based on the AA findings. The AA reviewed a large range of potential route, transit mode, and other transit investment alternatives for the corridor before finding that light rail in an exclusive guideway is the only mode that would provide the capacity, reliability, and travel time benefits needed to address the transportation problems of the corridor.

Based on the AA results, Sound Transit expects to consider light rail alternatives along an I-5 alignment in the EIS. A fully elevated SR 99 alignment might also be considered, although it carries higher costs, higher overall environmental impacts, lower transportation benefits, and is less cost-effective than an I-5 alignment.

The North Corridor light rail alternatives would operate light rail trains between Northgate and Lynnwood in two directions, 20 hours per day. Trains, which would be up to four cars long, would run every 4 minutes during the peak periods and every 10 minutes off-peak. All of the alternatives would provide for a fully exclusive guideway, with no part of the alignment shared with other vehicles.

All of the light rail alternatives would require new light rail vehicles and would involve other transit system and network modifications. As part of the larger ST2 program to expand the regional light rail system, the North Corridor Transit Project would also rely upon expanded regional light rail operations and maintenance facilities, in conjunction with ST2 plans for extensions of light rail to the east and south. The expansion of Sound Transit's regional light rail operations and maintenance facilities is independent of the North Corridor Transit Project and has a separate environmental review process.

Potential I-5 Light Rail Alternatives

Potential I-5 light rail alternatives would be located generally along I-5 with new stations proposed at NE 145th Street, NE 185th Street, Mountlake Terrace Transit Center (I-5 at SW 236th Street), and the Lynnwood Transit Center. Park-and-ride structures with up to 500 new stalls each would be located at the North 145th Street, North 185th Street, and Lynnwood Transit Center stations. Figure 1-6 shows a potential alignment with stations.

The AA produced a conceptual I-5 alignment that Sound Transit is using to identify other potential I-5 alignment alternatives to be considered further in the EIS. The general I-5 alignment from the AA includes at-grade and elevated light rail sections along the east side of I-5 from Northgate to Mountlake Terrace, and in the median north of Mountlake Terrace before crossing to the west of I-5 to reach the Lynnwood Transit Center. This general alignment builds on existing park-and-ride and transit center investments as well as local service connections, avoids repeated crossings of I-5, and also avoids major reconstruction of I-5 roadways.

Variations could include alignments at different locations relative to the east or west sides of I-5 or the I-5 median, different locations for crossing I-5, or different combinations of elevated or at-grade profiles or station locations and layouts.

Potential SR 99 Light Rail Alternatives

Based on the AA findings, any alignment along SR 99 would need to be entirely elevated in order to provide the capacity, reliability, and travel time savings needed to meet the project's purpose and need.

Figure 1-7 shows a representative SR 99 alignment based on the AA efforts. The SR 99 elevated light rail alternative evaluated in the AA begins on an elevated structure at the Northgate Link Station, continues north and then turns west over I-5, and then travels along Northgate Way and North 110th Street to the median of SR 99. This route transitions from the median to the west side of SR 99 at about North 120th Street, then operates on elevated structure on the west side of SR 99 to SR 104 where it turns east to reach a Mountlake Terrace Station at 236th Street SW and I-5. This general alignment avoids multiple crossings and reconstruction of SR 99, and directly serves the Shoreline Park-and-Ride. From the Mountlake Terrace Station it continues north to Lynnwood, which is similar to the I-5 light rail alternatives.

FEATURES AND SERVICE

Profile: Approximately 8.5 miles of elevated and ground-level double-track light rail

Service: Light Rail

Maximum Number of Vehicles:

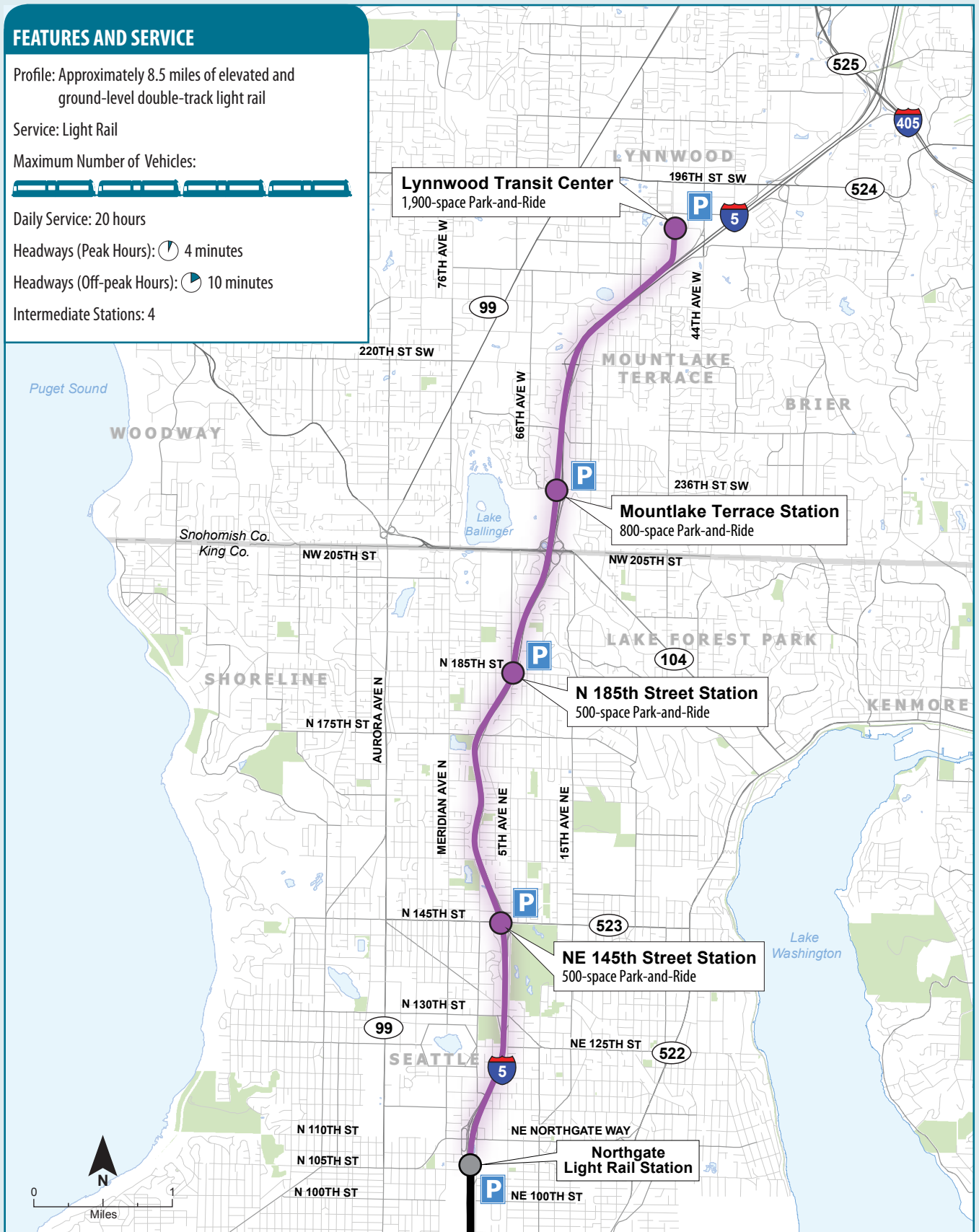


Daily Service: 20 hours

Headways (Peak Hours): ⌚ 4 minutes

Headways (Off-peak Hours): ⌚ 10 minutes

Intermediate Stations: 4



Data Sources: King County, Snohomish County, WSDOT, Sound Transit

- General Light Rail Alignment
- Potential Light Rail Station
- North Link Light Rail
- North Link Station
- P Parking Available at Station

Figure 1-6. Potential I-5 Light Rail Alignments and Stations

FEATURES AND SERVICE

Profile: Approximately 8.5 miles of elevated and ground-level double-track light rail

Service: Light Rail

Maximum Number of Vehicles:



Daily Service: 20 hours

Headways (Peak Hours): ⌚ 4 minutes

Headways (Off-peak Hours): ⌚ 10 minutes

Intermediate Stations: 4

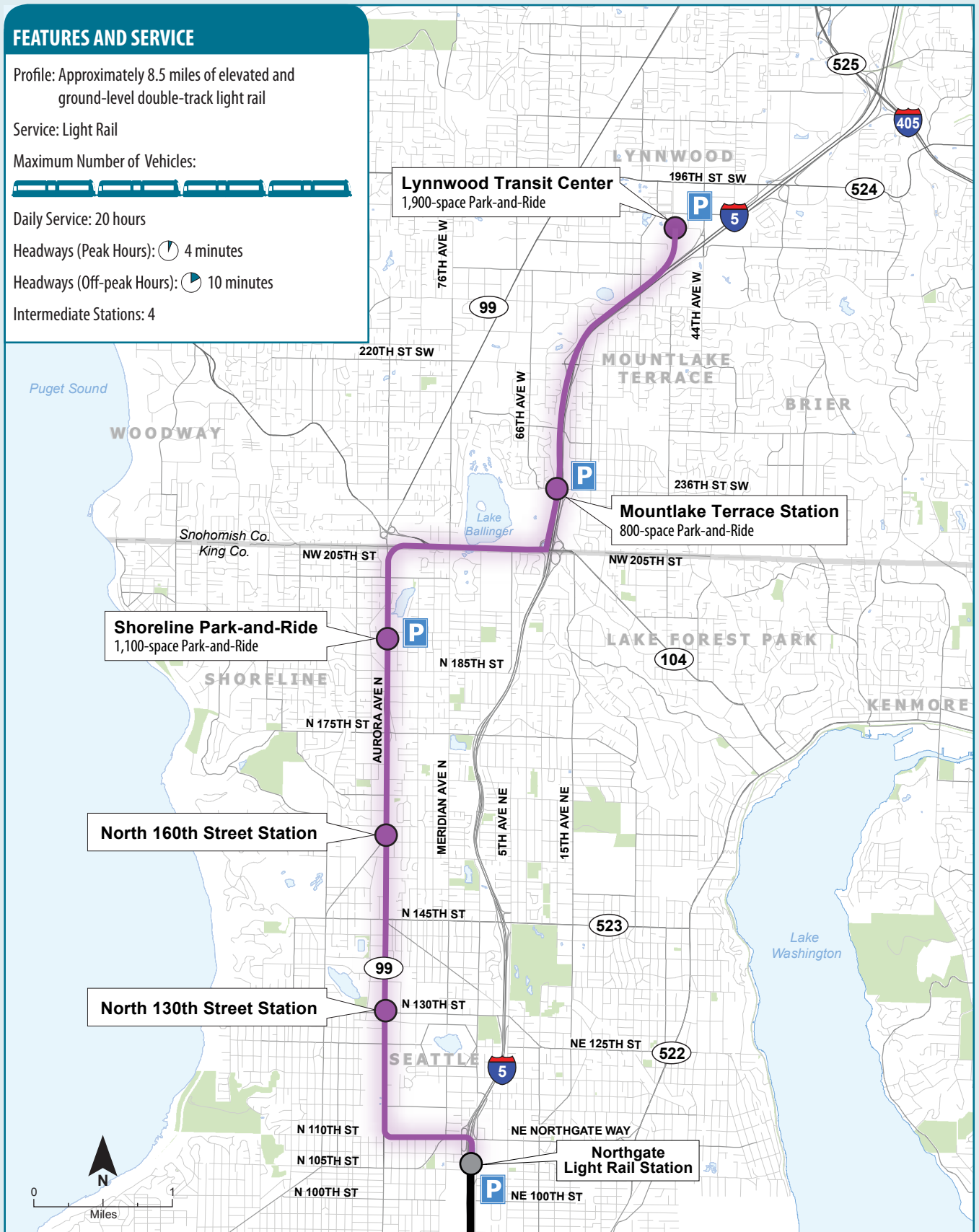


Figure 1-7. Potential SR 99 Elevated Light Rail Alignments and Stations

The five light rail stations assumed in the AA were located at SR 99 near North 130th Street, North 160th Street, and the Shoreline Park-and-Ride, with Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood Transit Center stations the same as those assumed for I-5 light rail. At the Shoreline Park-and-Ride, a 1,100-stall parking structure would be developed at the Shoreline Park-and-ride, adding 500 new spaces, and relocating 200 spaces from the Aurora Village Transit Center. The Aurora Village Transit Center would also be relocated to the Shoreline Park-and-Ride to create a consolidated multimodal transit hub.

If the SR 99 corridor light rail alternatives are advanced to the EIS for further study, variations could be considered such as alignments at different locations relative to the east or west sides of SR 99 or the SR 99 median, or alternative station locations and layouts.

1.5 Topics to be Addressed in the EIS

The project 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 North Corridor project alternatives. Public comments during the scoping process help the project team to define the scope of analysis and to identify significant impacts to be avoided, reduced, or mitigated. Topics to be addressed in the EIS include:

- Transportation
 - Regional travel
 - Transit
 - Local travel, including traffic, access and circulation, safety, biking, walking, and parking
 - Freight movement
- Land Use and Economic Activity
- Acquisitions, Displacements, and Relocations
- Community Impacts
- Visual Resources and Aesthetics
- Air Quality, including Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Noise and Vibration
- Ecosystems
- Water Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Hazardous Materials
- Electromagnetic Fields

- Public Services and Utilities
- Cultural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources (including Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act)
- Parklands
- Construction Impacts
- Cumulative Effects, including Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability
- Financial Analysis
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f)—a U.S. Department of Transportation regulation protecting parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or historic resources

1.6 Project Timeline and Next Steps

Following scoping, Sound Transit will develop and release a Scoping Summary Report. The report will address the comments Sound Transit has received about the project's purpose and need, alternatives, and environmental issues.

Based on scoping and the results of the AA, Sound Transit plans to move forward to develop a major transit capital investment in the corridor between Northgate and Lynnwood.

Identifying the Draft EIS Alternatives and the Scope of the EIS

The public and agency comments received during scoping will help Sound Transit (at the direction of the Sound Transit Board) and FTA to confirm the purpose and need for the project, identify the issues and alternatives to be considered in the Draft EIS (also possibly identifying a locally preferred alternative [LPA]), and define the scope of the EIS and its related technical analysis, including any special issues to be addressed.

In late 2011 or early 2012, the Sound Transit Board is expected to consider a motion to provide direction on the alternatives to be studied in the Draft EIS. The consideration of any motions will be conducted in regularly scheduled meetings of the Board. The Board's meetings are structured to allow public comment, and to provide meeting agendas and related materials, including any briefings or motions involving the North Corridor project. This information will also be available in advance of the meetings through the Sound Transit Web site. Interested parties may also request e-mail notices of the meetings.

Preparing and Issuing the Draft EIS

Work on the Draft EIS is anticipated to start in early 2012 and it will take approximately 12 to 18 months to complete and issue the Draft EIS. The No Build Alternative will be carried forward to provide the basis for comparison of the impacts and benefits of the light rail alternative(s).

Sound Transit and FTA will publish the Draft EIS with a public review and comment period of at least 45 days, including public meetings and a public hearing.

Preparing a Final EIS

After the Draft EIS public comment period ends, Sound Transit will consider comments and the Draft EIS findings. If Sound Transit has identified an LPA prior to issuing the Draft EIS, the Board will confirm or modify that LPA following the evaluation of public comments on the Draft EIS. If Sound Transit has not previously identified an LPA, the Board would identify the LPA at this time. In any case, the Board would consider public comments and the Draft EIS findings before providing direction to Sound Transit staff in the form of a motion. Based on the direction of the Board and in cooperation with FTA, Sound Transit will then complete preliminary engineering for the LPA and develop a Final EIS. The Final EIS will then update the environmental information for the LPA and other alternatives, respond to public comments on the Draft EIS, and further define measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential project impacts.

Obtaining Environmental Approvals and Commencing Final Design, Construction, and Operation

Following the release of a Final EIS, Sound Transit and FTA will issue their environmental findings as required under SEPA and NEPA, which includes selecting the project to be built and operated in the North Corridor, and its accompanying environmental commitments. FTA will issue a federal Record of Decision (ROD). If the FTA ROD approves a build alternative, the project will then continue forward with final design, permitting, construction, and operations. Service is planned to begin in 2023.

1.7 Public and Agency Involvement

Sound Transit is committed to involving all interested parties in decisions about this project. To learn more or to get involved, interested parties should attend a scoping meeting or contact the project staff identified below. See comment instructions earlier in this report for how to comment in writing at the public meetings. A public comment sheet is also attached to this report.

The project has prepared a Draft Coordination Plan describing how Sound Transit and FTA will involve the public and agencies throughout the EIS process. The plan will be available at the scoping meetings and is also available on the Sound Transit Web site at www.soundtransit.org/NCTP.

After scoping, the project will continue to provide opportunities for public involvement. Sound Transit will hold public meetings and hearings on the Draft EIS during its public comment period. In addition to the formal milestones and products listed above under Project Timeline and Next Steps, the project will have ongoing meetings with the public, tribes, business and community groups, and government agencies. The project's Web site and e-mail notices will also include the latest project information.

For further questions or requests, including translation services or materials in alternative formats, contact Roger Iwata, North Corridor Transit Project, Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826, or by e-mail to roger.iwata@soundtransit.org.