

North Corridor Transit Project

Alternatives analysis process

Background

The North Corridor Transit Project will extend mass transit from Northgate to Lynnwood, as authorized by voters in 2008, following years of planning.

The project will connect to and build on the regional light rail system currently operating from downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac Airport, the extension to the University of Washington now under construction (opening in 2016), and the further extension to Northgate in final design (targeted for opening in 2021).

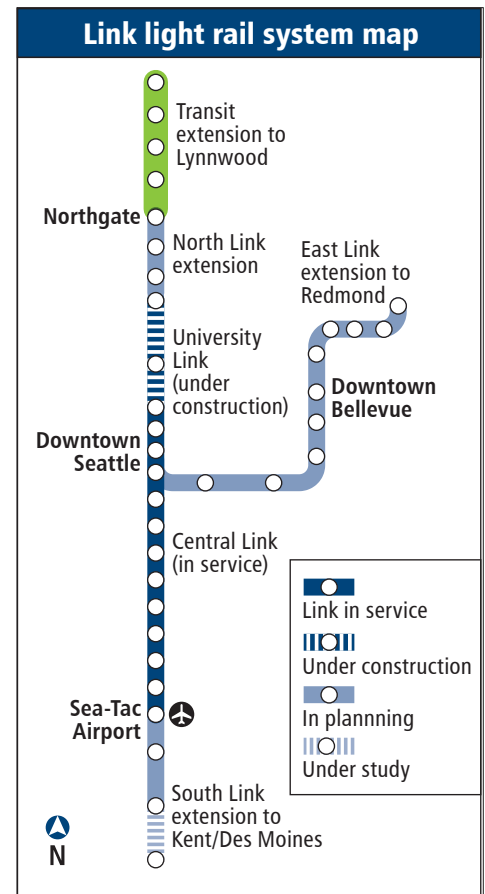
Why mass transit – isn't this light rail?

This project will need substantial federal grant funding to be built. A major source of federal funding is the "New Starts" program of the Federal Transit Administration. New Starts grants are awarded nationally on a competitive basis following a rigorous, objective review of potential projects.

A representative or prototypical project was defined, conceptually engineered and cost estimated as input to the financial plan for the ST2 program approved by voters in 2008. This representative project assumed a fully elevated light rail line from Northgate Station to Lynnwood Transit Center along the Interstate 5 corridor, with four new stations beyond Northgate.

To be eligible for this program, one requirement of the New Starts process is that projects complete an alternatives analysis (AA) that compares reasonable alternatives that could satisfy the purpose and need for the investment. Those alternatives can include multiple routes and modes (such as bus and rail), identified in conjunction with the public. The goal of the AA process, as shown in the diagram on the back, is to identify those alternatives that are most promising before beginning formal environmental review. This is why Sound Transit must evaluate many options, not just light rail.

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In 2008, voters approved the Sound Transit 2 Plan, which includes 36 miles of additional light rail to form a 55-mile regional Link light rail system.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to further examine the impacts and potential mitigation of the most promising alternatives identified through the AA. The breadth of the EIS process and alternatives to advance to the draft EIS will be identified by the Sound Transit Board in late 2011 or early 2012.

Qualification and award of federal funding will be a key component of keeping this project affordable for all Puget Sound residents. This is especially important as Sound Transit responds to the effects of the current economic recession, which has reduced the agency's projected revenues by roughly 25 percent through 2023.

North Corridor Transit Alternatives Analysis Evaluation Framework

