

East Link Cost Savings Work Plan Findings Public Involvement Summary



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Background

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed on November 15, 2011, Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue established a collaborative framework to share the additional cost of a tunnel in downtown Bellevue. Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue published a Cost Savings Report on June 5, 2012 to evaluate potential cost savings for the East Link Extension in the City of Bellevue. The full Cost Savings Report can be found at www.soundtransit.org/eastlink.

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue considered public feedback on the Cost Savings Report as well as technical analysis to develop the Cost Savings Work Plan. On June 28, 2012, the Sound Transit Board endorsed the Cost Savings Work Plan and through the Collaborative Design Process, Sound Transit and City staff refined and optimized concepts for consideration by the Bellevue City Council and the Sound Transit Board of Directors.

The Cost Savings Work Plan Findings were published on September 27, 2012. The full document was available for public review on Sound Transit's website.

Cost Savings Ideas – Advanced for Further Development

Bellevue Way Alignment at Winters House

- 1a. Shift Bellevue Way West to allow space for at-grade light rail in front of Winters House and a proposed City of Bellevue HOV Lane. The City of Bellevue HOV Lane continues the HOV lane north from the main entrance of the South Bellevue Station to the Bellevue Way and 112th Ave "Y" intersection.

112th Ave. SE Alignment

- 2b. Raise 112th Ave Roadway over an at-grade alignment of light rail at SE 15th. Options include:
 - 2.b.1– SE 4th Closed except for emergency access. This option includes a design alternative to connect Bellefield Residential Park to Surrey Downs.
 - 2.b.2 – General Traffic Access with SE 4th over at-grade light rail.
 - 2.b.3 – LRT in a trench under SE 4th (This is the same configuration in the MOU Recommendation for the north end of 112th Ave. SE).

Downtown Station Design

- 3e. Optimize the Adopted Project
- 3b. Construct a Stacked Tunnel Configuration (Allows tunnel to be narrower)
- 3c. Relocate Station to NE 6th

Overview

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue co-hosted three drop in sessions and 10 stakeholder briefings to share the Cost Savings Work Plan Findings (Work Plan Findings), inform the public of how the cost savings ideas advanced and educate stakeholders about the decision-making process.

Each drop in session was structured the same. Participants were asked to sign-in upon arrival and received a copy of the Work Plan Findings and comment form. Display boards and strip plots featured the updated cost savings ideas. Technical staff were available to explain the Work Plan Findings and invite participants to provide comments on the revised concepts. Staff collected a total of 78 comments at the drop in sessions. Each drop in session was focused on area-specific cost savings ideas, however materials for all cost savings options were available at each session.

Public comments were accepted in-person at the drop in sessions, and by mail and email. Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue received over 100 comments throughout the Work Plan Findings outreach process. The Sound Transit Board and Bellevue City Council will weigh public feedback along with environmental considerations and engineering findings to determine which ideas to advance for further development. All meeting materials and graphics are available on Sound Transit's East Link website www.soundtransit.org/eastlink and linked from the City's website as well.

Notification

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue collaborated to spread the word about the cost savings process and opportunities for public involvement. There was broad notification of the drop in sessions and opportunities to comment through the following channels:

- Display advertisements in the Bellevue Reporter, Seattle Transit Blog, La Raza, Seattle Chinese Post, Publicola.net (25,000 page views), and BellevuePatch.com (6,669 page views)
- Postcards mailed to over 20,000 eastside residents and businesses
- A press release to local papers and blogs
- Email notification to approximately 5,300 subscribers of the East Link Extension listserv, 850 subscribers of the Bellevue Gov Alert, neighborhood newsletter, and other agency or community group listservs
- Announcements on the Sound Transit project web page

Drop In Session #1: Bellevue Way

On October 2, 2012, Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue co-hosted the first of three drop in sessions to share the Work Plan Findings, with an emphasis on the Bellevue Way cost savings ideas. The drop in session was held from 5 to 7 p.m. at New Hope International Church in south Bellevue. Approximately 39 people attended the session to learn about the updated cost savings idea and provide feedback.

Drop In Session #2: 112th Ave SE

The second drop in session was held on October 3, 2012 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Bellevue Hilton Hotel along 112th Ave SE in Bellevue. Approximately 35 people attended the drop in session to learn more and offer comments on the updated cost savings ideas along 112th Ave SE.

Drop In Session #3: Downtown Bellevue

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue held the final drop in session on October 4, 2012 at Bellevue City Hall. The meeting was held from 4 to 6 p.m. and featured the downtown station cost savings. Approximately 42 people attended the downtown Bellevue drop in session.



Comment Summary

The following is a summary of key themes that emerged during the Cost Savings Work Plan Findings process. The key themes are arranged by potential cost savings idea. Transcribed comments associated with the key themes are included in italics.

Cost Savings Idea 1a: Shift Bellevue Way west to allow space for at-grade light rail with a City of Bellevue HOV lane

Residents expressed concerns about noise, visual effects, and loss of trees from shifting Bellevue Way west. Residents and the Eastside Heritage Center commented about the importance of maintaining access to the Winters House and Blueberry Farm. Residents also expressed concerns about the effect of the project on property values. Members from both Eastside Heritage Center and the Enatai neighborhood expressed support for keeping light rail in a trench in front of Winters House. Residents had concerns about the City of Bellevue proposed High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane project due to possible increased traffic and noise related to the roadway widening/moving. There was also concern that an HOV lane wouldn't solve southbound congestion onto I-90. Some residents and members of the business community cited benefit to the increased capacity on Bellevue Way with the City of Bellevue proposed HOV lane.

Concerns about noise, visual effects, and loss of trees from shifting Bellevue Way west.

- I absolutely oppose this idea. While I am in favor of Sound Transit and the route along Bellevue Way, the original lidded trench/trenches should be maintained.*
- Concerns regarding noise impact to Winters House from "rebound" off wall on west side of Belle. Way.*
- Serious visual impacts (negative) to historic character of Winters House.*
- Enatai neighborhood is greatly, negatively impacted. Significant loss of trees, degradation of quality of life and property. Sound and vibration impact to homeowners increased.*

- I am very worried about sound...Moving Bellevue Way West will 1) remove many sound absorbing trees. 2) it will require an ugly cement retaining wall. 3) This wall will bounce the light rail noise into our peaceful Mercer Slough trail system. 4) What about drainage off the steep slope by this retaining wall. 5) Are we losing our shoulder for emergency vehicles?*
- In a quiet "arboreal" residential neighborhood already facing an elevated rail alignment, station and multi-level parking structure, this cost-saving design is inappropriate and asks for too much of one neighborhood.*

Concern for construction duration.

- Second, I oppose option 1a because it will double the construction time in the Enatai neighborhood.*
- ... it would also at least double construction time for this part of an already-lengthy project. Again--too much to ask of one neighborhood.*

Concern from a resident for maintaining access to the Winters House.

- Very poor access to Winters House in this option.*

Concern about an HOV lane on Bellevue Way.

- We have always opposed an HOV lane on Bellevue Way and continue to do so. An HOV lane and widening Bell Way creates noise, increases speeds on Bell Way...*
- Why HOV? Never in the plans to start!*
- Move Bellevue Forward supports an at grade alignment on Bellevue Way but does not support the addition of a third lane (HOV) on Bellevue Way until the project is vetted openly with the public and until further information is available to warrant the addition of this lane.*

Bellevue Downtown Association supported added capacity on Bellevue Way.

- *We continue to support efforts that can reduce travel delay with added capacity on Bellevue Way (between the Y and South Bellevue Park & Ride) both during construction and once light rail is in service.*

Bellevue Chamber of Commerce cited benefits of an HOV lane on Bellevue Way.

- *Adding HOV capacity first, in order to mitigate the present and future congestion during construction of the East Link and provide relief once the project is completed, is the number one priority of our organization and is critical to moving people, goods and services within our community*

Eastside Heritage Center had concerns with access at the Blueberry Farm and Winters House, noise, visual appearance of the rail and barriers and impacts to the Winters House property.

- *EHC continues to have serious concerns with the proposal to re-route vehicle access so far south, as it increases challenges for reasonable and visible access to the House.*
- *...there is legitimate concern over the potential for amplified sound re-bouncing off the proposed retaining wall on the west-side of Bellevue Way, which reaches a height of over 35 feet directly across from the Winters House. There is no reference to mitigation measures for the Winters House, nor any acknowledgement that the noise wall for the neighborhood could adversely affect the historic site.*
- *...the report completely omits any reference to the two additional barriers that will be built separating the rail from the road on one side and from the sidewalk on the other. These barriers would negatively isolate the House and obstruct its view from the road. EHC requests that further design work be done on this particular element to give a more accurate visual depiction of the rail and barriers in front of the House, as well as details on height.*
- *This proposal would, in fact, significantly alter the surroundings, character and feeling of the historic Winters House with construction of a barrier within 50 feet of the front porch and with a train passing every 4 minutes.*



Cost savings idea 2b: Raise 112th Avenue SE alignment over at-grade light rail. Neighborhood access options include:

- **2.b.1 – SE 4th St. closed except for emergency access. Includes a design alternative to connect Bellefield Residential Park to Surrey Downs.**
- **2.b.2 – General traffic access with SE 4th St. over at-grade light rail.**
- **2.b.3. – Light rail in a trench section under SE 4th St.**

112th Avenue SE Alignment (Idea 2b):

Residents from the Surrey Downs neighborhood indicated a desire for keeping light rail in a trench at SE 4th Street. Residents had concerns about increased cut-through traffic in the neighborhood, access to Surrey Downs, and noise including audible pedestrian crossing warnings at East Main Station. There were also comments that expressed preference for the emergency access only option and concern about the elevated vehicle access at SE 4th, particularly from the Bellevue Club. There were concerns from neighbors in Surrey Downs and Bellefield Residential Park about the design option which creates a connection between the Surrey Downs neighborhood from 111th Place SE and the Bellefield Residential Park providing access to southbound 112th Ave. SE. Residents of Surrey Downs and Bellefield Residential Park requested left in and out options at SE 4th and SE 15th, respectively. Residents expressed concerns about train visibility and intrusiveness; however, elevating the road over the rail at SE 15th helped reduce those concerns relative to elevated light rail over 112th Ave SE.

SE 4th St. closed except for emergency access (Idea 2.b.1)

Concern for access to Surrey Downs.

- *Not adequate access for Surrey Downs and routes all park traffic through Surrey Downs. No Bellefield access option. This would burden SD with additional pass through traffic from another neighborhood. Especially since 112th westbound route in bus only. Also would probably route park access through SD.*
- *This option does not provide acceptable unrestricted access (including left turns in and out) for Surrey Downs. Also, routes all park traffic through Surrey Downs which is not acceptable.*

Concern about access from residents of Bellefield Residential Park, particularly with the design alternative connecting Surrey Downs to Bellefield Residential Park from 111th Place SE.

- *Belle Res. Park roads cannot handle any increase traffic as they are too narrow with driveway parking making it unsafe to increased traffic. Also there are no sidewalks. Need northbound entrance/exit at south entrance.*
- *Northbound entry and exit to/from Bellefield Residential Park is needed*

Benefits cited by the public include cost savings potential and reduced noise.

- *If heavily landscaped with no train interruption -- this could save most if done right. Eliminates bells, squeal, reverberated sound and gives the trench a dedicated right of way.*

Bellevue Club indicated support for Idea 2.b.1.

- *We believe that an at-grade option with limited, emergency entry on SE 4th into Surrey Downs is the best alternative. The substantial cost savings with an at-grade alignment can be used to support appropriate mitigation details on 112th Ave SE as well as other needs for the City of Bellevue and Sound Transit.*

General traffic access with SE 4th St. over at-grade light rail (Idea 2.b.2)

Benefits cited by the public include preserved access, improved safety and reduced visual impacts.

- *This route makes more sense—we need to keep SE 4th open.*
- *While this option costs the most, it best preserves ped access, which should be an objective of this project too.*
- *...the road-over-rail concept does make sense—as long as it makes light rail less visible and intrusive to residents there—e.g. lowering the rail bed as much as possible and extra screening. Also regarding this concept, it is very important that residents have full north/south access on 112th Ave SE—i.e. full left and right access on 112th Ave*
- *I support raising 112th over the tracks. I agree we should minimize at-grade street crossings, both for safety and for traffic congestion.*
- *Move Bellevue Forward continues to support the ‘road over rail’ design variation and an at-grade alignment on the west side of 112th Ave NE.*

Concern for visual impacts.

- *Landscaping between SE 8th and SE 4th will be the challenge of this alignment. Don't want 112th a concrete blight since it's a major gateway to Bellevue*

Requests to provide additional access to Surrey Downs and Bellefield Residential and Office Park.

- *Need northbound entrance/exit at south entrance. Need to consider flow of water from our ponds.*
- *Need northbound entrance/exit from Bellefield Park residences from southern exit. Roads and parking within Bellefield park cannot handle increased traffic as the roads are too narrow. Safety issue*
- *Not adequate access for Surrey Downs.*
- *This option provides only restricted access (rt in & out) to Surrey Downs and leaves access from 405 very limited. The only option which provides adequate access is MOU.*
- *Northbound access out of Bellefield is needed. Add left turn lane into park*

Light rail in a trench section under SE 4th St. (Idea 2.b.3)

Residents cited reduced visual impacts and access as key benefits.

- *Preserves access to neighborhood from 112th Ave SE. Helps shield noise and visual impact by putting train in trench.*
- *This is the alignment that Surrey Downs did SUPPORT as the only mitigation for light rail on 112th Ave SE.*
- *The 2.b.3 option (MOU) is the only acceptable option. It preserves access to Surrey Downs and minimizes the existing traffic pattern disruptions. Putting the train in a trench is the mitigation agreed upon by the City of Bellevue and Sound Transit and should not be withdrawn to save a few dollars.*
- *Preserves access to neighborhood from 112th Ave SE. Helps shield noise and visual impact by putting train in trench.*

Surrey Downs East Link Committee expressed support for keeping light rail in a trench at SE 4th Street.

- *By closing SE 4th St (in addition to closing SE 1st Pl for the Main St station), this easy accessibility to I-405 will be taken away from the residences in Surrey Downs and will result in 12 to 15 percent depreciation in home values, causing a direct loss of wealth ranging from \$17 to \$21 million... So this is our earnest request to you – please leave the SE 4th trench as provided in the MoU and look to find cost savings elsewhere.*

Bellevue Chamber of Commerce cited visual benefits.

- *While this option appears not to have substantial cost savings it provides a more visually appealing grade-separated option that will benefit both the light rail system as well as traffic flows.*



Downtown Bellevue Tunnel Design

- **Cost Savings Idea 3e – Optimize adopted project**
- **Cost Savings Idea 3b – Stacked Tunnel Configuration**
- **Cost Savings Idea 3c – Relocate Station to NE 6th Street**

Downtown Station Design - Optimize preliminary engineering design (Idea 3e):

Many members of the downtown community expressed a preference for the accessibility of the optimized preliminary engineering option, particularly with its two station entries and proximity to the downtown core and Bellevue Transit Center. The community noted the potential cost savings benefit compared to the original preliminary engineering plan.

- *Strongly prefer 3e—other options poor access and cost savings is not enough for a \$2 billion project.*
- *3e is an impressive improvement over the Adopted Project—better functionality at lower cost.*
- *Good connections to transit center and south part of downtown*
- *Still best option, much better access points, visible stations and access points*
- *Lower cost, closer to transit center*
- *Station entrances narrow streets and will reduce road capacity.*

Move Bellevue Forward supports the optimized adopted 110th tunnel station in downtown Bellevue and we are pleased to see that \$6-10 million in cost savings has been identified.

Downtown Station Design – Stacked Tunnel (Idea 3b):

Residents in the downtown area, as well as the business community, expressed concerns about reduced road capacity and minimal cost savings of a stacked tunnel option. Concerns were expressed about the proximity of the station entrance south of SE 4th to a condominium building.

- *2nd escalator inconvenient, narrow platform*
- *Cost saving not enough for \$2 billion project (\$3 million)*
- *Station entrances narrow streets and will reduce road capacity.*
- *Less savings. Takes up valuable lane space. Difficult design and construction.*
- *Left turn elimination is a problem. Bus routes would have to be altered.*
- *Deeper shafts—always creates more potential issues, function same as 3e*
- *Less passenger friendly*
- *Please don't take away the 2 lanes on 110th to put in the south entrance to the stacked station. 110th is used quite a bit during late afternoon as a shortcut to Main and avoid 112th southbound. Do another design not 3B.*

Abella residents indicated that the stacked tunnel creates potential issues with customer parking, security and safety issues for homeowners, and negatively impacts access to the parking garage.

Meydenbauer Center expressed concern for lane capacity on 110th Ave NE.

- *Any configuration that takes away lane capacity on 110th Ave. NE, either through proposed cost saving design options or significant road closures during construction, will create additional traffic congestion in downtown and particularly around the convention center, making our “peak” event ingress and egress situation considerably more congested.*

Bellevue Downtown Association identified lane constraints and removal of turn movements as primary concerns.

- *Based on the minimal cost savings potential compared to the adopted station, constraints to lane capacity, and removal of turn movements associated with the option, we support dropping the stacked tunnel idea from further review.*

Downtown Station Design - Relocate Station to NE 6th St. (Idea 3c):

Residents and members of the business community expressed that the NE 6th St. option had the best opportunity for cost savings potential. Comments indicated general support for the design of the station; however, there were concerns about accessibility with only one station entrance, jaywalking and safety crossing the intersection. There were also comments regarding visibility and questions about amenities for the station. Several commenters noted the potential for redevelopment and Transit Oriented Development.

Support for cost savings potential, visibility and compatibility with future development.

- *Idea 3c is the best design. Need to add a pedestrian underpass from the station to the transit center for safety and improved traffic flow.*
- *Cost savings idea 3C is WONDERFUL! I like the idea of an open air station, clearly visible to visitors and close to the existing transit center. Wayfinding will be much easier. Thank you!*
- *3c seems like the best option—and it would be even better if a developer could be found to build a TOD above the station and adjacent open space.*
- *Most cost savings! Least impact to traffic on 10th and 6th*
- *Greatest cost savings! Easily visible from transit center. In line with future NE 6th street extension. Let's do this one!*

- *Highest cost savings. Above ground station provides better security.*
- *There are no cons from the perspective of Abella owners. All owners contacted, commercial and residential, uniformly and energetically endorse relocation.*

Meydenbauer Center submitted a comment letter identifying benefits of Idea 3c.

- *This preferred station configuration maintains the current NE 6th Street five-lanes (with left turn lanes) which provides optimum traffic capacity for the Center, The Bravern and the Bellevue Transit Center. This also preserves the existing left-hand turn in/out of Meydenbauer Center from NE 6th Street which is optimal for our guests when entering and exiting the facility.*

Bellevue Downtown Association submitted a comment letter indicating that Idea 3c merits further review. The organization encouraged Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue to consider full weather protection for station entry and platform, better pedestrian connections, escalators, analysis of construction duration, impacts and mitigation, analysis of ridership tradeoffs between the downtown station options, analysis of future development options for the Metro site, description and/or agreement on construction contracting methods that could further reduce the City's contingent contribution and refinement of the cost savings potential for ideas that do not impact the alignment.



Bellevue Chamber of Commerce expressed support for maintaining capacity and mitigating construction impacts.

- *Finally, it is critical that a downtown option avoid the loss of capacity and mitigate the adverse impacts of construction; we believe idea 3c meets those criteria.*

Commenters identified concern for access.

- *Poor pedestrian access to transit center—need to cross 2 streets. Safety concern buses turning right to southbound 110th Ave NE*
- *Slightly worse access to transit center*
- *Given that the NE 6th station provides for just one station entrance at the eastern edge of downtown, we are very concerned about pedestrian access and ridership impacts. Additionally, the station as shown is mostly uncovered and exposed, provides very low pedestrian connectivity to the rest of downtown and does not fit into or complement the physical urban environment of the CBD.*

Meydenbauer Center indicated concern for noise.

- *We are concerned about potential noise from the proposed open air (and tunnel stations) as it relates to Meydenbauer Center, in particular noise intrusion to the theatre and meeting rooms located on the south side of the facility. Further study of potential noise impacts may warrant additional sound insulation not currently anticipated.*

Meydenbauer Center provided input on station design and amenities.

- *Careful consideration should be given to the design of the platform so we don't create a "barrier" wall on NE 6th street but instead create visual interest that enhances the station from the Center's view, this may be an opportunity for a significant STart investment. Weather protection for transit riders appears to be minimal in this design and we believe it should be considered for inclusion in and around significant areas of the station to improve the rider experience.*



Stakeholder Briefings

Sound Transit and the City of Bellevue offered briefings to community groups, businesses, residents and other stakeholders interested in learning more about the Work Plan Findings and providing input. The following groups received stakeholder briefings:

- Surrey Downs Community Club Leadership, September 6, 2012
- Eastside Heritage Center, September 10
- Bellefield Residential Park Homeowners Association, September 18, 2012
- Enatai Neighborhood Association Leadership, September 20, 2012
- Talon Portfolio & Private Capital (general receiver for Bellefield Office Park and several downtown office buildings), September 26, 2012
- Meydenbauer Center, October 2, 2012
- Bellevue Downtown Association, October 4, 2012
- Move Bellevue Forward, October 4, 2012
- Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, October 9, 2012
- Abella Condos, October 11, 2012



