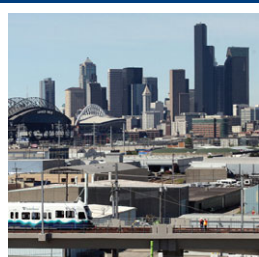


DRAFT EIS

# EAST LINK PROJECT

## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



SEATTLE



MERCER ISLAND



BELLEVUE



OVERLAKE



REDMOND



CENTRAL PUGET SOUND  
REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY



December 2008





December 12, 2008

Dear Recipient:

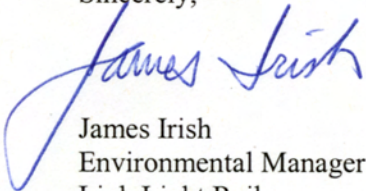
The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Sound Transit (the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority), and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) have prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) on the proposed East Link light rail transit project. Sound Transit is the project proponent.

The Draft EIS has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 to 4370e) and the State Environmental Policy Act (Ch. 43.21C RCW). It has been prepared to inform the public, agencies and decision makers about the environmental consequences of building and operating the East Link extension of the light rail system from downtown Seattle to Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond via Interstate 90. The Draft EIS examines the project alternatives identified by the Sound Transit Board in December 2006.

The major choices for the project involve the route and profile of the light rail line and station locations. The Sound Transit Board will consider the Draft EIS, public comment, and other information before identifying a preferred route and station locations. FTA, Sound Transit and WSDOT will then prepare a Final EIS. After completion of the Final EIS the Sound Transit Board will select the project to be built. The FTA will then issue a Record of Decision, which will state FTA's decision on the project and list Sound Transit's mitigation commitments to reduce or avoid impacts.

The Draft EIS includes a separately bound Executive Summary. Also available are separately bound appendices to the Draft EIS, consisting of drawings and maps, and four technical reports. Please see the Fact Sheet of this Draft EIS regarding how to obtain these documents and who to contact for further information about the Draft EIS.

Sincerely,

  
James Irish  
Environmental Manager  
Link Light Rail

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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Joni Earl

**EAST LINK LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Submitted pursuant to  
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4322 (2)(c))  
and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Ch. 43.21 C RCW)  
by the

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION**  
and

**CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY (SOUND TRANSIT)**

and

**WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
(For SEPA)**

In cooperation with

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
CITY OF SEATTLE  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND  
CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY OF REDMOND  
KING COUNTY  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
U.S. COAST GUARD

11-5-08

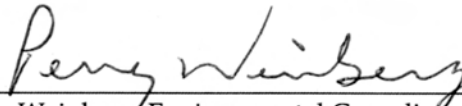
Date of approval



R. F. Krochalis, Regional Administrator  
For Federal Transit Administration, Region 10

11/6/08

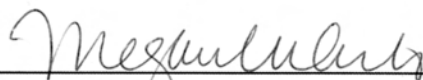
Date of approval



Perry Weinberg, Environmental Compliance Manager  
For Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority

11/10/08

Date of approval



Megan White, Director of Environmental Services  
For Washington State Department of Transportation

## Abstract

Sound Transit proposes to construct and operate an eastern extension of the Link light rail system providing urban transportation improvements in the Central Puget Sound metropolitan region. The East Link project would connect to the rail system's Initial Segment in downtown Seattle and extend the system east to Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond. Alternatives are considered in five geographic segments in this EIS. **Segment A, Interstate 90**, connects downtown Seattle to Mercer Island and South Bellevue via I-90. **Segment B, South Bellevue**, connects I-90 to approximately SE 6th Street along one of three corridors: Bellevue Way, 112th Avenue SE, or the BNSF Railway right-of-way. **Segment C, Downtown Bellevue**, would travel through downtown Bellevue between approximately SE 6th Street and an I-405 crossing at either NE 6th Street or NE 12th Street on either an at-grade, elevated, or tunnel profile. **Segment D, Bel-Red/Overlake**, would travel from the I-405 crossing to the Overlake Transit Center, either through the Bel-Red corridor or along SR 520. **Segment E, Downtown Redmond**, would travel from Overlake Transit Center to Downtown Redmond via the SR 520 corridor until West Lake Sammamish Parkway and then proceed through

Downtown Redmond via either Redmond Way or the BNSF Railway corridor. Alternatives considered include a No Build Alternative, one alternative for Segment A, five alternatives for Segment B, six alternatives for Segment C, four alternatives for Segment D, three alternatives for Segment E, and four maintenance facility alternatives. Overall, the project would have between 10 and 13 stations. Interim termini could occur at the east end of Segment C or any station in Segments D or E. Construction is expected to start in 2013, with operation under way between 2020 and 2021. The analysis and impact information in this EIS addresses potential long-term and short-term impacts of transportation; acquisitions, displacements and relocations; land use; economics; social impacts, community facilities, and neighborhoods; visual and aesthetic resources; air quality and greenhouse gas; noise and vibration; ecosystem resources; water resources; energy; geology and soils; hazardous materials; electromagnetic fields; public services; utilities; historic and archaeological resources; and parkland and open space. The analysis also considers issues related to environmental justice, protected park and historic resources, and the cost, funding, and cost-effectiveness of the alternatives.



# Fact Sheet

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## Proposed Action

The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) proposes to construct and operate an extension of its electric light rail transit system that would improve transportation connectivity between Seattle, Mercer Island, and the east side of Lake Washington to Bellevue and Redmond. The proposed light rail extension, known as the East Link Light Rail Transit Project (East Link Project), would cross Lake Washington in the center lanes of Interstate 90 (I-90) and would operate in a dedicated right-of-way between Seattle and Redmond. The East Link Light Rail Transit Project is included in Sound Transit 2: A Mass Transit Guide, The Regional Transit System Plan for Central Puget Sound (ST2), also known as the Mass Transit Expansion proposal, which was approved by the voters in November 2008.

The East Link corridor is approximately 18 miles long and has been divided into five segments along distinct geographic boundaries: Segment A, Interstate 90 (Seattle to Mercer Island and Bellevue

via I-90); Segment B, South Bellevue; Segment C, Downtown Bellevue; Segment D, Bel-Red/Overlake (Downtown Bellevue to Overlake Transit Center); and Segment E, Downtown Redmond (Overlake Transit Center to Downtown Redmond). Alternatives considered include 19 build alternatives (one in Segment A, five in Segment B, six in Segment C, four in Segment D, and three in Segment E), the No Build Alternative, and four maintenance facility alternatives (three in Segment D and one in Segment E). Each alternative route includes one to four stations; a total of 28 station options exist in the five segments. The segment alternatives would be linked to create a complete, operable light rail system that would connect with the Central Link light rail system at the Chinatown/International District Station in downtown Seattle. The East Link Project may be constructed in phases, depending on available funding or other factors. Sound Transit anticipates that any station including and beyond the last station in Segment C could be considered an interim station.

---

## Project Proponent

Sound Transit (Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority)  
Union Station  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, Washington 98104  
[www.soundtransit.org](http://www.soundtransit.org)

## Dates of Construction and Opening

Sound Transit plans to begin construction of East Link by 2013. The project may be constructed in stages, with the segment to Bellevue opening by 2020 and to Overlake Transit Center by 2021. Segment E to Downtown Redmond would be constructed after 2021.

## State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Lead Agencies

Sound Transit – Nominal Lead Agency  
Union Station  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, Washington 98104  
[www.soundtransit.org](http://www.soundtransit.org)

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) – Co-Lead Agency  
401 Second Avenue South  
Seattle, WA 98104  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov)

## National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Lead Agency

Federal Transit Administration  
915 Second Avenue, Suite 3142  
Seattle, Washington 98174-1002  
[www.fta.dot.gov/office/regional/region10/](http://www.fta.dot.gov/office/regional/region10/)

## SEPA Responsible Official

Perry Weinberg, Environmental Compliance Manager  
Sound Transit  
Union Station  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98104-2826

Megan White, Director Environmental Services  
WSDOT  
PO Box 47331  
Olympia, WA 98504

## Contacts

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Union Station  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98104-2826  
(206) 398-5445

### Federal Transit Administration

John Witmer, Community Planner  
Jackson Federal Building, Suite 3142  
915 2nd Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98174  
(206) 220-7950

### Washington State Department of Transportation

Paul Krueger, WSDOT Environmental Manager,  
I-90 Corridor and Sound Transit Lead  
Urban Corridors Office  
401 2nd Avenue South, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dylan Counts, Sound Transit Liaison  
WSDOT Public Transportation Division  
401 2nd Avenue South, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98104

## Anticipated Permits and Approvals

Permit or Approval	Issuing Agency
<b>Federal</b>	
Section 106 Review	Federal Transit Administration
Section 4(f) Review	Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of the Interior
Clean Water Act, Section 404 and Section 10	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Federal Endangered Species Act Review	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service
Interchange Justification Report	Federal Highway Administration
Franchise for Use of Interstate Right-of-Way	Washington State Department of Transportation
<b>State and County</b>	
Hydraulic Project Approval	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Aquatic Use Authorization: Aquatic Lease	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Public Utility Commission Permits	Washington Public Utility Commission
Section 106 Review	Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Discharge Permit	Washington State Department of Ecology
Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification	Washington State Department of Ecology
Temporary Modification of Water Quality Criteria	Washington State Department of Ecology
Underground Storage Tank Notification Requirement	Washington State Department of Ecology
Water Quality Certification: Section 401	Washington State Department of Ecology
Air Space Lease: Interstate or State Routes	Washington State Department of Transportation

Permit or Approval	Issuing Agency
<b>Cities</b>	
Shoreline Permits	Cities of Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue, Redmond
Street Use Permits	Cities of Bellevue and Redmond
Construction Permits	Cities of Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue, Redmond
Right-of-Way Permits or Franchise for Use of City Right-of-Way	Cities of Bellevue and Redmond
Environmental Critical Areas/Sensitive Areas Review	Cities of Bellevue and Redmond
Development Permits	Cities of Bellevue and Redmond
Noise Variance	Cities of Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue and Redmond
Street Vacations	Cities of Bellevue and Redmond
Certificates of Approval	Cities of Seattle and Redmond Landmark Preservation Boards
<b>Other</b>	
Various Approvals: Planning, Design Review, and Arts Commissions	Cities of Bellevue, Redmond, Seattle, Mercer Island
Notification of Intent to Perform Demolition or Asbestos Removal	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
Pipeline and Utility Crossing: Permits	Utility Providers
Utility Approvals: Easements and Use Agreements	Utility Providers
Property Permits and Licenses	BNSF Railway

## Principal Contributors

See Appendix A, List of Preparers.

## Date of Issue of the Draft EIS

December 12, 2008.

## Commenting on the Draft EIS

An extended comment period of 75 days (45 days are required) will begin December 12, 2008.

Comments on the Draft EIS can be made in writing, by e-mail, or at the public hearings. All comments are due by close of business on February 25, 2009. Send written comments to the following address:

Attention: East Link DEIS Comments  
Sound Transit  
Union Station  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, Washington 98104

E-mail comments should be sent to [eastlink.deis@soundtransit.org](mailto:eastlink.deis@soundtransit.org). Both written and e-mail comments should include an addressee and return address.

Or please attend one of the following public hearing with open house events and offer your comments at the hearing:

### Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Open House: 4 – 7 p.m.

Public Hearing starts at 5 p.m.

Old Redmond Schoolhouse Community Center,  
16600 NE 80th Street, Redmond, WA

### Thursday, January 22, 2009

Open House: 4 – 7 p.m.

Public Hearing starts at 5 p.m.

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School,  
2401 S Irving Street, Seattle, WA

### Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Open House: 4 – 7 p.m.

Public Hearing starts at 5 p.m.

Community Center at Mercer View,  
8236 SE 24th Street, Mercer Island, WA

### Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Open House: 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Public Hearing starts at 6 p.m.

Bellevue High School,  
10416 Wolverine Way, Bellevue, WA

**Thursday, January 29, 2009**

Open House: 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.  
 Public Hearing starts at 4:30 p.m.  
 Bellevue City Hall,  
 450 110th Ave. NE, Bellevue, WA

**Next Actions**

Following publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), public hearings will be held and comments will be taken on the proposed action. A Final EIS will then be published identifying a Preferred Alternative. Following publication of the Final EIS, the Sound Transit Board of Directors will make a final decision on the route, station, and maintenance facility locations to be built for the project. Also, after publication of the Final EIS, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is expected to issue its Record of Decision (ROD) on the project.

**Related Documents****Environmental Documents**

Final Environmental Impact Statement, Destination 2030: Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Puget Sound Region (Puget Sound Regional Council, May 2001)

Central Link Light Rail Transit Project Final EIS (Sound Transit, November 5, 1999)

Central Link Light Rail Transit Project Final Supplemental EIS, Tukwila Freeway Route (Sound Transit, November 16, 2001)

Central Link Light Rail Transit Project Final EIS Addendum Initial Segment (Sound Transit, November 16, 2001)

Central Link Light Rail Transit Project Environmental Assessment Initial Segment (Sound Transit, February 5, 2002)

Airport Link Environmental Assessment/SEPA Addendum (EA) (Sound Transit, May 26, 2005)

North Link Final Supplemental EIS (Sound Transit, April 7, 2006)

East Link Project Environmental Scoping Information Report Seattle to Bellevue to Redmond (Sound Transit, August 2006)

I-90 Two Way Transit and HOV Operations Project Final EIS/ROD (WSDOT and Sound Transit, May 2004)

Regional Transit System Plan Final Supplemental EIS (Sound Transit, June 2005)

**Other Documents**

Sound Transit 2: A Mass Transit Guide, The Regional Transit System Plan for Central Puget Sound (Sound Transit, July 2008)

VISION 2040. 2008 Update. (PSRC, April 2008)

Destination 2030: Metropolitan Plan for the Central Puget Sound Region. (PSRC, 2001)

East Corridor High Capacity Transit Mode Analysis History (Sound Transit, 2006)

Regional Transit Long-Range Plan (Sound Transit, July 2005)

East Link Project Sound Transit Board Briefing Book Light Rail Alternatives Seattle to Bellevue to Redmond (Sound Transit, November 2006)

Coordination Plan, Updated December 2008 (Sound Transit, 2008)

**Cost and Availability**

This Draft EIS is available for public review in a variety of formats and locations. The Draft EIS is available on the Sound Transit website ([www.soundtransit.org/eastlink](http://www.soundtransit.org/eastlink)). The Draft EIS is also available on CD at no cost from Sound Transit. Paper copies of the Draft EIS are available for the cost listed below.

- Executive Summary – FREE
- Draft EIS - \$25.00
- Appendix to Draft EIS: Drawings and Maps - \$25.00
- Technical Background Reports
  - East Link *Noise and Vibration Technical Report* - \$15.00
  - East Link *Ecosystems Technical Report* - \$15.00
  - East Link *Historic and Archaeological Resources Technical Report* - \$15.00
  - East Link *Transportation Technical Report* - \$15.00

Copies of the Draft EIS and related documents listed above are available for review or purchase at the offices of Sound Transit, Union Station, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington 98104. To request any of the documents, please contact Elma Borbe at (206) 398-5445. To review these documents, please call the Sound Transit librarian at (206) 398 5344 during normal business hours



(weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) to arrange an appointment.

Paper copies of the Draft EIS documents are also available for review at the following public places:

- Bellevue Community College Library
- King County Library System
  - Bellevue Regional Library
  - Mercer Island Public Library
  - Newport Way Library
  - Library Connection at Crossroads
  - Redmond Regional Library
- Seattle Public Library Branches
  - Downtown Branch
  - International District /Chinatown Branch Library
  - Douglas Truth Branch Library
- University of Washington Library
- Washington State Department of Transportation Library
- Washington State Library

# Preface

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Local, regional, and state agencies have been studying high-capacity transportation alternatives to connect Seattle with the Eastside of King County since the mid-1960s. In 1976, when expansion plans for Interstate 90 (I-90) were stalled, the affected entities of Seattle, Mercer Island, Bellevue, and the Washington State Highway Commission signed a Memorandum Agreement on the Design and Construction of the I-90 bridge, which called for conversion of the center roadway to dedicated transit usage in the future.

In 2004, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) prepared the *Central Puget Sound Regional High Capacity Transit Corridor Assessment* to establish a basis for more detailed planning studies and environmental analysis. Applying the adopted land use and metropolitan transportation plan, the report found that the cross-lake corridor, connecting the urban centers of Seattle, Bellevue, Overlake and Redmond, had the highest potential for near-term development of high-capacity transit (HCT) alternatives. Sound Transit's updated Long-Range Plan (2006) includes HCT across I-90 serving these urban centers, and the Sound Transit Board has adopted light rail as the mode for this corridor, now referred to as the East Link Project.

Today, much of Central Link is nearly complete, and Sound Transit is moving forward with the next phase of mass transit improvements in the Puget Sound region, Sound Transit 2 (ST2). ST2 includes construction of the East Link Project, which is an extension of light rail service from Seattle to Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond via I-90. The ST2 plan funds East Link construction to the Overlake Transit Center in Redmond and provides for environmental review and preliminary engineering from Overlake Transit Center to Downtown Redmond.

Sound Transit, together with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), have prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the East Link Project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the

Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). This Draft EIS does the following:

- Describes the alternatives and their potential impacts
- Provides environmental information to assist decision-makers in selecting the project to be built
- Identifies measures to avoid and minimize impacts, and, when necessary, compensate for adverse impacts
- Considers cumulative impacts as part of the environmental review process
- Provides information for other environmental processes, including compliance with the following:
  - Endangered Species Act
  - Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
  - Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, 49 United States Code (U.S.C.) 303
  - Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Funds Act
  - Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice

The scope of environmental review and the range of alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS respond to public and agency comments received during the public scoping process that began in September 2006. After the close of the formal scoping period, community participation was further extended through community workshops, briefings, stakeholder presentations, and agency coordination meetings.

In order to comply with NEPA and SEPA and to enhance readability, this Draft EIS focuses on the most relevant information regarding project definition, potential adverse impacts, and trade-offs among



*Aerial of East Link Corridor*

alternatives. The study area for the Draft EIS varies by topic and is described within each section of the document, as appropriate. The Draft EIS is organized as follows:

The **Executive Summary** is a separately bound condensed version of the overall document. It briefly describes the purpose and need for the project, the project's goals and objectives, and the alternatives being considered. It presents the major impacts for each alternative and potential mitigation, reviews the project's financial characteristics, and provides a brief evaluative comparison of the different alternatives. The Executive Summary concludes by identifying the major conclusions, areas of uncertainty, and the project's next steps.

**Chapter 1, Purpose and Need**, describes the project's purpose and need, background, and goals and objectives.

**Chapter 2, Alternatives Considered**, describes the alternatives that are studied in this Draft EIS. It also presents the history of selecting light rail as the mode of transit and identifies the process used to refine the range of potential project alternatives to the set studied in the Draft EIS. This chapter provides a review of construction activities and a comparison of cost estimates by alternative. It concludes by explaining the project's planning and decision-making context, including the major steps in the environmental evaluation and project development process.

**Chapter 3, Transportation Environment and Consequences**, describes the potentially affected existing and future regional and local transportation system and identifies how the project alternatives could affect that system. It then describes potential strategies to reduce or eliminate transportation impacts. The transportation system elements include transit, highways, arterials, local streets, nonmotorized facilities, freight traffic, and navigable waterways.

**Chapter 4, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**, describes the potentially affected environmental conditions (built and natural) in the study area, explains the impacts from construction and operation of the project alternatives, and describes avoidance and minimize measures. Finally, when adverse impacts cannot be avoided, compensatory mitigation is identified as appropriate. This chapter includes the following environmental elements:

- Acquisitions, displacements, and relocations
- Land Use

- Economics
- Social impacts, community facilities, and neighborhoods
- Visual and aesthetic resources
- Air quality
- Noise and vibration
- Ecosystem resources (aquatic resources, vegetation and wildlife, and wetlands)
- Water resources
- Energy
- Geology and soils
- Hazardous materials
- Electromagnetic fields
- Public services
- Utilities
- Historic and archaeological resources
- Parklands and open space

**Chapter 5, Cumulative Impacts**, describes relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions and projects in or around the project vicinity and the cumulative impact of the proposed alternatives on each element of the environment.

**Chapter 6, Alternatives Evaluation**, compares the project alternatives in terms of how effectively they meet the project's goals and objectives.

**Appendices A to H** provide additional details on the project and Draft EIS process. Appendices A to F, attached to the main volume of the Draft EIS, include document support information (references, lists of preparers and recipients, and acronyms and glossary), public involvement and agency coordination documentation, federally required reports on environmental justice and Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources (park and recreation areas, wildlife refuges, historic sites, and any facilities that have received Land and Water Conservation Act funding), an operating plan summary, and technical appendices related to the affected environment and environmental consequences analyses. Materials in Appendix F are numbered to match their corresponding environmental elements in Chapter 4. Appendix G is a separate large-format document containing conceptual design drawings, property acquisition, and hazardous material site appendices. Appendix H, also bound in separate volumes, contains detailed technical reports prepared for transportation, noise and vibration, ecosystems, and historic and archeological resources.

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