

FEB 2011

Tacoma Link Expansion

STAKEHOLDER GROUP FINAL REPORT

TACOMA LINK EXPANSION

STAKEHOLDER GROUP: DRAFT FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This document details the work of the Tacoma Link Expansion Stakeholder Group (see Appendix A for list of group members) and their recommendations on potential corridors for expanding Tacoma Link. Formed by the City of Tacoma, Sound Transit, and Pierce Transit in July 2010, this group included diverse representation of Tacoma and the region. The mission of this group was to provide commentary and feedback on potential corridors using their expertise as representatives of diverse constituencies. This qualitative, community-focused report should help guide decision-makers and further technical planning.

From July 2010 to January 2011, stakeholders met monthly (see Appendix B for meeting schedule and descriptions) to discuss a variety of issues related to the expansion of Tacoma Link including:

- Determining community-wide objectives to use as a lens when analyzing corridors;
- Relating those objectives to measures;
- Brainstorming and discussing potential corridors for expansion (see map, Page 4); and
- Describing the degree to which the corridors responded to objectives and measures.

This report is organized into six sections: Introduction, General Observations, Corridor Discussion, Key Issues for Policy Makers to Explore, Conclusions, and Next Steps, with major outcomes being:

1. The group identified six objectives as most important to the Tacoma community. Two of these objectives, Serving Underserved Communities and Serving Tacoma Neighborhoods, were prioritized over others, and economic development was an overarching priority.
2. The group identified six corridors for potential Tacoma Link expansion. Of these, three were more responsive to the group's measures than the other three: Orange (North Downtown-Central), Red (Eastside), and Purple (North End-Central; for a full description, see Corridor Evaluation Exercise, Page 5).
3. Significant policy issues remain, including reconciling qualitative and quantitative information, defining the scope of the final project, and funding. The group urges decision makers to explore these as part of the projects next steps.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Several themes emerged as the Stakeholder Group analyzed potential corridors with respect to community objectives:

1. **Objectives:** The group identified six objectives, with two prioritized over others (denoted by *). These objectives are not mutually exclusive, nor are they always complementary (see Corridor Evaluation Exercise, Page 5, for further description of objectives and measures). They are:

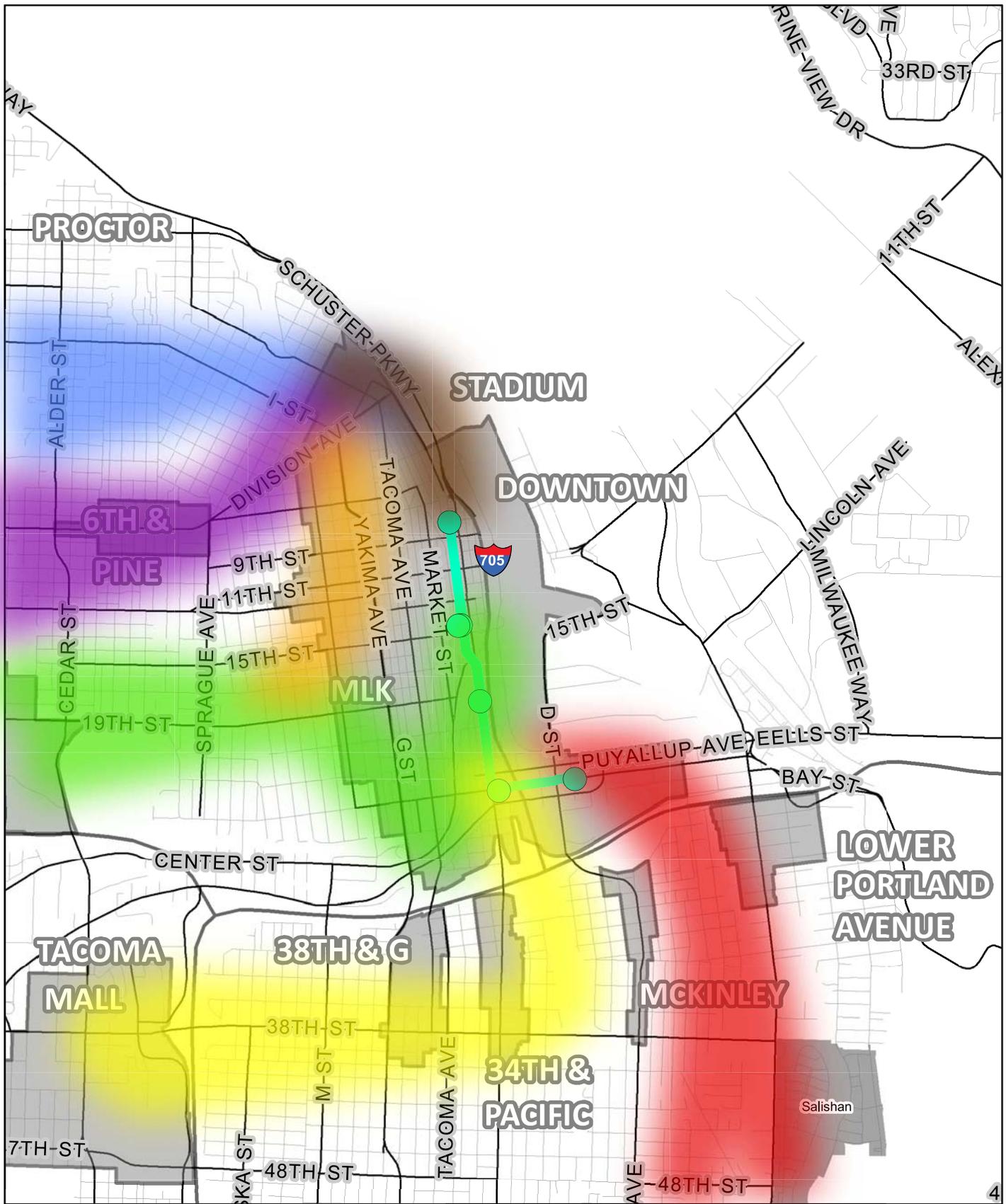
- Serving Underserved Communities*
 - Historically do not receive infrastructure investments – using transit investment to spur other investment
 - Not connected to greater Tacoma community
 - Diverse in terms of economics and ethnicity
 - Serving areas ripe for transit oriented redevelopment
 - Developing new transit markets
 - Serving Tacoma Neighborhoods*
 - Attracting business and retaining existing business
 - Serving existing housing stock as well as attracting new housing around the transit line through increased density
 - Attracting visitors, especially residents of other neighborhoods
 - Encouraging transportation choices within, to, and from the downtown core
 - Serving Downtown Tacoma
 - Attracting business and retaining existing business
 - Attracting visitors and new residents
 - Levering pending investments and enhancing investments that have already been made
 - Encouraging transportation choices within, to, and from the downtown core
 - High Ridership
 - Because it's user-friendly, reliable, timely, and goes where people want to go
 - Serve existing high ridership areas
 - Reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
 - Competitive for federal funding
 - Regional Connections
 - Connecting to Sound Transit's Central Link and SeaTac Airport
 - Connecting to areas of transit emphasis (ie: transit centers or large employees)
 - Low Cost
 - Leveraging other current transportation investments
 - Low cost of construction
 - Avoid additional costs
2. **Corridors:** Each of the corridors identified by the Stakeholder Group has pros and cons; three of the identified corridors (North Downtown – Central, Orange; Eastside, Red; and North End – Central, Purple) respond better to the group's objectives and measures than the other three (South End, Yellow; South Downtown – Central, Green; and North End, Blue; see Corridor Evaluation Exercise, Page 5, for corridor evaluations).
 3. **Connection to Central Link:** Regional transit connections, especially to SeaTac Airport, are critically important to the Tacoma community. However, given the long term phasing of such a project (ST2 only contemplates an expansion of Central Link to the Redondo/Star Lake area of Federal Way), the group agreed that the priority should be on a Tacoma Link expansion that serves the people of Tacoma in the near term.
 4. **Economic Development:** The concept of economic development underlies all other values and objectives identified by the group.
 - a. The group defines economic development in a number of ways:
 - i. Connecting residential areas to employment centers.

- ii. Connecting activity centers and mixed-use centers (which is a stated goal of the City of Tacoma).
 - iii. Using the expansion as a catalyst for additional development and investment in an area.
 - iv. Directing investment to underserved neighborhoods.
 - b. Different corridors respond to different facets of economic development in different ways.
5. **Cost, Technology, and Geography:** The Stakeholder Group did not extensively discuss potential project costs, preferred transit technology, or feasibility of rail under certain geographic constraints (this was not in the scope of this group). They did, however, acknowledge the importance and potentially determinative nature of both cost and feasibility. Furthermore, this final report assumes that the expansion project connects to and extends the existing Tacoma Link line, although transit technology – including cost and feasibility – is a subject that will and should be explored further during the technical phase of the planning phase.
 6. **Reducing Trips:** The Stakeholder Group puts a premium on reducing car trips; it should be a consideration in choosing an alignment. In particular, Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) is a goal of the City of Tacoma and region and could be enhanced with the expansion of Tacoma Link.
 7. **Benefits and Impacts:** To different degrees, all corridors will have benefits and impacts. For example, in corridors with few vacant properties, business displacement may be a significant concern if the expansion required the widening of a road or elimination of parking. Conversely, an investment of a rail or streetcar line could help bring customer traffic to the businesses in a corridor and could raise the community value of an area with a major public investment.
 8. **Other Factors:** Other factors, such as station spacing / location, headways, transit-oriented development potential, fares, and parking policies could greatly add to or detract from the success of the expansion.

I. Corridor Discussion

Of the six corridors identified by the stakeholder group for potential expansion of Tacoma Link, three responded to the measures better than the other three. Issues related to neighborhood connectivity, serving underserved communities, and ridership were discussed at length. This report also includes highlights of possible coordination with existing state and local projects and/or investments. A desire to connect multi-use centers, connect people to jobs, and use the expansion as a tool for economic development are main themes in this discussion.

Three corridors, Orange, Purple, and Blue, can all be approached in the same way through the Stadium District (although the Orange Corridor can also be approached via South Downtown; see below); for this reason, the Stadium District Corridor is highlighted as “Brown” on the map on Page 4.



Tacoma Link Expansion: Stakeholder Group Evaluation Corridors

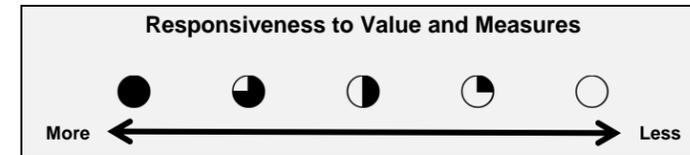
- Existing Tacoma LINK
- Link Stations
- Mixed Use Center
- Other Area of Interest



CH2MHILL

Tacoma Link Expansion Stakeholder Group
 01/24/11 meeting
 Corridor Evaluation Exercise

KEY:



Corridor:	Orange	Red	Purple	Yellow	Green	Blue
Description:	(North Downtown - Central)	(Eastside)	(North End - Central)	(South End)	(South Downtown - Central)	(North End)

Community Values	Criteria	Measure	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
1. Serving Underserved Communities a. Historically do not receive infrastructure investments – using transit investment to spur other investment b. Not connected to greater Tacoma Community c. Diverse in terms of economics and ethnicity d. Serving areas ripe for transit oriented redevelopment e. Developing new transit markets	Equity	Ability to generate economic development.						
2. Serving Tacoma Neighborhoods a. Attracting business and retaining existing b. Serving existing housing stock as well as attracting new housing around the transit line through increased density c. Attracting visitors, especially residents of other neighborhoods d. Encouraging transportation choices within, to and from the downtown core	Neighborhood connectivity	Degree to which neighborhoods are connected to each other and the core. Number of neighborhood commercial areas connected to each other and the core.						
3. Serving Downtown Tacoma a. Attracting business and retaining existing b. Attracting visitors and new residents c. Leveraging pending investments and enhancing investments that have already been made d. Encouraging transportation choices within, to and from the downtown core	Mobility	Ability to connect Tacoma activity centers with the core – providing more connections to more places. Number of activity centers connected to the core.						
4. High Ridership a. Because it's user-friendly, reliable, timely, and goes where b. Serve existing high ridership areas c. Reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) d. Competitive for federal funding	Ridership	Relative likelihood of attracting riders. Relative likelihood of attracting <u>new</u> riders.						
5. Regional Connections a. Connecting to Sound Transit's Central Link and SeaTac b. Connecting to areas of transit emphasis (e.g. transit centers)	Access to the region's core	Degree to which regional connectivity is advanced. Transit travel time from downtown Tacoma to						
6. Low Cost a. Leveraging other current transportation investments b. Low cost of construction c. Avoid additional costs	Affordability	Relative cost based on route length.						
Comments:			► Combines reaching higher population density, underserved communities and major employers (i.e. two hospitals).	► Reaches multiple underserved communities and potentially a unique activity center.	► Central orientation of corridor through western Tacoma provides ability to serve multiple neighbors.	► Reaches some underserved communities but most effective if reaches Tacoma Mall area.	► Reaches underserved community and one major employer, but bypasses others.	► Traverses an area of relatively higher population density, but beyond this area the density quickly diminishes.



Orange Corridor: North Downtown-Central

Corridor description:

This corridor extends up the hill from Downtown and serves the MLK District. It can be approached in two ways:

- *Via the Stadium District (see “Brown” portion of corridor on map, Page 4)*
Extending from the 9th and Commerce Station, through the Stadium District and then moving through the E Street / 1st Street / Division Street / MLK District corridor (description identified in Sound Transit’s Long Range Plan Update Issue Paper S.4: Potential Tacoma Link Expansion – West, March 2005).
- *Via South Downtown (see lower section of “Green” corridor on map, Page 4)*
Extending from one of the mid-line stations (such as Union Station), through the southern portion of Downtown and the Brewery District, and connecting up to 19th Street / MLK District corridor.

Responsiveness to objective and measures:

This corridor responds very highly to all of the objectives and measures, specifically:

- *Serving underserved communities*
There are many vacant properties in this corridor and, thus, much opportunity for relatively easy redevelopment and economic development within the MLK corridor. There is much consensus in the group that this area is ripe for redevelopment and that an expansion of Tacoma Link would support this redevelopment.
- *Serving Tacoma neighborhoods*
The corridor connects two of Tacoma’s mixed-use centers: the Stadium District and the MLK mixed-use center, which includes two of Tacoma’s major employers, Multicare’s Tacoma General Hospital and St Joseph Medical Center. It has high potential for serving close-to-downtown neighborhoods and to make better connections to and from Downtown.

Coordination with pending investments:

- *State Department of Commerce grant*
\$100,000 has been awarded to the City of Tacoma to conduct environmental and pre-development work – of the same nature as is being conducted in the south half of downtown through the PSRC HUD Sustainable Communities grant – in the MLK mixed-use center. Pre-approved new floor space will improve permit processing times to incent and attract local and regional investment.

- *Stadium Way Arterial Project*
Stadium Way is being rebuilt from the intersection of Commerce and 9th St. to the intersection of N. 1st St. and Tacoma Ave. Construction is scheduled to begin in July of 2011 and conclude by year's end 2012. Reconstruction of the arterial will include necessary repair or replacement of the 1920's retaining wall at Schuster Parkway and incorporation of "Complete Streets" concepts as much as possible.

Leveraging other investments

LID within the MLK Corridor

- \$400,000 has been allocated by the Tacoma City Council to fund the exploration of forming a comprehensive Local Improvement District (LID) to improve the streetscape, utilities and other infrastructure within the MLK corridor from Division to South 25th Street. The intent of the funding is to complete design and environmental work, community outreach, and economic benefit analysis to the point at which a complete improvement package can be presented to the affected property owners for their consideration and approval.



Red Corridor: Eastside

Corridor description:

This corridor extends from the Tacoma Dome Station along the Puyallup Avenue corridor, then through the Lower Portland Avenue corridor towards Salishan and can reach the 72nd Street Transit Center.

Responsiveness to objective and measures:

This corridor responds highly to the objectives and measures, specifically:

- *Serving underserved communities (and partnership potential)*
The Puyallup Tribe owns much of the property in and adjacent to the Lower Portland Avenue mixed-use center including the Emerald Queen Casino I-5. The Tribe has and is continuing to invest intensely in redevelopment of these properties – many of which are vacant – with housing, community services and commercial activities. This would provide a unique community partnership for expanding Tacoma Link.

In addition, the Eastside area is poised for redevelopment and an expansion of Tacoma Link would support this redevelopment.

Coordination with pending investments:

PSRC grant from HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

- Tacoma is the recipient of \$500,000 grant awarded to the Puget Sound Regional Council from the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative. Tacoma, recognized by the region as a key population and employment center, will use the award to fund environmental and pre-development work in the 500-acre southern half of downtown – an area that includes the Tacoma Dome District and the Brewery District. A minimum of 30 million square feet of new floor space will be pre-approved to improve permit processing times (for large projects reduced from years to weeks) and incent and attract regional investment.

Leveraging other investments:

- *Salishan redevelopment*
Expected to be completed in 2011, will have increased housing units from 855 to 1,200-1,300. An approximate \$225 million investment, the new Salishan – a mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood of affordable and market rate rental housing, single family homes for sale, commercial buildings and community buildings, and parks, all on brand new infrastructure – is transforming the whole surrounding community.

- *Swan Creek*
Citizens of Tacoma approved \$1,000,000 for improvements to Swan Creek. Included in those improvements is the development of a master plan that will transform Swan Creek into a regional destination. Development of the plan will happen in 2011 with construction commencing and concluding in 2012.



Purple Corridor: North End-Central

Corridor description:

This corridor extends from the 9th and Commerce Station, through the Stadium District and then moving through the E Street / 1st Street / Division Street / MLK District corridor (see the “Brown” corridor; description identified in Sound Transit’s Long Range Plan Update Issue Paper S.4: Potential Tacoma Link Expansion – West, March 2005) and then to the 6th Avenue District.

Responsiveness to objective and measures:

This corridor responds highly to the objectives and measures, particularly if it reaches Tacoma Community College (TCC); specifically:

- *Serving Tacoma neighborhoods*
Sixth Avenue is currently a developed corridor (although zoning allows for additional growth), so there is high potential for benefits (providing additional traffic for businesses) and / or impacts (construction impacts and needs for street space, such as current parking).
- *Ridership*
The corridor connects two of Tacoma’s mixed-use centers: the Stadium District and the 6th Avenue mixed-use center. Through these centers, transit ridership is presently strong, and a streetcar would presumably capture this existing ridership and make the redeployment of bus hours to other parts of the city possible. This strong current ridership could, but does not necessarily, translate directly into new ridership.

Coordination with pending investments:

Stadium Way Arterial Project

- Stadium Way is being rebuilt from the intersection of Commerce and 9th St. to the intersection of N. 1st St. and Tacoma Ave. Construction is scheduled to begin in July of 2011 and conclude by year’s end 2012. Reconstruction of the arterial will include necessary repair or replacement of the 1920’s retaining wall at Schuster Parkway and incorporation of “Complete Streets” concepts as much as possible.



Yellow Corridor: South End

Corridor description:

Extending from one of the mid-line stations (such as the S. 25th Street Station), through the 34th and Pacific corridor, connecting to the 38th Street corridor, and to the Tacoma Mall.

Responsiveness to objective and measures:

Overall, this corridor was not a priority as it didn't respond to objectives as highly as other corridors did. Moreover, responsiveness to these objectives and measures is predicated on reaching Tacoma Mall; specifically:

- *Serving underserved communities*
The Lincoln District small business community that struggles with storefront vacancy could receive a boost in traffic from a Link extension.
- *Serving Tacoma neighborhoods*
The corridor connects several of Tacoma's mixed-use centers including 34th & Pacific (includes the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department), 38th & G (Lincoln District), and the Tacoma Mall, also recognized as a growth center for the Puget Sound region. If this extension reaches Tacoma Mall, the corridor is in better position to fulfill neighborhood connectivity, regional connection, and ridership goals; without Tacoma Mall, the corridor falls far short of serving these objectives. In addition, a Link extension between downtown Tacoma and the Tacoma Mall may encourage competition between the two regional destinations.

Coordination with pending investments:

PSRC grant from HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

- Tacoma is the recipient of \$500,000 from a grant awarded to the Puget Sound Regional Council from the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative. Tacoma, recognized by the region as a key center of population and employment, will use the award to fund environmental and pre-development work in the 500-acre south half of downtown – an area that includes the Tacoma Dome District and the Brewery District. A minimum of 30 million square feet of new floor space will be pre-approved to improve permit processing times (for large projects reduced from years to weeks) and incent and attract regional investment.



Green Corridor: South Downtown-Central

Corridor description:

Extending from one of the mid-line stations (such as Union Station), through the southern portion of Downtown and the Brewery District, connecting up to 19th Street / MLK District, and continuing along the 19th Street corridor towards TCC.

Responsiveness to objective and measures:

This corridor responds moderately to almost all objectives and measures; responsiveness to these objectives and measures is predicated on either reaching TCC or connecting to the Orange corridor; specifically:

- *Serving Tacoma neighborhoods*

This corridor connects the Brewery District and MLK mixed-use center to Downtown, and in general responds somewhat favorably to the objectives and measures in the Downtown Core area. Beyond the MLK mixed-use center, however, it does not connect to any additional centers until past Cedar Street. Beyond Cedar Street, Tacoma Community College is a regional center that could be connected. If the extension includes TCC, the corridor is in better position to fulfill neighborhood connectivity, regional connection, and ridership goals; without TCC, the corridor falls far short of serving these objectives.

Coordination with pending investments:

PSRC grant from HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

- Tacoma is the recipient of \$500,000 from a grant awarded to the Puget Sound Regional Council from the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative. Tacoma, recognized by the region as a key center of population and employment, will use the award to fund environmental and pre-development work in the 500-acre south half of downtown – an area that includes the Tacoma Dome District and the Brewery District. A minimum of 30 million square feet of new floor space will be pre-approved to improve permit processing times (for large projects reduced from years to weeks) and incent and attract regional investment.



Blue Corridor: North End

Corridor description:

This corridor extends from the 9th and Commerce Station, through the Stadium District and then moving through the E Street / 1st Street / Division Street / MLK District corridor (see the “Brown” corridor; description identified in Sound Transit’s Long Range Plan Update Issue Paper S.4: Potential Tacoma Link Expansion – West, March 2005) and then through the North Tacoma area towards the University of Puget Sound (UPS).

Responsiveness to objective and measures:

This corridor responds moderately to poorly on all objectives and measures; responsiveness to these objectives and measures is predicated on reaching UPS; specifically:

- *Serving Tacoma neighborhoods*
This corridor does not connect to particularly dense areas of the city. It does connect the Stadium District to downtown, but beyond the Stadium District the corridor leads to primarily single-family neighborhoods and does not lead to any mixed-use centers or destinations of noted significance (unless it is connected to the University of Puget Sound).
- *Ridership*
The corridor connects a mixed-use center (the Stadium District) to Downtown which could produce some higher ridership.

Coordination with pending investments:

Stadium Way Arterial Project

- Stadium Way is being rebuilt from the intersection of Commerce and 9th St. to the intersection of N. 1st St. and Tacoma Ave. Construction is scheduled to begin in July of 2011 and conclude by year’s end 2012. Reconstruction of the arterial will include necessary repair or replacement of the 1920’s retaining wall at Schuster Parkway and incorporation of “Complete Streets” concepts as much as possible.

II. Key Issues for Policy Makers to Explore:

While there are many questions to be answered as the expansion of Tacoma Link moves forward (some of which are identified in the *General Observations* section of this report), the Stakeholder Group identified three key issues for the consideration of policy makers:

1. *Reconciling Qualitative and Quantitative Information:* Three corridors – Orange, Red, and Purple – responded best to the Stakeholder Group’s objectives and measures; however these corridors are very different and there are pros and cons to each. Policy makers will need to carefully consider the qualitative measures identified in this report with the quantitative measures of rigorous, technical planning work before choosing a final alignment.
2. *Defining the Scope of the Final Project:* The stakeholder group prefers delivering a project that can reach its desired location or fulfill its potential; they encourage policy makers to consider a complete project, which can – but does not have to – be part of a larger transit system in Tacoma.
3. *Funding:* The stakeholder group did not extensively discuss the issue of funding. While the group acknowledges the importance of funding, there is limited information available at this time regarding the cost or possible funding plans for the various corridors. The group does acknowledge that the issue of funding needs to be addressed, and that the ST2 plan states that the Tacoma Link expansion must be a robust partnership between Sound Transit and some or all of the following: the City of Tacoma, the Puyallup Tribe, the federal government, private interests, and other governmental entities. There is also acknowledgement that the community needs to focus on identifying the right project(s) for Tacoma and then determine how to fund them.

III. Conclusions

1. The group identified six objectives, with two prioritized over others: Serving underserved Communities and Serving Tacoma Neighborhoods. They also identified Economic Development as a running theme.
2. Three of the identified corridors –Orange (North Downtown-Central), Red (Eastside), and Purple (North End-Central) – responded best to the group’s objectives and measures.
3. There are three key issues for policy makers to consider as they move forward: reconciling qualitative and quantitative information, defining the scope of the final project, and funding.

IV. Next steps summary

The stakeholder group report is intended to be the first step in the process for expanding Tacoma Link, and this group’s work will better position the project to move expeditiously and successfully through the next phases of planning and project delivery. Following the completion of this group’s work, planning will begin for this project including an alternatives analysis, public outreach, environmental work, preliminary engineering, final alignment decision, and construction.

Appendix A: Membership of the Tacoma Link Stakeholder Group:

- ❖ Andrew Austin, Transportation Choices Coalition
- ❖ Jennifer Burley, University of Washington, Tacoma
- ❖ Eric Crittendon, New Tacoma Neighborhood Council
- ❖ Ryan Dicks, Pierce County Sustainability
- ❖ Chris Green, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County
- ❖ Phyllis Harrison, The Art Stop / LeRoy Jewelers
- ❖ Jesse Hart / Mark McIntire, Eastside Neighborhood Council
- ❖ Rollie Herman, Hillside Development Council
- ❖ Cheryl Jones, Allen Renaissance / MLK District
- ❖ Chelsea Levy, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Mark Martinez, Pierce County Building and Construction Trades Council
- ❖ Evette Mason, Port of Tacoma
- ❖ Michael Mirra, Tacoma Housing Authority
- ❖ Whitney Rhodes, Downtown Merchant's Group
- ❖ Lois Stark, MetroParks Tacoma / Tacoma Area Commission on Disabilities
- ❖ Chad Wright, Marine View Ventures

Appendix B: Meeting Overviews

The Stakeholder Group met approximately once a month from July 2010 to January 2011. Jointly facilitated by the City of Tacoma, Sound Transit, and Pierce Transit, the Stakeholder Group developed a set of community objectives, articulated possible corridor alignments, analyzed the pros and cons of each corridor with respect to community objectives, and developed a set of consensus recommendations for policymakers.

Specific content of each meeting was as follows:

Meeting #1 – July 26, 2010:

- Tour of Tacoma neighborhoods and mixed-use centers
- Goal: Visualize existing neighborhoods with an expansion of Tacoma Link; share their collective knowledge of community development activities; hear from City of Tacoma staff on current and future zoning and planning efforts

Meeting #2 – August 23, 2010:

- Streetcar Objectives Activity (“The Button Exercise”)
- Goal: Prioritize the community objectives heard most frequently in individual meetings

Meeting #3 – September 20, 2010:

- Read and discuss previous studies associated with expansion of Tacoma Link
- Goal: Educate members of the group on all previous studies and planning efforts to expand Tacoma Link (including Sound Transit's long range planning, Sound Transit's study for the Puyallup Tribe, the City of Tacoma's 2005 Streetcar Group, and Pierce Transit's system redesign)

Meeting #4 – October 18, 2010:

- Draw potential alignments (“Drawing Exercise”)
- Goal: Articulate all possible alignments (these alignments would later be turned into corridors and refined)

Meeting #5 – November 15, 2010:

- Develop criteria and reviewing data maps
- Goal: Overlay possible streetcar corridors with maps of data such as density and zoning; turn objectives into measures

Meeting #6 – December 13, 2010:

- Corridor evaluation (“Matrix Exercise”)
- Goal: Share pros and cons of all corridors in small groups

Meeting #7 – January 24, 2011:

- Develop final report
- Goal: Come to group consensus on the message that will be delivered to the policy makers