



*Tacoma Dome
Link Extension and
Operations and Maintenance
Facility South*

Early Scoping Information
Report

March 2018

EARLY SCOPING

Invitation to comment

Tacoma Dome Link Extension and Operations and Maintenance Facility South Early Scoping: April 2 to May 3, 2018

Sound Transit is conducting “Early Scoping” for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension project in south King and Pierce counties, Washington. **Exhibit 1** shows the extension from Federal Way to the Tacoma Dome station area.

- Learn about the project background, timeline and how to stay informed and involved.
- Provide input on the route, stations, potential alternatives, benefits and impacts.
- Provide input on the potential location of the operations and maintenance facility (OMF) in the south corridor (South King and Pierce Counties).
- Provide input on the Purpose and Need statement.

What is early scoping?

Early scoping starts the public conversation shaping the project before the start of formal state and federal environmental studies. With early scoping, the agency asks the public, other agencies and tribal governments to take part in defining goals for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension project and determining how it can best fit in with the communities and the environment.

Early scoping meetings

The public comment period for early scoping is open until May 3, with three public scoping meetings. The public meetings will take place at the following locations from 6-8:00 p.m.:

- **Tacoma:** Tuesday, April 17 – Best Western Plus Tacoma Dome Hotel, 2611 E. E Street
- **Federal Way:** Wednesday, April 18 – Todd Beamer High School, 35999 16th Avenue S.
- **Fife:** Tuesday, April 24 – Fife Community Center, 2111 54th Avenue E.

A separate early scoping meeting will take place with agencies to present project information and receive comments. Sound Transit invited local, regional, state and federal agencies and tribal governments to participate.

Ways to provide comments

In person: Fill out a comment card when attending any of the above public meetings.

Online: tdlink.participate.online

Email: tdlink@soundtransit.org

By mail: Tacoma Dome Link Extension Project
c/o Senior Environmental Planner Steve Kennedy
Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826



Exhibit 1. Representative Project for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension

The “representative project”

The representative project for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (see **Exhibit 1**) has:

- Approximately 9.7 miles of dedicated guideway to extend light rail from the Federal Way Transit Center to the Tacoma Dome Station area. The project travels through the cities of Federal Way, Milton, Fife and Tacoma, and the reservation of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians.
- Stations in south Federal Way, Fife, east Tacoma and the Tacoma Dome Station area.
- A rail-only fixed span bridge crossing the Puyallup River.
- Parking garages at the South Federal Way and Fife stations.

What is the representative project?

For ST3 projects in the 2016 ballot measure, Sound Transit produced “representative projects” identifying the mode, station locations and related features, such as an OMF, which formed the basis for the project’s scope, schedule and budget.

The ST3 Plan also included an OMF in the south corridor (South King and Pierce Counties). A specific site has not yet been identified. Potential sites will be identified and evaluated as part of this alternatives development process. The OMF South is needed to support overall system expansion.

About early scoping and the project schedule

With early scoping, Sound Transit is inviting public comments on the Tacoma Dome Link Extension’s Purpose and Need statement, and the “representative project” and other alternatives for consideration including the locations for the alignment, stations, and an OMF. The agency also seeks comment on transportation, environmental, and community impacts and benefits. After the early scoping comment period ends, Sound Transit will develop and evaluate potential alternatives, working with representatives from other agencies, tribes and public stakeholders.

Regulatory and public notice requirement. Sound Transit, as the local public agency proposing the project, must meet State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements. The project is also expected to need federal approvals from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and other federal agencies, activities that fall under the National Environmental Policy Act. Sound Transit designed the early scoping to meet relevant FTA requirements related to planning and project development, as outlined by Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act).

Sound Transit announced early scoping in the SEPA register. Notices and advertisements for the upcoming public early scoping meetings are appearing in local area newspapers. The agency mailed postcards inviting citizens to attend scoping meetings. There is an option for participation online via Sound Transit’s website. Sound Transit also invited regulatory agencies to participate.

Exhibit 2 shows the project’s overall development timeline, from planning through to construction and operation.



Exhibit 2. Project Timeline

Background information

Project area description

Land use in the project area is mostly commercial and industrial, with residential areas as well as parks, open space areas and smaller farms in some areas. Transportation facilities such as Interstate 5, State Route 99, local streets and railroads also account for large amounts of the land. The city centers of Federal Way and Tacoma are designated regional growth centers and serve as the primary hubs of employment and commercial activity within the project area. The Port of Tacoma’s manufacturing and industrial center is a large employment area and a major intermodal hub for shipping goods and materials.

Like the rest of the Puget Sound region, cities in South King and Pierce counties are experiencing high rates of growth and have established plans for how they can accommodate more residential, commercial and employment opportunities. In 2016 the estimated population of the four cities within the project area was more than 300,000, and employment was more than 150,000. Regional and local plans anticipate high levels of growth within the corridor through 2040, continuing the trend of growth the corridor has seen over the past several decades. Population in the communities within the project area is forecasted to grow 40 percent by 2040, and employment over the same period is forecasted to grow by 63 percent.

The primary highways in Tacoma Dome Link Extension project area—I-5 and SR 99—experience high levels of congestion throughout most of the day, which creates long and unreliable travel times. The Tacoma Dome Link Extension would connect to the regional Link light rail system at Federal Way, which would serve the high levels of travel between the region's southern growth centers at Federal Way and Tacoma as well as other major activity and/or urban growth centers to the north and east. This includes SeaTac, Tukwila, Seattle and the University of Washington, as well as Bellevue and Redmond. By having a terminus at the existing multimodal transit center at the Tacoma Dome, the Tacoma Dome Link Extension will also allow easy transfers to other transit services and provide service to Sea-Tac International Airport. The existing transit center services include Tacoma Link light rail to downtown Tacoma and its extension to central Tacoma, as well as to Sounder commuter rail, Amtrak, and local and regional bus lines serving areas throughout the South Puget Sound area.

Previous studies

Sound Transit will be building on previous studies and plans that led to the proposed extension of light rail to the Tacoma Dome and the definition of a representative project. These studies include:

- **Federal Way to Tacoma HCT Study.** In 2013-2014, Sound Transit conducted a high-capacity transit (HCT) study covering the south corridor, including South King and Pierce Counties. The study evaluated multiple corridors and modes for extending HCT from Federal Way to Tacoma.
- **Regional Long-Range Plan Update:** Also in 2013 to 2014, Sound Transit updated its long-range plan and prepared a SEPA EIS. The update confirmed regional light rail as the preferred mode for the extended corridor to Tacoma.
- **Sound Transit 3 System Plan:** During ST3 system planning in 2015 and 2016, Sound Transit evaluated representative projects for inclusion in the November 2016 ballot measure. The ST3 plan as approved by voters included an extension of light rail from the Federal Way Transit Center to the Tacoma Dome with stops in the south Federal Way, Fife, east Tacoma, and Tacoma Dome areas. Operations planning also identified the need for an OMF to serve the south corridor and the entire Link system.
- **Federal Way Link Extension:** This extension of light rail from the Angle Lake station in SeaTac to the Federal Way Transit Center began planning in 2012 and completed its NEPA and SEPA environmental processes in 2017. The Federal Way Link Extension is now entering its final design and construction phases for opening in 2024. It is the starting point for the north end of the Tacoma Dome Link Extension.

The project as part of the region's mass transit system

Sound Transit was created to build a mass transit system connecting the urban centers of King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. In 1996 voters-approved Sound Move, the first phase of investment in the mass transit system that includes regional express buses, commuter rail and light rail. Sound Transit began operating the first phase of the Central Link light rail system with the line from downtown Seattle south to SeaTac in 2009.

When voters approved the ST2 Plan in 2008, the second phase of investment in the region's mass transit system began. The plan added regional express bus and commuter rail service while building 36 additional miles of light rail to form a 55-mile regional system. The ST2 Plan extends light rail south to Federal Way, Bellevue to the east, and Lynnwood to the north.

Voters approved the third phase of investment, the ST3 Plan, in 2016. In addition to bus and commuter rail service expansion, the ST3 Plan adds 62 new miles of light rail for a regional system reaching 116 miles. ST3 extends light rail from Federal Way to Tacoma, as well as to Everett, South Kirkland, Issaquah, Redmond, and the Seattle neighborhoods of West Seattle and Ballard.

Exhibit 3 shows the Regional Transit System, including the Tacoma Dome Link Extension and other projects that are part of the system expansion.

Purpose and Need statement

To guide decision-making during the alternatives analysis and to support the project's state and federal environmental reviews, Sound Transit has developed a draft statement of why this project is being proposed. The agency will use the Purpose and Need statement to evaluate alternatives leading to a preferred alternative as well as any other alternatives for further study in an EIS. The agency will continue to develop and refine the Purpose and Need statement to reflect public and agency comments as the project moves forward.

The purpose of the Tacoma Dome Link Extension is to expand the Link light rail system from the Federal Way Transit Center to the Tacoma Dome Station area to:

- Provide high-quality rapid, reliable, accessible and efficient peak and off-peak light rail transit service connecting Federal Way, Milton, Fife, Tacoma, and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians to other destinations on the regional high-capacity transit system.
- Meet projected transit demand and offer an alternative to travel on congested roadways, better connecting people to where they live, work and play.
- Connect regional growth centers as described in adopted regional and local land use, transportation and economic development plans, and Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Develop a light rail extension and an operations and maintenance facility that are technically feasible and financially sustainable to build, operate and maintain, consistent with the regional system defined by Sound Transit's ST3 Plan and the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Expand mobility for people in the corridor and region, including this corridor's high concentrations of low income, minority and transit-dependent populations.
- Encourage equitable and sustainable urban growth in station areas through support of transit-oriented development, station access and multimodal integration, consistent with adopted local comprehensive or land use plans.
- Preserve and promote a healthy and sustainable environment by minimizing adverse impacts to people and the natural and built environments.



Exhibit 3. Regional Transit System

The project is needed because:

- Roadway congestion is increasing on I-5 and SR-99, the two primary highways connecting King and Pierce Counties, affecting reliability for transit as well as automobiles.
- There is not enough transit capacity to serve the corridor's riders today or in the future.
- Regional and local plans call for high-capacity transit (HCT) to serve long-term population and employment growth in the corridor consistent with VISION 2040 and the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- The regional system does not have the operations and maintenance facility capacity to efficiently operate the long-term light rail vehicle fleet needed to serve South King and Pierce counties.
- South King and Pierce County citizens and communities, including its low income, minority and transit-dependent populations and residents, need better access to the rest of the region.
- Regional and local plans call for increased residential and employment growth and density in areas to be served by HCT and multi-modal transportation systems.
- Environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region include reducing total vehicles miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.

How alternatives will be developed

Based on early scoping comments, Sound Transit will evaluate the representative project and other project alternatives, station locations and associated features. Sound Transit is continuing to study the detailed requirements for an OMF and will be seeking comments on potential sites.

The evaluations will apply the purpose and need statement and include other information about operating, engineering and environmental issues that could affect the performance of alternatives. Examples of evaluation measures and considerations include:

- Ridership and access
- Travel time and travel speed
- Multimodal access to stations
- Capital, operations and maintenance costs
- Land use and economic development
- Transit-oriented development potential
- Impacts to the environment, including historic resources, parks, natural resources
- Property impacts and related effects
- Noise and vibration
- Traffic and other transportation effects

- Constructability and construction impacts
- Other engineering risks and constraints
- Safety and schedule factors
- Demographics along the corridor
- Other operational and site-level factors affecting stations, park-and-rides, the guideway and bridges
- Siting of an efficient, effective and feasible OMF

As described in the Sound Transit’s *System Expansion Implementation Plan*, the project planning phase is to conclude with the Sound Transit Board identifying a preferred alternative and other alternatives to study in an Environmental Impact Statement. The board will consider public and agency comments, the evaluation materials and reports produced during the planning phase, recommendations from project advisory groups (i.e. Elected Leadership Group, Stakeholders Group, and Interagency Group), and public comments as they consider and identify a preferred alternative and other alternatives for evaluation in an EIS.

Exhibit 4 shows the timeline and major steps in alternatives development. Following early scoping, Sound Transit will summarize the early scoping process and comments in an Early Scoping Summary Report.

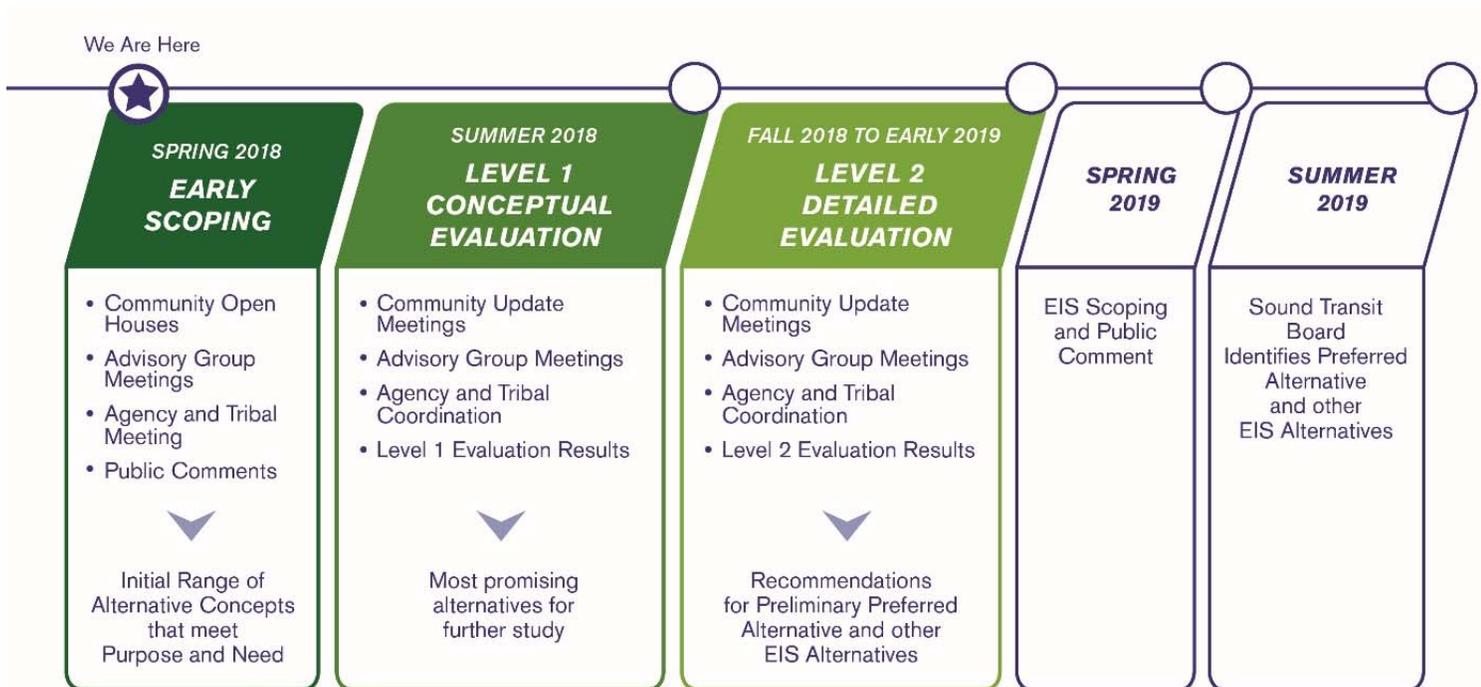


Exhibit 4. Alternatives Development Process

Next steps

At the end of the alternatives development process, in spring 2019, Sound Transit and FTA expect to begin scoping for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by publishing a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the Federal Register and inviting public and agency comments. This period is called the EIS Scoping.

Based on information from the alternatives development process and environmental scoping, the Sound Transit Board is anticipated to identify the preferred alternative and other reasonable alternatives to study in a Draft EIS in summer 2019.

Sound Transit will publish a Draft EIS, provide an opportunity for formal public and agency comment, and publish a Final EIS that includes responses to public and agency comments. After publication of the Final EIS, the expectation is for the Sound Transit Board to make the final decision on the project to build.

What is the difference between early scoping and formal EIS scoping?

Early scoping is the first opportunity for the public to learn about the Tacoma Dome Link Extension. The purpose is to inform the public, agencies, stakeholders and Tribes about the project, and to receive input early in the alternatives development process. Early scoping is happening now.

EIS scoping is part of the formal state and federal environmental review process expected to start in spring 2019.

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