



West Seattle and Ballard

Link Extensions

Early Scoping Information Report

February 2018

1. Early Scoping

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Early Scoping: February 2, 2018 to March 5, 2018

Sound Transit is conducting “early scoping” to start the project development and environmental process for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions in the metropolitan Seattle area of King County, Washington. The West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions are part of the Sound Transit (ST3) Plan that voters approved funding for in 2016. The West Seattle Link Extension would build light rail from West Seattle’s Alaska Junction neighborhood to downtown Seattle. The Ballard Link Extension would build light rail from Ballard’s Market Street area through downtown Seattle and include a new downtown Seattle light rail tunnel. [Exhibit 1-1](#) shows Sound Transit’s current service and future projects.

1.1.2 About Early Scoping

Sound Transit anticipates preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) beginning in 2019. Early scoping is an initial step in collaborating with agencies and the community to further define the project. It also provides an initial opportunity for the public to learn about and provide comments on the project as it begins. During early scoping, Sound Transit is seeking public comments on the project Purpose and Need, the representative project included in the ST3 System Plan, other alternatives, and the transportation and community impacts and benefits to consider in developing alternatives for further refinement and analysis.

Following early scoping, Sound Transit will develop an initial list of potential alternatives and evaluate how well they meet the project’s Purpose and Need. Potential project alternatives that meet the Purpose and Need will go through the alternatives development process. The public and agency outreach effort supports the overall planning, public involvement, and state and federal environmental processes. Sound Transit will offer further opportunities for public comment throughout the alternatives development process. At the end of this process, Sound Transit will hold an additional scoping process (environmental scoping) with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Sound Transit Board is expected to identify a preferred alternative and other alternatives to study in the EIS.

Sound Transit will comply with 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), to help it analyze and screen alternatives in the NEPA process.

Link Light Rail

Future service:

- Everett–Seattle–West Seattle
- Redmond–Seattle–Mariner
- Ballard–Seattle–Tacoma
- Issaquah–Bellevue–South Kirkland
- Tacoma Dome–Tacoma Community College

In service:

- Univ. of Washington–Angle Lake
- Tacoma Dome–Theater District

Sounder Commuter Rail

Future service:

- DuPont–Lakewood

In service:

- North Line (Everett–Seattle)
- South Line (Lakewood–Seattle)

Bus

Future service:

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

In service:

- ST Express bus (service re-evaluated annually)

○ New station or bus facility
 P Added parking
 ⊕ Station improvements
 ∞ Major transfer hub
 ○ Existing station or bus facility
 P Existing parking
 ⊙ Provisional light rail station



Exhibit 1-1: Sound Transit current service and future projects

1.1.3 Public and Agency Early Scoping Meetings

Early scoping includes a public comment period that is open until March 5, 2018 with three public meetings as well as an online open house option. The public meetings will be held at the following locations and times:

- › **West Seattle:** Tuesday, February 13, 2018, 6:30-8:30 p.m. — Alki Masonic Center, 4736 40th Ave. S.W.
- › **Ballard:** Thursday, February 15, 2018, 6:30-8:30 p.m. — Leif Erikson Lodge, 2245 N.W. 57th St.
- › **Downtown Seattle:** Tuesday, February 20, 2018, 5:30-7:30 p.m. — Union Station, 401 S. Jackson St.
- › **Online open house:** February 12–March 5, 2018 — wsblink.participate.online

A separate early scoping meeting will also be conducted with agencies and tribes to present project information and receive comments. Invitations to the agency scoping meeting and public scoping meetings will be sent to the appropriate federal, tribal, state, and local governments.

1.1.4 Ways to Provide Comments

Written scoping comments are requested by March 5, 2018 and can be sent or emailed to the addresses below, submitted at the public meetings, or provided via the online comment form available at wsblink.participate.online.

Mailing Address:

West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (c/o Lauren Swift)
Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826

Email: wsblink@soundtransit.org

1.2 The West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions and the Regional Transit System

1.2.1 Representative Project

Based on years of previous planning studies (see Section 1.4.1 below), the representative project for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions identified the mode, corridor, and station areas for the project. It also informed the project's cost, schedule, and operating needs. [Exhibit 1-2](#) shows the ST3 representative project for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions.



Exhibit 1-2: ST3 Representative project for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions

The representative project for the West Seattle Link Extension consists of 4.7 miles of light rail primarily on an elevated guideway from West Seattle’s Alaska Junction neighborhood to downtown Seattle, with stations serving Alaska Junction, Avalon, Delridge, SODO, and the sports stadiums. The representative project also includes a new rail-only fixed-span crossing of the Duwamish River and connects to existing Link service in 2030, which will reach Lynnwood and extend to Everett by 2036.

The representative project for the Ballard Link Extension extends light rail 7.1 miles to Ballard’s Market Street area with a new subway through downtown Seattle and South Lake Union, with stations serving International District/Chinatown, Midtown, Westlake, Denny, South Lake Union, Seattle Center, Smith Cove, Interbay, and Ballard. With both tunneled and elevated profiles, it also includes a rail-only movable bridge over Salmon Bay. The representative project connects to Link service in 2035, and would continue south to Tacoma on the existing line. Transfers to East Link, which will provide service to Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond, would be possible at the Westlake and International District/Chinatown stations.

1.2.2 Sound Transit and the Region’s Mass Transit System

Since its creation in 1996, with voter approval of Sound Move in 1996 and Sound Transit 2 (ST2) in 2008, Sound Transit continues to implement the regional mass transit system. [Exhibit 1-3](#) shows regional transit planning that has occurred over the years.

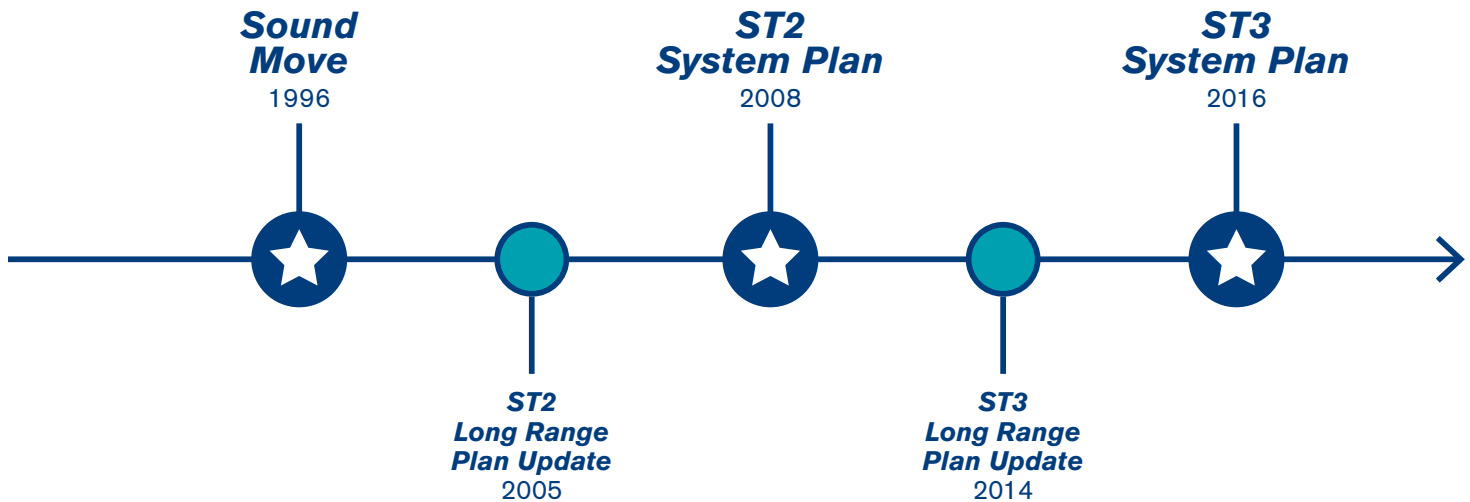


Exhibit 1-3: Regional transit planning over the years

In 2013, Sound Transit began planning for the next phase of investments to follow ST2. This work included updating Sound Transit’s Long-Range Plan and associated environmental review. The West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions are an element of the 2014 Sound Transit Long-Range Plan and the region’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Puget Sound Regional Council’s Transportation 2040). Following system planning work to detail, evaluate, and prioritize the next round of regional transit system expansion, voters in 2016 authorized funding to extend the regional light rail system to West Seattle and Ballard as part of the [ST3 System Plan](#). The ST3 System Plan also extends light rail east to Issaquah and south Kirkland, north to Everett, and south to the Tacoma Dome.



Mass Transit and the Region's Plans for Managing Growth

The Puget Sound region, which includes urbanized King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties, has coordinated regional, county, and local plans that guide how the region manages growth. Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 and Transportation 2040, which reflect Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan (2014), have policies that focus growth in urban centers and assume the regional mass transit system will link the urban centers. County and city comprehensive plan policies reinforce the need for mass transit investments to support new population and employment growth in concentrated centers.

1.3 Developing the "Purpose and Need"

To guide decision making during the alternatives development 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. This is known as the "Purpose and Need." This statement and criteria derived from this statement are used to evaluate alternatives, leading to the identification of the alternatives to study further during the environmental review process. The Purpose and Need statement will continue to be developed and refined to reflect public and agency comments as the project moves forward.

1.3.1 Purpose and Need of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions

The purpose of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions is to expand the Link light rail system from downtown Seattle to West Seattle and Ballard and to increase capacity and connectivity for regional connections in order to:

- Provide high quality rapid, reliable, and efficient peak and off-peak light rail transit service to communities in the West Seattle and Ballard corridors.
- Improve regional mobility by increasing connectivity and capacity through downtown Seattle to meet projected transit demand.
- 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 (Sound Transit, 2014).
- Implement a system that is consistent with the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Plan (Sound Transit, 2016) that established transit mode, corridor, and station locations and that is technically feasible and financially sustainable to build, operate, and maintain.
- Expand mobility for the corridor and region's residents, which include transit dependent, low income, and minority populations.
- Encourage equitable and sustainable urban growth in station areas through support of transit-oriented development, station access, and modal integration in a manner that is consistent with local land use plans.

- Preserve and promote a healthy environment by minimizing adverse impacts on the natural and built environments through sustainable practices.

The project is needed because:

- Increasing roadway congestion on transit routes between downtown Seattle, West Seattle, and Ballard will continue to degrade transit performance and reliability.
- Regional population and employment growth will increase operational demands on the downtown Seattle transit tunnel.
- Regional and local plans call for high capacity transit (HCT) in the corridor consistent with Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) VISION 2040 (PSRC, 2009) and Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan (Sound Transit, 2014).
- The region's citizens and communities, including travel-disadvantaged residents and low income and minority population, need long-term regional mobility and multimodal connectivity.
- Regional and local plans call for increased residential and employment density at and around HCT stations, and increased options for multi-modal access.
- Environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region include reducing total vehicles miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.

1.4 Potential Alternatives

1.4.1 Previous Planning Studies

Years of previous planning studies resulted in the representative project for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions included in the ST3 System Plan. The Summary of Previous Studies and Plans describes key studies in greater detail. Key studies include:

- › **Seattle Monorail Project:** The Seattle Popular Monorail Authority studied a 14-mile corridor that would extend monorail from Ballard through downtown Seattle to West Seattle in an EIS published in 2005. The EIS examined various alignment options, including a West Alternative, East Alternative, and other options/linkages.
- › **South King County — HCT Corridor Study:** Sound Transit conducted a high-capacity transit (HCT) study in 2013-2014. The study evaluated multiple corridors and modes for extending HCT from downtown Seattle to West Seattle, Burien, Tukwila, and Renton.
- › **Ballard to Downtown — Transit Expansion Study:** This HCT study, supporting both the Seattle Master Plan and Sound Transit long range planning, was performed in 2013-2014 in partnership between the City of Seattle and Sound Transit. The study looked at multiple corridors for expanding HCT.

- › **Sound Transit 3 System Planning:** From 2015 to 2016 during ST3 system planning, Sound Transit evaluated a range of candidate representative projects for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions for inclusion in the November 2016 ballot measure. The study included three candidate representative projects for the West Seattle Link Extension and four candidate representative projects for the Ballard Link Extension.

1.4.2 Development of Alternatives

Exhibit 1-4 shows the alternatives development process. During this process, Sound Transit will evaluate alternatives starting with the ST3 representative project. Sound Transit will prepare early feasibility studies and explore alignment, station, and design configurations as refinements to the representative project that could meet the project’s Purpose and Need. Using the Purpose and Need statement, Sound Transit will identify measures for comparing the alternatives. These measures typically include forecasted ridership, capital and operations and maintenance costs, and corridor-level environmental and land use analyses.

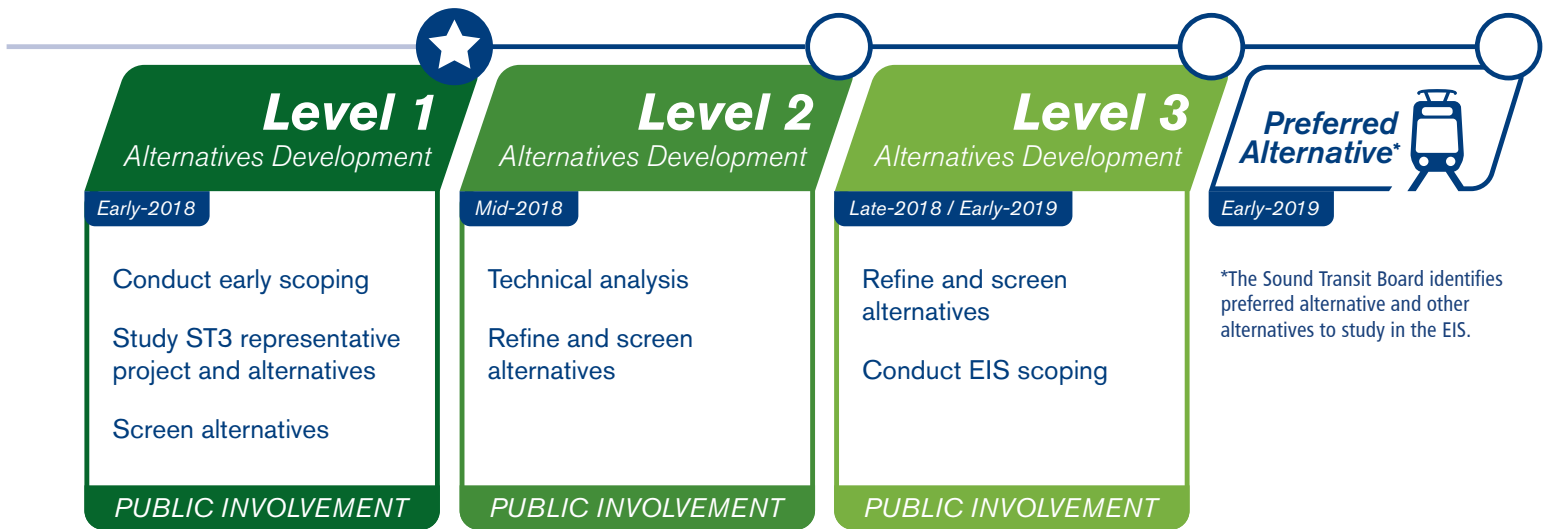


Exhibit 1-4: Sound Transit alternatives development process.

As described in the **ST3 System Expansion Implementation Plan**, as a new approach to project development, the Sound Transit Board is expected to identify a preferred alternative and other alternatives to study in an EIS at the end of the alternative development process and prior to starting the draft EIS. The Board will consider public and agency comments, screening-level impact analyses, analysis of technical and financial feasibility, and recommendations from the Elected Leadership Group and Stakeholder Group. Early identification of the preferred alternative and key project goals will jump-start the public discussion about stations and alignments, revealing areas of broad agreement as well as areas where project leadership needs to focus on problem-solving.

1.5 Project Timeline and Next Steps

Following early scoping, Sound Transit will summarize the early scoping process and comments in an Early Scoping Summary Report. Sound Transit will also develop an initial list of potential alternatives that emerge as a result of early scoping comments and evaluate how well they meet the project's Purpose and Need. Additional screening evaluation for alternatives found to meet the Purpose and Need will include additional design; analysis of environmental impacts; coordination with the Elected Leadership Group, Stakeholder Group, and Interagency Group; and additional opportunities for public input.



Elected Leadership Group

The Elected Leadership Group is composed of Sound Transit Board members and other local elected officials in the corridor. Its purpose is to build consensus around key decisions and work through project issues as needed.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

The Stakeholder Advisory Group is composed of transit riders, residents, business owners, major institutional representatives, community organizations and other members of the public. Its purpose is to build consensus around key project decisions and work through project issues as needed. The Stakeholder Advisory Group provides valuable input to elected leaders as they make project decisions. Some members have been appointed by the Elected Leadership Group and others selected through an application process.

At the end of the alternatives development process, Sound Transit and FTA will begin environmental scoping by publishing a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the Federal Register and inviting public and agency comments on the alternatives, elements of the environment to evaluate in the EIS, and the project Purpose and Need. Based on information from the alternatives development process and environmental scoping, the Sound Transit Board is expected to identify the preferred alternative and other reasonable alternatives to study in a Draft EIS.

Environmental Resource Categories



**Acquisitions, Displacements,
and Relocations**

Land Use

Economics

**Social Impacts, Community
Facilities, and Neighborhoods**

Visual and Aesthetics

Air Quality

Noise and Vibration

Water Resources

Ecosystems

Energy Impacts

Geology and Soils

Hazardous Materials

Electromagnetic Fields

Public Services, Safety, and Security

Utilities

Historic and Archaeological Resources

Parks and Recreational Resources

Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources

Environmental Justice

After the EIS scoping period, Sound Transit will conduct further engineering, environmental impact analysis, and public involvement work on the project. 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 Sound Transit Board is expected to make the final decision on the project to build. [Exhibit 1-5](#) shows the project’s current general timeline.

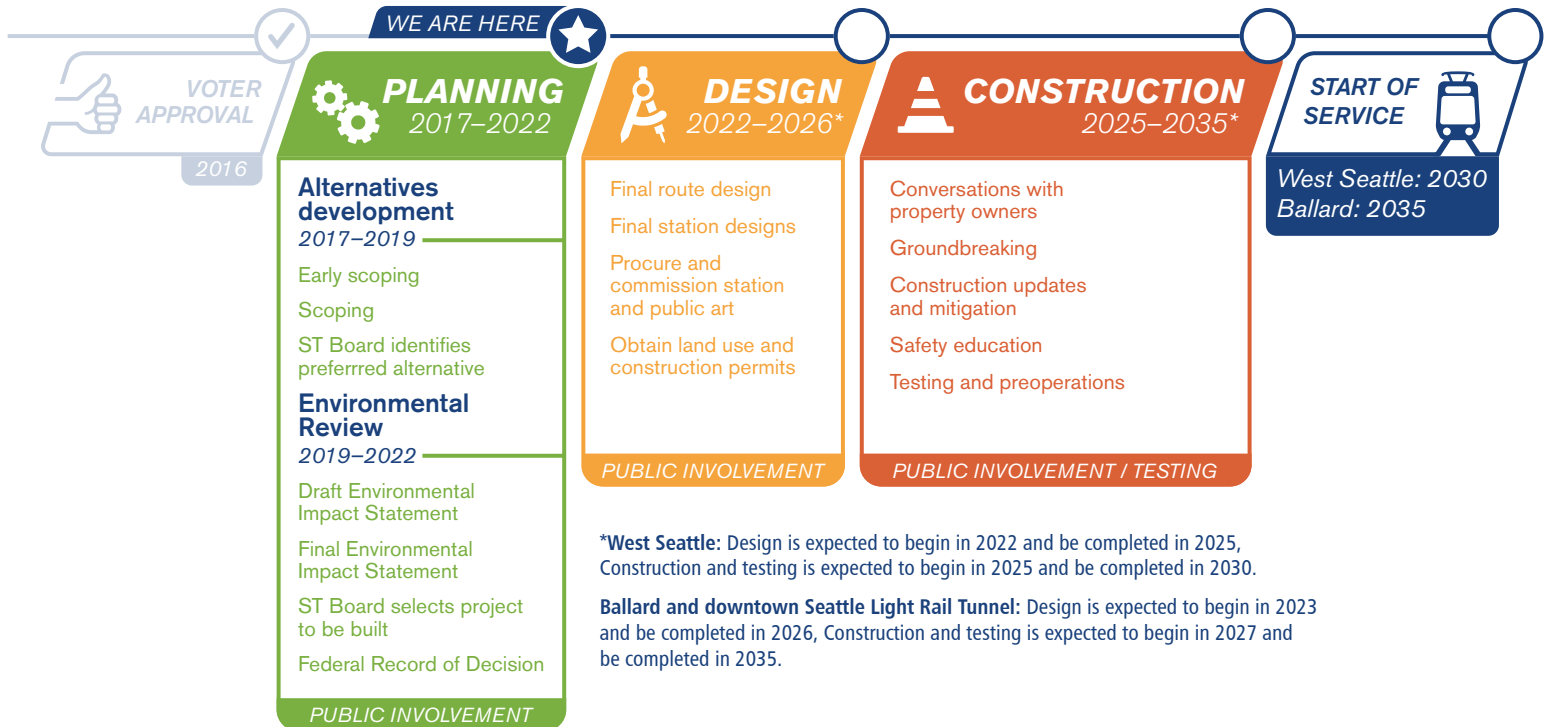


Exhibit 1-5: West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions general project timeline.

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