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## West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions

### Neighborhood Forums Summaries

May 16, 2018

#### Overview

Sound Transit held a series of neighborhood forums during the Level 1 alternatives development phase of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project to share and solicit input on the Level 1 alternatives. These forums served to educate and engage communities, provide participants with an opportunity to work with their neighbors to identify priorities specific to their neighborhoods, and discuss project issues and concerns. Neighborhood forums were held in the following neighborhoods: Chinatown/International District, South Lake Union/Seattle Center, Downtown, West Seattle, SODO/Stadium and Ballard/Interbay/Smith Cove. In total, over the six events, 300 people attended the first round of neighborhood forums.

#### Purpose, Process and Outcomes

The first series of neighborhood forums was completed between April and May 2018. This series was aimed at providing an opportunity for community members to share their priorities, vision and values as they relate to the Link light rail system expansion in their respective neighborhoods.

Each neighborhood forum began with a presentation covering project overview and timeline. Following the presentation attendees engaged in a conversation with five to 10 of their peers focused on current neighborhood values. Project staff then provided a presentation detailing what it means to bring light rail to a community. Following the second presentation, attendees discussed the Level 1 alternatives in relation to their neighborhood values. The conversation focused on opportunities and concerns about the various alternatives. After the second small group discussion, each table shared a short report out on the key themes from their group or visited other tables to view and share the key themes, depending on the size of the meeting.

Following each neighborhood forum, project staff synthesized the notes from each small group discussion, compiled key themes and distributed the summaries and notes to the technical team.

Additional series of neighborhood forums are planned for Level 2 (summer 2018) and Level 3 (fall 2018).

#### Notifications

Notifications for the neighborhood forums included:

- [Online display ads](#) on the Seattle Transit Blog (April 14 - May 13) and MyBallard (April 28 - May 13).
- [Community calendar](#) event postings on 58 Seattle-wide and neighborhood-specific websites.
- [Community liaisons](#) were utilized in Chinatown-International District to invite and encourage residents and business owners to attend. They handed out translated flyers and spoke Vietnamese and Chinese.
- [Stakeholder phone calls](#) to invite businesses in the SODO area to the May 9 neighborhood forum.
- [Email updates](#) to the project listserv on the following dates:
  - March 9

- March 27
- April 16 (reminder)
- May 1 (reminder)
- Reminder emails to confirmed RSVPs two days prior to each event.
- Social media events for each neighborhood forum.

## Neighborhood Forums Schedule

Event	Location	Schedule
Chinatown/International District	Bush-Asia Center	Saturday, 4/21, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
South Lake Union/Seattle Center	thinkspace Seattle	Monday, 4/23, 5:30 – 8 p.m.
Downtown	Central Library	Wednesday, 5/2, 5:30 – 8 p.m.
West Seattle	Alki Masonic Center	Saturday, 5/5, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
SODO/Stadium	Metropolist	Wednesday, 5/9, 4 – 6:30 p.m.
Ballard/Interbay/Smith Cove	Ballard VFW	Saturday, 5/12, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

### Chinatown-International District

**Date and time:** April 21, 2018 from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Key takeaway – what we heard:** Must be inclusive of all voices and acknowledge the neighborhood’s history, noting that past developments such as Union Station and I-5 were done *to* the community rather than *for* the community

- **Chinatown-International District**
  - Values: cultural vibrancy; accessibility; cultural/racial history
  - Opportunities: activating key locations (e.g. plaza; King Street Station; Union Station); making safety improvements; spotlighting small businesses; increasing connectivity; utilizing existing resources
  - Challenges: alienating community with information overload, technical language and less understood mode of transit; disrupting communities and small businesses; serving only a *portion* of the neighborhood by using 5th Avenue S; educating the public (especially the elderly in this community) about transit services

**Number of sign-ins:** 16

- **Elected officials/Commissioners:** King County Councilmember Joe McDermott; Planning Commissioners Grace Kim and Michael Austin
- **SAG members:** Larry Yok

### South Lake Union/Seattle Center

**Date and time:** April 23, 2018 from 5:30 – 8 p.m.

**Key takeaway – what we heard:** In these rapidly growing and changing neighborhoods, light rail should be built to serve what will exist in 2035, not what exists today

- **South Lake Union**
  - Values: major business and tech center; variety of dining options; walkable neighborhood

- Opportunities: providing reliable transit options for the fastest-growing jobs center in Seattle; improving access to the neighborhood outside of business hours; providing easy transfers to heavily-used bus routes on Aurora Avenue N
- Challenges: planning for what will exist when the line goes online, not for what is there now; providing transit access for residents and businesses in north Downtown and Belltown; bike network is limited, and many streets feel unsafe; intimidating pedestrian crossings at Mercer Street and Denny Way
- **Seattle Center / Key Arena**
  - Values: Seattle Center for events; vibrant and dense neighborhood centered around Mercer Street and Queen Anne Avenue N intersection
  - Opportunities: serving both the Seattle Center and Uptown neighborhoods; improving pedestrian movements at Denny Way and Mercer Street with station entrances at all four corners
  - Challenges: balancing need to serve Seattle Center for events versus need to serve businesses and residents north of Mercer Street

**Number of sign-ins:** 23

- **Elected officials/Commissioners:** None
- **SAG members:** Robert Cardona

## **Downtown**

**Date and time:** May 2, 2018 from 5:30 – 8 p.m.

**Key takeaways – what we heard:** Transit-dependent neighborhood that values the active downtown core and the proximity of key destinations and amenities; desire for seamless transfer points between transit lines, and shallower (rather than deeper) stations

- **Westlake/Midtown**
  - Values: walkability; variety of transportation options; key destinations like the waterfront, movie theaters, Town Hall, Westlake Park, Convention Center and Pioneer Square
  - Opportunities: incorporating retail space at stations; improving connections to Convention Center; making transfer points as seamless as possible by providing frequent service and good pedestrian navigation/wayfinding; building station entrances/exits on streets with less vehicle traffic, better bike and pedestrian facilities, and nicer streetscapes
  - Challenges: managing increased congestion once buses move out of downtown Seattle transit tunnel; ensuring 5th Avenue alternative is not redundant of existing light rail line; currently less 24-hour activity in midtown, so not ideal for a station
- **First Hill**
  - Values: walkability; proximity to Downtown; recreation; hospitals; religious institutions
  - Opportunities: connecting light rail with high-density area that will continue to grow, as well as future Madison Street BRT and hospitals; connecting First Hill to other

- neighborhoods (feels isolated today); potentially reaching more ridership than a Midtown station; coordinating light rail improvements with Interstate 5 lid project
- Challenges: tunneling under I-5 twice; making station access work for all users including seniors and disabled persons, given the topography

**Number of sign-ins:** 42

- **Elected officials/Commissioners:** King County Councilmember Joe McDermott
- **SAG members:** None

## West Seattle

**Date and time:** May 5, 2018 from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Key takeaways – what we heard:** Vibrant mix of character-rich neighborhood centers surrounded by density and single-family homes. With light rail on the way, it will be important to maintain a balance of the existing character and feel of West Seattle with the demand for additional density, as well as mitigate construction impacts. Support for an underground alignment, especially near and through the Junction.

- **Delridge**
  - Values: diversity; community; proximity; recreation; views; nature; opportunity; single-family homes; restaurants and cafes; key destinations such as Nucor Steel, West Seattle Golf Course, Delridge Playfield and Community Center, Camp Long
  - Opportunities: redevelopment in station areas to include new amenities such as a grocery store; improving access to the stations for people walking and riding bikes; potentially reducing the size of the West Seattle Golf Course and using part of that land for light rail and new development
  - Challenges: Preserving neighborhood feel and views; potential impacts to open space and recreation areas; potential impacts to Port of Seattle property and port operations; impacts of an elevated alignment to homes, businesses and traffic
- **Avalon**
  - Values: connectivity; community; single-family homes; history; new development; key destinations like Camp Long, Youngstown, Delridge Playfield and Community Center
  - Opportunities: Ensuring seamless transit connections between the stations and neighborhoods; building stations in the denser parts of neighborhoods
  - Challenges: noise impacts of an elevated alignment; hide-and-ride parking in the station area; traffic impacts during construction on heavily-traveled roads and at existing chokepoints; steep grades making pedestrian and bike access difficult
- **The Junction**
  - Values: walkability; convenience; small shops; farmers market; history; safety; family friendliness; key destinations like businesses along California Avenue SW, Trader Joe's, West Seattle High School and the intersection of California Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street
  - Opportunities: serving the future urban village, businesses and apartments near the Junction and the surrounding single-family neighborhood; building the station for future

- light rail extension to the south; improving access to and visibility of small, local businesses, especially along California Avenue SW
- Challenges: mitigating property, noise, visual, traffic and construction impacts of an elevated structure near the Junction; maintaining a safe environment for people walking when there is additional car and pedestrian traffic around the stations; impacting historic buildings in the Junction

**Number of sign-ins:** 140

- **Elected officials/Commissioners:** King County Councilmember Joe McDermott; Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold; Planning Commissioners Amy Shumann and Rick Mohler
- **SAG members:** Deb Barker, Brian King, Walter Reese

## SODO/Stadium

**Date and time:** May 9, 2018 from 4 – 6:30 p.m.

**Key takeaways – what we heard:** SODO is a busy, diverse and evolving neighborhood that is often “under-understood.” Large numbers of employees work atypical schedules, contributing to a higher rate of single-occupancy drivers and parking issues. Attendees preferred alternatives that included stations at both SODO and Stadium, and encouraged Sound Transit to explore creative options beyond the alternatives presented that would encourage the use of alternative transportation options and contribute to a more vibrant and safe neighborhood .

- **SODO & Stadium**
  - Values: multi-modal transportation; pocket park at S Spokane Street/5th Avenue S; SODO and Elliott Bay trails for biking and walking; key destinations include Starbucks Headquarters, Port of Seattle, stadiums, Living Computers Museum, Evergreen Treatment Center, various office spaces, Seattle Public Schools building, auto dealerships
  - Opportunities: Taking advantage of a 100-year opportunity to create something different in SODO (not just a new line next to the existing line); increasing ped/bike infrastructure; adding new development (including residential) that would increase density, activate the neighborhood and make it feel safer; adding a new elevated pedestrian walkway at Stadium station; improving connections to employment hubs; coordinating Sound Transit and Metro services during and after construction; building grade-separated roadways where appropriate
  - Challenges: current neighborhood zoning makes the area feel unsafe at night and on weekends; potentially contaminated soils; tunneling near I-90; building a second line next to an existing line; displacing bike lanes and buses during construction (and possibly afterwards); closing S Royal Brougham Way; maintaining ADA accessibility to stadiums; activating and connecting the area between the Stadium station and the stadiums; creating more connectivity between SODO and the Downtown core

**Number of sign-ins:** 24

- **Elected officials/Commissioners:** King County Councilmember Joe McDermott; Seattle Planning Commissioners Michael Austin and David Goldberg
- **SAG members:** Erin Goodman, Robert Cardona

## Ballard/Interbay/Smith Cove

**Date and time:** May 12, 2018 from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Key takeaways – what we heard:** Smith Cove, Interbay and Ballard have unique opportunities and challenges due to the vibrant mix of industrial, commercial and residential uses. The neighborhoods’ goal is to strike a balance between facilitating connections to the dense and developing neighborhoods on and adjacent to stations, while limiting impacts to freight, traffic, business and industry during and after construction. Many attendees were in favor of an underground alignment, especially near Fishermen’s Terminal and under Salmon Bay into Ballard, while other attendees favored a bridge crossing of Salmon Bay and were eager to learn more about the trade-offs between elevated and underground alternatives.

- **Smith Cove**
  - Values: freight; tourism; jobs; bike connections; industry; key destinations such as the future Expedia headquarters, Kinnear Park, Kerry Park, Terminal 91
  - Opportunities: improving bike connections to the Elliott Bay trail; providing transit access to future employees and residents
  - Challenges: steep grades between the station and density in Queen Anne; construction impacts for traffic and freight on Elliott Avenue W and 15th Avenue W
- **Interbay**
  - Values: affordability; density; future development; recreation; key destinations such as Interbay Golf Center, Interbay P-Patch, Interbay Athletic Complex, Whole Foods, pet hospital
  - Opportunities: improving intermodal access along W Dravus Street to Interbay station; facilitating bus-to-rail connections near 15th Avenue W and W Dravus Street; siting a station near potential future development along Thorndyke Avenue W north of the Interbay Golf Course; providing bus connections from Magnolia to the Interbay station
  - Challenges: construction impacts on 15th Avenue W; weighing the benefits and costs of a station closer to Queen Anne and one closer to Magnolia; limited east-west connections across the BNSF railyard
- **Ballard**
  - Values: vibrant; walkability; night life; diversity; small scale; maritime industry; mix of industrial, residential and commercial uses; key destinations such as businesses and restaurants along Ballard Avenue and NW Market Street, Ballard Farmers Market, Ballard Commons Park, library, Ballard Locks, Burke-Gilman Trail, Ballard High School, Safeway
  - Opportunities: orienting the Ballard station to facilitate a future northeast or east light rail extension; siting the station between 15th Avenue NW and 20th Avenue NW, near Ballard’s central hub; facilitating bus-to-rail connections along Market Street and 15th Avenue NW; facilitating connections to the neighborhood greenway on 17th Avenue

- NW and the Burke Gilman Trail; future transit-oriented development opportunities around the Ballard station; views offered by an elevated alignment and bridge crossing
- Challenges: mitigating noise, visual, traffic and construction impacts due to an elevated structure and bridge near Fishermen’s Terminal and across Salmon Bay; creating slivers of property that are difficult to redevelop; reliability impacts due to movable bridge openings; pedestrian safety near 15th Avenue NW; property requirements to site a bridge landing; impacting and/or displacing industrial uses that require freshwater docks

**Number of sign-ins:** 55

- **Elected officials/Commissioners:** Seattle City Councilmember Mike O’Brien; Seattle Planning Commissioners Kelly Rider, Rick Mohler and David Goldberg
- **SAG members:** Robert Cardona, Larry Yok