

Substitute Motion No. M2023-18

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority to confirm or modify the preferred alternative light rail route and station locations for the Ballard Link Extension, for evaluation in the Final Environmental Impact Statement along with other alternatives.

Background

The West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project is part of the Sound Transit 3 Plan (ST3) of regional transit system investments, approved for funding by voters in the region in 2016. The Project will provide fast, reliable light rail connections to dense residential and job centers throughout the region and add a new downtown Seattle light rail tunnel to provide efficient operating capacity for the entire regional system. It consists of two Link light rail extensions: one to West Seattle and the other to Ballard. The extension to West Seattle will operate from downtown Seattle to West Seattle's Alaska Junction neighborhood with four stations and will eventually connect to Everett Link. The Ballard extension will operate from downtown Seattle to Ballard's Market Street area with nine stations and will include a new rail-only tunnel from the Chinatown/International District to South Lake Union and Seattle Center/Uptown. It will eventually connect with the Tacoma Dome Link Extension.

The project development process has three phases. Phase 1 included alternatives development, environmental scoping and identification of a preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives. Phase 2 included the preparation of a Draft EIS and conceptual engineering of a preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives as identified through alternatives development. Phase 3 will include the preparation of a Final EIS, including responses to public and agency comments on the Draft EIS, and additional design and Preliminary Engineering as appropriate.

To maintain eligibility for potential federal funding and obtain required federal approvals, the project will comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the project, Sound Transit is required to comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The FTA, as the federal lead agency under NEPA, and Sound Transit, as the state lead agency under SEPA, have determined that the proposed project may have probable significant adverse environmental impacts. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies are preparing a combined NEPA/SEPA EIS for the project.

Sound Transit and the FTA published a Draft EIS for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions on January 28, 2022, starting a 90-day public comment period that ended on April 28, 2022. Hard copies of the Draft EIS were available for public viewing at public libraries and community-based organizations in the project area. Digital copies of the Draft EIS were also available on Sound Transit's website and online open house. One in-person and four virtual public meetings/hearings were conducted during the comment period. Four Community Advisory Groups organized by geographic area met approximately monthly during the comment period, providing another forum to share information and collaborate with community members around benefits, issues, and tradeoffs of the project. Numerous community briefings, office hours and property owner webinars were also held during the comment period to encourage public input. In addition, Sound Transit hosted or attended tours and community workshops focused on station areas, including the Chinatown/International District and Seattle Center stations. Comments were accepted by mail, email, online and hardcopy comment forms, transcribed phone messages and via a court reporter at the public hearings.

NEPA requires that Sound Transit identify a preferred alternative in the Final EIS (and SEPA also requires the same if the agency has one). In May 2019 (Motion No. M2019-51), the Board identified preferred alternatives and other alternatives for detailed study in the Draft EIS. In July 2022 (Motion No.

M2022-57), the Board modified the preferred alternative for the West Seattle Link Extension and directed staff to conduct further studies on refinements to the alternatives. Staff has completed those further studies, reported to the Board on February 9, 2023 [and based on potential funding identified in collaboration with King County and City of Seattle incorporated the results into the modified preferred alternative](#). Motion No. M2022-57 also requested further studies for the Ballard Link Extension. The results of this further study and public and stakeholder engagement were provided to the Board in February 2023, including how the refinements and cost savings ideas performed against project screening criteria and their affordability within the realigned financial plan.

This Motion to confirm or modify the preferred alternative for the Ballard Link Extension is a statement of the Board's current intent regarding the project based on the Board's review of the WSBLE Draft EIS findings, comments from Tribes and Tribal organizations, local and regulatory agencies, businesses and business organizations, community and arts organizations, and individuals during the comment period; review of the results of the Board-directed further studies; and new feedback received through public engagement. It is not a final decision. The Board will make a final decision on the Ballard Link Extension project to be built, including the route and station locations, after publication of the Final EIS.

On February 23, 2023, staff presented an example of a modified preferred alternative to the Sound Transit Board. The example modified preferred alternative was intended to assist in Board discussions regarding a preferred alternative.

Motion

Based on the Board's review of the findings from the *West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (January 2022); comments from Tribes and Tribal organizations, local and regulatory agencies, businesses and business organizations, community and arts organizations, and individuals during the Draft EIS comment period; review of the results of the Board-directed further studies; and new feedback received through public engagement, and other information developed to date, it is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the preferred alternative for the Ballard Link Extension is as described below.

Chinatown/International District

1. In the CID Segment: ~~to be determined~~, [The alignment would include a Station North of CID and a Station South of CID.](#)

Downtown

In the Downtown Segment, the alignment incorporates refinements to the 5th Avenue/Harrison Street (DT-1) Draft EIS Alternative, which includes a tunnel alignment generally under 5th Avenue and Westlake Avenue to Harrison Street, heading west under Harrison Street and Republican Street.

The station elements included in this refined alignment include the following:

2. Midtown Station: ~~to be determined~~, [Shifts the Midtown Station to the Station North of CID location \(as noted above\).](#)
3. Westlake Station: incorporates the Westlake Station (DT-1): Entrance Consolidation,
4. Denny Station: ~~to be determined~~, [While the previously-identified preferred alternative is not modified at this time, staff is directed to carry forward both the Denny Station on Westlake \(DT-1\) Draft EIS Station alternative and Denny Station on Terry \(i.e. South Lake Union Mix and Match\) alternative as part of ongoing](#)

environmental review. Staff is directed to continue collaboration with City of Seattle and community partners to further clarify the technical, financial, schedule and risk implications of both alternatives and return to the Board with a status report within two months.

For the Denny Station on Westlake alternative, staff is directed to include a station entrance location within 8th Avenue right-of-way and should also explore potential refinements to minimize closure of Westlake Avenue.

For the Denny Station on Terry (South Lake Union: Mix-and-Match) alternative, staff is directed to include station access from both sides of Denny Way.

5. South Lake Union Station: includes South Lake Union/Harrison Street (DT-1) Draft EIS Station,
6. Seattle Center: incorporates the Seattle Center: Republican West Station refinement.

South Interbay

7. In the South Interbay segment, the alignment follows the Modified Galer Street Station/Central Interbay (SIB-1) Alignment, which includes a tunnel portal from the Downtown segment at Republican Street, an elevated Galer Street Smith Cove Station, and an Interbay Station shifted south to straddle Dravus Street.

Interbay/Ballard

8. In the Interbay/Ballard segment, the alignment follows the Tunnel 15th Avenue Station Option (IBB-2b)* with the Tunnel 15th Avenue Cost Savings: Draft EIS location.

The preferred alternative outlined above is further described in the *West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (January 2022) and in the Board-directed further studies (January 2023).

The Board acknowledges that, regardless of the location of the CID station, south downtown would benefit from Union Station activation and Jackson Hub improvements. Building upon the recent further studies effort and past community and agency planning efforts, the Board directs staff to work with the City of Seattle, King County and other potential partners, and through engagement with community, to clarify the potential scope and schedule of such improvements as well as funding and partnership opportunities. Staff would report back to the Board on the above in advance of Board selection of the project to be built.

Based on current cost estimates and revenue projections, the above-described preferred alternative for the Ballard Link Extension along with the refinements to the preferred alternative for the West Seattle Link Extension is anticipated to exceed the assumptions in the realigned financial plan. Consistent with Motion No. M2022-57, potential funding sources to address the anticipated gap to be determined. Sound Transit, City of Seattle, and King County acknowledge there may be shared responsibility to address the additional cost of the delta between the final project to be built and the realigned financial plan through either additional funding or cost savings opportunities. Together, they have identified up to \$400 million in additional potential funding for the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions through various sources including publicly-owned property, value capture from increased development, and in-

[kind contributions. The City of Seattle and King County provided letters on March 23, 2023, indicating their intent to work with Sound Transit to further analyze costs and funding sources over the next year and develop a funding agreement in advance of the Board actions to select projects to be built for the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions.](#)

This motion also authorizes staff to advance any necessary environmental review and additional design, including Preliminary Engineering for the project. The Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after completion of the Final EIS.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on _____.

ATTEST:

Dow Constantine
Board Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator