

Motion No. M2023-18

Confirming or modifying the preferred light rail route and station locations for the Ballard Link Extension Final Environmental Impact Statement

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
System Expansion Committee Board	3/9/2023 3/23/2023	Recommend to Board Final action	Don Billen, PEPD Executive Director Cathal Ridge, Executive Corridor Director

Proposed action

Confirms or modifies the preferred alternative light rail route and station locations for the Ballard Link Extension for additional environmental review, including preparation of a Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Key features summary

- This action confirms or modifies the preferred alternative(s) for the Ballard Link Extension from the range of alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS and further studies directed by the Board in July 2022.
- Alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS were identified by the Board in 2019 in Motion Nos. M2019-51 and M2019-104. In 2022, the Board in Motion No. M2022-57 also directed further studies and public and stakeholder engagement to inform a future action to confirm or modify the preferred alternative for the Ballard Link Extension.
- A status report on the further studies and public engagement was provided to the Board in February 2023.
- Additional design or Preliminary Engineering as appropriate of the preferred alternative(s) confirmed or modified by the Board will be advanced for additional environmental review, including publication of a Final EIS.
- The Final EIS will respond to comments received on the Draft EIS. The Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after publication of the Final EIS.

Alternatives for consideration

The alternatives below were evaluated in the *West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (January 2022) and in the Board-directed further studies. These alternatives can be considered by the Board for confirmation or modification of the preferred alternative(s) for the Ballard Link Extension. At the time the Sound Transit Board identified alternatives for study in the Draft EIS (in Motion Nos. M2019-51 and M2019-104), some alternatives were anticipated to require third-party funding based on early cost estimates. The asterisk (*) identifies alternatives that require third-party funding and the alternatives that would only connect to these alternatives in adjacent segments.

Chinatown/International District

Draft EIS Preferred Alternative

- No preferred alternative was identified in this segment

Other Draft EIS alternatives

- 4th Avenue Shallow (CID-1a)* – At-grade alignment east of the existing light rail line, entering a tunnel between Edgar Martinez Drive South and South Royal Brougham Way; heading northwest to be under 4th Avenue South to a new International District/Chinatown Station. From the station, the tunnel alignment would continue north under 4th Avenue South and then transition to follow 5th Avenue or 6th Avenue in the Downtown Segment. The new International District/Chinatown Station would be under 4th Avenue South, west of the existing International District/Chinatown Station. The station platform would be approximately 80 feet deep. An underground connection would be provided to the southbound platform at the existing station. The 4th Avenue South Viaduct would be demolished and reconstructed to accommodate construction of this station. The Stadium Station on the existing light rail line would be removed and rebuilt to accommodate construction of this alternative.
- 4th Avenue Deep Station Option (CID-1b)* – Similar to the 4th Avenue Shallow Alternative, except the at-grade guideway would begin slightly farther east of the existing Link light rail line. The new International District/Chinatown Station would be under 4th Avenue South, west of the existing International District/Chinatown Station. An underground connection would be provided to the southbound platform at the existing station. The tunnel and station would be about 190 feet deep. The 4th Avenue South Viaduct would be demolished and reconstructed to accommodate construction of this station.
- 5th Avenue Shallow (CID-2a) and 5th Avenue Shallow (CID-2a) Diagonal Station Configuration – At-grade alignment east of the existing light rail line, entering a tunnel in the vicinity of South Massachusetts Street. The tunnel would continue north beneath 6th Avenue South and then transition to under 5th Avenue South near Seattle Boulevard South, east of the existing International District/Chinatown Station. There is also a diagonal station configuration where the tunnel would be under 6th Avenue South and transition to 5th Avenue South between South Weller Street and South Jackson Street. The station platform for the diagonal station configuration would be between 5th Avenue South and 6th Avenue South. From the station, the tunnel would continue north to James Street, either staying under 5th Avenue or transitioning to be under 6th Avenue in the Downtown Segment. The new International District/Chinatown Station would be under 5th Avenue South, east of the existing International District/Chinatown Station. An underground connection would be provided to the northbound platform at the existing station. The northbound station platform would be stacked over the southbound station platform and would be approximately 90 feet deep (to the lower platform). The station platform for the diagonal station configuration would be approximately 115 feet.
- 5th Avenue Deep Station Option (CID-2b) – Similar to the 5th Avenue Shallow Alternative, except with a deeper tunnel and station. The new International District/Chinatown Station would be under 5th Avenue South, east of the existing International District/Chinatown Station. An underground connection would be provided to the northbound platform at the existing station. The tunnel and station would be about 180 feet deep.

Further study concepts

The following concepts evaluated in the Board-directed further studies may also be considered in the identification of the preferred alternative in the Chinatown/International District segment:

- CID 4th Avenue Shallow Refined – Refinements to Draft EIS 4th Avenue Shallow (CID-1a) Alternative to maximize community benefits while minimizing cost and impacts.
- CID 4th Avenue Shallower - Refinements to Draft EIS 4th Avenue Shallow (CID-1a) Alternative to improve passenger experience and access.
- Station North of CID – Station and alignment option close to Pioneer Square Station, east of 4th Avenue.
- Station South of CID – Station and alignment option south of CID, under 6th Avenue and south of Seattle Boulevard South.
- Station North of CID and Station South of CID – Station and alignment options north of CID (close to Pioneer Square, east of 4th Avenue) and south of CID (under 6th Avenue S, south of Seattle Boulevard South).

Downtown

Draft EIS Preferred Alternative

- 5th Avenue/Harrison Street (DT-1) – Tunnel alignment generally under 5th Avenue and Westlake Avenue to Harrison Street, heading west under Harrison Street and Republican Street. Includes a Midtown Station under 5th Avenue between Columbia Street and Madison Street; a Westlake Station under 5th Avenue between Pike Street and Pine Street; a Denny Station under Westlake Avenue between Denny Way and Lenora Street; a South Lake Union Station under Harrison Street, between Dexter Avenue North and Aurora Avenue North; and a Seattle Center Station under Republican Street on the west side of Seattle Center.

Other Draft EIS alternatives

- 6th Avenue/Mercer Street (DT-2) – Tunnel alignment under 6th Avenue and Terry Avenue to Mercer Street, heading west on the north side of Mercer Street. Includes a Midtown Station under 6th Avenue between Spring Street and Seneca Street; a Westlake Station under 6th Avenue between Olive Way and Pine Street; a Denny Station under Terry Avenue North between Denny Way and John Street; a South Lake Union Station north of Mercer Street between Aurora Avenue North and Taylor Avenue North; and a Seattle Center Station under Mercer Street between Warren Avenue North and 1st Avenue North.

Further study concepts

The following concepts evaluated in the Board-directed further studies may also be considered for potential modification to the Preferred Alternative in the Downtown segment.

For the Midtown Station:

- Midtown Station (DT-1): Columbia Street right-of-way – Explore shifting station entrance into public right-of-way.

- Midtown Station (DT-1): 4th Avenue right-of-way – Explore shifting station entrance into public-right-of-way.

For the Westlake Station:

- Westlake Station (DT-1): Entrance Consolidation – Explore consolidating station entrances at Westlake Station.

For the Denny and South Lake Union stations:

- South Lake Union: Mix-and-Match - Connects Westlake/5th Avenue Station (DT-1) to Denny/Terry Station (DT-2) to South Lake Union/Harrison Station (DT-1).
- Denny Station: Entrance on Both Sides of Denny Way – Explore opportunities to provide station access from both sides of Denny Way.
- Denny Station (DT-1): 8th Avenue right-of-way – Explore station entrance locations for the Denny/Westlake Station (DT-1) within the 8th Avenue right-of-way.
- Denny Station (DT-1): Lenora Street right-of-way – Explore station entrance locations for the Denny/Westlake Station (DT-1) within Lenora Street right-of-way.

For the Seattle Center Station:

- Seattle Center: Mix-and-Match - Connects South Lake Union/Harrison Station (DT-1) to Seattle Center/Mercer Station (DT-2) to Prospect or Blaine tunnel portal.
- Seattle Center: Republication West Station – Shifts the Seattle Center Republican Station (DT-1) to the west.

South Interbay

Draft EIS Preferred Alternative

- Galer Street Station/Central Interbay (SIB-1) – Alignment exits the downtown tunnel at West Republican Street and would continue along Elliott Avenue West to an elevated Smith Cove Station. The elevated guideway would cross over the Magnolia Bridge before continuing north between the BNSF Railway tracks and the Interbay Golf Center and Interbay Athletic Complex. The Smith Cove Station would be elevated above the West Galer Street bridge.

Other Draft EIS alternatives

- Prospect Street Station/15th Avenue (SIB-2) – Alignment exits the downtown tunnel at West Republican Street and would continue elevated along Elliott Avenue West to an elevated Smith Cove Station. The elevated guideway would continue northeast and then transition to a retained cut along the western edge of the Southwest Queen Anne Greenbelt. It would then transition to elevated guideway in the middle of 15th Avenue West. The Smith Cove Station would be elevated on the east side of Elliott Avenue West, north of Kinnear Park and West Prospect Street.
- Prospect Street Station/Central Interbay (SIB-3) – Alignment runs in a retained cut after exiting the downtown tunnel at a portal east of Elliott Avenue West near West Prospect Street, at the north end of Kinnear Park; continuing north to a Smith Cove Station. The guideway would continue north in a retained cut along the edge of the Southwest Queen Anne Greenbelt; transitioning to elevated guideway near West Howe Street, crossing 15th Avenue West, and traveling northwest along the northern side of West Armory Way. It would continue north along the western edge of Interbay Golf Center and Interbay Athletic Complex and then continue over West Dravus Street. The Smith Cove Station would be in a retained cut north of West Prospect Street.

Further study concepts

The following concepts evaluated in the Board-directed further studies may also be considered for potential modification to the preferred alternative in the South Interbay segment:

- Modified Galer Street Station/Central Interbay (SIB-1) Alignment – 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.
- Modified Prospect Street Station/Central Interbay (SIB-3) Alignment – Includes a tunnel portal from the Downtown segment at Mercer Place, a Smith Cove Station shifted north of Magnolia Bridge and an Interbay station shifted south to straddle Dravus Street.
- Consolidated Alignment – Includes a tunnel portal from the Downtown segment at Blaine Street and a below-grade alignment leading to a consolidated Smith Cove-Interbay Station

Interbay/Ballard

Draft EIS Preferred Alternative

- Elevated 14th Avenue (IBB-1a) – The alignment crosses over West Dravus Street, curving northeast to Interbay Station; continuing northeast over the West Emerson Street interchange and over Salmon Bay on a high-level fixed-span bridge on the east side of the Ballard Bridge. The bridge over Salmon Bay would have a clearance of approximately 136 feet; however, the height of the bridge could be adjusted through coordination with the United States Coast Guard. Elevated guideway would continue north within the 14th Avenue Northwest right-of-way, transitioning to the east edge of the road before Northwest Market Street. The Interbay Station would be elevated just north of West Dravus Street between the railroad tracks and 17th Avenue West. The Ballard Station would be elevated and on the east side of the 14th Avenue Northwest, straddling Northwest Market Street.

Draft EIS Preferred Alternative with Third-Party Funding

- Tunnel 14th Avenue (IBB-2a)* – The guideway would cross under West Dravus Street and enter a retained cut before the Interbay Station; entering a tunnel portal east of Thorndyke Avenue West, traveling under Salmon Bay to 14th Avenue Northwest. The tunnel would continue north to the Ballard Station. The Interbay Station would be in a retained cut north of West Dravus Street, between 17th Avenue West and Thorndyke Avenue West. The Ballard Station would be in a tunnel under 14th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street.
- Tunnel 15th Avenue Station Option (IBB-2b)* – Similar to the Tunnel 14th Avenue Alternative until heading north under Salmon Bay, just north of West Nickerson Street, continuing in a tunnel east of 15th Avenue Northwest to the Ballard Station. The Interbay Station would be the same as the Tunnel 14th Avenue Alternative. The Ballard Station would be in a tunnel east of 15th Avenue Northwest and south of Northwest Market Street.

Other Draft EIS alternatives

- Elevated 14th Avenue Alignment Option (from Prospect Station/15th Avenue) (IBB-1b) – Similar to the Elevated 14th Avenue Alternative, except the alignment would start north of the Interbay Station,

extending northeast of the intersection of 15th Avenue West and West Emerson Street on elevated guideway, connecting to the 14th Avenue bridge over Salmon Bay. The height of the bridge could be adjusted through coordination with the United States Coast Guard. The Interbay Station would be the same as the Elevated 15th Avenue Alternative. The Ballard Station would be the same as the Elevated 14th Avenue Alternative.

- Elevated 15th Avenue (IBB-3)* – Elevated guideway at West Barrett Street in the median of 15th Avenue West, continuing to the Interbay Station; crossing to the west side of 15th Avenue West. The elevated guideway would continue over the West Emerson Street interchange, crossing the eastern edge of Fishermen’s Terminal before crossing Salmon Bay on a moveable bridge west of the Ballard Bridge. The bridge over Salmon Bay would have a clearance of approximately 70 feet when closed; however, the height of the bridge could be adjusted through coordination with the United States Coast Guard. The alternative would continue north to an elevated Ballard Station on the south side of Northwest Market Street. The Interbay Station would be elevated above 15th Avenue West, straddling West Dravus Street. The Ballard Station would be elevated above the east edge of 15th Avenue Northwest.

Further study concepts

The following concepts evaluated in the Board-directed further studies may also be considered for potential modification to the Preferred Alternative in the Interbay/Ballard segment:

- Tunnel 15th Avenue Cost Savings: Draft EIS location – Reduces size of east station entrance and eliminates south entrance to reduce costs.
- Tunnel 15th Avenue Cost Savings: Station in right-of-way – Shifts station construction into 15th Avenue NW and eliminates south entrance to reduce costs.
- Tunnel 15th Avenue Entrance North of Market – Adds station entrance to northeast corner in public right-of-way to improve passenger access to the north.
- Tunnel 14th Avenue Station Access – Includes pedestrian access improvements across 15th Avenue NW to improve passenger access to the west.
- Shifted Tunnel 14th Avenue Station – Shifts tunnel alignment to the east and eliminates western station entrance to reduce costs.

Union Station activation and Jackson Hub improvements

As directed in Motion No. M2022-57, Sound Transit conducted further study and engagement between community and agency partners in the Chinatown/International District segment focused on the shallow CID station and alignment options to collectively address remaining questions, minimize potential impacts and maximize community benefits through design, mitigation approaches and/or as part of broader partnerships. The further studies and engagement with community highlighted 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 may direct 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 could report back to the Board on the above in advance of Board selection of the project to be built.

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 includes 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 preferred alternative. Staff has completed those further studies and reported to the Board on February 9, 2023. In addition, Motion No. M2022-57 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.

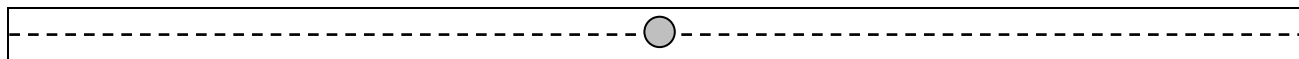
This Motion to confirm or modify the preferred alternative for the Ballard Link Extension is a statement of the Board’s current intent regarding the project based on the Board’s review of the WSBLE Draft EIS findings; comments from Tribes and Tribal organizations, local and regulatory agencies, businesses 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. In advancing the further studies, the evaluation was conducted consistent with the project purpose and need (*West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter 1, January 2022*), which builds upon the criteria established in the ST3 ballot measure (Resolution No. R2016-17) and the five core principles identified in both Motion No. M2020-36 and Motion No. M2020-37 (completing the spine, connecting centers, ridership potential, socio-economic equity, and advancing logically beyond the spine).

Consistent with the System Expansion Implementation Plan (SEIP), at the beginning of the project development process in 2017, Sound Transit and the City of Seattle finalized a partnering agreement specific to the project, which the Seattle City Council and the Sound Transit Board later adopted. The Partnering Agreement notes that “the parties acknowledge the importance of meeting Project schedule milestones and objectives in order to begin light rail operations on time. The Partnering Agreement further notes that “In cases where the City or other parties have an interest in changing Project scope beyond that allowed under Sound Transit’s financial plan, the City will collaborate with Sound Transit to identify reductions in scope or risk elsewhere on the project or provide increased funding through local contributions to finance the requested change.” This requirement for local contributions for substantial scope expansions is mirrored in the partnering agreements Sound Transit has entered into with several other municipalities in the region. In May 2019 (Motion No. M2019-51), the Board built on this approach, and established a process outlining that after publication of the Draft EIS and receipt of public comment, if the City of Seattle or other parties had an interest in expanding scope beyond that allowed under Sound Transit’s financial plan, identification as the preferred alternative would be contingent on the identification of third-party funding to cover the additional cost of delivering the project.

As part of the alternatives development process, Sound Transit developed comparative estimates to inform the evaluation of alternatives. Estimates were based on limited conceptual design. As design has advanced through the Draft EIS process, estimates have been updated and have changed. Estimates will continue to be updated as design advances and new information becomes available and will inform future discussions related to additional project scope elements and associated local funding contributions.

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

Project status



Project Identification	Alternatives Identification	Conceptual Engineering/ Draft EIS	Preliminary Engineering/ Final EIS	Final Design	Construction

Projected completion date for Preliminary Engineering/Final EIS: 2024

Project scope, schedule and budget summary are located on page 111 of the December 2022 Agency Progress Report.

Fiscal information

The current cost estimate for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project is \$14.6 billion in 2022\$ and is affordable within the Agency's Finance Plan by 2039. Staff are managing the project toward the Target Schedule of 2037, while working to close an affordability gap of \$2.2 billion in 2022\$. This action is consistent with the schedule and financial plan adopted by the Board in Resolution No. R2021-05 and does not impact the affordability of any other system expansion project.

The affordability of this action on the Financial Plan is unknown at this point due to the cost range of preferred alternative options, which have a variance to the Financial Plan cost estimate of -\$400 million to +1,300 million in 2019\$. Additionally, the range of options includes uncertainty in third party funding and impact on schedule.

Disadvantaged and small business participation

Not applicable to this action.

Public involvement

Sound Transit has engaged stakeholders, the public and various agencies at the local, regional, state and federal levels to solicit early and continued feedback since project development was initiated in 2017. The main focus during the Draft EIS phase was on engagement activities leading up to and during the formal Draft EIS public comment period, which was held for 90 days from January 28 to April 28, 2022.

In July 2022, the Board in Motion No. M2022-57 identified a preferred alternative for the West Seattle Link Extension and directed further studies and public engagement to inform a future action to confirm or modify the preferred alternative for the Ballard Link Extension. Since then, Sound Transit staff have been engaging community members and conducting further studies in response to Board direction and community feedback.

Between July 2022 and February 2023, further studies engagement activities have included hosting open houses, convening community workshops, providing community briefings, meeting with business, residents and property owners and participating in events and tours. Opportunities were provided for engagement in person and online, with an online open house and surveys that complemented other further studies engagement.

- In the CID, over the course of five public meetings and two online surveys, community members shared ideas for station locations outside of the CID, refinements to the 4th Avenue Shallow alternative and other urban design and place-keeping ideas. Community feedback at each meeting helped shape the scope and direction of the further study efforts and the engagement process. Over the course of five months, community members asked questions and shared thoughts on opportunities and issues, who might benefit and who might be burdened, and how concepts might support neighborhood goals. To gather additional feedback from community members, Sound Transit conducted door-to-door outreach, presented at residential and business forums in the CID neighborhood and met with community groups. Language interpretation was proactively provided at each CID open house, workshop and forum in Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese, and meeting materials were available in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese and Vietnamese, as needed.
- In Interbay/Ballard, the project provided two open house/workshop forums and an online survey to share information and some results and obtain feedback on the further study concepts in Interbay and Ballard.

- The Online Open House website, which is translated into 4 languages, hosted meeting materials from the CID and Interbay/Ballard open houses and workshops.
- Provided online further studies survey between January 26 and February 17, 2023 for public to provide additional feedback on the CID, Downtown, and Interbay/Ballard further study results, and learn more about the West Seattle, Duwamish, and SODO further studies. The online further studies survey was available in Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish.
- Provided in-person open house on February 8, 2023 for public to learn about further studies results, ask questions, and have conversations with staff.

Time constraints

A delay in confirming or modifying the preferred alternative to be studied in the Final EIS would delay Final EIS publication. Follow-on events, such as additional design and Preliminary Engineering would also be delayed.

In addition, given the number of new ideas under consideration throughout the corridor and acknowledging that community feedback is ongoing and Board direction is still pending, there is a high likelihood that additional environmental review prior to publishing the Final EIS will be required. The scope and schedule of any potential additional environmental review will depend on the Board's actions.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Motion No. M2022-57: Modified the preferred light rail route and station locations for the West Seattle Link Extension for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and requested further studies in some areas.

Motion No. M2019-104: Recommended additional alternatives for study in the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Motion No. M2019-51: Identified the preferred alternative(s) and other alternatives for study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project.

Motion No. M2017-161: Authorized the chief executive officer to execute a Partnering Agreement with the City of Seattle for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project.

Resolution No. R2017-32: Amended the Adopted 2017 Budget to create the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project by (a) establishing the Project Allocation to Date through the completion of the Preliminary Engineering Phase in the amount of \$285,896,000 and (b) establishing the 2017 Annual Budget in the amount of \$4,150,000; (2) authorized the project to advance through Gate 1 within Sound Transit's Phase Gate Process; and (3) established the name of the project as the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project.

Environmental review – KH 3/2/23

Legal review – AJP 3/7/23



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: The alignment would include a Station North of CID and a Station South of CID.

The Board directs further study of the CID 4th Avenue Shallower Alternative as part of ongoing environmental review.

Additionally, the Board directs further study of the following concepts in the Chinatown/International District segment as part of ongoing environmental review:

- maximizing connections to all regional/local transit modes comparing the opportunities of the 4th Ave Shallow and 4th Ave Shallower alternatives to the Station North of CID and Station South of CID alternative; and
- ways to minimize/eliminate construction impacts to CID (i.e., truck trips, more carbon-friendly excavation and material disposal methods, etc.) and to significantly reduce the duration of construction.

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: 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: 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 by May 25, 2023.

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. The scope of Jackson Hub Improvements should extend beyond the CID to the abutting stations and transfer points to improve accessibility. 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. 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.

In addition, the Board directs staff to continue public engagement, planning, and design to address other project-wide interests and concerns, as conveyed in comments received during the recent public comment period, including but not limited to: encourage more biking and walking mode share; accommodate future expansion; advance equitable TOD, particularly community-led/driven TOD; design shallower tunnel stations and fast and reliable transit transfers; enhance station accessibility and reliability of vertical conveyances.

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 March 23, 2023.


Dow Constantine
Board Chair

ATTEST:


Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator