

**SOUND TRANSIT  
STAFF REPORT**

**MOTION NO. M2001-104**

**Evaluation of Central Link Route and Station Alternatives  
From Convention Place to Northgate**

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Type of Action:</b>	<b>Staff Contact:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>
Board of Directors	9/27/01	Action	Ahmad Fazel Ron Endlich James Irish	206-398-5389 206-398-5141 206-398-5140

**OBJECTIVE OF ACTION**

Evaluate alternative Central Link light rail routes and stations from Convention Place to Northgate to identify cost more effective ways to build the Link light rail project consistent with the objectives identified in Sound Move.

**ACTION**

- To direct the Executive Director to evaluate Central Link light rail routes and station alternatives between Convention Place and Northgate.
- To direct the Executive Director to include the cost for this evaluation effort in the Sound Transit 2002 budget.

**KEY FEATURES**

**Highlights of Action:**

**Authorizes implementation of a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, preliminary engineering, and design to evaluate routes north of the initial segment (north of Convention Place).**

**Included in the evaluation, are the following elements:**

- Study areas, defined in three segments where alternative alignments will be evaluated: Capitol Hill/South Lake Union; Ship Canal Crossing/University District; Northgate
- Alternatives scoping and screening for the supplemental EIS
- Draft SEIS and conceptual engineering
- Final SEIS and preliminary engineering for the preferred alignment selected by the Board at the completion of the evaluation process
- Stakeholder and third party coordination
- Community outreach
- Stops the SEIS that is already underway for the segment from NE 45<sup>th</sup> Street to Northgate and incorporates that process into the new SEIS.
- Defines a proposed schedule of about 18 to 24 months to complete the workplan, including Board adoption of the project route and stations and preliminary engineering for the selected project.

**BUDGET**

Capital costs to implement the 2-year workplan for the review of alternative alignments for the segment from Convention Place to Northgate is \$21 million in year of expenditure dollars. This estimate is included within the finance plan, as presented to the Board and will be included in the proposed 2002 budget.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

### **Impact on Current Year Budget:**

The workplan would begin September 28, 2001 and the cost of this year's work is within the 2001 budget.

### **Impact on Sound Move Budget:**

The cost of the workplan is not included in the current *Sound Move* budget.

### **Impact on Cost-to-Complete:**

The cost of the workplan increases the total project cost-to-complete.

### **Impact on Subarea(s) Budget(s):**

The Central Link project addressed in the workplan is within the North King Subarea and is not currently in the subarea budget.

## **HISTORY OF PROJECT**

Sound Transit has studied many different routes between Downtown Seattle and Northgate over the last dozen years. Some routes have received substantial environmental/public review and engineering analysis while other route ideas have received virtually none. The 1996 *Sound Move* plan identified the Capitol Hill/Portage Bay tunnel route as the preferred route in the north. Sound Transit completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the Capitol Hill locally preferred alternative (LPA) route in November 1999. The Sound Transit Board has not yet selected the preferred route between NE 45<sup>th</sup> and Northgate. Because of recent budget and construction issues with the LPA, the Sound Transit Board has asked for a re-evaluation of routes in the north. Alternative alignments will be evaluated to determine which minimizes capital and operating costs per passenger trip, creates the greatest economic net benefits, and maximizes ridership (focusing special attention on routes generating new ridership as opposed to existing transit riders) given the available resources.

### **Prior Board or Committee Actions and Relevant Board Policies**

<b>Motion or Resolution Number</b>	<b>Summary of Action</b>	<b>Date of Action</b>
M99-14	Identifying the locally preferred alternative for alignment, station locations, and location of a vehicle maintenance facility for the central Link light rail line.	2/25/99
R99-34	Selecting the alignment alternatives and profiles, station locations, and vehicle maintenance base site alternative to be built for the Central Link light rail line	11/18/99

## **CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY**

Evaluation of route and station alternatives north of Convention Place will not begin until the Board approves the action.

## **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION**

The workplan includes working in close partnership and coordination with the City of Seattle, King County, WSDOT, the University of Washington, and other partners and stakeholders with an interest in the Link project from Convention Place to Northgate.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Evaluation of routes for extending Link north has been a subject for public discussion since spring of 2001. Sound Transit has participated in many community and neighborhood meetings throughout this period. In addition, Sound Transit held a public forum in June on Link issues. The City of Seattle, King County, University of Washington and some members of the public have expressed support for re-evaluating alternatives to the north. Some community organizations, particularly those representing the neighborhoods along I-5 adjacent to Portage Bay, have expressed opposition to alternative routes through their community.

The workplan includes public outreach throughout the alternative screening, SEIS, and design process.

## **DESCRIPTION OF POLICY**

The Board has selected a route north of Convention Place going through First Hill, Capitol Hill, and Portage Bay to the University District. This action provides for an evaluation of the routes and station alternatives between Convention Place and the University District as well as for the segment from the University District to Northgate.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Retain the current LPA route and evaluate measures to reduce the cost and risk of constructing the LPA.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Staff recommends proceeding with an evaluation of route and station alternatives from Convention Place to Northgate. Based on the extensive level of work done to date and the detailed awareness of construction and budget issues and community concerns, staff is suggesting a targeted approach to reconsidering route options. This proposed approach reflects the desire of some Board members to expedite the study effort while most efficiently using the limited resources available to complete the required technical work. To achieve these goals, staff proposes that a fairly limited set of options be considered at the start of the environmental scoping process. The recommended options are:

- Capitol Hill/South Lake Union (Capitol Hill LPA route including Capitol Hill station alternatives, Eastlake Avenue route, Boren Avenue route, route bypassing First Hill with stations between Capitol Hill and First Hill and on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue)
- Ship Canal crossing/University District (Portage Bay tunnel LPA route, Montlake tunnel route via Rainier Vista, tunnel route in the vicinity of the University bridge, and high- or mid-level bridge along I-5)
- Northgate (8<sup>th</sup> Avenue route – 2 options, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue route)

## **LEGAL REVIEW**

DLB 9/25/01

## **SOUND TRANSIT**

### **MOTION NO. M2001-104**

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority directing the Executive Director to evaluate Central Link Light Rail routes and station alternatives between Convention Place and Northgate.

#### **Background:**

On November 18, 1999, after completion of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the Sound Transit Board selected the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Central Link Light Rail project (Resolution No. R99-34). For purposes of pursuing federal funding, the portion of the LPA between NE 45<sup>th</sup> Street to the Operations and Maintenance Facility was identified as the Minimum Operable Segment.

Since then, the estimated cost for the Central Link project rose over previous cost estimates, particularly for construction of the north tunnel portion of the project. In April 2001, the U.S. Department of Transportation Inspector General recommended that federal funding for FY 2001 and FY 2002 be held in abeyance. As a result, the Board began to re-examine the project to see if there were other ways to build the Link light rail project consistent with the objectives identified in Sound Move.

The Board directed staff to study how to build the southern portion of Central Link first to allow more time to study the more complex design issues on the northern portion of the project and to consider more cost effective ways to build the northern portion of the project.

As a result of these studies, staff developed a recommendation to begin construction of the southern segment that extends from Convention Place south to South 154<sup>th</sup> Station and Sea-Tac Airport while studying route options for the northern segment. The work on the southern, initial segment is contained in Motion No. M2001-103.

This motion addresses the northern portion of Central Link from Convention Place to Northgate. This motion would authorize staff to evaluate alternatives for extending north. Approval of this motion would commence a workplan that includes a supplemental environmental impact statement, engineering, and design work. Alternative alignments will be evaluated to determine which minimizes capital and operating costs per passenger trip, creates the greatest economic net benefits, and maximizes ridership (focusing special attention on routes generating new ridership as opposed to existing transit riders) given the available resources. This workplan is expected to take approximately 18 to 24 months. Once an alignment is known and associated cost estimates are developed, staff will prepare a finance plan with Board guidance.

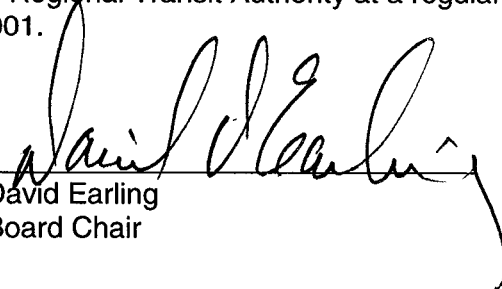
Additionally, the budget for completing these tasks will be presented to the Board during the 2002 budget process. However, prior to the 2002 budget adoption, the Executive Director may seek Board approval to enter into contracts to begin work on some of these tasks. As approval is sought on these contracts, budget authority will be requested as well.

#### **Motion:**

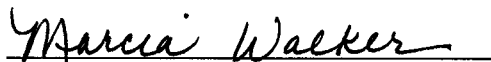
It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the Executive Director is directed to evaluate Central Link Light Rail routes and station alternatives between Convention Place and Northgate and to perform new environmental, engineering, and

design studies as described in the staff report for this motion and as provided in the Central Link September Progress Report on the three-month workplan, in the section titled "Extending Link North."

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2001.

  
David Earling  
Board Chair

ATTEST:

  
Marcia Walker  
Board Administrator