

SOUND TRANSIT

RESOLUTION NO. R2001-09

A resolution of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority amending Sound Move by: (1) transferring the budget from the I-405 at Talbot Road Regional Express capital project in south Renton to the I-405 at Park Avenue project in north Renton; (2) renaming the I-405 at Park Avenue project as the Renton HOV Improvements project; and (3) eliminating the I-405 at Talbot Road project.

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, herein after referred to as Sound Transit, is a duly organized regional transit authority existing under RCW Chapters 81.104 and 81.112 and has powers necessary to implement a high capacity transportation system; and

WHEREAS, on November 5, 1996, central Puget Sound area voters approved local funding for Sound Move, the ten-year plan for regional high-capacity transit; and

WHEREAS, Sound Move contemplated two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) direct freeway access ramps – I-405 at Talbot Road and I-405 at Park Avenue – to improve the speed, reliability, and access of transit and other HOVs between the regional freeway system and the Renton urban core; and

WHEREAS, after evaluating nearly 30 potential HOV improvement concepts the project team has recommended a new I-405 HOV direct freeway access interchange in north Renton at North 8th Street, just south of the Park Avenue location contemplated in Sound Move, to enhance transit speed and reliability in Renton's urban core; and

WHEREAS, for reasons such as cost-effectiveness and compatibility with other regional improvement projects, the project team has concluded that the I-405 at Talbot Road project is infeasible and has been unable to identify a feasible HOV direct freeway access project or arterial HOV improvement project in south Renton; and

WHEREAS, conceptual design costs for the HOV direct freeway interchange project at I-405 at North 8th Street range from \$75.3 million to \$93.1 million (YOES\$); and

WHEREAS, the combined budget for the I-405 at Park Avenue and the I-405 at Talbot Road projects is \$84.4 million (YOES\$); and

WHEREAS, the available budget falls within the range of conceptual cost estimates for improvements at I-405 at North 8th Street and project costs will be more specifically established at 30% design; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes fall within the range of alternatives and impacts analyzed in the 1993 System Plan Environmental Impact Statement; and

WHEREAS, alternative actions to address HOV needs in south Renton have been identified; and

WHEREAS, eliminating the I-405 at Talbot Road project in south Renton from Phase I of Sound Move and transferring the budget to complete the proposed north end project will require an amendment to Sound Move; and

WHEREAS, on July 23, 1998, the Board adopted Resolution No. R98-22 establishing criteria for evaluating proposals to amend Sound Move; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds that the proposed amendment to Sound Move is consistent with the established amendment criteria; and

WHEREAS, this proposed action has the support of the Eastside Transportation Partnership; and

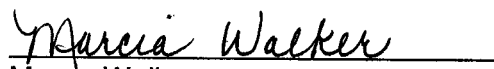
WHEREAS, amending Sound Move requires a two-thirds vote of the entire membership of the Board of Sound Transit.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by a two-thirds vote of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that Sound Move be amended to: (1) transfer the budget from the I-405 at Talbot Road Regional Express capital project in south Renton to the I-405 at Park Avenue project in north Renton; (2) rename the I-405 at Park Avenue project as the Renton HOV improvements project; and (3) eliminate the I-405 at Talbot Road project.

ADOPTED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on the 9th day of August, 2001.


Dave Earling
Board Chair

ATTEST:


Marcia Walker
Board Administrator

STAFF REPORT

SOUND TRANSIT RESOLUTION NO. R2001-09

Amending Sound Move to Combine the I-405 at Park Avenue and I-405 at Talbot Road High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Interchange Projects

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Finance Committee Board	8/2/01 8/9/01	Canceled Action	Agnes Govern, Director, Regional Express Jim Edwards, Program Manager, Capital Projects Tracy Krawczyk, Project Manager, Capital Projects	(206) 398-5037 (206) 398-5436 (206) 689-4906

PROPOSED ACTION

Approval of Resolution No. R2001-09 will amend Sound Move by: (1) transferring the budget from the I-405 at Talbot Road Regional Express capital project in south Renton to the I-405 at Park Avenue project in north Renton; (2) renaming the I-405 at Park Avenue project as the Renton HOV Improvements project; and (3) eliminating the I-405 at Talbot Road project.

KEY FEATURES

Highlights of Proposed Action:

- ◆ Recommends an amendment to Sound Move to: transfer the funds from the I-405 at Talbot Road Regional Express Capital project to the I-405 at Park Avenue project, rename the I-405 at Park Avenue project as the "Renton HOV Improvements" project, and eliminate the I-405 at Talbot Road project.
- ◆ Provides an update on work done to date on the Renton projects, including the results of the alternatives analysis process.
- ◆ Summarizes the recommended approach to move forward with design of an HOV direct freeway access project at I-405 and North 8th Street in north Renton.
- ◆ Summarizes on-going efforts to identify and fund HOV improvements in south Renton, consistent with Sound Move.

Discussion of Proposed Action:

Sound Transit's 2001 Adopted Budget allocates a combined \$84.4 million (YOES) for HOV direct freeway access improvements in Renton. This includes \$42.9 million for the I-405 at Park Avenue Project and \$41.5 million for the I-405 at Talbot Road Project (all YOES). These projects were envisioned to improve transit speed and reliability between the regional freeway system and the Renton urban core, including the Downtown Renton Transit Center, as well as enhance carpool and vanpool access to major employment centers. To date, these projects have been jointly managed within combined project agreements.

Over the past year, a multi-agency project management team (PMT) has met to identify and evaluate project concepts that best provide for transit, carpool, and vanpool needs within Renton's urban core. Currently ST Express buses spend more than 15 minutes on local arterial streets to serve the Renton Transit Center, in addition to time maneuvering through freeway congestion on I-405 and SR 167 to reach the local streets. Carpools and vanpools on the freeway system destined to and from the Renton urban core also must use congested interchanges that serve all area traffic.

After conducting an extensive alternatives analysis process that included nearly 30 potential HOV interchange concepts and arterial HOV improvements, the project team has recommended the design and construction of a new I-405 HOV direct freeway access interchange in north Renton at North 8th Street, just south of the Park Avenue location identified in Sound Move. Though much effort was put into identifying a feasible HOV improvement in south Renton, the PMT finally determined that it is unable to move forward with one at this time. Several factors contributed to this determination:

1. **Cost-Effectiveness.** Without freeway-to-freeway HOV access at the I-405 and SR 167 interchange, it is difficult to find a cost-effective HOV direct freeway access project that would benefit the two area ST Express bus routes (560 and 565) and other HOVs between the freeways and south Renton.
2. **Conflicts with Other Regional Improvement Projects.** The I-405 Corridor Program has identified the reconstruction of the I-405 and SR 167 interchange as a proposed project, along with widening throughout the I-405 corridor. Many of the HOV interchange concepts evaluated by the PMT posed conflicts with the potential footprint of the major interchange reconstruction project, potentially limiting redesign options for this high priority regional project and/or potentially placing a Sound Transit investment at risk of being reconstructed.
3. **Compatibility with Renton Goals and Policies.** The numerous arterial HOV concepts studied were not cost-effective and/or were not compatible with City of Renton goals and policies.

While the PMT concluded it was unable to move forward with either an HOV direct freeway access or arterial HOV project in south Renton at this time, alternative efforts to pursue these needed improvements have been identified. For the HOV direct freeway access element proposed to be eliminated from Sound Move, Sound Transit and the City of Renton will request that the I-405 Corridor Program address this need and/or other arterial improvements that may be necessary for the proper functioning of I-405/SR 167. Sound Transit is a co-lead agency for this effort. The City, as a reviewing agency, has already submitted comments with this request.

To address the potential for arterial HOV improvements in south Renton, the City is proposing to pursue a Rainier Avenue corridor study concurrent with the north HOV interchange development efforts at North 8th Street. A vision for the corridor is necessary to ensure City consensus on area priorities. HOV elements of this corridor study which meet Sound Move's established criteria would be eligible for available funding under the Sound Move Renton HOV Improvements Project.

The project team recommends combining the budgets for the original two interchange projects in Sound Move into the renamed "Renton HOV Improvements" project to move forward with preliminary engineering and environmental documentation efforts for the I-405 at North 8th Street HOV interchange in north Renton. This change is necessary to ensure adequate project funding is in place before proceeding with further preliminary engineering and environmental documentation efforts, including development of a 30% design cost estimate to determine the

ability to fund HOV improvements in south Renton. The result of this change will be the elimination of the I-405 at Talbot Road project in south Renton as part of Sound Move's Phase I efforts.

Evaluation of Proposal:

Resolution No. R98-22 establishes six criteria to evaluate a proposed revision to Sound Move:

- **Consistency with Sound Transit's enabling legislation.**

Pursuant to RCW 81.112.080(2) and RCW 81.104.015(1), Sound Transit is authorized to construct, maintain, operate, and regulate a system of public transportation services and supporting services and facilities necessary to implement a high capacity transportation system (HCT). The proposed action is consistent with this enabling legislation.

Eliminating the I-405 at Talbot Road project in south Renton from Phase I of Sound Move and transferring the budget to the proposed north end project will help ensure completion of substantial improvements to enhance transit, speed, and reliability in Renton's urban core. Alternative actions to address HOV needs in south Renton have been identified.

- **Consistency with Sound Transit's funding requirements and priorities.**

The proposed change to Sound Move would eliminate the I-450 at Talbot Road project in south Renton from Phase I of Sound Move and transfer its budget to a project that will develop HOV improvements in Renton, including an interchange at I-405 at North. 8th Street. This proposed transfer would keep the funds within the same subarea and jurisdiction. The change would not result in a net change in subarea expenditures. Should a feasible south Renton HOV project be identified in the future, it would be eligible for funding, depending upon size, within Phase I plan funding constraints.

- **Consistency with the proposition approved by voters in the November 1996 election.**

Sound Move called for the implementation of a system of fourteen direct access ramps in the region to improve regional and local bus operations in terms of speed, access, and reliability. HOV access ramps were identified as the preferred investment for improving speed and reliability of regional express buses by eliminating the need to weave across general-purpose lanes of traffic to reach HOV lanes.

Sound Move also required that, "Before building individual HOV access ramps, Sound Transit will work with the state Department of Transportation, local transit operators, local jurisdictions, and citizen committees to assess each facility's location and function. This assessment will determine whether there are ways to achieve equivalent transit speed, reliability, and ridership at a lower cost or by making transportation system management improvements instead." Based on such an assessment, an improvement on I-405 at North 8th Street was found to be a better investment than the original Sound Move project at Park Avenue.

While the I-405 at Talbot Road project is proposed to be eliminated from Phase I of Sound Move, two efforts are still underway to identify feasible HOV improvements in south Renton: the I-405 Corridor Program and a proposed City corridor study of Rainier Avenue (SR 167). Should a feasible project be identified consistent with Sound Move, it would be eligible, depending upon size, for inclusion in Phase I of Sound Move or a future Phase II to be put before the region's voters.

- **Consistency with and support of the transportation goals, commitments, projects, and corridors served in Sound Move.**

Renton's urban core is proposed to be served by a substantial HOV investment, consistent with the transportation goals, commitments, projects, and corridors served in Sound Move. A project is proposed for I-405 at North 8th Street in lieu of the I-405 at Park Avenue project identified in Sound Move based on an extensive analysis of alternatives that included consideration of transit and HOV benefits, travel time savings, cost-effectiveness, and consistency with plans and policies.

While Sound Move contemplated investments in both north and south Renton, to date the PMT has been unable to identify a feasible HOV direct freeway access project or an arterial HOV improvement in south Renton consistent with Sound Move and the City's goals and policies. Continued study efforts will occur through the I-405 Corridor Program and a City-proposed corridor study for Rainier Avenue that may identify feasible HOV improvements in south Renton. Any surplus funds from the proposed Renton HOV Improvements Project (I-405 at North 8th Street) will be used to address transit and other HOV needs in south Renton within the Phase I plan funding constraints, consistent with the transportation goals, commitments, projects, and corridors served in Sound Move.

- **Adequacy of environmental review completed under SEPA and/or NEPA, either as part of the 1993 System Plan EIS or otherwise.**

The proposed changes fall within the range of alternatives and impacts analyzed in the 1993 System Plan Environmental Impact Statement. In addition, project-level environmental review will be conducted on the proposed North 8th Street Interchange project consistent with the 1993 EIS and state and national environmental policy act requirements.

- **Extent to which the proposed revision has been reviewed and supported by the subarea(s), local jurisdictions, and community.**

The proposed change to Sound Move in Renton has been reviewed and is supported by the Eastside Transportation Partnership at its July 13, 2001 meeting. Both the PMT and Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) comprised of high-level agency staff, a city councilmember, and community and business leaders have supported moving forward with the north Renton improvement while continuing to study south Renton options. Public comments also have been supportive of this approach.

BUDGET

The combined budget for the existing two Renton projects is \$84.4 million (YOE\$). The conceptual design cost estimates (developed with 2% to 3% design detail) for the proposed North 8th Street interchange project range from \$75.3 million to \$93.1 million (YOE\$). This results in a potential budget surplus or shortfall range of +\$9.1 million to -\$8.7 million.

At a conceptual design level, the budget required to build the north interchange at either Park Avenue or North 8th Street substantially exceeds the budget identified in Sound Move to build an interchange at Park Avenue (\$41.5 million YOE\$). Changed assumptions since the original Park Avenue budget was established in 1995 include: revised engineering standards for HOV freeway design; changing environmental regulations to address fish species protected by the Endangered Species Act; and the need for the project design to be compatible with the proposed widening of I-405 by two lanes in each direction.

The Board is being asked to amend Sound Move by: transferring remaining funds from the I-405 at Talbot Road project to the I-405 at Park Avenue project; rename this project the "Renton HOV Improvements"; and eliminating the I-450 at Talbot Road project. This action is necessary to ensure project funding sufficient to complete the I-405 at North 8th Street interchange project prior to authorizing preliminary engineering and environmental documentation efforts proceed. If the 30% design cost estimate indicates that surplus project funding exists for the north Renton interchange, the surplus funds will be used to address transit and other HOV needs in South Renton.

Project	Total Project Budget
I-405 at Park Ave Project	\$42,892
I-405 at Talbot Road Project	\$41,512
Total Combined Budget for Renton HOV Improvements Project	\$84,404

All figures shown are in YOE\$. Budget amounts shown are based on the Sound Transit 2001 Adopted Budget (reference pages 183 and 184, project numbers 150 and 155).

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Board could delay action to change Sound Move and still authorize a forthcoming contract request for preliminary engineering and environmental documentation for the north Renton interchange (I-405 at North 8th Street) out of the existing I-405 at Park Avenue budget. With a transfer between project phases, sufficient funding would exist to complete preliminary engineering and environmental documentation; however, total project funding is insufficient to construct an interchange project. Sound Move could be amended in the future when there is a 30% design cost estimate for the North 8th Street project or when a south Renton HOV improvement project is identified.
2. The Board could delay action to change Sound Move and not authorize a forthcoming request for preliminary engineering and environmental documentation for the north Renton interchange (I-450 at North 8th Street) out of the existing I-405 at Park Avenue budget. Sound Move could be amended when a south Renton improvement project is identified.

CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY

If the Board chooses Alternative 1, the only consequence of delay will be to commit design funds to a project with insufficient budget to complete construction. If the Board chooses Alternative 2, the 2006 project completion date may be jeopardized due to the complexity of the project design and construction.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION

The multi-agency PMT and the EAC have reviewed and endorsed the approach to have the I-405 Corridor Program and City-sponsored corridor study address HOV needs in south Renton, while proceeding with I-405 at North 8th Street as the preferred project in north Renton. Additionally, the Eastside Transportation Partnership reviewed and provided support for the proposed change to Sound Move at their July 13, 2001, meeting.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

During the project alternatives analysis phase, the project team has sponsored two open houses and distributed three newsletters and/or postcards, including simultaneous publication in a citywide newspaper. Of the nearly 30 concepts studied, public comment has been very supportive of an HOV interchange on I-405 at North 8th Street, while comments have been mixed in terms of support for the various south Renton improvement concepts given some inconsistencies with Sound Move and City goals and policies.

LEGAL REVIEW

MBL 7/19/01