

**SOUND TRANSIT
STAFF REPORT**

MOTION NO. M2006-13

First Hill Work Program –Transit Connector Study

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Board	1/26/06	Discussion/Possible Action	Ahmad Fazel, Link Director Ron Endlich, North Link Program Manager	(206) 398-5389 (206) 398-5141

Contract/Agreement Type:	✓	Requested Action:	✓
Competitive Procurement		Execute New Contract/Agreement	
Sole Source		Amend Existing Contract/Agreement	
Agreement with Other Jurisdiction(s)		Budget Amendment	

PROJECT NAME

First Hill Work Program - Transit Connector Study

PROPOSED ACTION

Authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to proceed with the next phase of the First Hill Work Program, which includes conceptual engineering of First Hill transit connector improvements in the Madison and Broadway corridors, and confirming that no further work be advanced on the previous First Hill light rail station or alternative station sites.

KEY FEATURES of PROPOSED ACTION

- The First Hill Work Program included a work task to begin the evaluation process for transit alternatives for First Hill, in lieu of a First Hill light rail station. The initial phase of work has been completed with a narrowed set of recommended alternatives for both bus and streetcar improvements to serve First Hill. The proposed action would confirm the transit alternatives to be advanced for further study, consistent with the First Hill Work Program.
- The narrowed set of alternatives include more detailed evaluation of bus improvements in the Broadway and Madison corridors and streetcar improvements in the Broadway corridor from International District Station to the Capitol Hill light rail station via First Hill.
- The proposed action includes more detailed work on the recommended set of First Hill transit alternatives identified in the first phase of work. The scope of work will include conceptual engineering (5% design completion), cost estimates, environmental impact review, transit route restructuring assessment, and an implementation strategy.
- The work would continue to be managed by Link staff, with technical consultant support provided by the ST2 engineering design team as part of the existing ST2 consultant services contract. Continued community outreach and Board briefings on work progress would also be conducted as part of this effort.

- The First Hill Work Program also included several “due diligence” work tasks that further assessed First Hill station construction and siting issues. The results of this work are documented in the First Hill Work Plan Summary Report, dated December 2005. The proposed action, if approved, would confirm that no further work will be advanced on the previous First Hill light rail station or alternative station sites.

BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY

There is no action outside of the Board-adopted budget; there are no contingency funds required, no subarea impacts, or funding required from other parties other than what is already assumed in the financial plan.

BUDGET and FINANCIAL PLAN DISCUSSION

Work contemplated in this action to proceed with the next phase of the First Hill Work Program will use existing consultant resources within the agency’s ST2 project. No new contracting or budget authority is requested through this action.

BUDGET TABLE

Not applicable to this action.

M/W/DBE – SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

Not applicable to this action.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND for PROPOSED ACTION

On July 28, 2005, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution R2005-20, which modified the preferred route and station locations for the North Link light rail project and removed the First Hill station from the preferred alternative. This Board decision was based on technical findings and a Sound Transit staff recommendation related to the engineering, geology, construction risks, and other challenges associated with the First Hill Station.

The Board recognizes the importance of providing improved regional transit service to First Hill. As a result, the Board directed staff to complete the First Hill Work Plan by approving Motion M2005-102 on August 25, 2005. The work plan included tasks to examine alternative transit options for serving First Hill in the event that a First Hill station is not included in the selected project, to perform due diligence on the decision to remove the First Hill station from the preferred alternative, and to report back to the Board in writing at least four weeks prior to the Board decision on the North Link project, now expected in March 2006.

The analysis of transit alternatives was proposed in two phases. Phase one involved a feasibility study used by the Board to narrow down to the most promising transit options. If approved by the Board, the next phase of work will be a more detailed analysis on the narrowed list of options and will require consultant resources to complete.

In September 2005, Sound Transit formed the First Hill Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to assist in this effort, consistent with the work plan. The group was comprised of staff from Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, and King County Metro, meeting monthly between September and

November 2005. The group's goal was to identify improvements that would increase regional transit accessibility to First Hill, in the event that the First Hill station is not ultimately included in the North Link project.

Based on an evaluation performed in the first phase of this work plan, the TAC recommended the following alternatives be advanced into the next phase of the First Hill Transit Connector Study:

- Bus improvements along the Broadway and Madison corridors where the combined corridors serve all four major First Hill employment centers and attract the highest ridership.
- Streetcar or bus improvements from International District Station to Capitol Hill light rail station via First Hill which involves a shorter route, higher First Hill ridership (3,000 weekday boardings) and fewer congested intersections than other routes evaluated.

Staff has also prepared a "placeholder" project description and preliminary cost estimate for enhanced First Hill transit connector improvements and included this potential project in the Sound Transit 2 project evaluation process. The ST2 project description sheet for the First Hill transit connector (Project No. N7) is based on the Broadway/Jackson streetcar proposal, for costing purposes.

Sound Transit staff reported initial summary findings on the First Hill Work Plan to the Sound Transit Board at its December 8, 2005 meeting and submitted a written report on its findings to the Board in late December 2005.

If this motion is approved by the Board, these two transit connector alternatives would be advanced to the next phase of study. Technical work tasks would include conceptual engineering (5% design completion), cost estimates, and consideration of environmental issues. A transit route restructuring assessment and an implementation strategy will also be developed as part of this scope of work. It is anticipated that staff from Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, and King County Metro would continue to work on these elements, in addition to the consultant resources which will be required to complete certain elements of the work.

The proposed work would be directed by Link staff, with technical consultant support provided by the ST2 engineering design team as part of the existing ST2 consultant services contract. There is sufficient consultant contract budget available to complete this work; no additional budget resources are required to complete the proposed scope of work.

If approved, the technical work would begin in February 2006 and would be completed by May 2006 in order to provide better project definition and cost estimates to support the Board's ST2 decision-making process. The Board would then decide whether this project would continue forward as part of a package of proposed ST2 projects that would be presented to the voters for funding approval, as early as November 2006.

Staff also completed several due diligence tasks that further assessed construction and siting issues of the previous First Hill station. The results of this work are described in more detail in the Summary Report dated December 2005.

Staff concluded that expanded First Hill light rail station construction staging areas, alternative ground stabilization methods, or changes to the station profile would not greatly reduce construction cost or risk due to soils conditions and other factors at this site. Alternative station

sites were also reassessed; staff concluded that the most promising option would attract limited additional ridership and would be much more expensive than the University Link preferred route, and would not meet minimum Federal Transit Authority cost-effectiveness criteria and thus would not be eligible for New Starts federal funding.

This motion, if approved, would confirm that no further work will be advanced on the previous First Hill light rail station or alternative station sites. The First Hill route will remain in the North Link SEIS and is still available for further Board consideration. A final North Link route decision can only be made by the Board following the publication of the Final SEIS, scheduled for release in March 2006.

Prior Board/Committee Actions on this Project and Relevant Board Policies

Motion or Resolution Number	Summary of Action	Date of Action
M2005-102	Directed the Chief Executive Officer to complete the “North Link First Hill Work Plan” dated August 3, 2005 as reviewed by the Executive and Finance Committees on August 4, 2005 and the “North Link First Hill Rail Spur Work Plan” and report back to the Board in writing at least four weeks prior to the Board’s final decision selecting the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project.	8/25/05
R2005-20	Modified the preferred route, profiles, and station locations for the North Link Light Rail Project; and identified “University Link” as the preferred segment of North Link for purposes of the final SEIS and for obtaining a New Starts rating from the Federal Transit Administration participation.	7/28/05

CONSEQUENCES of DELAY

Delaying action on this Motion would delay the start of further technical work to better define project details and cost estimates. A long delay will limit the amount of additional work that could be completed before the Board’s current proposed June 2006 deadline to complete ST2 project decision making.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Sound Transit staff has worked with the First Hill community on the First Hill Work Plan since its conception in August 2005. Sound Transit project development and community outreach staff began meeting with groups and organizations on First Hill, including the First Hill Improvement Association, First Hill Community Council, and the First Hill Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Network, in September of 2005 to discuss goals, objectives and alternatives of the work plan. Community feedback was gathered and shared with the First Hill Technical Advisory Committee through the working process of evaluating alternatives. Staff kept in close contact with the community by relaying new information and seeking continued public feedback.

Community members were contacted before Sound Transit Board meetings involving the First Hill Work Plan. The community organizations asked and Sound Transit agreed to return to their meetings in December/January (depending on meeting schedules) to relay the findings of the Technical Advisory Committee. Sound Transit staff will continue these meetings and has reached out to other neighboring groups and organizations such as the East District Council and

Capitol Hill Stewardship Council. Community meetings in the Chinatown/International District are also planned.

Initial First Hill community feedback on the preliminary transit connector study results has been generally positive, especially on the streetcar proposal. Sound Transit staff will continue to meet with these organizations and work with interested community members and other stakeholders as the First Hill transit connector work evolves.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

JDI 1/6/06

LEGAL REVIEW

JW 1/20/06

SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M2006-13

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority authorizing staff to proceed with the next phase of the First Hill Work Program, which includes conceptual engineering of First Hill transit connector improvements in the Madison and Broadway corridors and confirms that no further work be advanced on the previous First Hill light rail station or alternative station sites. The Sound Transit First Hill streetcar project is generally defined from the International District Station east on South Jackson/King Street, north on 12th Avenue South, northwest on Boren Avenue, and north on Broadway Avenue to the Capitol Hill light rail station at Broadway and East John Street. For study purposes, an extension of this line north from East John Street along Broadway/10th Avenue East to East Aloha Street will also be examined during conceptual engineering.

Background:

On July 28, 2005, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution R2005-20, which modified the preferred route and station locations for the North Link light rail project and removed the First Hill station from the preferred alternative. This Board decision was based on technical findings and a Sound Transit staff recommendation related to the engineering, geology, construction risks and other challenges associated with the First Hill Station.

The Board recognizes the importance of providing improved regional transit service to First Hill. As a result, the Board directed staff to complete the First Hill Work Plan by approving Motion M2005-102 on August 25, 2005. The work plan included tasks to examine alternative transit options for serving First Hill in the event that a First Hill station is not included in the selected project and perform due diligence on the decision to remove the First Hill station from the Preferred Alternative, and to report back to the Board in writing at least four weeks prior to the Board decision on the North Link project, now expected in March 2006.

The analysis of transit alternatives was proposed in two phases. Phase 1 involved a feasibility study for the Board to use to narrow to the most promising transit options. If approved by the Board in this action, the next phase of work will be a more detailed analysis on the narrowed list of options and will require consultant resources to complete.

In September 2005, Sound Transit formed the First Hill Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to assist in this effort, consistent with the work plan. The group was made up of staff from Sound Transit, City of Seattle, and King County Metro and met monthly between September and November 2005. The group's goal was to identify improvements that would increase regional transit accessibility to First Hill, in the event that the First Hill station is not ultimately included in the North Link project.

Based on the evaluation performed in the first phase of this work plan, the TAC recommended the following alternatives be advanced into the next phase of the First Hill Transit Connector Study:

- Bus improvements along the Broadway and Madison corridors where the combined corridors serve all four major First Hill employment centers and attract the highest ridership.
- Streetcar or bus improvements from International District Station to Capitol Hill light rail station via First Hill which involves a shorter route, higher First Hill ridership (3,000 weekday boardings) and fewer congested intersections than other routes evaluated.

Staff has also prepared a “placeholder” project description and preliminary cost estimate for enhanced First Hill transit connector improvements and included this potential project in the Sound Transit 2 project evaluation process. The ST2 project description sheet for the First Hill transit connector (Project No. N7) is based on the Broadway/Jackson streetcar proposal, for costing purposes.

Sound Transit staff reported initial summary findings on the First Hill Work Plan to the Sound Transit Board at its December 8, 2005 meeting and submitted a written report on its findings to the Board in late December 2005.

If this Motion is approved by the Board, these two transit connector alternatives would be advanced to the next phase of study. Technical work tasks would include conceptual engineering (5% design completion), cost estimates and consideration of environmental issues. A transit route restructuring assessment and an implementation strategy will also be developed as part of this scope of work. It is anticipated that Sound Transit, City of Seattle and King County Metro staff would continue to work on these elements, in addition to the consultant resources which will be required to complete certain elements of the work.

The proposed work would be directed by Link staff, with technical consultant support provided by the ST2 engineering design team as part of the existing ST2 consultant services contract. There is sufficient consultant contract budget available to complete this work; no additional budget resources are required to complete the proposed scope of work.

If approved, the technical work would begin in February 2006 and would be completed by May 2006 in order to provide better project definition and cost estimates to support the Board’s ST2 decision-making process. The Board would then decide whether this project would continue forward as part of a package of proposed ST2 projects that would be presented to the voters for funding approval, as early as November 2006.

Staff also completed several due diligence tasks that further assessed construction and siting issues of the previous First Hill station. The results of this work are described in more detail in the Summary Report dated December 2005.

Staff concluded that expanded First Hill light rail station construction staging areas, alternative ground stabilization methods, or changes to the station profile would not greatly reduce construction cost or risk due to soils conditions and other factors at this site. Alternative station sites were also reassessed; staff concluded that the most promising option would attract limited additional ridership and would be much more expensive than the University Link preferred route, and would not meet minimum FTA cost-effectiveness criteria and thus would not be eligible for New Starts federal funding.

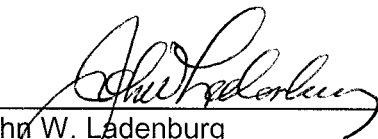
To remove further public uncertainty on this issue, this Motion, if approved, confirms that no further work will be advanced on the previous First Hill light rail station or alternative station sites. The First Hill route will remain in the North Link SEIS and is still available for further

Board consideration. A final North Link route decision can only be made by the Board following the publication of the Final SEIS, scheduled for release in March 2006.

Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that staff is authorized to proceed with the next phase of the First Hill Work Program, which includes conceptual engineering of First Hill transit connector improvements in the Madison and Broadway corridors and confirms that no further work be advanced on the previous First Hill light rail station or alternative station sites. The Sound Transit First Hill streetcar project is generally defined from the International District Station east on South Jackson/King Street, north on 12th Avenue South, northwest on Boren Avenue, and north on Broadway Avenue to the Capitol Hill light rail station at Broadway and East John Street. For study purposes, an extension of this line north from East John Street along Broadway/10th Avenue East to East Aloha Street will also be examined during conceptual engineering.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on January 26, 2006.



John W. Ladenburg
Board Chair

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator