

**SOUND TRANSIT
STAFF REPORT**

MOTION NO. M2007-94

**Identification of a Preferred Alternative for Purposes of
Environmental Documentation for the D Street – M Street Track & Signal Project**

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Board	8/23/07	Discussion/Possible Action	Jim Edwards, Acting Capital Projects Director Eric Beckman, Program Manager Mark Johnson, Project Manager	(206) 398-5436 (206) 398-5251 (206) 398-5192

Contract/Agreement Type:	✓	Requested Action:	✓
Competitive Procurement		Identify Preferred Alternative	✓
Sole Source		Amend Existing Contract/Agreement	
Agreement with Other Jurisdiction(s)		Budget Amendment	
Real Estate		Property Acquisition	

PROJECT NAME

D Street – M Street Track & Signal

PROPOSED ACTION

Identifies an alternative alignment for the D Street-to-M Street rail connector for purposes of completing environmental documentation under NEPA and SEPA.

KEY FEATURES of PROPOSED ACTION

- Identification of a preferred alternative alignment among those studied for feasibility will allow environmental documentation to be completed.
- Will initiate FTA review of the project's NEPA re-evaluation, concluding the project's environmental process.
- Identification of a preferred alternative does not bind Sound Transit to a particular project or outcome, but allows the project to proceed to the next logical step.

BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY

Current Project Phase: PE/ED

Projected Completion Date: Dependent upon alternative selected

Action Outside of Adopted Budget:	✓	Comments on Checked Items
This Project		
This Phase		
This Task		
Budget Amendment Required	✓	Will be necessary for any one of the three alternatives.

Key Financial Indicators:	✓	Comments on Checked Items
Contingency Funds Required		
Funding required from other parties (other than what is in financial plan)	✓	Dependent upon alternative selected.

Not checked = action is assumed in current Board-adopted budget. No budget action or adjustment to financial plan required.

BUDGET and FINANCIAL PLAN DISCUSSION

The Adopted 2007 Budget for this project is \$76,024,555, with a construction phase budget of \$3,580,323 and a contingency phase budget of \$35,533,633.

The Sounder Pierce County Program Reserve currently has a balance of \$2,170,422, but there are potential draws on those funds for the M Street – Lakewood Track and Signal, South Tacoma Station and the Layover - Pierce County projects.

BUDGET TABLE

Summary for Board Action (Year of Expenditure \$000)

Project: 135 - D Street-M Street Track & Signal

	2007 Board Adopted Budget ¹ (A)	Committed To Date ² (B)	Uncommitted (Shortfall) (C)
1 Agency Administration	\$ 3,166	\$ 1,734	\$ 1,433
2 Preliminary Engineering	\$ 1,742	\$ 1,511	\$ 230
3 Final Design	\$ 4,708	\$ 2,175	\$ 2,533
4 Right of Way	\$ 16,652	\$ 11,370	\$ 5,282
5 Construction	\$ 3,580	\$ 104	\$ 3,477
6 Vehicles	\$ 9,891	\$ 8,953	\$ 938
7 Contingency	\$ 36,284	\$ -	\$ 36,284
8 Total Current Budget	\$ 76,025	\$ 25,847	\$ 50,177
9 Pierce County Program Reserve	\$ 2,170	\$ -	\$ 2,170

Notes:

¹ Project budget is located on page 112 of the Proposed 2007 Budget book. The Board approved the Adopted 2007 Budget on December 14, 2006.

² Committed to date amount includes actual outlays and commitments through June 30, 2007.

IMPACT TO PROJECT SCOPE, SCHEDULE, AND BUDGET

The following table summarizes the impact to scope, schedule and budget for each of the design alternatives under consideration:

Lakewood-To-Tacoma Rail Connector Comparison Table of Alternative Alignments			
Alternative	Date of Study	Schedule Impact (Service Start Date)	Cost Impact (Order Of Magnitude, 2006 \$)
Alternative 1 Modified (2.85% Grade)	Oct-05; June-07	2009-2010	Additional \$10 to \$15 million
Alternative 2 Modified (2C) w/Tacoma Ave Access (2.85% Grade)	Jan-07; June-07	2011-2012	Additional \$65 - \$75 million
Alternative 3 Modified (2.85% Grade)	Oct-05; June-07	2011-2012	Additional \$65 - \$75 million

SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

Not applicable for this action.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND for PROPOSED ACTION

Staff briefed the Board on February 22, 2007 regarding the project status of the Sounder Tacoma-to-Lakewood Commuter Rail Corridor. At that time, the Board directed staff to conduct further feasibility studies for the D Street-to-M Street segment of the corridor. This segment will connect the current Sounder southern terminus at Tacoma Dome Station with Sound Transit's Lakeview Subdivision rail line. The Lakeview Subdivision will carry Sounder service south to South Tacoma and Lakewood once necessary track and signal improvements on it are completed. The Board directed further studies on Alternative 2 Modified (2C) and Alternative 3 Modified and requested updated engineering and cost analyses for the three feasible alternative alignments, including Alternative 1 Modified. Today's report will offer preliminary results of those studies and updates, with the final report expected in late September 2007.

Estimated cost for each alternative has increased since our last report in February 2007. The increase for Alternative 2 Modified (2C) has been the greatest, approximately \$40 million, primarily due to expansion of project scope in response to input from local businesses, community groups, and the City of Tacoma. But the other two alternatives have also increased: \$5-10 million for Alternative 1 Modified and approximately \$15 million for Alternative 3 Modified. These increases reflect the knowledge gained from the feasibility studies now underway that include more developed engineering design and more detailed cost estimates for construction and right-of-way acquisition than were previously available from studies.

Unrelated to scope expansion (affecting primarily Alternative 2 Modified (2C)), increases in cost estimates for the three alternatives reflect greater than expected increases in unit costs for excavation and retaining walls, more thorough knowledge of required utility relocations, and rising land values in this area of Tacoma. Estimates of project cost reported in February 2007 were in 2006 dollars for comparison to previous reports. The estimates for construction costs now being reported have been escalated to the mid-point of the construction period, better reflecting likely bids on the work.

Schedules for two of the alternatives have also been adjusted: service start for Alternative 2 Modified (2C) is now 2011-2012, the same as that for Alternative 3 Modified. Alternative 1 Modified service start is projected to be 2009-2010, reflecting the greater amount of engineering completed for this alternative prior to undertaking the feasibility studies for a grade-separated crossing of Pacific Avenue, but a year later than previously estimated due to the time needed to conduct the studies.

Environmental analyses are being completed; however, we are able to report that no significant unavoidable adverse impacts to any element of the environment have been identified for any of the three alternatives: all are equally feasible from the perspective of environmental impacts. Environmental documentation for Lakewood-to-Tacoma commuter rail service as first envisioned consisted of the May 2002 Environmental Impact Statement and December 2002 Record of Decision, satisfying SEPA and NEPA requirements. Consultation with FTA in March 2007 led to FTA determination that a NEPA Re-evaluation would satisfy federal requirements for any one of the three alternatives now being studied.

Alternative 1 Modified (2.85% grade)

This alignment follows the route of the preferred alternative identified in the project's 2002 EIS but modified to reduce its maximum grade to 2.85%, the current limit for safe operation downhill northbound into Tacoma Dome Station. As originally proposed, the rail line crosses Pacific Avenue and South Tacoma Way at-grade. Diagnostic studies of the Pacific Avenue crossing show that both the number of trains and the speed of those trains would be limited to currently planned Sounder service (18 trains/day), crossing at no more than 18 mph to comply with federal guidelines.

Tacoma City Council, city staff, and a number of businesses and community groups have made clear their opposition to an alignment with an at-grade crossing of Pacific Avenue. The limitations on the number of trains using this alignment each day would preclude AmTrak passenger trains from using the proposed Point Defiance Bypass route, negating the value of WSDOT's track and signal improvements now being designed for the Nisqually-to-66th Street portion of Sound Transit's Lakeview Subdivision.

This alternative is estimated to require an additional \$10 million to \$15 million to the project budget. Sounder service would start in 2009 to 2010.

Alternative 2 Modified (2C)

In April 2006, the Board authorized engineering and environmental assessment of a track alignment to be grade-separated at its intersection with Pacific Avenue. Studies have involved several iterations of this design, especially in the way access is provided for businesses along the north side of South Tacoma Way and the changes to South Tacoma Way itself, most of which involve completely rebuilding this arterial in a more southerly location within the existing public right-of-way between Pacific and Yakima Avenues.

The current design alternative, 2C, includes shifting the tracks to run in the public right-of-way along the north side of South Tacoma Way immediately west of Pacific Avenue, providing a railroad bridge over Pacific Avenue, creating a new frontage roadway north of the rail line giving access to businesses located on the north side of South Tacoma Way, and providing an at-grade crossing of the rail line at the western end of the frontage roadway, connecting it to South

Tacoma Way. Pacific Avenue would be lowered 12 to 14 feet at the railroad overpass to give required clearance for vehicular traffic. This alternative now maintains the current vehicular capacity of South Tacoma Way, a four-lane roadway, in response to protests from Nalley Valley business owners and other community groups to an earlier iteration that reduced South Tacoma Way to three lanes.

Considerable opposition to this alternative has been expressed by business owners and community groups in the area, the Tacoma City Council, and city staff due to impacts to existing businesses, especially the Tacoma Rescue Mission. That opposition and the considerable funding shortfall estimated for this alignment's construction make this the least feasible of the two alternatives with grade-separated crossings of Pacific Avenue.

This alternative is estimated to require an additional \$65 million to \$75 million to the project budget. Sounder service would start in 2011 to 2012.

Alternative 3 Modified

This alternative was studied briefly in late 2005, but was set aside because its estimated cost exceeded budget by a significant amount and opposition emerged in the community to the right-of-way acquisitions of existing businesses it required. As Alternative 2 Modified was developed, community opposition to Alternative 3 Modified waned, and then transformed into active interest in this alignment. This alignment closely follows that of EIS-Alternative 3, but provides a grade-separated crossing of Pacific Avenue. Based on an endorsement by the Tacoma City Council, the Board directed staff in February 2007 to study this alignment for feasibility, carrying environmental analysis, engineering, and cost estimating forward to a level matching that conducted for Alternative 2 Modified.

Alternative 3 Modified alignment crosses over Pacific Avenue on a bridge mid-block between 25th and 26th Streets, and travels through a number of existing businesses on the west side of Pacific to join the existing BNSF right-of-way behind the Tacoma Rescue Mission before entering Sound Transit right-of-way at the Tacoma Avenue overpass. Pacific Avenue is lowered nine to ten feet to give required clearance to vehicular traffic. This alternative requires acquisition of rights to twelve parcels, and involves negotiations with eleven owners, including a portion of the existing-but-disused BNSF right-of-way and easement from WSDOT to pass under I-705. Access to businesses fronting on South Tacoma Way is unaffected, and South Tacoma Way's existing four lanes are maintained.

Several community groups and a number of area businesses, the Tacoma City Council, and city staff have expressed support for this alternative. While widespread support for this alternative makes it most politically feasible, and engineering and operations studies show it to be the most practical and efficient grade-separated alignment to construct and operate, its estimated costs continue to be substantially over the project budget. Its overall feasibility depends upon developing funding partnerships to augment the project budget.

This alternative is estimated to require an additional \$65 million to \$75 million to the project budget. Sounder service would start in 2011 to 2012.

Next steps

Consultation with FTA has determined that the project's environmental process would best conclude with a NEPA re-evaluation. That work will begin this summer upon the Board's

identification of a preferred alternative, and can be completed in 4th quarter 2007. Documentation under SEPA will also be completed. Identification of a preferred alternative for purposes of completing the environmental documentation does not bind Sound Transit to a particular project or outcome but allows the project to proceed to the next logical step. Staff will continue efforts to secure funding partners during completion of the environmental work. In Fall 2007, staff will seek the Board's selection of an alternative to advance into final design.

Prior Board/Committee Actions

Motion/Resolution Number and Date	Summary of Action
M2007-36 2/22/07	Authorized staff to expand the scope of the feasibility study of the proposed grade separation of the Sounder commuter rail track across Pacific Avenue to consider an additional alternative alignment, including preliminary engineering, environmental analysis and outreach to affected property owners
M2006-56 7/20/06	Authorized the chief executive officer to execute a contract amendment with Herrera Environmental Consultants to provide technical on-call environmental services for projects on an as-needed basis in the amount of \$650,000 for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$1,514,000
M2006-34 4/20/06	Authorized staff to complete a feasibility study on the proposed grade-separated Sounder commuter rail track between D Street and M Street using currently authorized Tacoma to Lakewood project contingency funds
M2005-61 6/23/05	Authorized the chief executive officer to execute a contract amendment with HDR Engineering Inc., to include final design services for track and signal work for the Lakewood to Tacoma commuter rail segment, in the amount of \$3,929,927 with a 10% contingency of \$392,997, for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$5,429,916 and to extend the term of the contract to November 22, 2009

SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

Not applicable to this action.

CONSEQUENCES of DELAY

A delay in identifying a preferred alternative will delay completion of environmental documentation, leading to delay in completing work necessary to allow the Board to select a preferred alternative as scheduled in the 4th quarter 2007.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Sound Transit staff has conducted extensive coordination with the City of Tacoma staff and attended council briefings and have conducted extensive outreach to property owners who would be impacted by each alternative.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

SK 7/3/07

LEGAL REVIEW

BN 8/15/07

SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M2007-94

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority identifying an alternative alignment for the D Street-to-M Street rail connector for purposes of completing environmental documentation under NEPA and SEPA.

Background:

Staff briefed the Board on February 22, 2007 regarding the project status of the Sounder Tacoma-to-Lakewood Commuter Rail Corridor. At that time, the Board directed staff to conduct further feasibility studies for the D Street-to-M Street segment of the corridor. This segment will connect the current Sounder southern terminus at Tacoma Dome Station with Sound Transit's Lakeview Subdivision rail line. The Lakeview Subdivision will carry Sounder service south to South Tacoma and Lakewood once necessary track and signal improvements on it are completed. The Board directed further studies on Alternative 2 Modified (2C) and Alternative 3 Modified and requested updated engineering and cost analyses for the three feasible alternative alignments, including Alternative 1 Modified. Today's report will offer preliminary results of those studies and updates, with the final report expected in late September 2007.

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Next steps

Consultation with FTA has determined that the project's environmental process would best conclude with a NEPA re-evaluation. That work will begin this summer upon the Board's identification of a preferred alternative, and can be completed in 4th quarter 2007. Documentation under SEPA will also be completed. Identification of a preferred alternative for purposes of completing the environmental documentation does not bind Sound Transit to a particular project or outcome but allows the project to proceed to the next logical step. Staff will continue efforts to secure funding partners during completion of the environmental work. In Fall 2007, staff will seek the Board's selection of an alternative to advance into final design.

Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that alternative alignment Alternative 3 Modified is identified as the preferred alternative for the D Street-to-M Street rail connector for purposes of completing environmental documentation under NEPA and SEPA. Staff is directed to further study Alternative 3 Modified with an at-grade crossing of Pacific Avenue to bring the engineering and cost estimate to the same level as previous alternatives.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on August 23, 2007.



Mark G. Olson
Board Vice Chair

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator