

MOTION NO. M2013-31

Selecting the Tacoma Link Expansion Corridor and Mode to be Studied in the Project Environmental Review

MEETING:	DATE:	TYPE OF ACTION:	STAFF CONTACT:	PHONE:
Capital Committee	05/09/2013	Briefing	Ric Ilgenfritz, Executive Director of Planning Environmental & Project Development	206-398-5239
Board	05/23/2013	Final Action	Val Batey, Senior Transportation Planner	206-398-5117

PROPOSED ACTION

(1) Selects the corridor and mode for detailed study in the Tacoma Link light rail expansion environmental review, and (2) approves Gate 2 within Sound Transit's Phase Gate process.

KEY FEATURES SUMMARY

- This action selects a corridor and a mode to advance for detailed study in the project environmental review. Possible corridors that performed best and were the most promising through the screening process and detailed evaluation are:
 - Corridor B1: Connecting from the existing Theater District Station north through the Stadium Mixed Use Center then south and west to the 6th Avenue and Pine Mixed Use Center, terminating in the proximity of North Union Avenue.
 - Corridor C1: Connecting from the existing Tacoma Dome Station east to the Lower Portland Mixed Use Center then south, terminating in the proximity of East 44th Street.
 - Corridor E1: Connecting from the existing Theater District Station north through the Stadium Mixed Use Center then southwest to Martin Luther King Jr. Way and south through the Martin Luther King Jr. Mixed Use Center, terminating in the proximity of South 19th Street.
 - Corridor H2: Connecting from the existing Theater District Station north through the Stadium Mixed Use Center then southwest to Martin Luther King Jr. Way and south through the Martin Luther King Jr. Mixed Use Center, with three terminal options: at South 6th Avenue, South 11th Street, or South 19th Street, and connecting from the existing Tacoma Dome Station east to the Lower Portland Mixed Use Center then south, terminating in the proximity of East 29th Street.
- Potential modes for expansion include Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT).
- This action approves Gate 2 for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project. Gate 2 authorizes the project to advance to identify alternatives and perform conceptual engineering. Alignments, profiles, and station locations will be refined within the general route and station areas during conceptual engineering.

BACKGROUND

In cooperation with the City of Tacoma and Pierce Transit, Sound Transit is studying the potential to expand Tacoma Link. The Tacoma Link Expansion Project to extend the existing system is part of the voter-approved ST2 Regional Transit System Plan. ST2 includes a capital contribution for expansion of Tacoma Link if other public or private entities provide matching funds. Sound Transit intends to apply for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts grant. The funding strategy requires federal funding to pay for up to one third of the total project cost.

A local planning process to evaluate reasonable alternatives to meet the project's purpose and need is required for Small Starts grant eligibility. The local planning process evaluates alternatives, screens out less promising alternatives, and identifies those to be considered further in the environmental review process.

Sound Transit initiated an Alternatives Analysis (AA) process in August 2012 with early public and agency scoping to solicit comments on the purpose and need for the project, the range of alternatives to be examined, and proposed evaluation criteria. Early scoping included two public and agency scoping meetings/open houses and a 30-day public comment period to help define the alternatives and evaluation process. The early scoping process and comments are summarized in the *Early Scoping Summary Report*.

At the conclusion of the early scoping comment period, 24 corridor options in eleven distinct corridors were identified. Eight of the corridors had been studied in a Pre-AA study completed by Sound Transit in 2012 and therefore were automatically included in the list of options to be studied in the AA.

The corridor options were evaluated in an initial screening process. The screening included questions designed to assess each corridor's ability to meet the purpose and need for the project. Of the 24 corridor options, corridors B1, C1, D4, E1, E2, and G1 passed the initial screening process. Next, a Detailed Evaluation was conducted to measure each of the remaining six corridor's ability to meet the goals and objectives of the project.

On March 21, 2013 the City of Tacoma sent Sound Transit a letter requesting evaluation of a "hybrid" option against the same criteria used to evaluate the six corridors in the second level screening. The City requested that Sound Transit evaluate a hybrid comprised of a segment of the C1 corridor extending from Tacoma Dome Station to Portland Avenue and South 29th Street, plus a connection "northwest to the City's designated Mixed-Use Center (MUC) along Martin Luther King Jr. Way and north along a portion of the E1 corridor terminating in the vicinity of 6th Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way." The City also requested that Sound Transit evaluate options to terminate the E1 segment of the hybrid at South 11th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way or South 19th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. This hybrid, the H1 corridor, was evaluated against the same criteria used to evaluate the six corridors discussed above.

The Tacoma Link Expansion Stakeholder Roundtable asked Sound Transit to evaluate a slightly different hybrid alternative, a combination of the E1 alternative and C1 alternative. This hybrid, the H2 corridor, was evaluated against the same criteria used to evaluate the six corridors discussed above.

The results of the initial screening and detailed evaluation are reported in the Tacoma Link Expansion Alternatives Analysis Report and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Addendum. The report includes the project's purpose and need, goals and objectives, and the framework and results of the screening and detailed evaluation of corridors and modes. It also provides a summary of the public involvement activities conducted during the AA process.

Using criteria based on the project's Purpose and Need Statement and Goals and Objectives, the analysis in the Detailed Evaluation found that four corridors performed best and are most promising: B1 – North End Central, C1 – Eastside, E1 – North Downtown Central, and H2 – Hybrid with North Connection to MLK.

The AA Detailed Evaluation also analyzed two transit modes, LRT and bus rapid transit (BRT). Overall LRT fared better in this evaluation. In addition, LRT is the only mode consistent with Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan and ST2.

Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan includes an extension of Tacoma Link from downtown Tacoma north and west to Tacoma Community College. The EIS accompanying the Long-Range Plan included a programmatic evaluation of the environmental impacts of expanding Tacoma Link in broad corridors to the west and to the east. The Long-Range Plan EIS evaluated a variety of modal alternatives (including BRT), and LRT was selected as the mode choice in the Long-Range Plan and in the ST2 Plan for the Tacoma Link expansion based on the extensive regional planning, public and agency involvement, and environmental review conducted through the Long-Range Plan and ST2 processes.

Before committing federal funds to the Tacoma Link Expansion project, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the Tacoma Link Expansion project, Sound Transit is required to comply with the SEPA. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies will prepare the appropriate environmental review for the project.

FISCAL IMPACT

Tacoma Link Expansion Funding Strategy			
ST Local Revenue	Small Starts Grant to ST	Partner(s) as required by ST2	Total Project Budget (YOE)
\$50M	\$50M	\$50M	\$150M

Corridor Alternative	Cost Estimate (2012\$ includes 25% contingency)
B1 North End Central	\$163M
C1 East Side	\$119M
E1 North Downtown Central	\$133M
H2 Hybrid of E1 + C1	\$179M

Estimated Operating Costs			
	Miles	Cars	Total Annual Cost
Existing	1.6	3	\$4.3M
B1	2.9	7	\$10M
C1	2.3	6	\$9M
E1	2.3	6	\$9M
H2	3.2	8	\$11-12M

SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

Not applicable to this action.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT WORKFORCE PROFILE

Not applicable to this action.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Outreach conducted for the Tacoma Link Expansion project since June 2012 includes the following:

- Mailings to over 54,000 addresses in the study area
- Over 800 documented public comments
- Online and print ads in 8+ media outlets
- 8 fairs, festivals & markets
- 15 open houses or drop-in sessions throughout Tacoma attended by more than 500
- Business district and neighborhood council briefings throughout the study area
- Over 50 media articles or posts
- Outreach to over 22 social service providers that represent low-income, underserved, minority and non-English speaking populations

The AA process included extensive public outreach through several forms: a project website, five sets of project open houses, a citizen-based stakeholder roundtable, and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The AA phase of the project also included the formal launch of the project's environmental review. Sound Transit and the FTA started the environmental process for the Tacoma Link Expansion by conducting an early scoping process in August 2012 under SEPA and NEPA. The early scoping invited comments from the public, agencies, and Tribes of Sound Transit's intent to develop and evaluate alternatives for the Tacoma Link Expansion, including corridor and mode (LRT and BRT) alternatives. Two public meetings were held to receive early scoping comments, and written comments were accepted during the 30-day public comment period.

The public involvement and outreach effort is summarized in the Tacoma Link Expansion Alternatives Analysis Community Outreach Report.

To create a forum for community representatives to review the project in more detail and provide input to Sound Transit, a Stakeholder Roundtable was formed consisting of 23 members representing the diverse communities, neighborhoods, institutions and organizations of Tacoma. The Stakeholder Roundtable was comprised of leaders from the Tacoma community. The Roundtable met six times between November 2012 and April 2013. The purpose of the Stakeholder Roundtable was to provide input to Sound Transit by representing the interests, concerns, and needs of the community, communicate information to interest groups to inform diverse cross-sections of community members about the project, how decisions are made and how to get involved, and provide ongoing individual and group feedback to the TAC on the technical work and on project issues.

The TAC met eleven times between June 2012 and April 2013. The purpose of the TAC was to provide key guidance to Sound Transit on the technical analysis in the AA as well as the public outreach strategy.

During the design and environmental review of the corridor and mode selected for detailed study, Sound Transit will engage the affected communities in the development of the Tacoma Link Expansion alignment and station locations. Public outreach will be a critical element of the project development process to get input on alignment and station design issues.

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Delaying identification of the corridor and mode to be studied in the next phase likely would delay further design efforts and the environmental review process under NEPA and SEPA.

PRIOR BOARD/COMMITTEE ACTIONS

Motion No. M2012-13: Authorized the chief executive officer to execute a contract with CH2M HILL Inc., to provide alternatives analysis services for the Tacoma Link Expansion project in the amount of \$998,663 with a 10% contingency of \$99,866 for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$1,098,529.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

JI 5/17/2013

LEGAL REVIEW

PW 5/17/2013

MOTION NO. M2013-31

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (1) selecting E1 – North Downtown Central as the corridor and light rail as the mode for detailed study in the Tacoma Link light rail expansion environmental review, and (2) approving Gate 2 within Sound Transit’s Phase Gate process.

BACKGROUND:

In cooperation with the City of Tacoma and Pierce Transit, Sound Transit is studying the potential to expand Tacoma Link. The Tacoma Link Expansion Project to extend the existing system is part of the voter-approved ST2 Regional Transit System Plan. ST2 includes a capital contribution for expansion of Tacoma Link if other public or private entities provide matching funds. Sound Transit intends to apply for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts grant. The funding strategy requires federal funding to pay for up to one third of the total project cost.

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The AA Detailed Evaluation also analyzed two transit modes, LRT and bus rapid transit (BRT). Overall LRT fared better in this evaluation. In addition, LRT is the only mode consistent with Sound Transit's Long Range Plan and ST2.

Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan includes an extension of Tacoma Link from downtown Tacoma north and west to Tacoma Community College. The EIS accompanying the Long-Range Plan included a programmatic evaluation of the environmental impacts of expanding Tacoma Link in broad corridors to the west and to the east. The Long-Range Plan EIS evaluated a variety of modal alternatives (including BRT), and LRT was selected as the mode choice in the Long-Range Plan and in the ST2 Plan for the Tacoma Link expansion based on the extensive regional planning, public and agency involvement, and environmental review conducted through the Long-Range Plan and ST2 processes.

Before committing federal funds to the Tacoma Link Expansion project, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the public agency proposing the Tacoma Link Expansion project, Sound Transit is required to comply with the SEPA. To satisfy both NEPA and SEPA requirements, the agencies will prepare the appropriate environmental review for the project.

MOTION:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that (1) E1 – North Downtown Central is selected as the corridor and LRT as the mode for detailed study in the Tacoma Link light rail expansion environmental review, and (2) Gate 2 within Sound Transit's Phase Gate process is approved.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on May 23, 2013.



Pat McCarthy
Board Chair

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator

PHASE GATE ACTION

Tacoma Link Expansion

MEETING	DATE	STAFF CONTACT	PHONE
Board	05/23/13	Ric Ilgenfritz, PEPP Executive Director Val Batey, Senior Transportation Planner	206-398-5239 206-398-5117

GATE 1	GATE 2	GATE 3	GATE 4	GATE 5	GATE 6	GATE 7	GATE 8
Enter Project Development	Identify Alternatives	ID Preferred Alternative	Enter Final Design	Establish Baseline	Proceed to Construction	Transition to Operations	Close Out Project

ACTION REQUESTED

Authorize the Tacoma Link Expansion project to enter Gate 2 – Identify Alternatives

PROJECT BUDGET

Preliminary Engineering Budget: \$5,765,000

Estimated Final Project Cost: \$150M

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Schedule to complete Preliminary Engineering:

Estimated Project Completion: 2020

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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Using criteria based on the project's Purpose and Need Statement and Goals and Objectives, the analysis in the Detailed Evaluation found that four corridors performed best and are most promising: B1 – North End Central, C1 – Eastside, E1 – North Downtown Central, and H2 – Hybrid with North Connection to MLK. The AA Detailed Evaluation also analyzed two transit modes, LRT and bus rapid transit. Overall LRT fared better in the evaluation. Also, LRT is the only mode consistent with Sound Transit's Long Range Plan and ST2.

With approval of Phase Gate 2, the Board will select the corridor and mode for study in the Tacoma Link light rail expansion environmental review in Motion No. M2013-31. The next phase of work includes advancing conceptual engineering to develop alignments, profiles and station locations and conducting the appropriate environmental review. Board approval for preliminary engineering, final design and construction will be sought upon completion of a project funding agreements with funding partners.

ACTION APPROVED



 Pat McCarthy, Board Chair

May 23, 2013
Date