
MEMO

TO: Kent Keel, Sound Transit Board Chair

FROM: Sound Transit staff

SUBJECT: Recommendation regarding projects with paused actions

DATE: September 8, 2020

This memo responds to your request for staff to bring forward recommendations regarding which projects with paused actions should advance for consideration by the Sound Transit Board this fall and is intended to be shared with the full Board. As the Board has discussed, actions this fall don't determine what changes to a project's timeline may ultimately be necessary based on COVID-19 fiscal impacts. Those changes will be determined by the Board's summer 2021 realignment decisions. However, the Board does need to decide this fall which project actions to advance in order to continue to make progress on the system expansion program and to better inform realignment decisions to be made next year.

Path Forward

In June 2020, Sound Transit developed the Path Forward for the Capital Program Realignment. The Path Forward established July 2021 as the target for completing the realignment process and provided a framework "to make measured progress on near-term actions while not over-committing resources or over-correcting the program before the ramifications of the recession and possible government responses come into clearer focus." These near-term actions include potentially approving currently paused project actions.

At the August 2020 Board meeting, to assist the consideration of these paused actions, each action was reviewed in detail by project, phase, and mode. Following discussion by the Board, Chair Keel directed staff to provide a recommendation regarding what actions to un-pause projects should be considered by the Board this fall.

Staff Recommendations

As previously stated, Board decisions to un-pause project actions this fall will move certain projects forward over the coming months but will not exempt those projects from timeline adjustments that may be required as part of the Board's

July 2021 realignment decisions. The staff recommendations below are practical in nature. Our analysis has focused on the following:

- Which near-term actions we believe can help inform the Board in making realignment choices next year;
- Which projects could benefit from waiting for more updated information to yield better informed decisions next year;
- Avoiding any presupposing of the decisions the Board might make next year; and
- Ensuring that none of the recommended Board actions this fall would lock the Board into any subsequent decision next year.

While continued pauses on some actions could potentially impact final delivery dates, in most cases the drivers of revised delivery dates will be the Board's consideration next year of lower revenue projections. The following sections outline the staff recommendations by mode.

Sounder

ST2 and ST3 fund continued incremental improvements to the successful Sounder commuter rail program. These improvements will increase access, capacity, and reliability over time. However, as a principally commuter-based service, Sounder may be especially impacted by any changes in work and travel patterns if telework significantly changes travel patterns and transit mode share even after the pandemic. While the future ridership patterns for all modes are unknown, additional Sounder capacity and access (including the construction of eight- and ten-car platforms) may not be needed as quickly as previously forecast. Because of this, the staff recommendation is to focus in the near term on the access projects where additional engineering and cost estimating could directly inform realignment. These are the Kent, Auburn, and Sumner parking and access projects.

The Kent, Auburn, and Sumner parking and access projects have completed planning and environmental review. The Sumner parking and access project was preparing to advertise for design-build construction bids this year. However, the most recent estimates for all three of these projects are over the amounts in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Staff recommend that the Board consider authorization of a design-build project management (DBPM) contract for all three to develop scope and packaging options to determine if they can be delivered at a lower cost. Knowing whether these projects can be delivered at the lower cost carried in the TIP, or if additional budget is required, is an important consideration next year as you seek to rebalance the expansion program within available revenue.

Staff recommends that Board actions on all other Sounder projects be deferred until next year.

This includes the Sounder Maintenance Base, which had been scheduled for a baseline action and design-build construction advertising this year. Staff recommend considering this action and selecting a Design Build Program Manager next year rather than this fall. The timing and size of this facility is tied in part to whether future ridership requires eight- or ten-car trains. Until we analyze these scenarios further, the potential long-term operating savings from owning and operating a base rather than contracting with Amtrak is unclear.

Sounder platform extensions, South Tacoma and Lakewood Station parking and access Improvements, and Edmonds & Mukilteo Station parking and access improvements are either early in planning or not started, and we recommend they remain paused. However, some limited additional planning is likely to be needed at a few of the stations to coordinate with adjacent projects prior to next summer. None of this work is anticipated to exceed the CEO's signature authority.

Stride Bus Rapid Transit

The Bus Rapid Transit program is nearing the end of its environmental review. Staff recommends advancing two engineering contracts for the program that will help analyze alternatives for sequencing the program in coordination with WSDOT and within available revenues.

Collaboration with WSDOT is essential for the success of the BRT program, as both the I-405 and SR 522 BRT lines operate principally within WSDOT right of way. I-405 BRT will also use WSDOT electronic toll lanes between Bothell and Renton. WSDOT is on schedule with the construction of the toll lanes that will be used by I-405 South BRT between Bellevue and Renton. The schedule for I-405 North between Kirkland and Bothell is uncertain due to the reduction in toll revenue caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend that the Board advance the I-405 BRT preliminary engineering contract to preserve the option of opening BRT segments as the WSDOT toll lanes are completed, and to further advance project cost estimates ahead of the realignment.

Staff also recommend that the I-405 and SR 522 BRT General Engineering Consultant Contract (GEC) be advanced this fall. The BRT program is complicated, with numerous individual elements that will require permitting and construction through numerous jurisdictions. The GEC would help coordinate these complex pieces and develop sequencing options for the program that can be considered by the Board in the context of the program realignment.

Staff do not recommend action this fall to advance the funding contract with WSDOT for construction of the Northeast 85th Interchange. With a total project cost of \$325 million, this station is almost one third of the total I-405 BRT project budget, and approval is not necessary this fall to maintain the pre-COVID-19 schedule for I-405 North of 2025. Deferral to 2021 would also create time for further value engineering review of this station to potentially reduce cost in the

interest of delivering the I-405 North BRT segment sooner than might otherwise be affordable.

Staff also recommend deferring consideration of the Design Build Project Manager for Bus Base North until next year. The base will support the entire Bus Rapid Transit program, but the number of buses, and when those buses will come online, varies widely based on when each segment begins revenue service. The further analysis to be performed by the recommended GEC on these sequencing options will provide vital information for when Bus Base North may be needed.

Link Light Rail

There is one paused action for future Link extensions: starting the Everett Link Extension and Operation Maintenance Facility North planning process by authorizing alternatives development. Staff recommend that the Board consider this action this fall. The OMF is a system-wide facility that will be needed to support Everett Link and other extensions. Siting maintenance facilities is challenging and requires a long lead time. Additionally, starting work on Everett Link will provide the realignment effort with information about project cost and phasing options. Everett Link is the longest ST3 extension, and building it in segments may allow earlier delivery of the first segment than might otherwise be affordable.

Third Party Agreements and Other Projects

Agreements in this category commit the agency to funding third party projects, so care needs to be taken as these commitments will directly impact not just Sound Transit but the work of other agencies.

Staff recommend that the paused agreement for the Everett parking contribution be considered by the Board this fall. The parking project is complete, on time and on budget. This project is also very cost-effective; Sound Transit's contribution would reimburse the City of Everett for 90 stalls which will be used now but could also be considered in the future as part of the parking needs for the Everett Link Extension.

Staff also recommend Board action this fall to advance the agreement with the City of Seattle for Madison BRT. This project has completed final design and is seeking a Federal Transit Administration Small Starts grant. The project does not yet have an announced funding allocation from the FTA. Still, the City is right to seek to eliminate any and all reasons for the FTA to withhold such an allocation, including the requirement to demonstrate that all local funding is in place.

Staff do not recommend considering the funding agreement with the City of Seattle and King County Metro for Rapid Ride C/D this fall. Unlike the Madison BRT project, discussions about potential projects are still in the preliminary stage, and Sound Transit's funding will not leverage other grant sources.

Staff also do not recommend advancing the paused actions for North Sammamish Park and Ride and the Bus on Shoulder projects. There is not consensus with the Sammamish City Council regarding the site for the park and ride, and any further work at this point is at risk. During initial work, the Bus on Shoulder Project identified limited potential locations with modest travel time improvements, and further analysis can be deferred until next year.

Recommendations Summary

Seven of the 15 paused actions from this spring are recommended for Board consideration in the fall. The value of the un-pausing actions recommended total \$76.5 million, or approximately half the value of the currently paused development actions. Neither of the construction budget actions, which would total nearly \$500 million, are recommended for advancement at this time. The work recommended for advancement will help staff provide the Board with better information next year as you consider the realignment and will neither predetermine your future decisions nor cause material financial impact to other projects.

The recommendations are summarized in the following tables. The first table shows the paused actions that are recommended by staff for consideration by the Board in fall 2020. The second table lists the paused actions that are recommended to be deferred until 2021 for further consideration. Each table includes the project, paused action(s), value of the paused action(s), and a summary of the reasoning behind the recommendation.

CONSIDER FOR ACTION IN FALL 2020

Project	Paused Action(s)	Value	Reasoning
Kent and Auburn Station Parking and Access Improvements	Execute DBPM consultant contract with focus on cost savings alternatives	\$4 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop lower cost scope and contract packaging options to determine if the projects can be delivered within the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) estimates
Sumner Station Parking and Access Improvement	Execute DBPM consultant contract with focus on cost savings alternatives	\$6 million	
I-405 BRT North & I-405 BRT South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorize Phase 3: Preliminary Engineering (PE) consultant contract Authorize General Engineering consultant (GEC) 	\$13 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-405 BRT PE: Preserve the option of opening BRT segments as the WSDOT toll lanes are completed and obtain better cost estimates GEC: Review scope, phasing, contract packaging options, and partner capacity
SR 522 BRT	Authorize General Engineering consultant (GEC)	\$1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEC: Review scope, phasing, contract packaging options, and partner capacity
Everett Link and OMF North	Authorize consultant contract to start Alternatives Development and project development	\$16 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OMF North: Long planning lead time for a facility that supports multiple alignments Everett Link: Develop phasing options and better cost estimates for the longest ST3 light rail extension
Everett Parking Agreement	Authorize agreement with City of Everett for contribution to project	\$0.7 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverages City funding to cost effectively provide 90 parking stalls
Madison BRT Agreement	Authorize agreement with City of Seattle for contribution to project	\$35.8 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound Transit funding needed, amongst other factors, for the City to pursue \$60 million in federal funding

DEFER UNTIL 2021 FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Project	Paused Action(s)	Value	Reasoning
Sounder Platform Extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget amendment to start project development Authorize Phase 1: Alternatives Development consultant contract 	\$3 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow more time to analyze the effect of telework on commuter based service
South Tacoma and Lakewood Station Parking and Access Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Tacoma: Budget amendment to start project development South Tacoma and Lakewood: Authorize Phase 1: Alternatives Development consultant contract 	\$4 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow more time to analyze the effect of telework on commuter based service Improvements likely to have shorter lead time than other projects
Sounder Maintenance Base	Execute DBPM consultant contract	\$2 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited scope of work for DBPM without advancing baseline decision
	Baseline for construction	\$210 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term savings opportunity depends on size of ST fleet and future decisions regarding train and platform lengths
Edmonds & Mukilteo Station Parking and Access Improvements	Authorize Phase 2: Environmental review/conceptual engineering consultant contract	\$2 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow more time to analyze the effect of telework on commuter based service Improvements have relatively short lead time compared to other projects
Bus Base North	Execute DBPM consultant contract	\$12 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential program phasing options for I-405 Stride and SR 522 Stride that have not yet been examined impacts the scope and timing for Bus Base North
NE 85th Interchange St. Agreement	Authorize agreement with WSDOT to rebuild interchange	~\$275 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly one-third the cost of the I-405 BRT program Agreement could be completed in 2021 and still support pre-COVID-19 plan of I-405 North service in 2025
North Sammamish Park and Ride	Authorize Phase 2: Environmental Review and Conceptual Engineering	\$2 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further work at risk until site preference clarified
Bus on Shoulder	Authorize Phase 2: Environmental Review and Conceptual Engineering	\$1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial project development identified limited potential locations with modest travel time improvements, and further analysis can be deferred until next year
Rapid Ride C/D Agreement	Authorize agreement with City of Seattle and King County	~\$25 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all project elements are defined and more time needed to determine these elements. More funding could be available for full contingency not needed for Madison BRT; more time needed to see if funding is available.

Next Steps

As stated previously, consideration of these actions is not the realignment process itself. Following Board decisions on these actions this year, the Board will consider adoption of the 2021 TIP and establish the schedule next year to complete the full program realignment.

In the meantime, staff are working on scenario development and evaluation criteria for realignment as directed by the Board in Motion M2020-36 and M2020-37. The table below shows the schedule for the near-term decisions, and the full program realignment. Advancing some paused actions this fall will enable continued progress on the system expansion program and provide better information for realignment without pre-determining its outcome or delaying other projects. Next year you will determine what sequence of projects best achieves the objectives of the voter approved plans within available funding sources.

	Near-term Decisions	Full Program Realignment
September	Direct which paused actions to consider	
October	Consider & possibly approve paused actions	Review and update Financial Plan
November	Consider & possibly approve paused actions	
December	Consider adoption of 2021 Budget & TIP	Establish 2021 schedule for completion of realignment process
Q1 2021	Consider further short-term actions, including any results from advancing paused actions	Determine realignment scenarios; gather public feedback
Q2 2021		Develop draft realigned program
July 2021		Adopt final realigned program and consider any budget revisions