

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

<p>AGENDA TITLE: Sound Transit Light Rail Guiding Principles DEPARTMENT: Public Works PRESENTED BY: Mark Relph, Public Works Director Kirk McKinley, Transportation Services Manager Alicia McIntire, Senior Transportation Planner</p> <p>ACTION: <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion</p>
--

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

Sound Transit is currently in the process of evaluating alternatives to extend light rail north of Northgate. This extension is part of the 2008 voter approved Sound Transit 2 funding plan that will connect Shoreline to the light rail line. The section from downtown Seattle to the University of Washington is currently under construction. The section to Northgate will follow.

Over the past year, Sound Transit has evaluated several alignment and mode alternatives for high capacity transit in the North Corridor. Two alignment alternatives remain for evaluation and the environmental scoping process is now underway. Scoping is the process to take public and agency input to determine the “scope” of the environmental analysis. Council is being asked to review draft guiding principles addressing alignment of light rail through Shoreline which will be used to provide input to Sound Transit’s scoping process. A single Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) alignment may be an outcome from the Sound Transit scoping process.

On September 12th the City Council received a briefing from Sound Transit on the timeline and process they will follow on scoping and development of any preferred alternatives.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:

At this time, there is no significant financial impact to the City associated with this process, as it is being managed and funded by Sound Transit. Throughout the environmental review process, the City will need to participate in Sound Transit’s process by continuing to provide technical and policy direction. This process is scheduled to be complete in 2014. In 2012 the City, along with Sound Transit, will begin engaging the community in station area planning for the selected Shoreline station locations and to identify appropriate mitigation for the station areas. This will require dedication of City staff resources.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required at this time. This report is for discussion purposes only. The Council is scheduled to finalize these guiding principles at their October 24 business meeting. Upon Council consensus on these principles and development of a recommended light rail alignment, the City's position on the alignment will be forwarded to the Sound Transit Board for consideration as they move through the environmental process.

Approved By: City Manager _____ City Attorney _____

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several months of analysis and evaluation, Sound Transit has narrowed the alignment alternatives for the North Corridor Transit project down to two options. They include SR 99 and Interstate 5. Sound Transit has begun environmental scoping for these two alternatives in order to identify issues to address in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The scoping process may also result in the determination of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the alignment.

BACKGROUND

In September 2010, Sound Transit began the planning process to extend high capacity transit from Northgate to Lynnwood. This extension is part of the 2008 voter approved Sound Transit 2 funding plan. The North Corridor Transit Project will connect Shoreline to Lynnwood in the north and to Northgate and points south by 2023. The existing light rail line that runs from Sea-Tac Airport to downtown Seattle is currently being extended to the University of Washington, with completion all the way to Northgate by 2021.

The electorate voted for and approved a light rail alignment on I-5, with potential stops at NE 145th and NE 185th Streets in Shoreline. However, in order to qualify for federal funding, Sound Transit is required to examine multiple high capacity transit modes, as well as corridor alignment alternatives, and potential station locations for the North Corridor. The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to select the alternative(s) that will be evaluated through the federal environmental process in late 2011. Sound Transit will make a final alignment decision in 2014 following completion of a National Environmental Policy Act/State Environmental Policy Act EIS (NEPA/SEPA) and preliminary engineering.

The process began with a wide field of alignment alternatives and three different mode options (traditional bus, bus rapid transit and light rail). With each level of evaluation, the review of the alternatives has become more technical and refined. As a result, different mode and alignment alternatives have been removed from consideration. Attachment B shows Sound Transit's schedule for the Alternatives Analysis (AA) portion of the North Corridor project and the alternative concepts that have been eliminated through the process.

Sound Transit recently completed their Level 2 screening process and presented the results to Council at the September 12th meeting. Upon completion of the Level 2 screening process, Sound Transit reduced the alignment options to a mixed profile (elevated and at-grade) I-5 alignment and an entirely elevated Highway 99 alignment. Both alignments include two stops in Shoreline. Environmental scoping for both alternatives is currently underway. Upon completion of the scoping process, the alternative(s) to be evaluated in the EIS will be identified. The EIS will include several options for station locations within the vicinity of NE 145th and NE 185th St on I-5 and potentially stations on SR 99, if it is included in the EIS. Different aspects of the alignment, such as west and east side of I-5 will also be considered. The results of the alternatives analysis are posted on the Sound Transit website at www.soundtransit.org.

DISCUSSION

The extension of high capacity transit into Shoreline will greatly influence transit service in the City. It is assumed that this extension will come in the form of an extended light rail line north of Northgate and continuing to Lynnwood, as Sound Transit has eliminated all other mode alternatives from consideration. The alignment of the light rail line and station locations will greatly affect the surrounding neighborhoods, including land use patterns and traffic.

Sound Transit submitted the AA to the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) for review in late July. After receiving FTA and public comments, as well as the completion of environmental scoping, a LPA may be adopted by the Sound Transit Board by the end of 2011. If a LPA does not emerge, more than one alternative would then proceed into the EIS process. Sound Transit staff shared that an evaluation of the I-5 alignment in the EIS would likely include several crossing alternatives to get from the east side of I-5 (Northgate) to the west side (no later than Lynnwood). These options may include locating the NE 185th station on the west side of I-5, closer to Shoreline Center and stadium, and converting the Mountlake Terrace Freeway Station for light rail use.

The alignment options will serve different neighborhoods and, as a result, have differing impacts. Sound Transit has asked the jurisdictions affected by the light rail alignment (Seattle, Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood) to provide input in response to the alternatives under review. The cities of Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood have identified I-5 as the preferred alternative. The City of Seattle has not identified a preferred alternative at this time, nor has Shoreline.

In order to provide Sound Transit with feedback regarding the alignment determination, staff is recommending Council adopt guiding principles to help identify a preferred alignment for Shoreline. Attachment A provides a first draft of these principles for Council consideration. Staff is also recommending that Council identify a preferred alignment alternative once the guiding principles have been agreed to and staff can evaluate the alternatives with respect to those principles.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Until now, Sound Transit has managed the public outreach for the North Corridor Transit Project. Early AA scoping was undertaken in September through October 2010. Three public workshops were held in North Seattle, Shoreline and Lynnwood, as well as one agency scoping meeting, with over 200 people attending the workshops. More than 260 online surveys were completed and over 90 comments were received via mail or email. Sound Transit has also briefed various business and community groups throughout the AA process. Three public meetings, as well as one agency meeting, are scheduled in October for the EIS scoping process. One of these meetings will be held on Tuesday, October 11, 2011 from 6-8 p.m. at the Shoreline Conference Center, Shoreline Room. Shoreline staff will be present at the October 11 Sound Transit meeting to inform the community about the guiding principles and receive comments.

Attachment C outlines the public outreach program for development of the guiding principles. In addition to this meeting, Council is scheduled to discuss the guiding principles on October 17, with an opportunity for public comment at that meeting. Council is scheduled to finalize the principles on October 24 and recommend a preferred alignment for the North Corridor light rail at its November 14, 2011 meeting.

COUNCIL GOAL(S) ADDRESSED

This project addresses Council Goal 2: Provide safe, efficient and effective infrastructure to support our land use, transportation and surface water plans, as one of the major objectives of the Goal is to work with Sound Transit, neighboring cities, regional agencies and Shoreline neighborhoods to implement the Sound Transit II plan to bring light rail through Shoreline.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT

At this time, there is no significant financial impact to the City associated with this process, as it is being managed and funded by Sound Transit. Throughout the environmental review process, the City will need to participate in Sound Transit's process by continuing to provide technical and policy direction. This process is scheduled to be complete in 2014. In 2012 the City, along with Sound Transit, will begin engaging the community in station area planning for the selected Shoreline station locations and to identify appropriate mitigation for the station areas. This will require dedication of City staff resources.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required at this time. This report is for discussion purposes only. The Council is scheduled to finalize these guiding principles at their October 24 business meeting. Upon Council consensus on these principles and development of a recommended light rail alignment, the City's position on the alignment will be forwarded to the Sound Transit Board for consideration as they move through the environmental process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft North Corridor Project, Light Rail Guiding Principles for Shoreline
Attachment B: Sound Transit Alternatives Analysis Schedule
Attachment C: Draft Public Outreach Plan, Developing Light Rail Guiding Principles: Choosing an Alignment