



LIGHT RAIL PERMITTING CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ADVISORY DOCUMENT - RECOMMENDATION TO THE DIRECTOR – CENTRAL BELLEVUE SEGMENT DESIGN AND MITIGATION PERMIT SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

Introduction

The Light Rail Permitting Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was appointed by the Bellevue City Council consistent with the terms of the Light Rail Overlay regulations contained in the city's Land Use Code (LUC). Land Use Code section 20.25M.035.A describes the CAC purpose to:

- 1. Dedicate the time necessary to represent community, neighborhood and citywide interests in the permit review process*;** and
2. Ensure that issues of importance are surfaced early in the permit review process while there is still time to address design issues while minimizing cost implications; and
- 3. Consider the communities and land uses through which the RLRT (Regional Light Rail Train) System or Facility passes, and set "the context" for the regional transit authority to respond to as facility design progresses*;** and
- 4. Help guide RLRT System and Facility design to ensure that neighborhood objectives are considered and design is context sensitive by engaging in on-going dialogue with the regional transit authority and the City, and by monitoring follow-through*;** and
5. Provide a venue for receipt of public comment on the proposed RLRT Facilities and their consistency with the policy and regulatory guidance of paragraph 20.25M.035.E below and Sections 20.25M.040 and 20.25M.050 of this Part; and
- 6. Build the public's sense of ownership in the project*;** and
- 7. Ensure CAC participation is streamlined and effectively integrated into the permit review process to avoid delays in project delivery*.**

* Identifies the focus of this Advisory Document

Design and Mitigation Permit Review — 60% Design Development Phase

This phase of review is intended to provide feedback regarding effectiveness of design and landscape development in incorporating prior guidance at context and schematic design stages. This phase is intended to provide further input and guidance, based on the input and guidance provided in the context setting phase, on compliance (or lack of compliance) with the policy and regulatory guidance of LUC 20.25M and LUC 20.25M.040 and 20.25M.050, and whether information is sufficient to evaluate such compliance. The CAC advice is based on the alignment and station design agreed to by the City of Bellevue City Council and Sound Transit Board through a Memorandum of Understanding. The CAC is charged with providing the Director of the Development Services Department with a final advisory document.

CAC Work Product

The work of the CAC at each review stage will culminate in a CAC advisory document that describes the phase of review and CAC feedback. The work product required following the Pre-Development Phase of CAC review is intended to provide Sound Transit with early guidance and advice that is integrated into future Design and Mitigation Permit submittals. This final Design and Mitigation Permit advisory document is intended to provide the Director of the Development Services Department with a recommendation to demonstrate Sound Transit compliance with Design and Mitigation Permit Decision Criteria pursuant to LUC 20.25M.030.C.3.

There were two Pre-Development CAC Advisory Documents that covered the scope of this Design and Mitigation permit. On May 16, 2014, Sound Transit was provided with the East Main Segment Pre-Development Advisory Document. On July 15, 2014, Sound Transit was provided with the Downtown Segment Pre-Development Advisory Document. These documents outlined Sound Transit compliance with context setting characteristics and early Design and Mitigation Permit requirements. The pre-development advisory documents also included several recommendations on additional items to be addressed during formal permit review.

The following represents the CAC advisory recommendation to the Development Services Department Director regarding compliance related to LUC 20.25M.030.C.3, LUC 20.25M.040, and 20.25M.050.

20.25M.030.C.3 Design and Mitigation Permit Decision Criteria

The City of Bellevue Development Services Director is responsible for insuring compliance with all Design and Mitigation Permit decision criteria as outlined below. The CAC was tasked with review and recommendation on some, but not all, decision criteria. Those criteria not discussed by the CAC are still applicable to approval of the Design and Mitigation Permit and compliance with all decision criteria will need to be demonstrated in the Director's decision.

A proposal for a RLRT system or facility may be approved or approved with conditions; provided, that such proposal satisfies the following criteria:

a. The applicant has demonstrated compliance with the CAC Review requirements of LUC 20.25M.035; and

- Sound Transit has demonstrated compliance with CAC review requirements by attending and presenting materials regarding the East Link Light Rail System and Facilities at CAC meetings held the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings Sound Transit and City staff provided tours of the existing Central Link Light Rail System and Facilities and proposed East Link route in the City of Bellevue including the Central Bellevue Segment.

b. The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan including without limitation the Light Rail Best Practices referenced in Comprehensive Plan Policy TR-75.2 and the policies set forth in LUC 20.25M.010.B.7; and

The CAC was not asked to do an exhaustive review of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan policies and Light Rail Best Practices. Where CAC members felt that elements of the permit were not consistent with these policies, they have recommended modifications to the permit in areas that were identified within their scope. Some CAC members expressed concern that some elements of the project that are outside of their scope were inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Light Rail Best Practices. The East Link Project shall demonstrate consistency with the numerous Comprehensive Plan Policies that are applicable to light rail (LU-9, LU-22, LU-24, ED-3, TR-75.1, TR-75.2,

TR-75.5, TR-75.7, TR75.8, TR-75.9, TR-75.12, TR-75.15, TR-75.17, TR-75.18, TR-75.20, TR-75.22, TR-75.23, TR-75.27, TR-75.28, TR-75.32, TR-75.33, TR-75.34, TR-75.35, TR-118 and UT-39) and Light Rail Best Practices. This proposal shall be consistent with Light Rail Best Practices which focus on community and neighborhoods, community involvement, connecting people to light rail, land use, street and operations, system elements (elevated, at-grade, and tunnel), property values, station security, and construction impacts and mitigation. A detailed description of project compliance will be included in the issued Design and Mitigation Permit. The CAC's recommendations advocate for the City's long-term transportation and land use objectives while minimizing environmental and neighborhood impacts, balancing regional system performance.

LIGHT RAIL BEST PRACTICES

Key provisions of the Light Rail Best Practices report are included below where the CAC's recommendations and input are needed to ensure compliance or provide additional clarity.

- 1) Guiding Principle 2. Light rail should be developed in a manner that complements, not diminishes, the character and quality of Bellevue.
Light rail systems should be planned, designed, and built to fit appropriately into the local context and provide community enhancements, without shifting the community character. East Link should be designed to improve the places in Bellevue through context-sensitive design, high quality materials, and innovative urban design approaches that can protect neighborhoods and property values and provide a safe and secure environment for transit riders and neighbors.
- 2) Guiding Principle 3. Anticipate impacts and advocate for exceptional mitigation.
Light rail will reinforce Bellevue's role in the region as the population, economic, and cultural center of the Eastside. However, the benefits of the system cannot be achieved without some short-term disruption and inconvenience during construction and without making some long-term changes to the existing environment. Proven techniques to avoid, minimize, and mitigate these impacts can be employed to make the short term impacts manageable. The City should expect and advocate for exceptional mitigation throughout the project phases and seek to leverage additional local investments through light rail development.
- 3) Guiding Principle 4. Alignment profile should consider the unique qualities of each part of the community. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution for alignment profiles – at-grade, elevated, and tunnel – in Bellevue. There are trade-offs when selecting profiles for each of the three areas (south of downtown, downtown, and Bel-Red) in Bellevue. The profile should advance the land use vision for each of the areas it travels through, by conveniently connecting destinations, optimizing ridership, and minimizing impacts
- 4) Guiding Principle 5. An early, ongoing public involvement program is essential for success in Bellevue. An early, ongoing, and comprehensive program to engage stakeholders is absolutely essential to the success of light rail in Bellevue. Providing transparency about project information and decisions will increase public understanding of and comfort with the project. Engaging the community in the design of the system, particularly stations, will result in more sensitive designs and build the public's sense of ownership. Transparently sharing information and engaging the community in a meaningful two-way, ongoing planning process will increase the success of the system. As planning for East Link is currently underway, the City and Sound Transit should begin immediately to identify the next phase of the public involvement program for the East Link project.

c. The proposal complies with the applicable requirements of this Light Rail Overlay District; and

- As it will be conditioned, this application for Design and Mitigation Permit will be in compliance with all elements of the Light Rail Overlay District including RLRT system and facilities development standards. Approval of an Alternative Landscape Option and Noise Monitoring and Contingency Plan will be included as conditions of approval. The CAC has made recommendations to insure compliance with context requirements by making recommendations regarding noise wall treatments, portal design, landscaping, art opportunities, and materials within the Central Bellevue Segment.

d. The proposal addresses all applicable design guidelines and development standards of this Light Rail Overlay District in a manner which fulfills their purpose and intent; and

- The CAC reviewed and discussed the applicable design and development standards of the Light Rail Overlay District and has made recommendations intended to insure design guidelines and standards are met. Specific CAC advice is discussed below in this document.

e. The proposal is compatible with and responds to the existing or intended character, appearance, quality of development and physical characteristics of the subject property and immediate vicinity; and

- The Central Bellevue Segment of East Link must comply with all applicable zoning and context requirements. Recommendations from the CAC to mitigate impacts to residential properties near the East Main Station and Wilburton Station are responsive to the existing and intended character of this segment. Light Rail Overlay (LUC 20.25M) development standards also respond to the character within this segment.

f. The proposal will be served by adequate public facilities including streets, fire protection, and utilities; and

- The CAC was not tasked with verifying adequate public services. It is anticipated that when the light rail system is operational anticipated impacts to public facilities including streets, fire protection, and utilities will have been mitigated.

g. The proposal complies with the applicable requirements of the Bellevue City Code, including without limitation those referenced in LUC 20.25M.010.B.8; and

- Development, construction and operation of the RLRT system and facilities must comply with applicable Bellevue City Codes, including the noise control code and environmental procedures code. Technical analysis of Sound Transit submitted Noise Studies and documents will be completed by city staff and technical consultants. Any additional noise mitigation resulting from technical review will be included as conditions of approval in the Design and Mitigation Permit. The CAC has offered advice regarding the type of sound walls used and sound wall materials.

h. The proposal is consistent with any development agreement or Conditional Use Permit approved pursuant to subsection B of this section; and

- The CAC was not tasked with verifying consistency with the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the City of Bellevue and the Sound Transit Board. Plan development through the final design stage will result in expected refinements to design that is typical to any major development. Significant design changes in project

design that are within the scope of work for the CAC will be brought back to the CAC for evaluation during construction permit review.

i. The proposal provides mitigation sufficient to eliminate or minimize long-term impacts to properties located near the RLRT facility or system, and sufficient to comply with all mitigation requirements of the Bellevue City Code and other applicable state or federal laws.

- To the greatest extent possible with the chosen alignment and station design, the proposed RLRT facility and system will avoid, minimize, and mitigate anticipated long-term impacts to properties located near the light rail system and facilities. Mitigation includes, but is not limited to, enhanced landscaping, critical area planting enhancements, permanent noise walls, sound absorbing panels on the guideway, and the installation of public art.

j. When the proposed RLRT facility will be located, in whole or in part, in a critical area regulated by Part 20.25H LUC, a separate Critical Areas Land Use Permit shall not be required, but such facility shall satisfy the following additional criteria:

- i. The proposal utilizes to the maximum extent possible the best available construction, design and development techniques which result in the least impact on the critical area and critical area buffer; and
 - ii. The proposal incorporates the performance standards of Part 20.25H LUC to the maximum extent applicable; and
 - iii. The proposal includes a mitigation or restoration plan consistent with the requirements of LUC 20.25H.210; except that a proposal to modify or remove vegetation pursuant to an approved Vegetation Management Plan under LUC 20.25H.055.C.3.i shall not require a mitigation or restoration plan.
- Mitigation and restoration requirements per LUC 20.25H due to impacts to critical areas and their buffers will be incorporated into the Design and Mitigation Permit approval and have been discussed at CAC meetings. Impacts to critical areas in the Central Bellevue Segment include temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands and their buffers, and temporary and permanent impacts to Sturtevant Creek and its buffer. A total of .725 acres of temporary and permanent impacts to critical areas is anticipated within the Central Bellevue Segment. Mitigation for impacts to critical areas and their buffers per the criteria located in LUC 20.25H will occur within the project area and adjacent segments of East Link. Mitigation is required to result in a condition that is equal to or superior to the pre-existing environment. Based on staff's review of the technical reports and mitigation proposed by Sound Transit, the proposed mitigation will provide a lift in critical areas function at maturity over the existing condition.

CAC Recommendation to the Director of Development Services

At the request of the CAC, CAC Pre-Development Phase advice that has been addressed or partially addressed in the Design and Mitigation Permit submittal are included in bold for the Director's reference.

20.25M.040 RLRT system and facilities development standards

1. Landscape Development

- The CAC recommends that landscape development at the Wilburton (Hospital) Station, particularly in the vicinity of NE 8th Street, be designed in a way which does not create a site obstruction for motorists.
- The CAC recommends that vegetation retention should be maximized north of the Wilburton (Hospital) Station to provide a buffer to adjacent residential development.

2. Fencing

- Security and safety fences should be designed to meet City's codes. These fences should be designed to minimize blocked views to maintain the idea of a city in a park.

3. Light and Glare

- The CAC recommends that no stations should have up lights that could shine into neighboring buildings or residential areas. All lighting should remain within the confines of the stations to the greatest extent possible.

4. Recycling and Solid Waste

- The CAC recommends that Sound Transit work with its sustainability group to evaluate a system wide compost collection bin option at its stations.

5. Use of City Right of Way

- The CAC acknowledges that specific details regarding the use of the City ROW will be handled through the review and issuance of Right of Way Use Permits per LUC 20.25M.040.J; however, they want to emphasize the importance of limiting impacts on traffic to the best level technically feasible.

20.25M.050 Design guidelines

1. **Design Intent – Southwest Bellevue Subarea** - In addition to complying with all applicable provisions of the Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan, the design intent for the Regional Light Rail Train system and facility segment that passes through this subarea is to contribute to the major City gateway feature that already helps define Bellevue Way and the 112th Corridor. The Regional Light Rail Train system or facility design should reflect the tree-lined boulevard that is envisioned for the subarea, and where there are space constraints within the transportation cross-section, design features such as living walls and concrete surface treatments should be employed to achieve corridor continuity. The presence of the South Bellevue park and ride and station when viewed from the neighborhood above and Bellevue Way to the west, as well as from park trails to the east, should be softened through tree retention where possible and enhanced landscaping and "greening features" such as living walls and trellises.

Design Intent – Downtown Subarea - In addition to complying with all applicable provisions of the Downtown Subarea Plan, the design intent for the RLRT system and facility segment that passes through this subarea is to enhance Downtown Bellevue's identity as an urban center that serves as the residential, economic, and cultural heart of the Eastside. The above-ground expression of the Downtown Station is envisioned as a highly utilized urban "place" with an architectural vocabulary that not only reflects and communicates the high quality urban character of Downtown as a whole, but also complements the immediately adjacent civic center uses including Bellevue City Hall, Meydenbauer Convention Center, the Transit Center, Pedestrian Corridor, and the Downtown Art Walk. The alignment crossing over I-405 will be prominent to visitors entering, leaving, and passing through the Downtown,

and its design should be viewed as an opportunity to create a landmark that connects Downtown Bellevue with areas of the City to the east. The station and freeway crossing should reflect Bellevue's branding, and should be comfortable and attractive places to be and experience, with high quality furnishings and public art that capitalize on place-making opportunities.

Design Intent – Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea - In addition to complying with all applicable provisions of the Wilburton/N.E. 8th Street Subarea Plan, the design intent for the RLRT system and facility segment that passes through this subarea is to focus on the hospital station's role as a gateway location to points east of Downtown on to Bel-Red and beyond. The alignment crossing over I-405 should create a cohesive connection between the Downtown and hospital stations, but the hospital station itself should have its own identity. With significant ridership anticipated to be generated from the Medical Institution District to the west, the hospital station should take design cues from the hospital, the ambulatory health care center, and the medical office buildings that were designed to be responsive to the Medical Institution Design Guidelines that are shaping the character of this area.

2. **Context and Design Considerations** - The CAC was tasked with evaluating the existing context setting characteristics included in the Land Use Code in order to verify that the design of the stations and alignment is consistent with the vision for the Southwest Bellevue, Downtown, and Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subareas. The Land Use Code states that the character of these areas is defined by:

Southwest Bellevue

- The expansive Mercer Slough Nature Park;
- Historic references to truck farming of strawberries and blueberries;
- Retained and enhanced tree and landscaped areas that complement and screen transportation uses from residential and commercial development; and
- Unique, low density residential character that conveys the feeling of a small town within a larger City.

Downtown Subarea

- Private entertainment and cultural attractions;
- High quality urban amenities such as pedestrian oriented development and weather protection that encourages people to linger and not just pass through;
- High rise buildings that attract a creative and innovative work force;
- Multifamily developments that attract urban dwellers that are less tied to their vehicles to accomplish day-to-day tasks;
- Great public infrastructure including roadways, transit and pedestrian improvements, parks and public buildings; and
- Stable property values that make it a desirable place for businesses to locate and invest.

Wilburton/NE 8th Street

- Outdoor spaces that promote visually pleasing, safe, and healing/calming environments for workers, patients accessing health care services, and visitors;
- Buildings and site areas which include landscaping with living material as well as special pavements, trellises, screen wall planters, water, rock features, art, and furnishings;
- Institutional landmarks that convey an image of public use and provide a prominent landmark in the community; and
- Quality design, materials, and finishes to provide a distinct identity that conveys a sense of permanence and durability.

The CAC advised that the following additional context and design considerations should be considered when evaluating the East Link project in the Southwest Bellevue, Downtown Bellevue, and Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subareas for context sensitivity during future CAC and permit review phases. The following items pertain to the Central Bellevue Segment:

Southwest Bellevue

- Along 112th SE design treatments and mitigation should be complementary to differing levels of development intensity that exist on the east (commercially developed) and the west (residentially developed) sides of the road.
- The portal and tunnel between the East Main and Downtown Stations present an opportunity to “Visually Transport” transit riders from the historic mid-century modern, stable neighborhoods of Southwest Bellevue to the bustling urban context of the Downtown. Art on the portal and in the tunnel could help depict the transition from the suburban context to the urban context.
- Landscaping should be employed to soften the impact of the portal structure adjacent to the East Main Station. If art opportunities are employed, additional emphasis on the concrete mass of the East Main portal structure should be avoided.

Downtown Subarea

- The Downtown Station should convey a sense of arrival at a bustling economic hub that provides access to retail, visitor services, offices, and urban residential neighborhoods.
- The station should convey a future focus on smart growth, and the importance of transit to the success of sustainable development.
- The aesthetics of the station roof should be taken into account and finished to enhance views down on the Downtown station for adjacent high rise and convention center development.
- Clear connectivity, accessibility, and way finding should be provided between the Downtown Station and the Bus Transit Center.

Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea

- Height of the flyovers (freeway, 116th Ave NE, and NE 8th) between the Downtown Station and the Wilburton (Hospital) Station presents unique opportunities and challenges.

- i. Design attention should be given to the under-portions of the flyover structures that will be visible from vehicles and pedestrians that pass underneath them.
 - ii. Required railings on the flyover structures could present an art opportunity if they could be employed without further emphasizing the mass of the structure.
- The aesthetics of the Wilburton (Hospital) station roof should be taken into account and finished to enhance views down on the station for adjacent development on Midlakes Hill to the east and future development anticipated in the Wilburton Village.
- Clear connectivity, accessibility, and way finding should be provided between the Hospital Station and the Medical Institution District where Overlake Hospital and the Group Health Ambulatory Care Center are located.
- Weather protection should be provided on the route between the Wilburton (Hospital) Station and the Medical Institution District.
- References to the freight hub and rail platform that served Bellevue's historic truck farming industry should be incorporated into the Wilburton (Hospital) Station.
- The Wilburton (Hospital) Station context should convey a sense of institutional permanence and quality that is broader in focus than accessibility to health care.

3. Additional General Design Guidelines

- The CAC recommends that the issue of lighting be uncoupled from the issue of meeting the needs of those with disabilities and that both audio and visual cues be included in station design.
- The CAC recommends that a decorative gate be used for access to the electrical building near the tunnel portal and East Main Station.
- The CAC recommends that the design of the Bellevue Downtown Station should complement the existing City Hall and new plaza design while providing distinct elements that differentiate the two uses.
- The CAC recommends the city work with Sound Transit to seek out opportunities for additional weather protection complementary to the plans for landscaping, art, and visual access at the Bellevue Downtown Station.
- The CAC recommends that restroom facilities be incorporated into the Bellevue Downtown Station design.
- The CAC recommends that variable seating heights be provided at all light rail stations in Bellevue.
- The CAC recommends that Sound Transit include places for people to rest along the walkway connecting the Wilburton (Hospital) Station to 116th Ave NE. **(The CAC was shown an updated graphic by Sound Transit that includes two benches along the walkway).**
- The CAC recommends a signature treatment for the railing for the entire span from the Bellevue Downtown Station to the Wilburton (Hospital) Station. The CAC recommends Sound Transit continue to use the style of rail planned for the I-405 crossing to achieve this goal.

- The CAC recommends that Sound Transit use a stacked stone or brick type pattern with variegated earth tones for noise walls south of the tunnel portal to provide continuity with the walls recommended in the adjoining South Bellevue Segment. Ashlar stone walls are one recommendation from the CAC.
- The CAC recommends a special treatment that may include art or vegetation for the surface structure at the mid tunnel access point.
- The CAC strongly recommends that Sound Transit further evaluate alternative locations for the signal house and maintenance access located in close proximity to the Lake Bellevue Condominiums.
- The CAC recommends that the city insure that Sound Transit adhere to all applicable water quality and storm drainage requirements.
- The CAC recommends that the City of Bellevue insure that Sound Transit evaluate and consider local soil conditions in station design and engineering.
- The CAC recommends that the City of Bellevue insure that Sound Transit considered all local environmental factors in their noise analysis, including, but not limited to the transmission of sound across Lake Bellevue, elevated structures on piles, and noise measurement locations.
- The CAC recommends that Sound Transit provide an interpretive sign regarding Sturtevant Creek the bridge to the pedestrian walkway.
- The CAC recommends a special artistic or architectural treatment for the elevated guideway crossing of NE 8th Street due to its prominence.
- The CAC recommends the use of concrete masonry units (CMU) for both the east and west faces of the Wilburton (Hospital) Station.
- The CAC recommends that the station area planning team or downtown livability team evaluate access to and from the Bellevue Downtown Station by pedestrians and bicyclists.

Design and Mitigation Permit Approval

The recommendations contained in this Advisory Document represent the conclusion of the CAC review of the Central Bellevue Segment Design and Mitigation Permit. The recommendations included in this document shall be incorporated into the Director's administrative decision. Departures by the Director from specific recommendations included within the CAC's Design and Mitigation Permit Advisory Document shall be limited to those instances where the Director determines that the departure is necessary to ensure that the RLRT facility or system is consistent with: (i) applicable policy and regulatory guidance contained in the Light Rail Overlay; (ii) authority granted to the CAC pursuant to this section; (iii) SEPA conditions or other regulatory requirements applicable to the RLRT system or facility; or (iv) state or federal law. Departures from the CAC Design and Mitigation Permit Advisory Document shall be addressed in the decision by the Director, and rationale for the departures shall be provided.