

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

July 6, 2010
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Davidson, Deputy Mayor Lee, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Degginger, Robertson, and Wallace

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Mayor Davidson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. There was no Executive Session.

2. Study Session

- (a) East Link – Review and Discussion of *112th Avenue Light Rail Options Concept Design Report* and the *Evaluation of Hospital Station Options Report*

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding Sound Transit's evaluation of additional light rail options.

Ric Ilgenfritz, Sound Transit, introduced James Irish and Sue Comis, and reported on the results of the 112th Avenue Light Rail Options Concept Design Report and the Evaluation of Hospital Station Options Report. He recalled that the Sound Transit Board updated the East Link preferred alternatives at the end of April, at which time it directed staff to analyze more options for the South Bellevue segment. The agency is moving toward a July 15 discussion of the Sound Transit Board capital committee, and a Board decision on July 22 regarding which options should be the focus of the preliminary engineering work for Segment B. Sound Transit continues to conduct public outreach along with City staff.

Mr. Ilgenfritz reviewed the overall project schedule, which anticipates the completion of preliminary engineering by the end of the year. A supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be released this fall, with an additional public comment period on the options that have been updated by the Board. The Final EIS will be completed by next summer, and construction is scheduled to begin in 2013/2014. Service is scheduled to begin in 2020/2021.

Mr. Ilgenfritz reviewed the options under consideration for the 112th Avenue corridor, and provided sample visual simulations and reviewed the results of the recent evaluation work. The six options include two that connect to the Main Street portal, two that connect to the 2nd Street portal, and two that connect to downtown at-grade alignments. Options for 112th Avenue include side-running (west side and east side options) and center running configurations, with the potential for a retained cut along the east side. Alignments along the west side of 112th Avenue would involve the removal of some residences. The portal options involve cut and cover tunnels.

Mr. Ilgenfritz compared cost estimates for the six options, in terms of their cost reductions from the earlier B3 Side-running/C9T (Tunnel) alternative. The estimates are based on a conceptual level of engineering (i.e., less than five percent engineering work). Estimates for the entire project will be updated at the end of preliminary engineering and upon completion of cost risk analysis. Mr. Ilgenfritz noted Sound Transit's goal to find a savings of \$75 million.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Ilgenfritz clarified that the tunnel scopes in Options 3 and 4 are less costly than in Options 1 and 2, largely because the NE 2nd Street portal involves a shorter tunnel.

Councilmember Wallace observed that the C9T cost estimate is preliminary and based largely on the linear feet of the light rail alignment, which makes it difficult to compare costs and to determine whether the \$150 million gap has been closed. Mr. Ilgenfritz said he can provide additional information on the options in order to better understand the cost estimates relative to each other.

Responding to Councilmember Degginger, Ms. Comis said Sound Transit can provide cost information for Segment B versus the C9T portion.

Councilmember Wallace stated that the fundamental decision points are the costs, because the City has agreed to cooperate on closing the budget gap. The City therefore needs to understand how well the project team is doing in closing the budget gap, and the impacts associated with each option (e.g., noise, vibration). Mr. Wallace said the City needs to understand the cost model to assure an apples-to-apples comparison.

Mayor Davidson recalled that at one point the Council was told that the costs were essentially the same for the B7 and B3 options. He questioned whether additional evaluation has been done for B7, which he feels could have fewer environmental and construction impacts.

Mr. Ilgenfritz said the cost estimates for the original B7 and B3 alternatives remain as they were in the Draft EIS. There was a difference in costs of approximately \$10 million. Those estimates have not been updated because when the Sound Transit Board adopted the initial preferred alternative last year, the B3 Modified/Side-Running option became the focus for preliminary engineering. The cost estimates for the options presented tonight are compared to the B3 Modified alternative.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Ilgenfritz said all of the 112th Avenue options discussed tonight are less expensive than B3's longer route and elevated light rail line to the east of 112th.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Ilgenfritz confirmed that costs can be kept at a lower level by choosing an option that requires the least amount of road reconstruction. Ms. Balducci recalled that the term sheet between the City and Sound Transit is focused on filling the budget gap related to a downtown tunnel. If the tunnel becomes cheaper and the gap becomes smaller, the agreement should take that smaller gap into account. Mr. Ilgenfritz noted his understanding of the City's position on this point.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Ilgenfritz said he cannot say at this point which option is the best, given significant uncertainty about final costs. The primary value of this information is to compare the options. He noted the potential for a greater cost savings with at-grade Option 3. The other three options involve varying degrees of structure, which drives costs and risk higher. In further response, Mr. Ilgenfritz said Options 5 and 6 are significantly less expensive than the previous four options.

Responding to Councilmember Degginger, Mr. Ilgenfritz said staff can get back to the Council with an assessment of utilities relocation impacts. Mr. Irish noted relatively higher costs for utilities relocation with the center-running, at-grade option.

Mr. Irish reviewed four transportation measures used to compare the options, which are driveways converted to right in and out only, changes to side streets, at-grade roadway crossings, and intersections not meeting the City's level of service standards (with and without mitigation). In general, the center-running Options 1, 3 and 5 (at-grade) have greater effects on side streets, side driveways, and at-grade crossings. All of the options potentially affect only one intersection, and the impact could be readily mitigated with a turn lane.

Mr. Irish compared the options based on additional criteria including residential and business displacements, noise, wetland and parks impacts, and construction impacts.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Irish said 32 noise receptors are counted for the Bellevue Club Hotel site. Ms. Robertson requested additional information on residual noise at certain properties. She does not consider mitigation to be complete if residents cannot enjoy their yards or keep windows open due to the noise.

Mr. Irish said that Sound Transit does not have that information because the mitigation has not been fully detailed at the current level of analysis. More design details are needed to fully understand the appropriate noise mitigation measures.

Mayor Davidson observed that the Sound Transit Board capital committee is scheduled to make a decision on July 16, yet many questions have not been answered. He questioned whether additional analysis will be conducted before July 16.

Mr. Ilgenfritz stated that the question to be before the Board on July 22 is which of the design options should be the focus of preliminary engineering work. He said that design is advancing for Segment A across the bridge, and Segment D up the Bel-Red Corridor. It is not advancing for the Bellevue segments because staff and the City Council continue to work on resolving issues and focusing efforts. The question is where to direct additional engineering work in order to answer some of the Council's and Sound Transit Board's questions.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Ilgenfritz said the capital committee's July 16 agenda includes a briefing, and potentially action, on Segment B.

Mayor Davidson said he would prefer that the committee not address Segment B until the City Council can have additional discussion about the options.

Responding to Councilmember Degginger, Mayor Davidson said he would like further discussion by the Council, in order to prepare a letter for the Sound Transit Board's July 22 meeting.

Councilmember Balducci stated her understanding that the City Council's July 19 agenda item is to review the results of the City's additional evaluation work related to the B7 option.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, the City Manager said staff anticipates receiving information from the City's consultants by July 14. The purpose of the July 19 Council discussion is to compare the B7 option with the B2 alignment, with regard to costs and impacts.

Councilmember Balducci explained that she will be attending the capital committee meeting, but is not able to attend the Sound Transit Board meeting on July 22. Therefore the capital committee meeting will be her only opportunity to provide input on the Segment B options and cost comparisons.

Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Irish said more detailed information on noise impacts will be developed for the Supplemental EIS report. In general, the center-running options will likely have higher noise impacts because this configuration is more difficult to mitigate through certain measures, most notably sound walls. Ms. Robertson noted that the City is spending approximately \$200,000 for consultant work on Segment B. That information will not be available until the July 19 meeting packet. She would like the Sound Transit Board to delay its discussion until Councilmember Balducci, representing Bellevue, has the opportunity to share this information with the Board.

Councilmember Lee noted that cost is only one factor in the evaluation and decision process. He questioned the criteria to be used by the Sound Transit Board in making its final decision.

Mr. Ilgenfritz said all factors will be considered, including costs. The results of the preliminary engineering work will help the Board to narrow its preferences. The next key decision point about what will be built will likely be the second quarter of 2011, upon completion of

preliminary engineering and the Final EIS. Until that time, all options remain under consideration by the Board.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Ilgenfritz said the at-grade crossings with potential impacts include 112th Avenue SE and SE 8th Street, 112th Avenue SE and SE 6th Street, the entrance to Bellefield Office park, and crossings between the side of the street and the center of 112th Avenue SE.

Mr. Wallace questioned statements in the DEIS indicating that there are no noise impacts associated with the B2 option, while the center-running options have identified noise impacts. Mr. Irish said there are a number of factors, including that currently projected noise levels are higher than those indicated in the DEIS, based on Seattle's light rail system, resulting in higher noise levels than originally anticipated. The DEIS also did not include the sound of bells and braking sounds associated with the trains.

Mr. Irish responded to additional questions of clarification regarding noise, including impacts to outdoor spaces at the Bellevue Club but not to the club's hotel. Mr. Wallace expressed concern about whether sufficient information will be available to the Sound Transit Board to facilitate an accurate comparison of mitigation costs for the options.

Councilmember Wallace stated that the City's noise ordinance measures noise impacts to the property line, and Sound Transit's information indicates that some exterior noise impacts cannot be mitigated, which means that noise levels will not comply with the City's noise ordinance. Mr. Irish said that Federal Transit Administration criteria take precedence for the light rail project.

Mr. Wallace expressed concern that noise impacts have not been sufficiently mitigated in Tukwila, despite Sound Transit's efforts over the past year. Mr. Irish said the impacts of that system were estimated using noise levels from Portland's system, and noise mitigation measures are in effect in Tukwila. He noted that four locations, however, are still above the FTA criteria. Mr. Irish said it is more difficult to retrofit that light rail segment than it is to mitigate noise impacts as a system is designed.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Irish said Sound Transit will commit to noise mitigation as part of its process, which includes SEPA review.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Irish confirmed that overall noise impacts for all segments through Bellevue (i.e., B, C, D) will likely increase as engineering work moves forward. In further response, Mr. Irish said the noise in Tukwila is primarily associated with elevated portions of the track. Wheel squeal is a function of the tightness of curves. More information on noise impacts for Segments B and C will be available in the Supplemental EIS this fall. Noise impacts associated with Segment D will be addressed in the Final EIS.

Responding to Councilmember Degginger, Mr. Irish confirmed that certain locations along 112th Avenue SE currently have ambient noise levels of 60-70 decibels. Mr. Irish described how noise levels are measured, and noted the locations of the measurements taken.

Mr. Irish noted that the table comparing wetland and park impacts covers the area between the Y at Bellevue Way/112th Avenue SE and the downtown tunnel portal. None of the options directly affect wetlands. However, they each have some effect on wetland buffers and park property.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Irish said a wetland is defined by three criteria: 1) Presence of wetland vegetation, 2) Certain amount of water annually, and 3) Presence of wetland soils. Areas that have been developed are no longer considered wetlands under federal, state, and city regulations. This includes office buildings on 112th Avenue SE that are adjacent to Mercer Slough park.

Mr. Chelminiak questioned whether the area at the Y where Bellevue Way merges into 112th Avenue SE is considered a wetland or a wetland buffer. Mr. Irish said the study area for the purposes of the current analysis is south of the Y. None of the options are in wetlands, but they are in buffers.

Mr. Irish compared construction impacts for the six options along 112th Avenue SE. Impacts include disruptions to property owners and drivers, utilities disruptions, and construction duration.

Responding to Ms. Balducci, Ms. Comis said construction staging for a tunnel portal at Main Street or NE 2nd Street would not require a huge area. Councilmember Balducci said she believes that more residents favor a portal at NE 2nd Street than at Main Street. However, she would like to hear from the community to know for sure.

Mr. Ilgenfritz reviewed hospital station location alternatives, which include three elevated and one at-grade options. Sound Transit is obligated to accommodate the rail-banked status of the Eastside rail corridor by preserving adequate right-of-way. Option A north of NE 8th Street is an elevated station and the current assumed alternative. Option B spans NE 8th Street. Option C, a station south of NE 10th Street, was proposed by some property owners in the area. Option D, an at-grade alternative north of NE 10th Street, is preferred by the hospitals.

Ms. Comis presented a comparison of the alternatives using the criteria of cost, station spacing from 120th Avenue NE, station visibility, business displacements, and construction impacts. In addition, she compared walking distances and hospital access.

Councilmember Wallace observed that Options C and D appear to have a more gradual curve, while Option A has a sharper turn. He recalled the effect of turn radius on potential wheel squeal noise. Mr. Irish said that wheel squeal is effectively mitigated by lubricating the train wheels.

Councilmember Degginger thanked Sound Transit staff for the information and discussion. He recalled that the Council's objective for a hospital district station is to serve both the medical facilities and the Wilburton area south of NE 8th Street.

Councilmember Balducci recalled that a key issue for the hospitals is to have pedestrian access from the light rail station to the medical facilities.

Mr. Ilgenfritz noted the last presentation slide summarizing the next steps. Two more workshops and an open house are scheduled to discuss the 112th Avenue SE options. Sound Transit will also conduct outreach on the hospital station alternatives. The Sound Transit Board is expected to provide direction on these options during its July 22 meeting.

Mr. Sarkozy asked Mr. Ilgenfritz to communicate Bellevue's interest in the Sound Transit Board delaying its discussion beyond July 22, in order to accommodate additional input from Bellevue.

(b) King County Transit Task Force Update – Continuation of Discussion on Guiding Principles

[Item postponed.]

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC
City Clerk

kaw