

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

July 18, 2011  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Chelminiak

1. Executive Session

At 6:04 p.m., Councilmember Robertson called the meeting to order, and announced recess to Executive Session for approximately one hour to discuss one item of potential litigation.

[Deputy Mayor Lee arrived at 6:50 p.m.]

The meeting resumed at 7:14 p.m., with Mayor Davidson presiding.

2. Study Session

- (a) Discussion regarding Potential Mitigation Options on Sound Transit's Preferred East Link B-Segment Alignment (B2M)

City Manager Steve Sarkozy noted that the City has been in discussions with Sound Transit regarding the East Link light rail project. He recalled that the Council has taken a position in favor of the B7 alignment, and has spent City funds to study that option. Sound Transit previously identified the B2M route as its preferred alternative. Recently, the City and Sound Transit have been discussing mitigation measures for the B2M alternative. Mr. Sarkozy referred to page SS 2-3 of the meeting packet for a list of the City's principles guiding the policy discussions.

Bernard Van de Kamp, Transportation Regional Projects Manager, briefly reviewed the B2M alignment extending north from I-90 to the Downtown via Bellevue Way and 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He described the concept of exceptional mitigation, which involves exploring the potential range of mitigation measures to effectively address impacts and to go beyond relying on a minimum standards approach.

Mr. Van de Kamp said that primary areas of great concern for both the Council and residents are construction, traffic, and noise impacts. He noted there are mitigation concepts under consideration to address these impacts. One is adding a southbound HOV lane on Bellevue Way SE between the Y at 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and I-90. Another is to address noise impacts through design refinements and operating policies. Adding a lane on Bellevue Way SE maintains traffic capacity during construction, and adds southbound capacity after the completion of light rail.

Mr. Sarkozy said that he, Councilmember Degginger, and Councilmember Wallace have been discussing mitigation concepts with Sound Transit. There has not yet been a public process associated with these preliminary discussions, however.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Van de Kamp said staff is reviewing the East Link Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and will comment on wetlands and critical areas upon completion of that review.

Councilmember Degginger noted that the protection of environmentally sensitive areas is a high priority for mitigation and is included in the list of transit principles. However, current discussions with Sound Transit focus on noise, visual and traffic impacts related to the B2M option.

Ric Ilgenfritz, Sound Transit, thanked the Council and City Manager for transmitting the ARUP study of the B7-Revised alternative proposed by the City. He reviewed the project schedule, noting that Sound Transit anticipates a Record of Decision for the project from the Federal Transit Administration this fall, which will allow the project to move into final design beginning in 2012. Light rail service is projected to begin in 2022/2023.

Mr. Ilgenfritz reported that preliminary engineering design and cost estimates have been completed. Sound Transit has received a preliminary finding of engineering and operational acceptability from the Federal Highway Administration for the conversion of the I-90 center roadway. The Final EIS was published on July 15 in the federal and state registers, and the comment period runs through August. Sound Transit staff have started to review the FEIS with the Sound Transit Executive Board and the Board's capital committee. Discussions are on track for the Board to identify an alignment decision on July 28.

Mayor Davidson questioned the consistency of the pending updated term sheet with the April 2010 term sheet previously developed by the City and Sound Transit. Mr. Ilgenfritz said the Sound Transit Board has directed staff to prepare an action item on the preferred alignment for consideration on July 28. The Board also asked staff to pursue negotiations with the City for an updated term sheet that is consistent with the April 2010 term sheet agreement.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Ilgenfritz said that Sound Transit is funded by a portion of the sales tax and motor vehicle excise tax, as well as federal grants. Mayor Davidson noted that Bellevue contributes a lot of tax dollars to Sound Transit, and he is therefore concerned that Bellevue is being asked to provide additional funding for a Downtown Tunnel.

Don Billen, Project Manager, reviewed Sound Transit's B2M/C9T alternative. He recalled concerns previously raised by residents about alarms associated with at-grade crossings, and described a design option with grade-separated crossings to address these concerns. This option moves the station from SE 8<sup>th</sup> Street to a location near Main Street using a shallow retained cut design. The B2M connects to the C9T as a tunnel through the Downtown. The revised design is entirely grade separated with no bells at SE 15<sup>th</sup>, SE 8<sup>th</sup>, or SE 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. The only potential location for bells is as the train comes in and out of the station.

Councilmember Robertson stated her understanding that the reason for the elevated track over 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE at SE 15<sup>th</sup> Street or SE 8<sup>th</sup> Street is that the water table does not allow for an underground tunnel. Mr. Billen acknowledged that Sound Transit is concerned about the water table and soil conditions.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Billen said the elevation at these locations is different from that of the Winters House, and the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue alignment is much closer to the slough channel.

Mr. Billen continued to describe the B2M alignment incorporating proposed design options.

Mr. Ilgenfritz noted a retaining wall on the west side of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, which provides a buffer between light rail and the park/neighborhood.

Mr. Billen described the East Main Station and measures to mitigate noise at that location. Mr. Ilgenfritz noted that this design creates usable public space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Lee, Mr. Billen said the vertical distance from the track to the wire is typically 20 feet.

Councilmember Robertson asked how Sound Transit would mitigate noise impacts at the East Main Station. Mr. Ilgenfritz explained that the station is designed into the hillside to mitigate noise and visual impacts. Sound Transit uses different bell volumes for day and evening hours. He noted the importance of bells for providing safety at the station.

In further response to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Billen said the crossover is located south of the station. He noted that Sound Transit learned from the Central Link system how to better design crossovers in order to mitigate noise. Ms. Robertson questioned whether the B2M option will better mitigate exterior noise levels for residents. Mr. Billen said Sound Transit believes there are opportunities to mitigate noise without having to resort to residential sound insulation which, he acknowledged, does not provide a benefit when someone is in his or her backyard.

Councilmember Robertson said there has been no public outreach on the modified design. Mr. Ilgenfritz noted the constraints of the project schedule, and the Sound Transit Board's interest in selecting a preferred alternative on July 28 as planned. The Board's intent is to identify an alternative and to establish a term sheet with the City that sets a timeframe for finalizing the Interlocal Agreement and for finalizing the alignment decision later this year.

Councilmember Robertson commented that she would appreciate more time to work through the details, and she would like the Sound Transit Board to defer its decision until the fall.

Councilmember Balducci said she would like to keep moving forward toward a cooperative alignment decision.

At 8:04 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC  
City Clerk

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