

THE NORTHWEST SEAPORT ALLIANCE
MEMORANDUM

MANAGING MEMBERS
STAFF BRIEFING

Item No. 8A
Date of Meeting April 5, 2022

DATE: March 20, 2022

TO: Managing Members

FROM: John Wolfe, CEO

Sponsor: Lindsay Wolpa, Strategic Projects Senior Manager

Project Managers: Deirdre Wilson, Senior Planning Manager
Geri Poor, Regional Transportation Senior Manager, Port of Seattle

SUBJECT: Sound Transit 3:

- West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Briefing -- Duwamish Crossing
- Tacoma Dome Link Extension status update

A. BRIEFING REQUESTED

Sound Transit's Cathal Ridge, Project Director for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) will provide an overview of the WSBLE Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The WSBLE will deliver light rail connections to residential and job centers, including a proposed new downtown Light Rail Tunnel, connecting the two extensions. The presentation will focus on the Duwamish Crossing alternative alignments with their potential impacts to adjacent Port and NWSA-licensed properties, other maritime businesses, and other environmental impacts – Sound Transit will be visiting a later Port of Seattle Commission meeting to detail the Ballard extension. The study will benefit the regional transportation system, but has potential to impact both Port of Seattle and North Harbor NWSA-managed properties and operations. Managing Members will learn more about the project and have the opportunity to ask questions.

While at a different stage in its project timeline, Sound Transit will also provide an update on the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) project status.

B. SYNOPSIS

In early 2018, Sound Transit launched its extensive stakeholder process for the ST3 WSBLE project. Using “representative” alignments presented during the 2016 voter-approved ballot measure, Sound Transit sought consensus around a “preferred” alignment for the project before launching the project’s environmental review. The nexus is significant between Port of Seattle and Northwest Seaport Alliance operations and the project’s alignments.

With respect to TDLE, there are no direct impacts to Port of Tacoma (POT) and NWSA facilities. Unlike WSBLE, none of the guideway or stations are close to or on POT or NWSA property. The biggest impacts will likely occur during guideway construction across the Port of Tacoma Road/I-5 interchange, and to a lesser extent in the vicinity of 54th and the East Tacoma station at Portland Avenue. This is mostly due to construction of the pilings that will

hold up the guideway at these locations. We do not expect any significant long-term traffic impacts once construction is complete, although access to the freeway system via Portland Avenue may be a little bit slower and less reliable during the morning commute. Staff has raised these construction concerns with Sound Transit staff and is still waiting for feedback.

In 2019, Sound Transit embarked on an environmental process for WSBLE. Prior to which, in April 2018, the Managing Members received an overview presentation and provided comments regarding Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Extensions. Port of Seattle and Northwest Seaport Alliance submitted scoping comments to Sound Transit on April 2, 2019, which can be viewed as a separate attachment.

On July 2, 2020, the Managing Members and Port of Seattle Commission jointly approved a Partnering Agreement with Sound Transit for the project's planning and environmental review phase.

In January 2022, Sound Transit published their WSBLE DEIS for a 90-day comment period, closing April 28, 2022. At this meeting, Sound Transit's overview of the WSBLE DEIS will provide the managing members the necessary background of this significant Seattle area infrastructure project and show that NWSA and the Port of Seattle must remain closely engaged with project development as the environmental review, design and construction efforts move forward.

Through construction and subsequent operations, as outlined in the 2019 scoping comments, this project has the potential of impacting many Port of Seattle and NWSA-managed facilities:

- Terminal 5
- Terminal 18
- Terminal 25 (east side of East Waterway, north of Spokane St)
- Terminals 30 (north of T-25)
- Terminals 102, 103 and 104 (south of Spokane St)
- Old Tsubota Steel site (near Magnolia Bridge)
- Interbay/Magnolia cruise and fishing terminals (Terminals 90 and 91)
- Fishermen's Terminal

These extensions could significantly improve transportation in our region; however, given the route of the current representative alignment, there could be significant negative impacts to the region's maritime and industrial sectors if key issues are not appropriately addressed.

C. BACKGROUND

Sound Transit's mission is to plan, build and operate mass transit service throughout central Puget Sound. The initial phase of the regional mass transit system, called Sound Move, was approved by voters in 1996. The second phase, Sound Transit 2 (ST2), was approved in 2008. Under these plans, the regional light rail system will more than double in length from just over 20 miles today to over 50 miles by 2023. Service is also increasing on the 83-mile Sounder commuter rail line from Everett to Lakewood, and ST Express buses continue to serve major highways in the region.

central Puget Sound. On November 8, 2016, voters of the Central Puget Sound region approved the ST3 ballot measure. With this plan, the light rail system will more than double again to 116 miles with over 80 stations. Light rail will expand north to Everett, south to Tacoma, east to downtown Redmond, south Kirkland, and Issaquah and west to Ballard and West Seattle, building 62 new miles of light rail. Sound Transit 3 will also invest in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in two corridors: connecting Lynnwood to Burien via I-405 and SR 518; and on SR 522 between Bothell and Shoreline with service extending to Woodinville and connecting to Link light rail. Finally, the plan will expand Sounder commuter rail, including an extension at Tillicum to serve Joint Base Lewis-McChord and DuPont.

The ballot measure included a “representative project alignment,” essentially acting as a baseline and budget for further development of the link extensions. The “representative” project for the West Seattle Link Extension builds light rail from West Seattle's Alaska Junction neighborhood to downtown Seattle primarily on an elevated guideway with a new rail-only fixed span crossing of the Duwamish River. The West Seattle Link Extension will connect to existing Link service, continuing north to Lynnwood and Everett. The “representative” projects for the Ballard Link Extension and downtown Seattle Light Rail Tunnel build light rail from Ballard's Market Street area through downtown Seattle with both tunneled and elevated alignments and a rail-only movable bridge over Salmon Bay. These connect to Link service, continuing south to Tacoma.

In general, the West Seattle Link Extension (WSLE) would travel south from S Lander St toward S Spokane St on an elevated guideway. Near S Spokane St, it would turn west on an elevated guideway either on the north or south side of the West Seattle Bridge, where it would cross the Duwamish Waterway on a light-rail-only, high-level fixed bridge structure. On the west side of the Duwamish Waterway, the guideway would remain mostly elevated to the west side of the Delridge valley.

Sound Transit launched an “alternatives development” process including broad stakeholder involvement in early 2018 with the goal of building consensus around a “preferred project alignment” for the WSLE in advance of starting the EIS. That process included the formation of an Elected Leadership Group (ELG), interagency staff group (IAG) and a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). Alongside ten other elected officials, former Commissioner Stephanie Bowman represented Port of Seattle and NWSA interests on the ELG. Port and NWSA staff was represented on the IAG and closely monitored the SAG and other Sound Transit outreach efforts.

In 2019, the ST Board identified alternatives for review in the EIS, considering recommendations from these groups. They included a preferred alternative for the segment known as the Duwamish Crossing on the south side of S Spokane St:

- South Crossing Alternative (“DUW-1a,” the preferred project alignment)
- South Edge Crossing Alignment Option (“DUW-1b”)
- North Crossing Alternative (“DUW-2”)

The Duwamish Segment includes the area between S Forest St in the SODO neighborhood and the intersection of SW Charlestown St and Delridge Way SW in the North Delridge neighborhood. This segment does not include a station but does include a connection to the existing Operations and Maintenance Facility Central.

In August 2021, the Board adopted a Realignment Plan for projects not yet in construction. The COVID pandemic and related changes in economic forecasts had caused the Sound

Transit Board to recognize and affordability gap due to steep rises in real estate and construction costs in the region. After 17 months of discussion and public engagement, the Board extended completion dates for the West Seattle Extension to 2032 and for the Ballard Extension to 2037 to Smith Cove, and a target of 2037 to Ballard (depending on improved funding) but budgeted by 2039.

D. CURRENT STATUS

As previously acknowledged, The Sound Transit Board published the DEIS which evaluates potential impacts and benefits of the alternatives on the natural and built environments and transportation system and identifies potential mitigation measures. It is available for review and public comment from January 28 to April 28, 2022. NWSA and Port of Seattle staff are reviewing the document and will provide detailed comments to be summarized by an executives' cover letter.

After completion of the public comment period on April 28, the Board will identify the preferred alternatives for evaluation in the Final EIS (FEIS). The Board is not bound by its 2019 identification of a DEIS preferred alternative in the various segments and could shift its decision. After completion of the FEIS, anticipated in 2023, and issuance of the Record of Decision by the Federal Transit Administration, the Board will make a final decision on the project to be built based on the alternatives evaluated in the EIS.

E. PRIOR MANAGING MEMBERS REVIEW

On July 2, 2020, the Managing Members and Port of Seattle Commission approved a Partnering Agreement with Sound Transit for the WSBLE planning and environmental review phase.

On April 3, 2018, the Managing Members received an overview of and provided comments regarding Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions.

F. ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

1. Port of Seattle and Northwest Seaport Alliance Scoping Comments, submitted to Sound Transit on April 2, 2019
2. Sound Transit Slide Presentation