



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Tim Parham, Chair

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, August 09, 2018

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, Eileen Canola, Sandra Fried, Grace Kim, Ellen Lohe, Rick Mohler, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Kelly Rider, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble

Commissioners Absent: David Goldberg, Patti Wilma

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

Guests: David Hancock

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Tim Parham called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

ACTION: Commissioner Sandra Fried moved to approve the July 26, 2018 meeting minutes. Commissioner Michael Austin seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed. Commissioners Ellen Lohe, Marj Press, Julio Sanchez, and Lauren Squires abstained.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming community events. She introduced Connie Combs, the Planning Commission's new Policy Analyst. She also recognized Commissioner Ellen Lohe for completing her one-year tenure on the Commission through the Get Engaged program. Commissioner Lohe thanked her fellow Commissioners for the opportunity and stated that she was grateful to have learned from the experience.

Working Session: Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Level 2 Alternatives

Executive Director Murdock introduced the purpose of the working session: to familiarize the Commissioners with the Level 2 alternatives under consideration in advance of Sound Transit's next

briefing at the September 13 Planning Commission meeting. She also encouraged Commissioners to identify any questions for Sound Transit and to begin formulating recommendations that will be sent to the Seattle members of the Sound Transit Elected Leadership Group.

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission Staff, provided an overview of the following Level 2 alternatives and stations:

- Chinatown/International District
- SODO/Stadium
- Alaska Junction/Avalon/Delridge
- Interbay/Ballard

A summary of the Commissioners' comments for each of these is below.

Chinatown/International District (C/ID)

- Commissioners who attended the recent C/ID station charrette hosted by Sound Transit provided a summary. They noted the charrette was attended by several City departments, King County Metro, and several neighborhood non-profit organizations, but not many community residents.
- Commissioners stated that charrette attendees demonstrated support for a 4th Avenue station location alternative.
- Commissioners stated that a cut-and-cover construction method for a station on 5th Avenue would have significant impacts that could cause disruption to local businesses and the whole neighborhood. If a construction staging area is located in close proximity to the station area, local businesses may be displaced, while others may experience access issues.
- Commissioners noted that Union Station could be activated to become an important multimodal transportation hub (the "Grand Central Station of Seattle").
- Commissioners commented that development of a new station in the C/ID is an opportunity to make the area around the new station more pedestrian-friendly.
- Commissioners stated that Sound Transit's proposal to move the 5th Avenue station location further to the north would lose the opportunity for a seamless transition between the existing and new stations as well as other modes of transit.
- Commissioners stated that 5th Avenue is an important feeder route for trolley buses heading south to the main base.
- Commissioners noted that a 4th Avenue station alternative would allow transit riders connections to other modes including Sounder and Amtrak trains at King Street Station. This alternative could also improve the 4th Avenue and 2nd Avenue Extension triangle, which is currently not pedestrian-friendly. Commissioners stated that if the 4th Avenue viaduct needs to be replaced, it could be moved up in the funding queue to prioritize the rebuild to coincide with a new C/ID transit station.
- Commissioners stated that if a 5th Avenue station is constructed and the 4th Avenue viaduct is replaced later, the C/ID would experience two separate and significant disruptions due to construction. Commissioners stated that partnerships between agencies will be critical for the success of this project, particularly at this station.

- Commissioners noted that station options at this location constructed via a deep bore tunnel would require elevators for station access. A lack of escalators raises safety concerns.
- Commissioners recognized that the City and Sound Transit are partnering on a Racial Equity Toolkit. One aspect of this toolkit is to determine which stakeholders are included and which are not. Commissioners stated that local businesses do not appear to be included.
- Commissioners asked what the City and Sound Transit are doing to proactively address land use and zoning around the stations. Lessons learned from previous Sound Transit projects could avoid leftover vacant lots after the construction is completed. Executive Director Murdock stated that the City will begin station area discussions after the specific station locations are selected.
- Commissioners noted that the C/ID station could be the most expensive station to improve access and multimodal connections. Commissioners recognized the potential impacts to small businesses and noted that Sound Transit established a community development fund for affected businesses in 2000, 9 years before the first light rail line opened. Commissioners asked if Sound Transit will create a similar fund for local business impacts in the C/ID.

SODO

- Commissioners noted that one of the proposed alternatives does not include a new Stadium station and noted that perhaps both lines do not need to stop at Stadium.
- Commissioners stated that they would like more information on which regional bus routes would be displaced from the E-3 busway and questioned whether the busway would still be necessary over time as increasing rail service becomes available.
- Commissioners recognized that the existing SODO and Stadium stations have low ridership and stated that they would like to know more about the potential for new development and employment in SODO that would justify additional stations in this area.

West Seattle

- Commissioners stated that 3-D modeling of the West Seattle station and alignment alternatives is essential to understanding the potential impacts and benefits of each.
- Commissioners noted that the Delridge station presents potential accessibility challenges to people with disabilities. The Pigeon Ridge (purple) alternative appears to be preferred, as its alignment in relation to local topography is most accessible.
- Commissioners expressed concern about the qualitative impact of high-level bridges (e.g. people looking down from above). They stated that high station platforms are not accessible to all.
- Commissioners stated that there appeared to be strong support for the Pigeon Ridge alternative at the West Seattle neighborhood forum. Community members had concerns with the scale and local impacts of the proposed elevated alignments in the Alaska Junction.
- Commissioners noted that Sound Transit appears to have paid greater attention to community input in this segment than others.

Ballard/Interbay

- Commissioners discussed the pros and cons of a fixed bridge, movable bridge, and tunnel crossing of Salmon Bay. Commissioners discussed the various alternatives in Interbay, including at-grade or

elevated alignments on the east or west side of the BNSF railroad tracks. They also discussed the potential for mixing and matching components of the various alternatives.

- Commissioners noted that a station at Dravus could be integrated into a Ballard tunnel alignment and expressed a preference for a north/south orientation at the Ballard station.
- Commissioners stated that a Ballard station on or in immediate vicinity of 15th Avenue NW would best allow connections to the Rapid Ride D Line.
- Commissioners asked whether industrial stakeholders have been sufficiently involved in discussions of the various alternatives.
- Commissioners noted that an Interbay station could lead to a new urban village on either side of the Dravus Street bridge, including the lower east slope of Magnolia. They stated that Sound Transit should consider the potential for transit-oriented development in the vicinity of this station.
- Commissioners recognized the risk of sea level rise around the proposed Smith Cove station and stated that any development in the Armory area will also need to take that into consideration.
- Commissioners questioned who is intended to be served by the Smith Cove station.
- Commissioners stated that the Salmon Bay crossing warrants a visionary process to serve the high-density neighborhood in Ballard. A transit/bike/pedestrian bridge like Tilikum Crossing in Portland is a potential comparable crossing.
- Commissioners noted that Old Ballard has narrow streets that would make it difficult to site a station near 17th Avenue NW.
- Commissioners stated that cost information and visualizations are essential to making informed decisions on these alternatives.

Public Comment

David Hancock, a resident of West Seattle, stated that he has been following the ST3 process through the West Seattle Transportation Coalition. He has been hearing that a tunnel option is preferred. He is interested in pursuing a career in planning and would like to get engaged more with these issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.