

January 26, 2015

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

East Link Project Update

STAFF CONTACT:

Dave Berg, Director, 452-6468

Nancy LaCombe, Regional Transportation Project Manager, 452-4382

Transportation Department

Chris Salomone, Director, 452-6191

Planning and Community Development Department

Mike Brennan, Director, 452-4113

Development Services Department

Kate Berens, Deputy City Manager, 452-4616

City Manager's Office

Monica Buck, Assistant City Attorney, 452-4082

City Attorney's Office

POLICY ISSUES:

The general policy guidance below informs the City's work on this final design phase of the East Link Project.

Comprehensive Plan Policies:

The Comprehensive Plan contains a body of adopted policy, which emerged from the Light Rail Best Practices work, to frame the City's role in light rail project development, including advancing the City's land use and transportation objectives and minimizing neighborhood and environmental impacts.

MOU with Sound Transit:

The City and Sound Transit entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in November 2011 that defines City contributions to a downtown light rail tunnel. The MOU also provides the basis for a Collaborative Design Process (CDP) that was further defined and agreed to in January 2012. The CDP provides the mechanism for the City and Sound Transit to jointly advance the design of the East Link Project through the 60% design phase.

Light Rail Overlay District:

In addition to collaborating with Sound Transit within the framework of the MOU, the City is the permitting agency for East Link within Bellevue. The Council adopted Land Use Code (LUC) Part 20.25M defining development standards and design guidelines, which shape staff's feedback on design issues. The LUC provisions also establish the permitting process for East Link utilizing the Light Rail Permitting Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC).

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

Action
 Discussion
 Information

City and Sound Transit staff will present an update on the East Link project, with the main focus of the meeting to provide information and have a discussion about project mitigation.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The East Link project is approaching completion of final design within Bellevue. Many aspects of the project affect the City in both the short term (during construction) and long term (operational impacts). While an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents these impacts, and a Record of Decision (ROD) was issued by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) in November 2011, there are a wide array of agencies that oversee the actual enforcement of mitigation. The ROD describes the project, identifies the alternatives considered and the basis for the decision, and itemizes mitigation commitments.

Staff from Sound Transit and the City will provide information on what is mitigated and who regulates it during the January 26 Study Session presentation. Sound Transit staff will present a review of what mitigation is being proposed for the project, including an overlay using the animation tools presented previously to the Council and the public at open houses. For this presentation, the animation will run at a slow speed to highlight proposed mitigation along the light rail alignment.

City staff will provide information on the City's role, both in permitting and project oversight. Council set several policy directives with the selection of the alignment through Bellevue:

- The collaborative design process, in which the City and Sound Transit staff were to work together during the design. The joint goals were to reduce costs, deliver a quality project to Bellevue and the region, on schedule and in compliance with applicable codes and regulations. This process has not always been an easy task for either agency – sometimes facing differing fundamental agency perspectives.
- The Light Rail Overlay District was established in a Land Use Code amendment. This code amendment was put in place to create requirements and standards for the rail alignment and stations to provide certainty for the City, Sound Transit and the public. This code amendment establishes a comprehensive and consolidated permit process for a Regional Light Rail Transit System, while acknowledging the unique characteristic of not only the lineal aspects of the light rail system, but also the numerous land use districts and neighborhoods it passes through.

In addition to discussing how staff has applied the above directives to the project, City staff will provide more specific information regarding issues of greatest concern to the community. These include construction disruptions, traffic impacts, noise impacts during construction and operation, neighborhood impacts and business interruptions, along with a few others. None of these mitigation measures are in their “final state”; however, staff will provide what information is available at this time, and discuss the next steps in the process.