

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

East Link Light Rail Project Update

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DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Update on East Link light rail construction project including current and upcoming activities in Bellevue, project mitigation and status of community outreach.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**Major construction activities**

Sound Transit's East Link light rail is a 14-mile extension of its system which brings high capacity transit to East King County. In Bellevue, 5.5 miles of track and six of the ten stations are being built. East Link construction began in earnest in spring 2017 and involved utility work requiring roadway closures, structure demolition and vegetation removal. Since the last update to Council in December 2017, much progress has been achieved.

Overall, East Link is at approximately 44 percent completion. Some major project milestones occurring this year within Bellevue City limits include extensive installation of columns and girders, tunnel break-through at the north portal signaling the completion of excavation, and wetland mitigation activities.

In the coming year, light rail stations, the Operation and Maintenance Facility-East (OMF-East) and the South Bellevue Station garage will become visible as structures take their forms.

Heavy civil construction is expected to end in mid-2021, the installation of electrical and communications systems is anticipated to be complete in early 2022 and operational testing will finish by mid-2023 when East Link will be in service.

Project mitigation

Mitigation for the construction and operation of East Link light rail was addressed through the planning and environmental processes associated with the project. Construction and operation mitigation is addressed in Design and Mitigation Permits issued for South Bellevue, Central Bellevue, Spring District/120th Station, and BelRed. Examples of construction mitigation measures include temporary and permanent sound walls, noise and vibration monitoring, traffic control, wetland mitigation and tree and vegetation preservation (Attachment A: East Link Light Rail Project Mitigation Map).

Community relations

City staff support Sound Transit's outreach efforts including on-site meetings and briefings with individuals and groups, forwarding construction updates via City communications tools, and responding to inquiries and concerns.

Concerns in the past year have typically been associated with:

- Construction noise: Level (e.g. decibel), type (e.g. pounding), timing (e.g. late in night; early in morning), and duration.
- Traffic impacts: Short-term and long-term lane, road and intersection closures that impact access to homes, businesses and services, including the traffic mitigation pilot on 108th Avenue Southeast/Southeast 16th Street.
 - Following demonstrated success with discouraging evening commuter traffic from using neighborhood streets, the pilot turn restrictions at 108th Avenue Southeast and Southeast 16th Street were extended to the completion of heavy civil construction along Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue Southeast. Upon making modifications to the turn restrictions in January 2018, community feedback has been minimal. The effectiveness of the turn restrictions will continue to be monitored while they remain in place, enforcement will continue and the community will be informed of potential modifications.
- Environmental protection: Lake Bellevue water quality, Winters House preservation, and Mercer Slough protection.

The City continues implementing strategies in the Access Bellevue Communications Plan, including hosting meetings with business representatives and distributing City-wide mailers regarding East Link and other major transportation-related projects. A second edition of an Access Bellevue mailer was sent to homes and businesses in January.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

The East Link light rail project, including its design and construction, is supported by the policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan and associated light rail policy documents (e.g. Light Rail Best Practices Report). The City of Bellevue and Sound Transit committed to project coordination and collaboration, cost savings, permitting, project certainty, mitigation, property conveyance and business, neighborhood relations and other issues as captured in the 2015 Amended and Restated East Link Memorandum of Understanding. Council's 2018-2020 Vision Priorities calls for the continued oversight of East Link construction and to effectively mitigate its impacts to neighborhoods, traffic and business.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. East Link Light Rail Project Mitigation Map

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A