

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

Update from Sound Transit staff on the draft Sound Transit Phase 3 (ST3) System Plan.

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POLICY ISSUES:

How can ST3 best serve the future transportation needs of Bellevue and the Eastside?

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

- ☐ Action
- ☒ Discussion
- ☒ Information

The purpose of tonight's briefing:

- Sound Transit staff will present the draft Sound Transit 3 (ST3) System Plan, which is out for public comment until April 29.
- No Council action is required tonight. The presentation is an opportunity for Council to ask questions of Sound Transit staff and provide direction for a draft Bellevue comment letter in response to the draft plan.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Sound Transit is in the final stages of completing the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) System Plan that—if approved by voters—outlines the expansion of High Capacity Transit (HCT) in the Puget Sound Region for the next 25 years. Council has been actively involved in providing comments to Sound Transit during the ST3 planning process, communicating that a successful plan will build a transit system that connects Eastside cities and addresses the needs of the Eastside in a comprehensive fashion to serve the substantial expected population and employment growth in East King County.

Council was briefed on the candidate projects under consideration for the draft plan at the December 14 and January 11 Study Sessions (Attachment 1). In response to Sound Transit's request for feedback on the candidate project scopes, Council provided comments to the Sound Transit Board on January 21 (Attachment 2) and also participated in a joint Eastside cities comment letter on the same topic (Attachment 3). Additionally, Council heard a presentation from Sound Transit staff about its plans for balancing the potential projects in the ST3 System Plan with funds to pay for them at the February 8 Extended Study Session (Attachment 4).

Eastside cities are projected to be home to nearly 700,000 regional residents and more than 550,000 jobs by 2040. It is critical that ST3 build a reliable and equitable system that addresses

the needs of this growing part of the region. Bellevue's priorities acknowledge and emphasize the many interests and goals shared among Eastside cities, and the desire for the ST3 System Plan to recognize that HCT connections between Eastside cities, are as critical to the overall regional network as cross-lake connections.

Draft ST3 System Plan

On March 24, Sound Transit released a draft ST3 plan that outlines transit projects to be opened incrementally between 2019 and 2041. The plan includes more than 25 regional projects, the following of which directly affect the Eastside as well as other parts of the region (listed chronologically by projected opening):

- Parking improvements in Kenmore and Bothell; at Kingsgate in Kirkland; and at a new transit center in South Renton, opening 2019-2024;
- I-405 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): Lynnwood to Burien, opening 2024;
- SR 522 BRT: UW Bothell to 145th Light Rail Station in Shoreline, opening 2024
- Completion of East Link into downtown Redmond, opening 2028;
- A second light rail line on the Eastside, connecting downtown Bellevue to Issaquah, opening 2041; and,
- Approximately 600,000 annual ST Express hours to continue providing current service levels offered today as interim express bus service in future HCT corridors.

In addition to the above projects, Sound Transit proposes completing environmental review of HCT from Bothell to Bellevue via Kirkland, and creating a "system access fund" to use for non-motorized facilities that connect with HCT stations throughout the region.

The draft ST3 plan is expected to cost a total of \$50 billion, \$27 billion of which will be generated by sales, car tab and property taxes authorized for use by the Legislature in 2015. The remaining funds will be generated through bonds, federal grants, existing taxes, fares and other sources. Sound Transit estimates that under collection of the full authorized revenues the estimated cost to a typical adult living in the Sound Transit District would be approximately \$200 more annually.

I-405 Bus Rapid Transit

In its communications to the Sound Transit Board on ST3, Council has emphasized the importance of building true BRT—defined as a system that operates primarily in its own right of way or at the very least in the Express Toll Lanes (ETL) serving in-line stops—in the I-405 corridor as a top priority. Council has communicated that for the I-405 BRT project to meet the needs of the growing Eastside travelling public, the scope must include:

- In-line station at Canyon Park with a connection to the pedestrian overcrossing of I-405;
- Expanded parking garage at Canyon Park;
- In-line station in Kirkland at NE 85th Street;
- Extending NE 6th Street to 120th Avenue NE in Bellevue;
- In-line station at 112th Avenue SE with a pedestrian bridge connection to the park-and-ride;
- Expansion of the 112th Avenue SE Park-and-Ride;
- In-line station at North 8th Street in Renton;
- Direct access to the Tukwila Sounder Station;
- At least one additional in-line station south of I-90; and,
- Non-motorized access improvements and other service improvements paired with related capital improvements (signals, signage, lighting).

As described in the I-405 BRT draft project sheet (Attachment 5), the project scope is only slightly better than current Regional Express (REX) Route 535 bus service in the segment north of Kirkland. From Kirkland to Renton, BRT will operate in the ETLs, but with very limited stops. The project sheet outlines the following BRT project assumptions:

- BRT would operate in general purpose lanes on I-5 (between the Lynnwood Transit Center and I-405);
- BRT would operate in general purpose lanes on I-405 between I-5 and Brickyard (using shoulder bus lanes in southbound direction in two segments);
- Leaving Brickyard, BRT would transition from general purpose lanes to I-405 ETLs, continuing to Totem Lake Freeway Station;
- BRT would operate in I-405 ETLs between Totem Lake and South Renton, accessing the Bellevue Transit Center from the NE 6th Street HOV direct access ramp;
- BRT would operate in I-405 and SR 518 general purpose lanes between South Renton and the Tukwila International Boulevard station.

The plan calls for the addition of one new station in the I-405 corridor: an in-line station at NE 85th Street in Kirkland. To improve speed and reliability, Sound Transit has pledged to operate the BRT buses on the shoulder of southbound I-405 for approximately one mile between Canyon Park park-and-ride to the Bothell UW campus, and one mile between SR 522 and Brickyard park-and-ride in a new pilot program for shoulder running buses. There is no shoulder available in the northbound direction to provide shoulder running buses.

Public Comment Period

Sound Transit is taking public comments on the draft ST3 System Plan through April 29, and Council again has an opportunity to submit comments for the Board's consideration. There will be an Eastside ST3 public meeting at the Old Redmond School House on April 27 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The Sound Transit Board will adopt a Final ST3 System Plan and associated financial policy in June, which could be placed on the November 8 ballot for a public vote.

NEXT STEPS:

Sound Transit will continue to move forward with ST3 planning through June. Council will receive monthly updates as the plan progresses on the following schedule:

Sound Transit 3/Council Involvement Timeline	
April	
<i>April 25, Bellevue City Council Meeting:</i>	Council finalizes comment letter to the Sound Transit Board on the draft ST3 System Plan.
May	
<i>May 24, Bellevue City Council Meeting:</i>	Council will receive a written update on ST3 as part of the regional issues packet.
June	
<i>June 23, Sound Transit Board Meeting:</i>	Sound Transit Board adopts final ST3 System Plan.
<i>Summer 2016</i>	
Council may choose to provide comment on the final ST3 System Plan in advance of a potential November 2016 public vote.	
November	
Potential public vote on ST3 funding package	

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – January 11 Bellevue City Council Agenda Memo

Attachment 3 – City of Bellevue ST3 Candidate Projects Comment Letter

Attachment 3 – Eastside Cities Joint ST3 Candidate Projects Comment Letter

Attachment 4 – February 8 Bellevue City Council Agenda Memo

Attachment 5—I-405 Bus Rapid Transit Project Detail Sheet