

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 16, 2011
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Davidson, Deputy Mayor Lee, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Robertson, and Wallace

ABSENT: Councilmember Degginger

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m., with Mayor Davidson presiding. There was no Executive Session.

2. Study Session

- (a) Report on the Interim Analysis (Tipping Point) for the East Link Light Rail B7-C9T to NE 2nd Street Tunnel Portal (B7-Revised) Alternative

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the East Link Light Rail B7-Revised alternative, which is being studied by an outside consultant.

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman introduced the ARUP North America consultants: John Eddy, Project Manager, and Richard Prust, Deputy Project Manager. Mr. Sparrman briefly reviewed the three phases of the B7-Revised alternative analysis. Phase 1, Concept Report, including five-percent conceptual engineering, has been completed. If the Council wishes to have the consultant conduct further study, Phase 2 is an environmental analysis (Estimated cost, \$450,000), and Phase 3 is 15-percent conceptual engineering (Estimated cost, \$2.5 million).

Mayor Davidson recalled that Sound Transit's East Link Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was originally expected to be released in May/June.

Councilmember Balducci said that the last estimate she heard for the publication of the FEIS was July. She recalled that the Bellevue City Council asked Sound Transit to delay its release of the FEIS in order to allow the City's consultant work to be completed.

Mr. Sparrman described the B7-Revised alignment. He noted that the purpose of the consultant's work was to enable an apples-to-apples comparison of the proposed B7-Revised alternative and Sound Transit's B7 alternative.

Mayor Davidson restated that the Interim Analysis Report compares the proposed B7-Revised/C9T alternative (Using a NE 2nd Street tunnel portal) with Sound Transit's original B7/C9T alignment studied in its 2008 Draft EIS. Councilmember Chelminiak recalled that the current C9T (Downtown Tunnel) option was not studied in the 2008 report, but was developed later through the City's work with Sound Transit.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Sparrman said the consultant has completed five-percent engineering work for the B7-Revised alternative, which is comparable to the five-percent engineering work completed by Sound Transit for the original B7 option. Alternative B2M was at the 15-percent engineering level by Sound Transit when the City hired ARUP to conduct further study, and today the B2M is at approximately 30-percent engineering. Mr. Sparrman said this makes it difficult to compare the two B7 options with the B2M option.

Councilmember Wallace observed that an analysis is needed to compare the B7-Revised with the B2M. He noted the need for an updated cost estimate for the C9T alternative as well.

Mr. Sparrman noted that staff is using existing information from the 2008 DEIS to compare to the current B7-Revised alternative as much as possible. He observed that there would not be a big difference in ridership numbers as the analysis moves from five-percent engineering to 15-percent and 30-percent engineering. The primary differences between options are reflected in the cost information and in environmental mitigation.

Councilmember Balducci said that, during individual Councilmember briefings, she received a document comparing cost and ridership information for the original B7, B7-Revised, and the B2M. Responding to Ms. Balducci, Mr. Sparrman said the data for option B2M was taken from the DEIS and the Supplemental DEIS completed by Sound Transit. Mr. Sparrman confirmed that the five-percent engineering level of the B2M in the Sound Transit DEIS is comparable to the engineering level for the B7-Revised in the ARUP report.

Deputy Mayor Lee recalled that one of the reasons for the consultant's work was a recognition that the B7 alignment was not adequately studied by Sound Transit. However, the B2M engineering work has now advanced beyond the level of engineering analysis for the B7 alternatives. Mr. Sparrman confirmed that the consultant would complete 15-percent conceptual engineering for the B7-Revised during Phase 3 of the proposed process, if directed to do so by the Council.

Mr. Eddy reviewed the consultant process schedule and key milestones. He explained that the Interim Analysis Report provides highlights of the technical memoranda to ensure there are no fatal flaws or significant hurdles for the alternatives being studied. Mr. Eddy noted the process for identifying B7 alternatives and working through the constraints, station alternatives and alignment alternatives with staff.

Mr. Eddy described the B7-Revised alternative, which travels along I-90 over the Mercer Slough and then follows I-405 toward Downtown Bellevue. He described details of the I-90 Mercer Slough crossing, including challenging environmental conditions and concerns under review by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Eddy said WSDOT is studying the movements of I-90 in the Mercer Slough, which will be completed in approximately one year.

Continuing, Mr. Eddy described the B7-Revised alignment through the BNSF rail corridor, and commented on options related to shared light rail/freight usage during different time periods, compliance with the rail banking agreement, additional future costs to allow freight to share the tracks, and construction costs. He described the route along I-405 and into the Downtown via a tunnel portal at NE 2nd Street. Considerations for this portion of the route include Sturtevant Creek, configuration of the East Main Station, taking of the Red Lion and Sheraton Hotels, and the cut and cover tunnel. Mr. Eddy briefly described the A2 Station and Park and Ride facilities.

Councilmember Robertson noted that the A2 Park and Ride has 50 more parking stalls than Sound Transit's planned expansion of the existing South Bellevue Park and Ride. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Prust confirmed that the A2 Station/Park and Ride design provides better traffic operations on Bellevue Way than the planned expansion of the existing facility. He described the difference in traffic signals for the two options. He confirmed that the A2 design would preserve access to the boat launch ramp from both north and south.

Councilmember Chelminiak observed that the extra traffic signal will slow traffic down in that area. Mr. Sparrman said the B2M alternative expands the existing South Bellevue Park and Ride and would likely add a traffic signal.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak about impacts to bus service, Mr. Prust said buses would experience an additional two to three minutes in travel time to get into and out of the A2 Park and Ride. Mr. Prust said Sound Transit has indicated that this represents approximately \$750,000 to \$1 million in additional operating costs per year, due to the need to add buses to maintain desirable service frequencies on affected routes. Metro bus service would be similarly impacted. Councilmember Chelminiak observed that the need for additional bus service related to the A2 Station design would potentially reduce bus service levels in other areas.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Sparrman said that additional analysis is needed to determine whether the expanded South Bellevue Park and Ride alternative could be implemented without an additional traffic signal.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Sparrman said that the A2 Station would be useable if Sound Transit Phase 3 extends light rail farther east along I-90 in the future.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Prust said the projection of 1,450 parking stalls for the A2 Park and Ride is based on the amount of traffic anticipated for the facility.

Councilmember Wallace encouraged comparing station/park and ride costs using the same number of parking stalls (1,400 or 1,450) for the two alternatives (i.e., A2 versus expanding the existing Park and Ride).

Continuing the presentation, Mr. Eddy described the stakeholder outreach process, which has involved Sound Transit, WSDOT, and King County Metro, as well as City staff and Bellevue citizens. He presented a list of technical memoranda prepared to date addressing different aspects of the study including A2 station concept and cost estimate, light rail ridership, right-of-way impacts, noise impacts, environmental considerations, and the BNSF rail corridor.

Referring to the ridership estimates, Councilmember Wallace observed that ARUP's estimates for the East Main Station are lower than Sound Transit's ridership estimates. Mr. Prust explained that the A2 Station/Park and Ride (B7-Revised) draws some of the riders who will use the East Main Station under the original B7 alternative. It is essentially a redistribution of the ridership.

Responding to Mr. Wallace, Mr. Prust explained that, in order to achieve an apples-to-apples comparison of ridership, it was decided that ARUP would provide the information for Sound Transit to do the modeling of the data, using the same model used in Sound Transit's analysis of the B7-C9T. Mr. Prust confirmed that the City did not conduct its own ridership study.

Responding to Mr. Wallace, he confirmed that Sound Transit used its own model to analyze ridership. However, ARUP utilized the BKR model to analyze traffic impacts.

Referring to the list of technical memoranda, Mayor Davidson observed that the noise impact assessment does not appear to recognize that noise impacts for the condominiums on the B7 route were already mitigated when they were built through a conditional use permit. Mr. Prust said that ARUP's standard noise analysis to date assumes noise mitigation where there are impacts.

Deputy Mayor Lee asked whether the consultant had looked at the implications of not having an East Main Station. Mr. Prust said they have looked at that at a relatively high level. There would be a reduction in construction costs, as well as the potential for an alignment that would reduce impacts for the Sheraton Hotel property. Eliminating the East Main Station would result in the loss of 1,000 of the projected riders, and the remaining 1,500 riders would primarily use the Bellevue Transit Center Station.

Deputy Mayor Lee questioned the cost savings of eliminating the East Main Station. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Prust said travel times are incorporated into the ridership model. Mr. Lee said he would like to compare travel times with and without the East Main Station.

Councilmember Chelminiak noted that one way to save money and increase ridership is to move the SE 8th Street Station to SE 2nd Street, which would be across the street from the Red Lion site. Zoning on the hotel property allows transit-oriented development/redevelopment.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Chelminiak said moving the station to SE 2nd Street would reduce the impacts to Surrey Downs Park as well.

Councilmember Wallace asked whether the consultants studied retaining the current South Bellevue Park and Ride and adding the A2 Station. Mr. Eddy said that the A2 Station provides sufficient parking capacity based on the modeling.

Mr. Eddy noted that ARUP added noise receptors in its analysis. Responding to Ms. Robertson, he explained that ARUP chose to evaluate additional properties to ensure that noise impacts are fully studied.

Councilmember Wallace observed that the diagram on traffic impacts reflects a great deal of mitigation, which is included in the base cost of the A2 Station/Park and Ride. He recalled that Sound Transit did not have a mitigation plan for the South Bellevue Park and Ride in the DEIS analysis. He wondered whether Sound Transit's cost estimates include traffic mitigation costs.

Mr. Sparrman said that mitigation measures will be fully addressed during design review. He noted that the costs associated with the second driveway that would be added to the Park and Ride are included in Sound Transit's estimates. Many, but not all, of the mitigation expenses are included in Sound Transit's estimates.

Councilmember Wallace said it would be helpful to understand what is included within the base construction costs. He recalled that the early DEIS contained high-level cost estimates, including contingency funds. The ARUP analysis has taken a thorough look at mitigation measures and costs, and added contingency funds as well. Mr. Wallace said he is concerned that this overstates the cost estimate for B7-Revised, because mitigation costs are not reflected in Sound Transit's original cost estimates. Referring to the roadway diagram for the A2 Station/Park and Ride, Mr. Wallace questioned whether the same design would be needed for the South Bellevue Park and Ride option.

Mr. Sparrman said that none of the roadway infrastructure depicted by ARUP for the A2 Station would be needed to support the expansion of the South Bellevue Park and Ride. In further response to Mr. Wallace, Mr. Sparrman said that Sound Transit's analysis to date indicates that the two full signaled intersections can be designed to mitigate traffic impacts associated with the Park and Ride expansion. Mr. Prust noted that the A2 Station's proximity to I-90 triggers the need for certain design elements.

Mayor Davidson questioned whether pillars are needed to support the expanded South Bellevue Park and Ride facility. Mr. Sparrman recalled that he asked WSDOT staff about this issue when they presented information to the Council. Their response was that, in general, the current Park and Ride foundation is adequate. There is one area in the southeast quadrant in which special geo-technical mitigation measures would be needed.

Councilmember Robertson said it would be helpful for the public to understand how the A2 Station/Park and Ride compares with the expanded South Bellevue Park and Ride. She requested

a comparison of the amount of pavement in both options. She observed that the A2 Station improves traffic, and that the analysis reflects minor or no cut-through traffic impacts. Mr. Prust confirmed that ARUP's analysis indicates very little cut-through traffic through Enatai neighborhoods.

Continuing, Mr. Eddy compared the environmental impacts of the B7-Revised alternative with the original B7-C9T option. He described increased ecosystem, water resources, and visual impacts related to the A2 Station, but noted reduced construction impacts to the Mercer Slough. Removing the 118th Station and lowering the East Main Station into a cut reduces visual impacts.

Mayor Davidson expressed concern about Sturtevant Creek impacts to the fish habitat. Mr. Eddy clarified that, at this point in the study, the consultants have completed a qualitative assessment. If the Council chooses to move forward with further analysis, the ecological study becomes a quantitative assessment and provides more specific information.

Mr. Eddy reviewed right-of-way property impacts comparing the B7-R to B7-C9T.

Ms. Robertson questioned the net impact if the South Bellevue Park and Ride was eventually returned to the Mercer Slough Park. Mr. Sparrman said staff will provide the number of acres of the Park and Ride to the Council.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Eddy said the ROW costs were developed by providing information on the impacted parcels to Sound Transit, which in return provided the acquisition costs to ARUP. Sound Transit staff reviewed ARUP's mappings of properties and takings, and applied their methodology to that data. ARUP did not directly conduct the cost analysis. Responding to Mr. Wallace, Mr. Eddy confirmed that Sound Transit did not want to provide its 2007 parcel data to ARUP.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Eddy said the estimates do not capture the potential for selling some ROW back upon completion of the project. However, ARUP has noted this as a possible future consideration. Mr. Eddy said there are no residual values applied to the properties.

Responding to Mr. Wallace, Mr. Eddy said that Sound Transit priced the value of the rail corridor using so-called "over the fence" pricing, which is basing the value on the values of the properties next door to the corridor.

Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Eddy said he will provide information on Sound Transit's recent easement transaction for another part of the corridor, and its implications for the B7 route.

Mr. Eddy compared the project cost estimates for the B7-Revised and Sound Transit's B7-C9T, noting that the analysis reflects 2007 dollars. ARUP's cost estimate extends from I-90 to the south end of the Bellevue Transit Center Station.

Councilmember Chelminiak noted that he has been asked by a citizen whether it would be possible, instead of using the NE 2nd Street tunnel portal, to make the turn with the B7-Revised into a tunnel portal at Main Street. Mr. Prust said that ARUP would need to look at that to determine whether the alignment could turn at location.

Deputy Mayor Lee questioned how ARUP was able to put the B7-Revised cost estimate in 2007 dollars. Mr. Eddy said ARUP used historical costing data and Sound Transit's figures for all of the unit costs.

Councilmember Robertson commented that the Sound Transit Supplemental DEIS document shows the connection from B7 to the Main Street portal, so that has already been studied. She said it would be helpful for ARUP to evaluate that option as well. She said her understanding is that a curved station would greatly reduce the costs of that station and the takings. However, Sound Transit prefers a straight station.

Mr. Prust stated that traveling behind the Sheraton to the portal site would still result in an impact on the site, but it would provide some flexibility.

Councilmember Robertson thanked the consultants for identifying opportunities in Section 5.2 of the report, because the cost estimates do not consider those opportunities. If all of them were implemented, the savings would be \$126 million. Ms. Robertson said that the cost of the B2M/C9T is \$1.27 billion, and the cost of the B7-Revised/C9T is \$1.41 billion. With the opportunity costs, the cost of the B7-Revised/C9T is reduced to \$1.284 billion.

Regarding the Main Street tunnel portal versus the NE 2nd Street portal, Councilmember Balducci commented that every element has tradeoffs. The Main Street portal results in a longer tunnel, which increases costs for Segment C.

Councilmember Chelminiak referred to the opportunities section of the report. He observed that the largest savings result from eliminating the Main Street station, which affects ridership. The use of mechanically stabilized retained fill saves \$5 million. He noted that Councilmember Robertson's calculations add \$50 million in residual redevelopment value. Mr. Chelminiak said that amount should also be added to the B2M alternative with the NE 2nd Street station, which decreases costs significantly and retains a station at that location. Mr. Chelminiak said he sits on the Eminent Domain Task Force of the Attorney General's Office. He observed that the residual value scenario potentially represents condemning private property solely for economic development reasons, which was the situation with the monorail in Seattle. Councilmember Chelminiak cautioned that some of the identified cost savings represent costs in other areas such as the loss of ridership.

Mayor Davidson stated that it is important to remember that this is a preliminary report addressing complex issues.

Councilmember Wallace commented on the issue of residual value, noting that Sound Transit did not consider this component in its 2007 estimates. However, there will be a redevelopment value

along the B7-Revised alignment. There will not be this redevelopment value with the B2M alignment. If the tunnel portal is placed on the Red Lion site, there is potential redevelopment value, depending on the tunnel design. Regarding the curved station concept, Mr. Wallace noted that the current plan shows a station through the Red Lion hotel, with a trench through the Sheraton site approximately 15 feet below ground before it enters the tunnel portal to go into the Downtown. Mr. Wallace stated his understanding that there is the possibility to go around the Sheraton with a curved station, but that Sound Transit is not open to that concept. He questioned whether there is a process for proposing a deviation to Sound Transit.

Mr. Prust said that Sound Transit's criteria is typical for new light rail construction. However, this issue could be negotiated with Sound Transit.

Councilmember Balducci observed that the ability to provide curved stations has been a challenge for other light rail systems. Responding to Ms. Balducci, Mr. Eddy said that straight stations are the standard for light rail stations. He said that the typical approach to transit system planning is to not challenge the project's criteria, due to the environmental process. To shave a foot off here or there becomes problematic in the early stage of a design, until the project reaches the final stage of design. The typical approach is to start with a straight station and plan around that. In further response, Mr. Eddy confirmed that the federal government will have final approval authority.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Lee, Mr. Eddy said that transit systems resist using curved stations, although some do exist. Mr. Lee suggested this can be achieved through good engineering. Mr. Eddy said that good engineering does not necessarily drive the criteria. The concept of curved stations has impacts related to passenger comfort, safety, and other operational issues as well. Mr. Lee suggested it would be worthwhile to take a look at other curved stations.

Continuing the presentation, Mr. Eddy described additional key findings related to the cost estimates. He reviewed risks and opportunities, and summarized the features of the B7-Revised and B7/C9T alignments including noise impacts, residential and business displacements, property acquisitions, and environmental impacts. Mr. Eddy revised the next steps, should the Council wish to move forward with continued analysis.

Mayor Davidson noted Councilmember Degginger's absence and said there would be no Council decision that night.

Councilmember Robertson reviewed what she would like to see happen before the next check-in with the Council. She believes there is a great deal of misunderstanding and/or lack of information in the community about the B7-Revised option. However, in going door to door and speaking with residents, Ms. Robertson observed that once they learn about the alignment, they supported it. She would like to see more information comparing Sound Transit's B2M option with the B7-Revised. She noted that this objective was discussed during previous Council meetings, although it was not an initial task for the consultants to date.

Ms. Robertson observed that there are lower park impacts with the B7-Revised than with the B2M, and fewer residential impacts. She wants more information on comparative traffic impacts for Bellevue Way, the stations, and 112th Avenue SE. She stated it is important to compare the alternatives to the best practices report adopted by the Council in 2008. A primary tenet of the report was to avoid neighborhood and traffic impacts.

Councilmember Balducci observed that the Council is not addressing that the B7-Revised alternative costs \$140 million more than the B2M alignment. This has been left out of the press releases and public materials as well. This does not include the \$300 million needed for the Downtown Tunnel, which the Council unanimously supports. She stated that, with this interim report, the Council has taken a \$300 million funding challenge and made it a \$440-450 million problem. She asked the City Manager whether the City has determined if it will be able to fund the term sheet contributions identified with Sound Transit for the tunnel.

Ms. Balducci said that while she appreciates that the consultants identified potential risks and cost saving opportunities, these are issues that require substantial analysis. WSDOT has not determined whether it will allow Sound Transit to build the A2 Station and B7-Revised alignment along the I-90 bridge, and it could be some time before that agency makes a decision.

Regarding neighborhood impacts, Ms. Balducci believes they have been mischaracterized. The B2M alignment does not involve any property takings if it utilizes the median or east side of 112th Avenue SE. However, business and residents along 112th Avenue NE have expressed support for an alignment along the west side of 112th Avenue NE, including the taking of condominiums. By contrast, potential impacts of the A2 Station to South Enatai are significant due to the large 400,000 square foot structure.

Mayor Davidson observed that there is not sufficient space to place the alignment along the middle of 112th Avenue SE. Ms. Balducci clarified that her comments were focused on residential takings. While takings were not originally identified in the B2M alternative, condominium residents have spoken in support of a west side alignment that would acquire their property.

Councilmember Wallace stated that it makes sense that 112th Avenue SE residents do not want a train directly in front of their homes, and would therefore opt to sell their properties. However, the fact remains that these 54 townhomes would be taken. Going back to February 2009, Mr. Wallace said the Council has been looking for a Segment B alternative that uses the rail corridor route while also producing more ridership than the original B7 route.

Mr. Wallace believes that the interim report reflects a strong solution, with ridership that is essentially the same as the B2M route. He is disappointed that the NE 2nd Street tunnel does not appear to be feasible, unless there is the potential for achieving a design deviation commitment from Sound Transit. Mr. Wallace said that the ARUP analysis represents a Segment B route to the Red Lion site that is cost competitive and ridership competitive to the B2M. Acknowledging that perhaps the consultants and/or staff need to do additional work to address questions raised tonight, he observed that now is the time to discuss the report with Sound Transit and to ask

them to embrace the Segment B option addressed in the ARUP report. Councilmember Wallace believes this is a good opportunity for the Council to unite with Sound Transit. He said the solution meets all of the Council's objectives related to ridership and impacts.

Councilmember Chelminiak questioned whether the B7 alignment will allow the future continuation of light rail to Issaquah. He observed that there is no room to tunnel, which leaves the only option as constructing a second bridge over the Mercer Slough. Mr. Sparrman confirmed this understanding.

Looking at the B7 route, Mr. Chelminiak said the light rail alignment would cross 112th Avenue at 153 feet in the air, which is equivalent to the height of the PACCAR building. He believes that the B7 route and A2 Station could not take light rail to Issaquah. Mr. Chelminiak thanked the consultants for the report. He noted that it demonstrates the need to serve the market at the South Bellevue Park and Ride.

At 8:03 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared a five-minute recess before reconvening for the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC
City Clerk

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