



CITY OF EVERETT

Planning

STAFF MEMO

TO: Everett Planning Commission
FROM: Yorik Stevens-Wajda, AICP, Planning Director
DATE: December 3, 2021
MEETING DATE: December 7, 2021
SUBJECT: Draft Scoping Letter to Sound Transit

Sound Transit's project to extend light rail service into Everett has advanced past initial screening into the *early scoping* phase.

Scoping is a process under which Sound Transit provides information and solicits feedback to help compare project alternatives and inform the decision-making process. The scoping outreach effort supports the overall planning, public involvement and state and federal environmental processes. Based on the input received, Sound Transit will refine the list of potential alternatives (rail alignments, station locations, and operations & maintenance facility location) and evaluate how well they meet the project's purpose and need.

At the planning commission's December 7 meeting, staff will update the commission on the progress of the light rail extension, present the city's draft scoping letter as an informational item, and answer any questions the commission may have.

For more information see Sound Transit's [Everett Link Extension Early Scoping Information Report](#) and the project website at everettlink.participate.online.



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December 9, 2021

Everett Link Extension Project
c/o Kathy Fendt
Sound Transit
401 S Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826

Dear Sound Transit staff, board, and Everett Link Light Rail extension partners, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments as part of the project's early scoping effort.

The extension of the regional light rail spine into the city, a development decades in the making and thoroughly supportive of the board's [core principles](#), will transform travel patterns countywide, generate new development opportunities, and better connect Everett to the region. VISION 2050 identifies Everett as a metropolitan city under its regional growth strategy, allocating 25% of Snohomish County's population growth and 49% of its employment growth through 2050. These targets represent a rate of growth for Everett significantly higher than recent experience. The design and timing of the light rail extension will be essential for both attracting and accommodating this growth.

We ask that Sound Transit staff, boards and committees, and partner agencies and jurisdictions consider the following comments as the project progresses.

OVERARCHING GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Open all four stations within Everett by 2037

The city's goal, and top priority, is to help Sound Transit identify sufficient funding to open all four stations within the current city limits by 2037. The apparent financial gap identified through the recent realignment process will make reaching the goal difficult because about \$600 million in new revenue must be secured just to meet the opening date listed in ST3, plus an additional several hundred million dollars to fund the provisional station (Sound Transit estimated the cost of the recently advanced 130th St Station at [\\$228 million](#)).

Consider and study provisional station alternatives

The city recognizes that Sound Transit and its local, regional, state, and federal partners may not be successful in securing the funding necessary to open all four stations in 2037 (or 2041, under the affordable scenario identified in [Resolution R2021-05](#)), and that a provisional station will need to be deferred until funding is identified. To ensure the best phasing plan for the light rail extension under each of various timing and sequencing scenarios, please study and formally consider the relative performance and impacts from deferring either of the two stations on Evergreen Way (SR-526 and Airport Rd).

Both stations will serve important concentrations of housing and commerce, and both will provide transfers to the Swift Blue Line and the thousands of residents and jobs along the Evergreen Way corridor. It's important to reiterate the city's support for opening both stations in 2037, but also to recognize the possibility that one will need to be deferred.



To prepare for such a scenario, the city is interested in learning more about whether the Airport Rd station could be included in the first set of stations to open, around 2037, with the costs of the SR-526 station deferred as a provisional station to the extent absolutely necessary and as for as short a period as possible.

Support for the SW Everett Manufacturing and Industrial Center as a key purpose of the project

The Southwest Everett Manufacturing and Industrial Center is a powerful economic engine for the city, region, and state, and includes the largest concentration of jobs in Snohomish County. Many of those jobs and firms support a robust aerospace cluster anchored by the Boeing Co. manufacturing complex and supported by a network of suppliers and support businesses that depend on proximity to the factory.

The city is concerned that the draft project purpose statement doesn't capture the importance of the manufacturing/industrial center and the need to minimize direct displacement of vulnerable or strategic businesses. The eighth bullet in the purpose statement ("Preserve and promote a healthy environment and economy by minimizing adverse impacts on the natural, built and social environments through sustainable and equitable practices.") is on the right track but could be worded more strongly.

Please consider adding support for the Southwest Everett Manufacturing and Industrial Center as a formal purpose of the project.

Design the project to maximize station area development potential

All the light rail stations in Everett will be transfer hubs, with people connecting between light rail and buses, carpools, sidewalks, ride-hails, bike lanes, vanpools, autonomous vehicles, and more. The varied needs of each connecting mode could result in large station footprints that would displace valuable real estate closest to the platforms themselves.

Please design stations to minimize the land area dedicated to transportation, while maintaining seamless transfers and a quality passenger experience.

Design the project to provide easy transfers to local transit; extend the Link Blue Line to Airport Road

Regional policy¹ calls for most of the region's growth to be accommodated around high-capacity transit station areas and centers. That translates to as many as 50,000 more people and 65,000 more jobs for Everett by 2050 within the downtown area and other transit station areas. Significant growth will locate within easy walking distance of light rail stations, but most of the city's development potential will be in areas that are a bus transfer away. Key to attracting and accommodating this growth will be seamless and efficient transfers.

To this end, Sound Transit should consider matching the light rail service pattern to fully meet the city's, and the county's, premier bus rapid transit corridor: Evergreen Way/SR-99/Swift Blue Line. Airport Rd, the only direct connection between Link and SR-99 north of Tukwila/International Blvd Station, will be a key transfer point to the Evergreen Way corridor in both directions. Thousands of homes are on Evergreen Way, hundreds of businesses operate on it, and significant growth in both is planned and forecast. Frequent service on the Swift Blue Line must be matched with frequent service on the Link Blue Line to make for efficient transfers and an expanded market for light rail riders.

¹ MPP-RGS-8 Attract 65% of the region's residential growth and 75% of the region's employment growth to the regional growth centers and high-capacity transit station areas to realize the multiple public benefits of compact growth around high-capacity transit investments. As jurisdictions plan for growth targets, focus development near high-capacity transit to achieve the regional goal.



Frequent service should be part of the project purpose

Please add “frequent” to the list of adjectives in the first bullet of the purpose statement. Service frequency will depend on funding levels for operations, travel patterns, and the light rail line’s role within the broader transportation system decades into the future. Decisions made in the planning and design phases will play an ongoing role in supporting frequency of service. Under all scenarios, frequency will be a crucial factor for how useful, and used, the light rail and public transportation systems will be.

Incorporate nonmotorized connections to stations

Please modify the seventh bullet of the purpose statement to *incorporate*, rather than *encourage*, convenient, safe, and equitable nonmotorized access to stations. Well designed and attractive sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes connecting each station to the surrounding community are not simply an amenity to encourage, they are a fundamental component of the system deserving of focused attention at all phases of the project.

Support for initial alternatives

City staff has participated in a process spanning most of 2021 with Sound Transit and partner jurisdictions and agencies, mostly under the umbrella of the Interagency Group. One of the most important tasks within this process was to develop a broad range of initial alternatives for alignment, station, and operations & maintenance facility locations, and to support a screening review of those alternatives.

The city understands the need to constrain the alternatives to generally align with the representative alignment and project financing that was approved by voters five years ago. The city supports the work done to date to develop alternatives to advance into Level 1 evaluation and refinement and looks forward to continued engagement with Sound Transit as the evaluation process continues and we work together towards the best preferred alternative possible.

Thank you again for providing this opportunity to comment as part of the early scoping process. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Yorik Stevens-Wajda, Everett Planning Director at (425) 257-8725 or [ystevens@everettwa.gov](mailto:y Stevens@everettwa.gov).

Sincerely,

Cassie Franklin, Mayor, City of Everett

Brenda Stonecipher, President, Everett City Council

