Ad Hoc BNSF Advisory Committee
BNSF Eastside Corridor Commuter Rail Feasibility Study
Agenda
November 19, 2008, 9 - 11 am

Location: Boardroom of the Puget Sound Regional Council, 1011 Western Avenue, between Spring and Madison Streets in downtown Seattle.

1. Introductions and Meeting Goals

2. Corridor Updates
   • Port of Seattle
     Purchase, Public Process, Shortline Operator
   • Sound Transit ST2
     Demonstration Project

3. Draft Phase II Feasibility Report
   • Review purpose of study
   • Ridership Estimates
   • Cost Estimates
   • Conclusions

4. Discussion by Advisory Committee Representatives

5. Next Steps
   • Final meeting on December 10th?
   • Remaining issues for Finalizing Reports
   • Presentation Process for Legislature

6. Public Comment

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jennifer Ryan at (206) 405-0542, jryan@psrc.org or Marina King at (206)-389-2878 or mking@psrc.org
Attendees

Jane Hague- King County Council; Richard Cole- City of Redmond; Steve Buri- City of Newcastle; Andrea Tull- Sound Transit; David Beal- Sound Transit; Allison Dobbins- Parsons Brinckerhoff; Peter Camp- Snohomish County; Dave Somers- Snohomish County; Grant Degginger- City of Bellevue; Robert Vogt- City of Woodinville; Julia Patterson- King County Council; Tom Hodgson- City of Kirkland; Lynn Schilaty- City of Snohomish; Rep. Liz Loomis- 44th Legislative District; Tom Jones- Cascadia; Don Persson- City of Renton; Peter Hahn- City of Renton; Deborah Chase- HDR Engineering; Tessa Gregor- Cascade Bicycle Club; Rick Dewitt- Mill Creek Citizen; Kathryn Leathers- House legislative staff; K. Simpson- Senate legislative staff; Paul Zimmer- Eastside Rail Now; Kim Becklund- City of Bellevue; Gary Greenberg- Eastside Trail Advocates; Geri Poor- Port of Seattle; Will Hall- Snohomish County Council; John Resha- King County Council; Josh Johnston- King County Council; Val Batey- Sound Transit; Robert Foxworthy- King County; Chuck Ayers- Cascade Bicycle Club; Sally Marks- King County DOT; Thomas Noyes- WSDOT; Doug Hodson- King County Executive’s Office; Jennifer Ryan, Charlie Howard, Marina King- PSRC

1. **Introductions and Meeting Goals**

Mike Merritt from the Port of Seattle provided a brief welcome.

2. **Planning Elements going on in Corridor**

**Jennifer Ryan, PSRC**, provided an introduction to the corridor including current activities by local agencies.

**David Beal, Sound Transit**, discussed the Legislature’s mandate through H.B. 3224, for the Sound Transit/PSRC Commuter Rail Feasibility Study. Rep. Liz Loomis, author of the bill, was present. The study will be in two phases: Phase I, completed, reviews all previous studies and reviews previous conclusions. Phase II will be a feasibility study to determine if commuter is feasible within the corridor.

Sound Transit’s consultants (Parsons Brinckerhoff) will complete the Phase II study. Impacts on local neighborhoods, and mitigations will be addressed through the study’s evaluation criteria.

Concerns expressed included: the 3 mile track gap in downtown Renton, which affects the feasibility of the whole project.

David Beal continued with the study schedule – two meetings of this committee will occur after the study draft is completed in Oct/Nov of this year. Sound Transit’s defeated ’07 ballot measure did include funding for a corridor study. Funding is again on the table for the ST 2 ballot measure to be voted on this November. It assumes some form of public/private partnership to complete the project. Public contributions are limited to recoverable capital elements. Sound Transit is looking for a partner with the financial capacity. A full environmental analysis and mitigation, as if this was a totally publicly funded project, will be completed.
A Draft Timeline for Corridor Acquisition was provided. The Port of Seattle will take ownership of the corridor in fall of '08.

The Mayor of Woodinville stated that a pedestrian/bike trail is a necessity in the right-of-way. The assumption by the Legislature and in the study is for dual usage.

3. Organization of Commuter Rail Feasibility Study
This advisory committee is composed of jurisdictions along the corridor. Although this is not a voting group, it is an opportunity to express concerns and help construct the evaluation criteria. The ETP’s technical group will also be reviewing the study.

Jennifer Ryan reviewed the draft study work plan, which was handed out and includes two more meetings of this committee in Oct/Nov to review study data and come to some conclusions and recommendations.

The need was expressed for information on the cost to run commuter rail and expected ridership numbers, i.e. cost/benefit analysis. There was also the question about how the study will gather all of the varied concerns of the affected jurisdictions. Representative Loomis requested that the effect on greenhouse gas emissions be included. Other concerns included safety issues due to grade crossings, noise and aesthetic considerations.


Andrea Tull, Sound Transit, provided a handout on performance measures to evaluate rail feasibility. Input from the committee was requested, in order to refine them. Connecting urban centers around the region with high capacity transit is a goal stated in the adopted Vision 2040 and is also endorsed by the Sound Transit Board. This was listed on the handout, under the heading “Connectivity and mobility,” stating that regional growth centers would be served directly. Grant Degginger, Mayor of Bellevue, was concerned about the term “directly” and it was agreed to omit it.

Julia Patterson, King County Council rep took exception with the comment that commuter rail wouldn’t affect greenhouse gas emissions. She suggested that cutting down on SOVs on I 405 would have an important effect on emissions.

6. Draft Phase I Report

A matrix was provided, summarizing studies done to date. Parsons Brinkerhoff, the consulting group who completed the report, explained the matrix.

7. Issues and Concerns of Advisory Committee Representatives

Woodinville: Issues included safety concerns regarding a high-speed train passing through residential neighborhoods. There was appreciation for the possible economic benefits for the central business district in Woodinville, although parking was a possible concern. There are limited funding sources for transportation, so it is important to choose and fund the modes that move the most people and are the most environmentally friendly.

Kirkland: This study coincides with Kirkland’s non-motorized transportation plan. There are some residential concerns but no concrete negative comments.

City of Snohomish: The city of Snohomish suggested that connecting the line to Everett would be important for the whole region. Cost of this project is a puzzle and all over the map at this time.

Renton: Renton’s concern is that the terminus is unclear. It needs to connect to Tukwila Sounder Station. There is citizen support for acquisition of right-of-way and there is concern about the last 3 miles, which will go through downtown Renton.
Redmond: In Redmond, residents don’t want this corridor plus the Sound Transit package – they see an either/or situation. This study hopefully will provide more data to help make that decision.

Newcastle: Newcastle residents are in favor of preserving right-of-way for commuter rail.

8. Public Comment

Rick Dewitt, Millcreek citizen – there are many different sections of the corridor, each with particular and unique issues. Add segment scenarios and evaluation of segment issues to the technical data.

Chuck Ayres, Cascade Bicycle Club – supports dual use, not trail only. The issue is sequencing – benefiting the most # of people the quickest. The original study was a complete corridor study and it finished with a recommendation for a trail for the short to mid-term due to the information gathered. He suggested a demonstration trail project on the corridor as soon as possible, perhaps outside of the legislative mandate and timetable.

Gary Greenberg, Eastside Trail Advocates. At-grade crossings in residential neighborhoods are a concern. He doesn't want the pro-rail movement to outweigh the examination of a trail-only option.

Tom Jones, Cascadia Institute. On October 1st, the American Public Transit Association will meet in San Diego. The Oceanside-Escondito corridor is open. It is a similar situation to ours. Siemens will be offering tours. See it in action. Local jurisdictions are adding ped/bike trails into the corridor, which was originally just for rail.

Matt Cohen, attorney in Seattle, served in the County Executive’s office during negotiations with BNSF for acquisition of the corridor. There are two gaps in the corridor – Wilberton tunnel, which is designated as a trail right now; and a 200 foot wide gap just south of the Snohomish river – negotiated by the railroad to protect the mainline corridor. There is no ability to run into the city of Snohomish and on in to Everett. The BNSF is not going to be open to a grade crossing of their line for a trail or a commuter rail line.

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m. All of the material in today’s meeting will be posted on the PSRC website. Copies are also available from PSRC or from David Beal at Sound Transit.