



TO: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
FROM: Kurtis D. Kingsolver, P.E., Public Works Director/City Engineer /*KDK*
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Request for Resolution – Approval of the Tacoma Link Expansion Route to Move Forward to Environmental Process - February 4, 2014
DATE: January 30, 2014

SUMMARY:

Sound Transit, Pierce Transit, and the City have been working together to identify one or more routes for the expansion of the Tacoma Link to move forward into the environmental review phase of the project. Sound Transit recently completed public outreach to gauge public opinion on the different potential route alignments. The results of this outreach, as presented at the Council Study Session on January 28, 2014, indicated the route with the most community support is the A1 (Stadium Way) and B1 (MLK) alignment, although there was also some support for the A2 (Broadway) and B1 (MLK) alignment. In addition, the outreach was clear the A3 alignment is not a viable option and should therefore be removed from any further analysis.

BACKGROUND:

Sound Transit began the Tacoma Link Expansion Alternatives Analysis in 2012 to evaluate alternative routes for expansion. Sound Transit briefed the Council on the Tacoma Link Alternatives Analysis at the January 22, February 26, April 16, and April 23, 2013 study sessions. Based on the information provided to the Council during these study sessions, Council approved Resolution No. 38664 supporting the North Downtown Central Corridor (to Hilltop via the Stadium District) as the preferred corridor for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project.

Subsequent to the selection of the North Downtown Central corridor, Sound Transit began studying and obtaining public input on potential route alignments within the North Downtown Central Corridor. Sound Transit conducted extensive public outreach from November 2013 through January 2014 to present information and gather feedback regarding specific route alignments. This outreach included but was not limited to: two public open houses, convening two stakeholder roundtable meetings, an online survey and comment opportunities that garnered more than 250 public comments, informational mailing to 11,000 addresses in and around the proposed corridor, listserv notifications, online and print ads in seven publications, distribution of 100 posters to Hilltop businesses and Stadium District multi-family residences, and 13 community briefings. Sound Transit and City staff briefed the Council on this phase of the project at the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee on November 13, 2013 and at the Study Sessions on December 10, 2013 and January 28, 2014.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternative to analyzing only the A1/B1 alignment during the environmental review phase is to also analyze the A2/B1 alignment. Analyzing the second alignment will increase the length of the environmental phase by up to six months and increase the cost of this phase by approximately \$900,000 in consultant costs. The additional time required to review two alignments may cause the City to miss grant opportunities which could extend the time required to obtain the City's funding match and delay the beginning of construction. The advantage of moving forward with more than one alignment into the environmental review phase is that additional analysis will be conducted with regards to topic areas such as transportation, land-use, economic impact, neighborhoods, noise, air quality, etc., all of which will be used to determine which alignment best complies with both NEPA and SEPA as well as an assessment of



impacts, benefits and potential mitigation. This information would then be used to select the preferred alignment.

RECOMMENDATION:

At study session on January 28, 2014, staff presented several alignment options to council and outlined the advantages and disadvantages of each as well as discussed whether or not it would be beneficial to move one alignment forward rather than two into the environmental review phase. Although no decisions were made, council was clear the A3 alignment should be removed as an option. In addition, there was strong support for the B1 (MLK) alignment over B2 (MLK/J Loop). Staff recommends removing the A3 alignment and selection of the B2 alignment. With regards to selecting either the A1 alignment (Stadium Way) or the A2 alignment (Broadway), no decision was made although there was more support for A1 over A2. To begin the environmental review process, staff recommends the council decide whether to move one alignment forward (A1/B1) or two alignments forward (A1/B1) or A2/B1).