



**TO:** T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
**FROM:** Kurtis D. Kingsolver, P.E., Public Works Director/City Engineer / *10/20*  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution – Recommend Tacoma Link Station Locations to  
Include in Environmental Review Process/Federal Transit  
Administration Small Starts Program – September 9, 2014  
**DATE:** September 3, 2014

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**SUMMARY:**

A resolution recommending that one alternative, consisting of seven new proposed stations, be included in the environmental review for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project and in the application submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts Program. FTA has advised that presenting one alternative in the Small Starts application will qualify the project for a Categorical Exclusion (CE). The CE will position the project more strongly for potential funding as early as mid-2015.

**STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:**

- Plan for and improve public infrastructure that meets the transportation needs of all Tacoma residents and visitors.
- Foster neighborhood, community, and economic development vitality and sustainability.

Sound Transit staff has been working closely with City staff and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to prepare an application for funding from the FTA Small Starts Program for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project. FTA requires environmental review of the project under the National Environmental Policy Act. Furthermore, for the Small Starts Program, the FTA determines the nature of review necessary. In late August 2014, FTA advised Sound Transit that the Tacoma Link Expansion Project could qualify for a Categorical Exclusion environmental process if the project contained only one alternative for the proposed location of stations. Based on feedback from the Sound Transit presentation in May 2014 to the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee, and feedback collected from public outreach, a single alternative for the location of stations can be identified for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project.

**BACKGROUND:**

On February 4, 2014, pursuant to Resolution No. 38837, the City Council recommended, and the Sound Transit Board approved, the A1/B1 (Stadium Way/MLK) alignment for Tacoma Link expansion to advance into preliminary design and environmental review. In March 2014, Sound Transit submitted a letter to the FTA declaring its intention to develop the identified alignment into a project eligible for funding from the Small Starts Program. In May 2014, the FTA approved development of the project and, on May 14, 2014, Sound Transit presented the next steps for project development to the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee.

The presentation to the IPS Committee included information on project development timeline, proposed station locations, next steps for community outreach and comment, and noted that the FTA would, at some point in the future, determine whether the environmental process would be a Categorical Exclusion (CE) or an Environmental Assessment (EA). The project development timeline showed that with a CE, the earliest an award from Small Starts could be anticipated would be mid-2015; with an EA, the earliest an award could be anticipated would be late 2015.



Six station locations were reviewed with the IPS Committee and circulated in public outreach efforts:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK)/S. 19<sup>th</sup> Street
- MLK/S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street
- MLK/6<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Stadium District
- Stadium Way/S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street
- Old City Hall (as an alternative to the existing Theater District Station)

A majority of the public comments received requested a seventh station be considered:

- MLK/Division Avenue

Forty-one percent of the public comments received preferred the option of maintaining the existing Theater District Station. Slightly fewer respondents, 37 percent, expressed preference for a new station at Old City Hall. Even among those who expressed a preference for a new station at Old City Hall, the majority of respondents supported the Stadium Way/S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street Station.

**ISSUE:**

Public responses show that there is no strong preference for eliminating any of the six proposed locations from environmental review and there is desire to examine a seventh station at Division Avenue. Per FTA direction, these seven stations may be carried forward in environmental review and the project would qualify for a CE.

At its meeting on May 14, 2014, the IPS Committee recommended that Sound Transit review the options of a route with and a route without the Stadium Way/S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street Station. Per the FTA direction received in August 2014, carrying forward two options such as this would prompt an EA.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

If more than one alternative is submitted for examination to the FTA Small Starts Program, an EA would be required to be completed. This option would delay any award, and the earliest potential award from Small Starts that could be anticipated is late 2015.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

A resolution recommending that one alternative, consisting of seven new proposed stations, be included in the environmental review for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project and in the application submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts Program. FTA has advised that presenting one alternative in the Small Starts application will qualify the project for a Categorical Exclusion (CE). The CE will position the project more strongly for potential funding as early as mid-2015.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Small Starts application is being submitted by Sound Transit to the FTA on September 10, 2014. The station locations must be identified for the application. The budget for the Tacoma Link Expansion Project has assumed that \$75 million of the funding for the project would come from the Small Starts Program. There is not an alternative funding source identified.