



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Brian Boudet, Planning Division Manager, Planning & Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning & Development Services
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Tacoma Dome Link Extension Scoping Comments – June 11, 2019
DATE: May 23, 2019

SUMMARY:

A resolution providing recommendations to Sound Transit on route alignment and station location alternatives and other significant issues to be evaluated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement process for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension Project.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Woodards

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

The resolution signifies the City of Tacoma’s active participation in Sound Transit’s Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) project by providing the City Council’s recommendations and relaying relevant feedback from citizens and the community, and therefore directly supports the following strategic policy priority:

- Encourage and promote an efficient and effective government, which is fiscally sustainable and guided by engaged residents.

BACKGROUND:

The TDLE project, a part of the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) high-capacity transit system expansion approved by voters in November 2016, includes two key elements: (1) the Central Link light rail expansion from Federal Way to the Tacoma Dome area; and (2) an operations and maintenance facility along the corridor. Sound Transit is seeking public comment on the scope of work for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the TDLE. As the City of Tacoma is one of the TDLE participating and affected agencies, it is critical that the City Council provide comments, concerns and recommendations to Sound Transit concerning route alignments, station areas and significant issues that should be evaluated in the EIS for the TDLE.

The City Council’s comments should address the following issues and topics: Alternatives ET-3A/B, TD-2, and TD-4 East 26th Street In-street; potential alternatives of Underground and Over-the-Sounder; pedestrian and multimodal connections; parking; Transit-Oriented Development; Freighthouse Square; visual impacts; financial impacts; future expansion of the TDLE to the Tacoma Mall area; as well as the City’s core values and guiding principles relating to equity, urban fabric, economic vibrancy, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and jurisdictional partnerships.

The City Council’s comments will be made based on the deliberations among Council Members, past Council actions relevant to the TDLE, and feedback from the community, as reflected on the following documents:

- Resolution No. 39981, adopted on April 10, 2018, executing the Partnership Agreement with Sound Transit on the TDLE;



- Resolution No. 40303, adopted on April 16, 2019, initiating the establishment of the TOD Advisory Group;
- The Planning Commission’s letter of comments to Sound Transit, dated April 17, 2019;
- The Transportation Commission’s letter of comments to Sound Transit, dated April 24, 2019;
- The Sustainable Tacoma Commission’s letter of comments to Sound Transit, dated April 25, 2019;
- The City Manager’s letter of comments to Sound Transit, dated May 1, 2019; and
- The Puyallup Tribe of Indians’ letter of comments to Sound Transit, dated May 1, 2019.

ISSUE:

The issue primarily pertains to route alignments, station areas and topics of interest that Sound Transit should evaluate in the EIS process for the TDLE project. The City Council has been actively engaged with the community and participated in the project, has indicated the desire to provide comments, and has reviewed a draft list of potential comments at the study session on May 21, 2019.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could reject or modify the resolution. However, the TDLE project is one of the most significant transportation investments in the Puget Sound region in recent years and for decades to come. Tacoma is one of four jurisdictions (along with Federal Way, Fife, and Puyallup Tribe) that are directly impacted by the project and two of the proposed four stations will be located in Tacoma. It is in the best interest of the City that the City Council provide comments at this critical juncture of the project. The Council’s comments will help inform Sound Transit’s decision and ensure that the outcomes of the project best accommodate the City’s goals and interests.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the resolution. Upon approval, the resolution will be forwarded to Sound Transit, in time for the Elected Leadership Group’s review on June 14, 2019, and Sound Transit Board’s consideration in July 2019.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no significant fiscal impact associated with the adoption of this resolution. However, as the TDLE project proceeds, there might be a potential cost increase associated with the City’s desire to develop different or additional alternatives, options or components of the project. The City recognizes the potential impact to the project budget and commits to collaborating with Sound Transit to exploring partnerships, grant opportunities and other funding strategies.