



City of
Bellevue

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November 6, 2012

Mr. Kent Hale
Senior Environmental Planner
Sound Transit
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

**RE: Bellevue City Council response to Sound Transit Link Operations and Maintenance
Satellite Facility**

Dear Mr. Hale:

I am writing on behalf of the Bellevue City Council to express our strong opposition to the siting of a Link Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Satellite Facility in Bellevue. I would like to reiterate and clarify the Council's concerns about the timing of this initiative as well as the potential location and impact of such a facility in the City's Bel-Red area. The City has consistently opposed this location for this type of facility.

The timing of the O&M study outlining potential sites in Bellevue comes as an unwelcome surprise to the City. We were assured by Sound Transit during ST2 package development in 2007-08 and development of East Link DEIS that a maintenance base was not needed for East Link or on the eastside. This message was reinforced by Sound Transit staff during the City Council's alignment deliberations following the release of the East Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Sound Transit's January 12, 2009 presentation to Council indicated that a base was not funded in ST2. During the same presentation, Sound Transit staff stated that they had looked at the Bel-Red corridor's existing industrial uses and acknowledged that the maintenance facility alternatives for the area were no longer consistent with the City's land use planning goals.

The City Council's February 2009 letter responding to the East Link DEIS also addressed the location of the O&M facility; *"We view maintenance base MF-5 in downtown Redmond as the most desirable location. The three maintenance bases evaluated in Segment D are not consistent with the land uses envisioned for the Bel-Red Corridor. Given that the maintenance base will not be operationally necessary until East Link is extended to downtown Redmond, there is no funding included in ST2 for the base, and MF-5 is consistent with the surrounding land uses in Redmond, we see no need for a maintenance base site to be selected in the Bel-Red area"*.

The Bel-Red Subarea Plan resulted from the City working intensively with the community for several years to develop a vision for the Bel-Red area that transforms the current light industrial and low-intensity commercial land uses to a mixed-use transit oriented community. The plan was developed in parallel with the East Link EIS and supports the investment in light rail infrastructure by emphasizing higher density development nodes around the light rail stations. A light rail maintenance facility at any of the proposed sites in Bellevue would clearly be incompatible with the adopted Bel-Red Subarea Plan and current zoning.

Locating an O&M facility in the Bel-Red area could diminish the capacity for employment and housing in a key TOD node which is contrary to the City's plans as well to Sound Transit's interests. Locating an O&M facility adjacent to parcels zoned for high density mixed-use development may make the parcels harder to develop.

We are also concerned that multiple potential O&M sites are identified in Bellevue, yet only one is identified adjacent to the North Link extension. North Link is the area where travel demands will be the greatest and the need for the facility is generated. According to recent studies, Sound Transit has concluded that travel demand will equate to roughly 50 percent of the capacity of the downtown Bellevue station in 2030 during peak periods. This is important because demand at this station is projected to be the highest of stations on the eastside and, as recently as April of this year, Sound Transit staff contemplated shorter three-car train platforms as a cost savings option. The system expansion requirements appear to be driven by demands on North Link and, therefore, the O&M facility should be located on the west side, rather than forcing it into an area where it would be incompatible with the community vision, adopted land use regulations, and transit oriented development.

Lastly, it is disappointing that this unwelcome surprise comes without warning so soon after the City and Sound Transit entered into the East Link Memorandum of Understanding. The City has devoted substantial effort and resources to the Collaborative Design Process and has enjoyed the spirit of transparency and partnership. The Council believes that this new approach is a success and serves as the model for our future interactions. This approach to the O&M effort violates this spirit of cooperation.

Section 2.1 of the MOU calls for the parties to act cooperatively and in good faith, and to communicate problems that arise with the performance of the terms of the MOU. A maintenance facility in Bellevue would create such a problem. Under the MOU definitions, the maintenance facility is part of the "Light Rail Transit Facility" but is not described as part of the "Project". The maintenance facility will need to be added to the Project definition and the entire MOU will need to be rethought and amended to reflect this material change. The timelines in the MOU will need to be adjusted to provide sufficient time for the City to conduct due diligence on the proposals and consider how the MOU will be modified.

The maintenance facility was not studied in the FEIS nor included in the FTA's ROD. The cumulative noise and environmental impacts of a maintenance facility in Bellevue would need to be studied in conjunction with the rest of the Project. Noise studies will need to be updated

to reflect the fact that light rail trains will be operated along the line between the hours of 1:00 am and 5:00 am.

The City Council expects that Sound Transit will consider our concerns seriously. We believe a deeper investigation of potential O&M sites in direct proximity to the North Link Extension is warranted. We request that the candidate sites in Bellevue be immediately dropped from further consideration based on Sound Transit's past commitments, inconsistency with the community vision, and incompatibility with adopted land use regulations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Conrad Lee", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Conrad Lee
Mayor

CC: Sound Transit Board of Directors
Bellevue City Council
Steve Sarkozy
Kate Berens
David Berg
Mike Brennan
Chris Salomone