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LIGHT RAIL TO EASTSIDE AND SOUND TRANSIT 2012 PLANS

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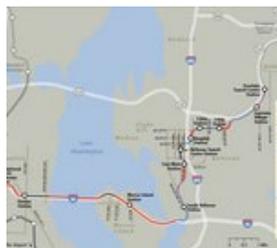


Sound Transit Link
Light Rail train

On October 27 the Sound Transit Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Bellevue that clears the way for entering into final design on an agreed-upon route for East Link through the City of Bellevue. I was one of the three Sound Transit Board negotiators that met with the Bellevue City Council to define the terms of the agreement. The Bellevue Council unanimously approved the MOU at its November 14 meeting.

The agreement includes the following terms:

- Bellevue agrees to the Sound Transit preferred alignment from I-90 to downtown, with some modifications on 112th.
- Sound Transit agrees to construct a cut-and-cover tunnel through downtown Bellevue, with Bellevue covering half of the additional cost (\$160 million). While the tunnel was not Sound Transit's original preference, it does increase both speed and ridership on East Link.
- Bellevue agrees to process all Sound Transit permits rapidly and to approve the necessary legislation, including the use of the City Right-of-Way at no cost to Sound Transit.



East Link alignment

In 2011, Sound Transit began tunneling for University Link, and the Board approved the Final EIS for East Link, among other major activities. In 2012, this agreement enables the agency to move to the next stage in East Link, part of a flurry of activities including:

- Finishing the University Link tunnels (now about one-third complete), and continue work on the stations and line, scheduled to open in 2016.
- Doing final design for North Link, from the UW to Northgate.
- Continuing work on the North Corridor environmental review (Northgate to Lynnwood).
- Selecting a design/build contractor for South Link, from the Airport to S. 200th Street.
- Developing final design for East Link.
- Beginning South Corridor planning (extension further south).
- Completing the Tacoma to Lakewood construction for Sounder.

The agency will also move 25 million passengers on Sounder, Link, and the Sound Transit Express buses – and is managing all of this despite a 25% drop in revenues due to the economic downturn. This is the first time the agency will have three separate light rail projects moving into construction. And Sound Transit is also funding the streetcar from Pioneer Square to the Capitol Hill station, which the City of Seattle plans to begin constructing in 2012 as well.

There is a long way to go to complete the full build out of the Sound Transit Ii (ST2) ballot measure, approved by the voters in 2008, and there is no schedule for when Sound Transit will return to the ballot for the next projects.

It is great to see so much happening to expand the regional High Capacity Transit system. A tremendous amount of the credit for this progress goes to former Mayor Greg Nickels, then Chair of the Sound Transit Board, who led the successful effort to put ST2 on the 2008 ballot when the Board was skeptical and uncertain as to whether this was a good idea. The results of his work will make a huge difference in our transit future.

Posted: November 17th, 2011 under [Transportation](#)

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