



**MEMO TO:** Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Rob Odle, Director, Planning and Community Development

**DATE:** June 6, 2017

**SUBJECT: Downtown Redmond Link Extension Project Refinements Letter to Sound Transit Board**

**I. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Authorize the City Council President to finalize the draft comment letter to the Sound Transit Board (Attachment A), consistent with Council direction provided at the June 6 Council meeting.

**II. DEPARTMENT CONTACTS**

Rob Odle, Director, Planning and Community Development	425-556-2417
Nina Rivkin, Chief Policy Advisor	425-556-2103
Colleen Kelly, Assistant Director for Community Planning	425-556-2423
Don Cairns, P.E., Transportation Planning and Engineering Manager	425-556-2834
Jeff Churchill, AICP, Transportation Strategic Advisor	425-556-2492

**III. DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND**

On June 22, 2017, the Sound Transit Board is scheduled to approve proposed refinements to the Downtown Redmond Link Extension concerning the station locations and vertical profile (at grade, elevated, etc.) of the guideway. The Board's action will focus the environmental review to be conducted over the remainder of the year. After completion of this environmental review, the Board will take action next year to update the "project to be built." This memo:

1. Summarizes the Council's discussion of potential refinements to the Downtown Redmond Link Extension,
2. Summarizes community input on potential refinements, and
3. Describes a draft comment letter to the Sound Transit Board that communicates the City Council's recommended refinements to the project.

**The Existing Project to be Built**

Sound Transit selected a "project to be built" for all of East Link – from Seattle to Downtown Redmond – in 2011, at the conclusion of several years of environmental review and alternatives analysis. The project is memorialized in the East Link *Record of Decision* (ROD) issued by the Federal Transit Administration. The extension from Overlake to

Downtown Redmond can proceed to design and construction, with a scheduled opening to Downtown in 2024, because the ROD included all of East Link from Seattle to Downtown Redmond.

The preferred alternative for the Downtown Redmond extension, known as E2 as described in the ROD, calls for an at-grade station in Southeast Redmond, a retained cut crossing of the SR 520 interchange, and an at-grade station in Downtown Redmond west of Leary Way (See Attachment B).

### **Council Recommendation for Downtown Redmond Segment**

The City Council considered changes to the station location and vertical profile of the station and guideway as part of the Downtown Transit Integration (TRAIN) Study, which was conducted between August 2016 and February 2017. Four station area concepts were developed and evaluated. After receiving community input, which strongly favored an elevated alignment and a station in the “east” location (i.e., in the vicinity of 164<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE and 166<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE), the Council recommended an elevated station in Downtown in the “east” location. Key considerations for both the community and City Council were maintaining multimodal mobility in Downtown and reducing potential conflicts between light rail vehicles and pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

More information about the TRAIN Study is available in the TRAIN Study report online at [www.redmond.gov/LightRailExtension](http://www.redmond.gov/LightRailExtension) and included as Attachment C.

### **Council Preliminary Preference for Southeast Redmond Segment**

The City Council considered both options of an at-grade or elevated station and guideway in the Southeast Redmond area during study sessions in April and May 2017. After reviewing a preliminary evaluation of at-grade and elevated alternatives, the Council concluded that the significant factors in making a recommendation were the ability to connect the East Lake Sammamish Trail to the Redmond Central Connector, and overall project affordability. The Council’s preliminary preference for the Southeast Redmond segment is for an at-grade station and guideway, consistent with the existing preferred alternative.

### **Community Input at May 17, 2017 Open House**

Sound Transit hosted an open house on May 17, 2017, on the extension to Southeast Redmond and Downtown Redmond to re-engage the community on this project at the beginning of design, and share and obtain input on potential project refinements such as station locations and where light rail would be at-grade or elevated. Community members asked questions and provided input on topics such as parking and bicycle facilities at the two stations, bus transit, Southeast Redmond congestion, construction impacts to trails, storage tracks, affordable housing, property acquisition for light rail, the East Lake Sammamish Trail extension through the SR 520 interchange, and transit-oriented development.

### **Draft Letter to Sound Transit Board**

Staff has drafted a letter to the Sound Transit Board expressing the Council’s recommended refinements to the project. The letter recommends an elevated station in the “east” location in Downtown, and maintaining the at-grade station in Southeast Redmond. In addition, the letter reiterates the City’s objectives for the Downtown and Southeast Redmond areas, and lists key design considerations for each station area based on prior community and Council input. The draft letter is included as Attachment A.

## **IV. PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS HELD**

Past Council discussion and action dates are provided in the table below.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action/Discussion</b>
<i>(past)</i>	5/4/16	Council letter supporting ST3 and identifying Southeast Redmond station area interests
	2/28/17	Council preference for elevated Downtown station in east location Council input on Southeast Redmond station area values
	4/11/17	Southeast Redmond station area background
	4/25/17	Southeast Redmond station area evaluation and trade-offs
	5/9/17	Southeast Redmond station concepts and preliminary Council preference for at-grade or elevated station
	5/17/17	Sound Transit open house for light rail extension to Downtown
<i>(tonight)</i>	6/6/17	Council letter to Sound Transit Board concerning refinements to the project extending light rail to Downtown

## **V. IMPACT**

### **A. Service/Delivery:**

The proposed Council recommendations support an elevated station at the “east” location in Downtown and an at-grade alignment in Southeast Redmond. An elevated station in the “east” location (vicinity of 164<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and 166<sup>th</sup> Ave NE) maintains Downtown mobility; reduces potential train conflicts with pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers; preserves the west end of the Redmond Central Connector; and has greater potential to catalyze transit-oriented development near the Downtown light rail station.

An at-grade alignment in Southeast Redmond enables a partnership to complete the “missing link” of the East Lake Sammamish Trail, and is affordable when paired with an elevated Downtown station. Both elevated and at-grade alignments in Southeast Redmond can accommodate major station elements in a manner that meets City objectives.

**B. Fiscal Note:**

Based on current cost estimates, the at-grade alignment for the Southeast Redmond station area saves between \$110 million and \$136 million. The elevated alignment for the Downtown Redmond station area costs an additional \$45 million. Based on this information it is not cost feasible to construct an elevated station in both Downtown and Southeast Redmond.

**VI. ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The City Council could choose not to send a letter concerning project refinements to the Sound Transit Board.

**VII. TIME CONSTRAINTS**

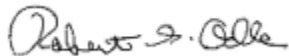
The Sound Transit Capital Committee is scheduled to make a recommendation on refinements to the project at its June 8, 2017, meeting. The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to act on proposed refinements to the project at its June 22, 2017, meeting. A letter from the Redmond City Council would be most effective if delivered before the Capital Committee's meeting on June 8.

**VIII. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A.** Draft Letter to Sound Transit Board for Downtown Redmond Link Extension Project Refinements

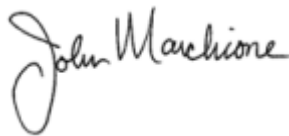
**Attachment B.** Map of 2011 Preferred Alternative

**Attachment C.** Downtown Transit Integration (TRAIN) Study Report



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**Robert G. Odle, Director of Planning and Community Development**



Approved for Agenda \_\_\_\_\_

**John Marchione, Mayor**