



West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) City of Seattle DEIS Review

Seattle City Council Transportation and Public Utilities Committee | April 19, 2022

Presentation Overview

1. BACKGROUND:

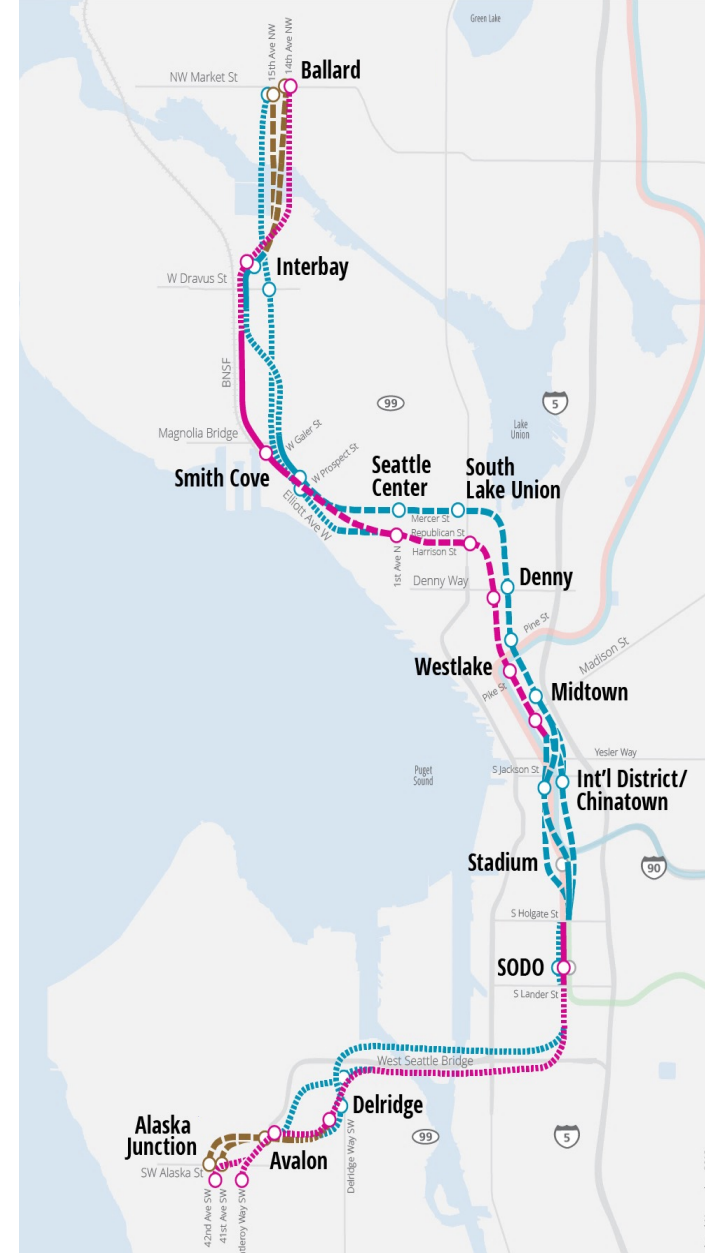
WSBLE Project and the City Team

2. CITY DRAFT EIS REVIEW:

Draft Findings

3. NEXT STEPS:

City position on Preferred Alternative



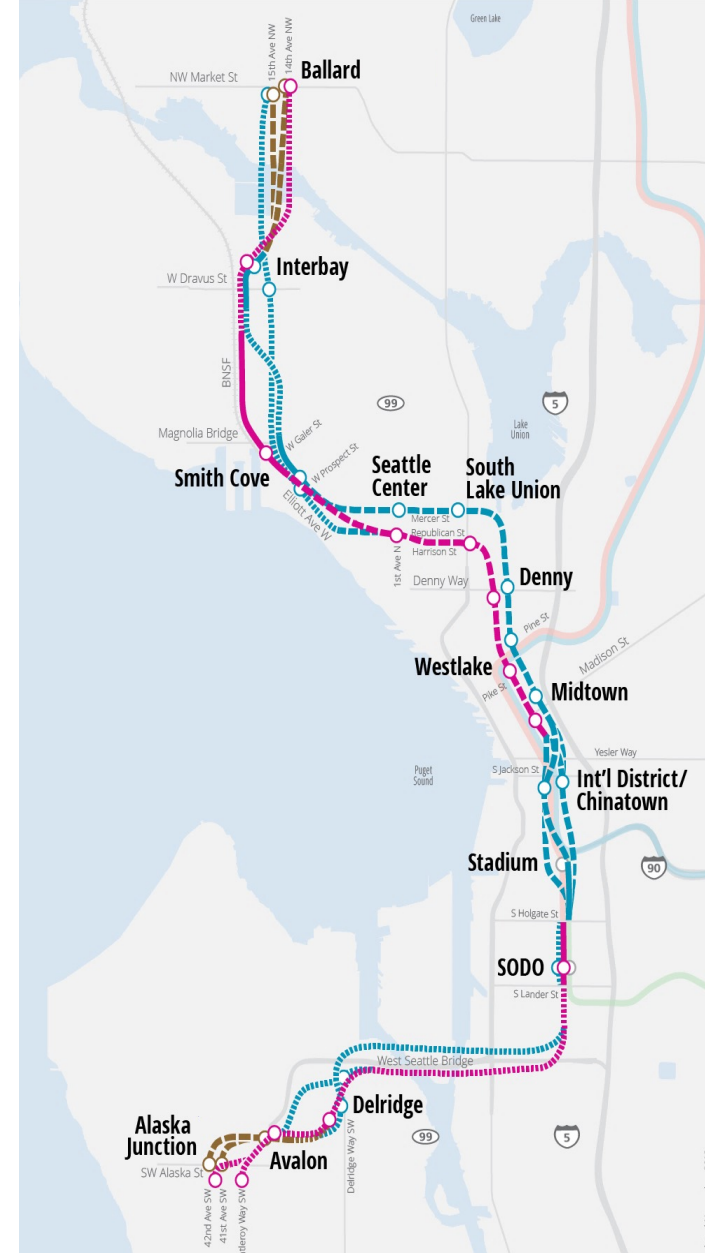
BACKGROUND

WSBLE Overview

At \$12+ Billion, West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) project is the **largest infrastructure project in City history**—with tremendous opportunity for transformation, but also potential for significant construction and related impacts to existing communities.

The project includes:

- 10+ miles of new light rail track
- 13+ new stations
- 2nd light rail-only downtown tunnel
- 2 water crossings



BACKGROUND

WSBLE Timeline



BACKGROUND

City Roles

The City has been a strong supporter of the WSBLE project from the outset – Seattleites voted overwhelmingly for ST3 and support the regional system.

The City has many roles in planning, permitting, and delivering WSBLE:

- **Governing roles** through Sound Transit Board membership (Mayor Bruce Harrell, Council President Debora Juarez)
- **Regulatory roles** defined by statute and code, including project permitting
- **Advocacy roles** for community issues to be fully addressed, advancing the City's Racial Equity Toolkit to ensure the new system not only avoids disparate impacts but creates benefit to all
- **Partnering roles** via our 2018 Partnering Agreement, with a focus on clear City leadership across departments, intensive staff coordination, and streamlined permitting



CITY DEIS REVIEW

WSBLE DEIS + City Partnership

The City is both a **reviewer** and **regulator**.

Our aim is to:

- Help advance the best project to meet community and City interests.
- Facilitate streamlined permitting and construction of the eventual project. **Critiquing the DEIS now is normal and necessary** to facilitate permitting and construction later.

The City is a **committed partner** to Sound Transit to support WSBLE and will work collaboratively to resolve outstanding DEIS issues in the coming months.

2018 Partnering Agreement

*The DEIS is a **critical early juncture** for the City to uphold our Partnering Agreement with Sound Transit "...to ensure that **environmental impacts and appropriate mitigation measures** are identified during the environmental review process... [and] ...to work together to ensure that there are **no surprises later** in project permitting..."*



CITY DEIS REVIEW

Community Engagement Overview

The City is partnering with Sound Transit on many engagement opportunities throughout the DEIS process with the goals to:

- Facilitate community access to the DEIS analysis and encourage comments
- Support City decisions that are centered in racial equity and co-created and truth-checked with community

City staff listen through a range of engagement opportunities, some with Sound Transit, but also City-led and community-led activities: briefings, workshops, one-on-ones, and through Community Liaisons.



DON Community Liaisons

CITY DEIS REVIEW

Summary of Engagement Activities

- **Community Advisory Groups.** City engages four segment-based committees, convened monthly by Sound Transit, streamed on YouTube, on station planning and DEIS analysis.
- **DON Community Liaison Cohort.** The cohort partners with Sound Transit to support transcreation of DEIS materials and engage business owners and community organizations, especially in RET-priority communities.
- **DEIS Briefings.** City attends and participates in DEIS briefings, with priority to underrepresented organizations.
- **Stakeholder Roundtables.** City shares draft DEIS comments at community convenings throughout the WSBLE corridor.



DON Community Liaisons

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Station-specific Engagement

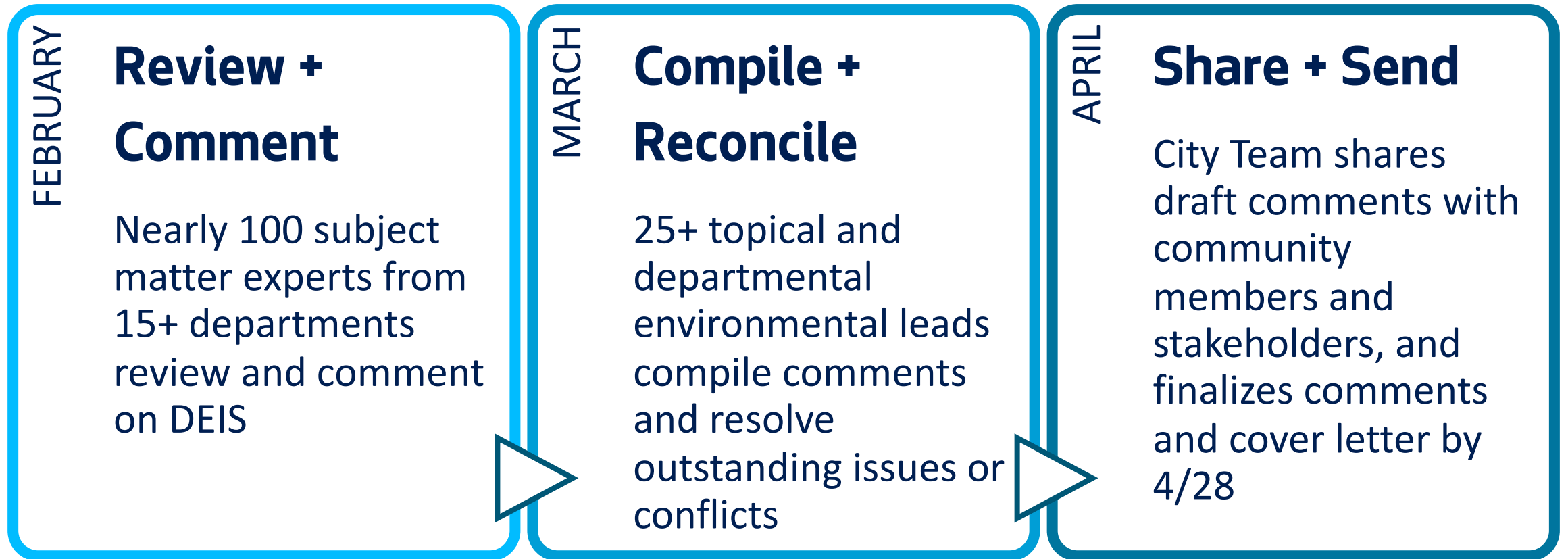
- **Seattle Center.** As the primary property owner at Seattle Center station, the City has helped convene resident organizations and community to discuss the project.
- **Chinatown-International District.** The City has co-convened workshops with Sound Transit and community members to understand project impacts and potential mitigation for this RET-priority community.
- **Delridge.** The City has focused on one-on-one briefings with Sound Transit, e-mail and video-based share-outs, and a long-term capacity-building approach, for the RET-priority community <math>< \frac{1}{2}</math> mile south from alternatives.



Seattle Center Charette

CITY DEIS REVIEW

City Staff DEIS Review Process



City Scope of WSBLE DEIS Review

Review for compliance and adequacy:

1. Does the DEIS demonstrate compliance with City Codes/Director's Rules?
2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?
3. Does the DEIS meaningfully compare alternatives?

Review for additional strategic questions for the City:

4. Does the DEIS adequately analyze impacts to BIPOC communities, propose mitigation, and further the joint Racial Equity Toolkit outcomes?
5. How does the DEIS information shape City position on alternatives?

CITY DEIS REVIEW

1. Does the DEIS demonstrate compliance with City Codes/Director's Rules?

Summary: More analysis is needed to ensure code compliance.

In many instances, references to the Seattle Municipal Code are inconsistently cited or not cited at all. Analysis in these sections should better indicate how the project will meet minimum code requirements necessary for permitting, as well as inform additional mitigation measures. Examples:

- Shoreline Master Program
- Environmentally Critical Areas
- Stormwater regulations
- Trees
- Local development regulations and zoned height limits



2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?

Summary: In many instances, more analysis is needed to fully assess and adequately mitigate the impacts.

The following slides highlight select areas, by segment, where the City would like to see additional analysis of impacts and development of adequate mitigation.

CITY DEIS REVIEW

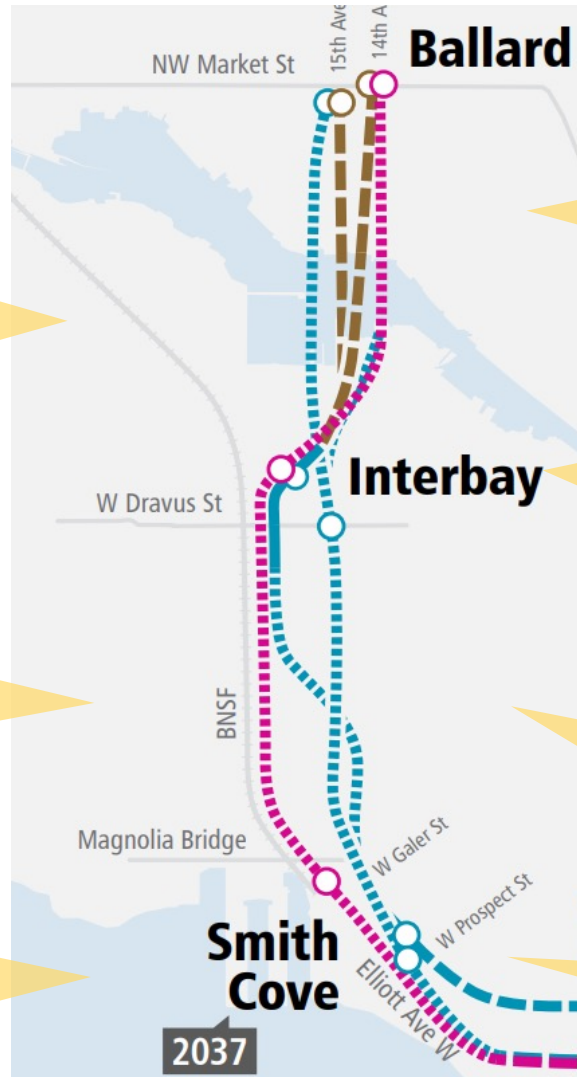
2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?

Examples from South Interbay and Interbay-Ballard Segments

Navigation/Tribal/maritime business impacts from elevated Ship Canal crossing

Construction and operational transportation impacts

Visual/aesthetic impacts related to elevated guideway on Elliott Way



Residential and business displacement throughout segments

Property acquisition impacts to future SCL substation in Interbay

Impacts to Fire Station 20 operations

Impacts to Kinnear Park

CITY DEIS REVIEW

2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?

Examples from Downtown Segment

Construction and operational impacts to Seattle Center campus and tenants

Impacts to regional facilities (I-5, SR 99)



Street closures in Downtown core, especially Westlake Ave

- Bus transit reroutes
- Diversion traffic
- Streetcar impacts
- I-5 ramps
- Garbage, recycling
- Emergency services

CITY DEIS REVIEW

2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?

Details for Seattle Center

Impacts to protected features and historic public assets in either alternative, particularly DT-1 Seattle Center.

Temporary and permanent noise and vibration impacts to sensitive venues, e.g. Seattle Rep, KEXP, SIFF, The Vera Project, Cornish Playhouse, and Climate Pledge Arena.



Displacement affecting resident organizations and the long-term performance of the Seattle Center campus

Impacts to historic buildings including the Northwest Rooms, International Plaza, and Cornish Playhouse

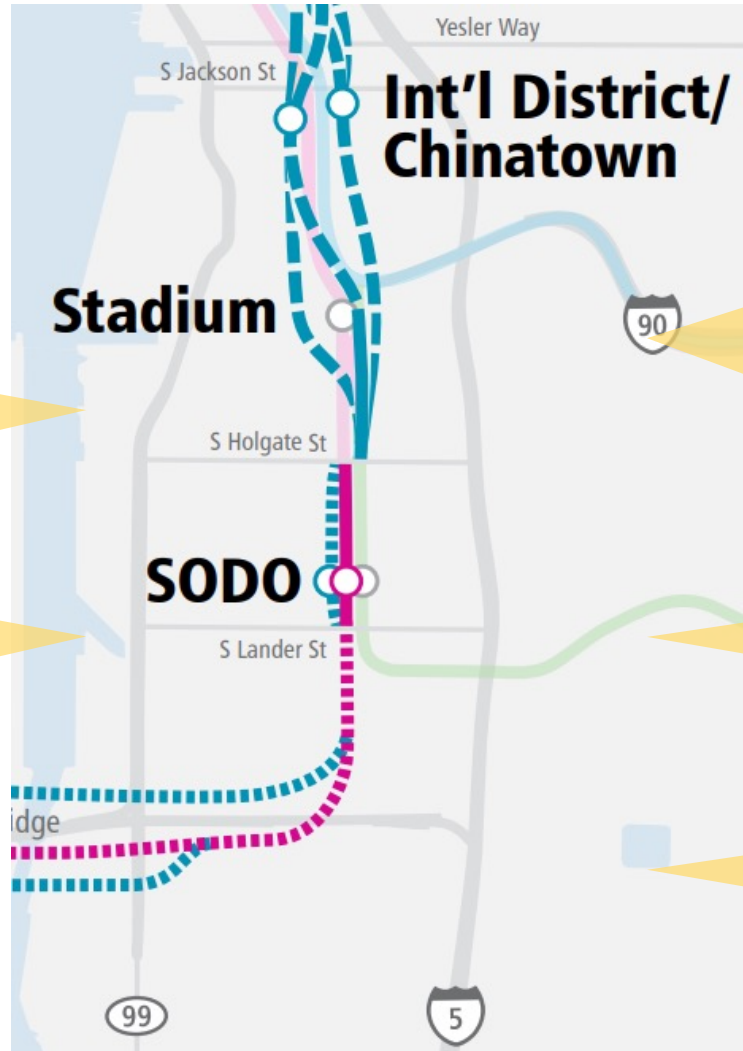
CITY DEIS REVIEW

2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?

Examples from Chinatown-International District and SODO Segments

Construction impacts to traffic and transit

Long-term impacts to east-west mobility in SODO



Business and residential displacements—particularly temporary and permanent impacts to Chinatown-International District businesses

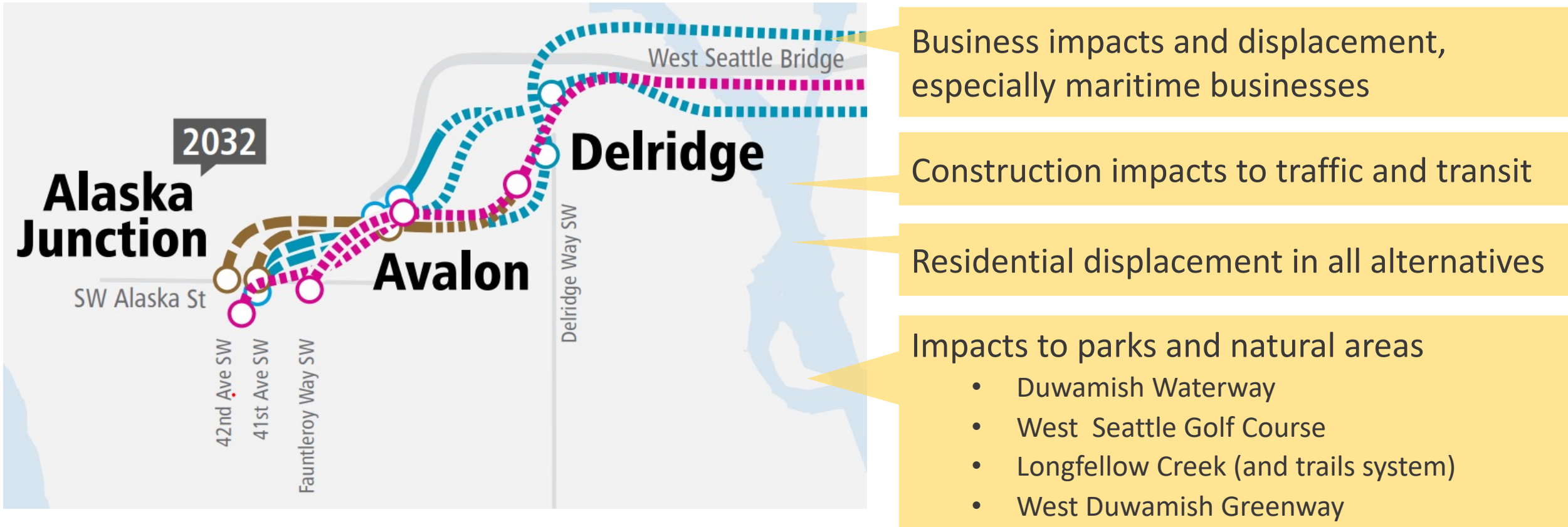
Impacts to City structures, including 4th Avenue S bridge

Impacts to historic and cultural resources

CITY DEIS REVIEW

2. Does the DEIS adequately identify and evaluate project impacts and include appropriate mitigation?

Examples from Duwamish and West Seattle Segments



CITY DEIS REVIEW

3. Does the DEIS meaningfully compare alternatives?

Summary: More information is needed to support the comparison of alternatives for the North portal and South Interbay segment.

(SIB-1 and SIB-2) More information needed:

- Mitigation for transportation and visual impacts from construction and operation of an elevated guideway
- Compliance with noise regulations

(SIB-2 and SIB-3) More information needed:

- Avoidance/mitigation of Environmentally Critical Area impacts
- Compliance with noise regulations



CITY DEIS REVIEW

3. Does the DEIS meaningfully compare alternatives?

Summary: More information is needed to support the comparison of alternatives for Chinatown-International District segment.

(CID-1a and CID-1b) More information is needed:

- Avoidance/mitigation of construction transportation impacts for 4th Ave S alternative options

(CID-2a and CID-2b) More information is needed:

- Avoidance/mitigation of community and business impacts for 5th Ave S alternative options

(ALL) More community process and analysis needed on how to avoid/minimize impacts, advance RET outcomes, and address historic harm.



CITY DEIS REVIEW

4. Does the DEIS adequately analyze impacts to BIPOC communities, propose mitigation, and further the joint Racial Equity Toolkit outcomes?

Summary: More analysis is needed.

There are several instances in which the City finds the **evaluation of impacts to BIPOC communities** to be insufficient or inadequate. *Examples:*

- **Methodology:** Need additional analysis of BIPOC displacements and affordable housing, especially in Delridge and regional hub of CID
- **Methodology:** Need additional analysis of small business displacements; cumulative impacts seem under-represented
- **Mitigation proposed:** Need update to the RET report, and coordination with the City to identify tools to reduce residential and economic displacement, especially small business support during construction



CITY DEIS REVIEW

5. How does new DEIS information shape City position on alternatives?

Summary: For many segments, the DEIS provides necessary information to inform City position on LPA for FEIS. In some segments, we seek additional analysis or processes:

- **South Interbay:** Additional analysis on compliance, impacts, and mitigation
- **Delridge:** Additional community process to address RET outcomes
- **Downtown**
 - **Seattle Center:** Seek refinements to avoid/minimize impacts to sensitive uses
 - **Denny/SLU:** Seek mix-and-match refinements or additional mitigation to ensure optimal transit integration at DT-1 SLU-Harrison while avoiding DT-1 Denny-Westlake impacts
- **Chinatown-International District:** See next slide



CITY DEIS REVIEW

5. How does new DEIS information shape City position on alternatives?

Summary: For Chinatown-International District, we seek additional analysis on impacts and mitigation; and additional process to address community benefits, RET outcomes, and historic harm.

1

Provide time for community by removing pressure to identify preferred alternative now

2

Press for stronger refinements to avoid/minimize impacts to community

3

Develop a partnership to tackle longer-term impacts, address historic harm

What do these comments mean?

The City is a **strong supporter of the WSBLE project** and intends to support eventual project permitting and construction. Between the Draft EIS and Final EIS, the City is committed to work with Sound Transit to ensure that the project:

- Complies with codes and regulations through additional analysis or modifications.
- Avoids/minimizes/mitigates impacts through modifications or a Mitigation Plan.

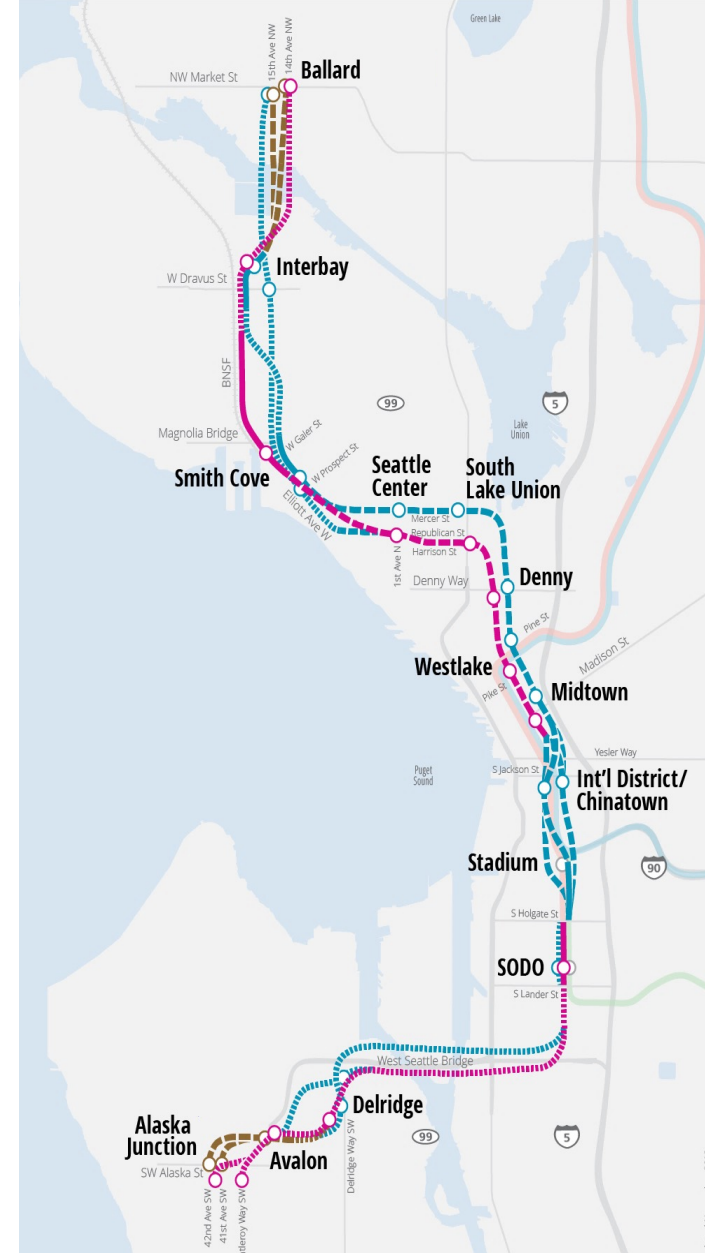
We appreciate our ongoing partnership with Sound Transit and look forward to working together on the additional analysis and mitigation flagged here and in our detailed comments.

NEXT STEPS

Developing position on Preferred Alternative

- Continue community and stakeholder engagement to inform position on preferred alternative
- Continue staff analysis of alternatives and proposed refinements
- Transmit resolution on WSBLE alternatives in May/June

Mayor Harrell and CP Juarez engage in Sound Transit Board discussions in May and June.



NEXT STEPS

City Position on Preferred Alternative

Staff analysis of DEIS alternatives informed by core values:

- **RACIAL EQUITY.** Promote equitable benefits and avoid disparate impacts.
- **SAFETY + USER EXPERIENCE.** Locate and design stations for safe access and circulation that minimizes pedestrian risk.
- **COMMUNITY.** Minimize residential and business displacement and impacts to existing neighborhood assets and maximize opportunities to further equitable TOD and other community-identified priorities.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.** Minimize impacts to sensitive environmental areas.
- **STEWARDSHIP.** Facilitate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars by seeking highest benefit for dollars spent and helping keep project on time and under budget.



NEXT STEPS

Refinements to the DEIS Alternatives

This month, Sound Transit will **discuss potential refinements** to the DEIS alternatives that strive to reduce costs, avoid impacts, reduce risk, or achieve other benefits to the system.

We appreciate the value in studying refinements, and the need to find ways to control costs overall going forward.

However, the City **discourages scope reductions** that do not bring commensurate benefit to the system and its riders, and that are not consistent with what was committed to voters when we approved ST3 in 2016.

We would welcome a broader discussion of the benefits and trade off around these ideas and look forward to continuing to work with ST to refine this work as they advance it in the coming months.





Additional questions please contact:

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