

**Allentown Community Meeting**  
**February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - 5:30 to 7:00 pm**  
**Tukwila Community Center**

**MINUTES**

**Welcome and Introduction from Mark Hafs, EIS Project Director**

- City officials and staff present: Mayor McLeod, Councilmember Tosh Sharp, Councilmember Hannah Hedrick, Councilmember Jovita McConnell, Councilmember Dennis Martinez, Interim City Administrator Marty Wine, Interim Deputy City Administrator Brandon Miles, Parks and Recreation Director Pete Mayer, Public Works Director Hari Ponnekanti, Interim Traffic Engineer Adam Cox, EIS Project Director Mark Hafs.
- Community Attendance: About 20
- Mark reviewed the meeting agenda, as well as the shared goals and guiding principles.
- Marty and Brandon introduced themselves and the elected officials in the room.
- Brief overview from Brandon of potential acquisition on Duwamish Hill Preserve. Purpose to preserve open space and add to the existing park. There are also plans for future roadway and shoreline improvements, but more details to come.
- Connecting Duwamish Gardens and Chinook Wind Extension shoreline restoration project for passive recreation is also forthcoming.
- While serving as interim Deputy Administrator, Brandon will continue to be the business relations liaison and will also serve as the point of contact for any questions regarding Sound Transit expansion.

**EIS Final Three (3) Options Update -- Mark Hafs and Scott Johnson, HDR**

- We have selected the three alternatives, and - presented to you at our last meeting and at the City Council meeting last night, 2/28. We are moving forward to study these alternatives as part of the draft EIS.
  - o We have a team of experts who have begun studying the potential effects of the three alternatives on the project area. Some of the topics that will be areas of focus are noise, air quality, vibration, water quality, traffic, cultural resources, and several others. The project team will study the current conditions and potential reroutes. In addition to the three new routes the project team will study the effects of not making any changes to routes that freight truck traffic currently takes to and from BNSF's Allentown yard.
- Mark presented the cost estimates for the three alternatives.
  - o Cost estimates are based on very high-level, preliminary engineering drawings, or schematic designs.
  - o Prices were estimated using WSDOT cost estimates on projects of a similar caliber.
  - o Real estate costs have been estimated using today's dollars (assessed value).
  - o These are very expensive but also very intense, complicated projects.
- Alternative 2 - \$164M-\$193M
  - o Brief Overview: The trucks would enter the yard on a new road on the northern end of the property. Potential complicating factors include mitigating wetlands impacts, tunneling under bridges for Boeing Access Rd and the Sound Transit Light Rail track, and excavating the toe of the east slope of Skayak Hill, which is culturally significant to local tribes. With this option, the

- entrance facility and cargo container storage areas would all move to the northern part of the yard, which would require acquiring property.
- This option is not preferred by BNSF.
  - **Q:** Was the existing road on Airport Way considered as an option?
    - **A:** Yes- but it was deemed not feasible for various reasons including extensive excavation that would be required on the toe of Skayak Hill, which would be both costly and likely to affect a culturally sensitive area.
  - Another hurdle this option will face, if selected, is acquiring the land that is a shooting range and former WWII-era military training area – likely to require environmental remediation for contaminated soil.
- Alternative 3B - \$41M-\$54
- **Brief Overview:** Proposes to use the existing intersection on Interurban Ave S/Gateway Dr., then will travel down 15<sup>th</sup>, before crossing a new bridge over the Duwamish, and entering the BNSF yard at its south end. This option will also require Railroad Way to be elevated to meet the elevation of the proposed bridge's east end. This option requires some land acquisition along the north edge of the property formerly used by the Yellow Feight company. The potential new bridge over the river is roughly similar to the planned 42<sup>nd</sup> replacement bridge but will cost more due to the larger scale of the overall project.
- Alternative 4 - \$125-\$138
- **Brief Overview:** This option will build a new road coming down from MLK, along the hillside on I-5, drop meet the S 129<sup>th</sup> St Bridge at its east end, and enter the BNSF yard at a new gateway on yard's south end. This option requires very little rearrangement of the BNSF yard.
  - **Q:** How will the MLK/S 129<sup>th</sup> St Intersection be impacted? It is a very dangerous intersection and adding additional truck traffic might make it worse.
    - **A:** This option will build a separate new ramp for truck traffic - linking MLK with the S 129<sup>th</sup> St Bridge - which trucks would be required to use, so they will not impact the existing MLK/S 129<sup>th</sup> St Intersection. Other traffic could also use this new road.
  - This alternative proposes replacement of the 129<sup>th</sup> St Bridge, which is on WSDOT's list of bridges that are deficient. The project team has coordinated with WSDOT to refine the design of this alternative, and WSDOT is supportive of the alternative's early planning and design.
- Discussion on how we will pay for this.
- The project team is beginning to look at federal and state grant funding opportunities targeted towards projects like this.
  - We believe that this project is both regionally and nationally significant and want to convey that to the granting agencies.
  - However, we can't apply until we have a finished project (EIS Study), and the preferred alternative has been selected by City elected officials and Administration, with community input.
  - Right now, we are researching potential grants so that we will be prepared to move forward with grant applications once the preferred alternative is selected.
- **Q:** I'm feeling like we're only going to pay attention to the cheapest option from here on out; choosing between two bad choices because we can't afford them is discouraging and might not solve the problem.

- **A:** Thanks for bringing this up. We are not advocating for any of the alternatives, but rather trying to state the facts, complications, and unique aspects of each of the alternatives to paint a complete picture.
- **Q:** Why can't BNSF share the costs of building a new truck route?
  - **A:** BNSF is federally pre-empted from any state or local regulations, and they are not legally obliged to compensate the City for its truck reroute efforts. Additionally, the current routes for freight traffic work well for BNSF, and there is no financial incentive for them to pay for a new route. However, BNSF has met with the project team several times, providing information that has significantly improved the alternative designs; we believe that this shows a substantial commitment to the City on their part. Additionally, BNSF has offered to partner with us in identifying grants that could fund future planning and design work for a preferred alternative, and to both help prepare grant applications and support those applications in the grant approval process. This could make a key difference in our ability to get funding for a new truck route.
- **Q:** Is any attention being paid to the traffic flow?
  - **A:** Yes – this has been and will continue to be an important consideration.
- The Mayor will be meeting with Senator Murray and Senator Cantwell in March and this project is on their list of projects to discuss.
- We expect to be done with the draft EIS in the next few months.
- **Q:** Is the high end of the range of estimates likely to be what the alternatives would actually cost?
  - **A:** It is possible. We included a range since we are so early in the design phase, but it is possible that the actual costs will end up being higher or lower than we estimated. We are looking for grants to fund most of this project, although the City may be responsible for a small share or match.
- **Q:** Have you met with the tribes?
  - **A:** Yes – we have been in touch with the Duwamish Tribe and have a request out to the Muckleshoot Tribe. We will continue to reach out to them as part of project planning.
- **Q:** Are these 2024 dollars or have they been increased to account for inflation?
  - **A:** These are in today's dollars. We understand that these costs will be inflated by the time the project is built, and the cost estimates do not reflect this.
- **Q:** Can you please update the City website on this project and when this group is meeting?
  - **A:** Yes – we will be sure to update the website.
- **Q:** Can you please include a potential timeline for this project in the next presentation?
  - **A:** Yes, we can try. We don't have all the information at this point but will take note of it.

**42<sup>nd</sup> Ave S Bridge Project Update – Adam Cox**

- The City currently has 90% plans that were submitted in January, 2024. These are being reviewed by City of Tukwila Parks, Public Works Maintenance crews, Seattle City Light, and King County, among others.
- The project team will now pivot to permits and then finalize the final 10% of the design.
- However, the permitting timeline does not line up with our original timeline and there are many permits that the City needs to get approved before we can proceed. Also worth noting is that the permits are sequential, and we need approval on the first to get the second, and so on.
- We have learned from talking with permitting agencies that they do not have the staff capacity to review permits according to our timeline. Our project applications are in the queue to be reviewed, but we do not have a clear timeline for agency review.

- Therefore, we are under the impression that Advertisement-ready permits and designs will be ready in 2026, with two years of construction (2027-2029) with a complete project by 2029.
  - o We recognize that our updates about permitting delays pushing back the opening of the replacement bridge is disappointing news, and that the longer it takes to build the new bridge, the longer Allentown will have to cope with the current traffic conditions.
- When it comes to funding, we currently have two grants that will fund the bridge design and construction completely (\$12 million and \$7 million). The granting timelines have also been extended due to the permit delays.
- We have been in touch with the lobbyist, WSDOT, local programs, and other permit agencies to get more information regarding the permit timeline. From each permitting agency we are working with, we get the same answer: that they don't have the capacity to review these timelines according to our schedule but are working on it.
- These delays are being faced by jurisdictions statewide. We know this because WSDOT has issued a blanket extension for all grant-funded projects for two years to account for outside agency delays. This is not just a Tukwila problem; this affects all regional projects.
- There have also been changing permit conditions since we've begun designing the bridge, which further complicates things.
- To reiterate, construction will start in 2027 and will be done in 2029.
- **Q:** Can you reuse some of the documentation from the previous tribal consultations related to construction of the Community Center?
  - o **A:** We can look into it, but this project has constraints not shared by that project that will require additional consultation.
- **Q:** Can you look into better ways to keep people from driving the wrong direction on the bridge?
  - o **A:** Yes – this was brought up last night, too. We will look into it.
- **Q:** Is there an opportunity for third party permit reviews?
  - o **A:** We can talk to them about it, but it is not our agency who is issuing them, so we are not sure.
- **Q:** How has safety been considered?
  - o **A:** The Emergency Management team has been here (about a year ago), and the City has worked internally with team re planning for floods, earthquakes, etc.
  - o We will consider working with our Emergency Management team on more public-facing preparedness and coordination at a future meeting.
- **Q:** I would like to request that the team reconsider the direction of traffic flow on the bridge. We made our recommendation, and it was the opposite of what the City ended up doing.
  - o **A:** We can follow up with how that decision was made and when it was previously reconsidered.
- **Q:** Was there an insurance claim to the truck company who hit the bridge? Why aren't they paying for it?
  - o **A:** Yes – we worked with the City Attorney regarding the insurance claim. We do not have any other details on that at this time.
- We want to reiterate that the 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave Bridge and Allentown Truck Reroute EIS are separate projects, and that their timelines are completely different.
  - o The 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave Bridge is in the final phase of construction document preparation, and we are just waiting on permits.

- The Allentown Truck Reroute is in the middle stage of the EIS process; the actual construction would come after a lengthy planning, design, and permitting process, and would be expected to take ten or more years.
- The City's last effort to study a potential Allentown truck reroute - from 2017 - didn't progress past the draft phase. Because the project area conditions have changed since 2017, along with the project's underlying assumptions, the EIS cannot be reused for the current truck reroute effort. However, much of the information in the documents is still useful, and has been incorporated into the current study.

**Miscellaneous**

- Because we ran over the planned time for our meeting, we agreed to defer miscellaneous topics we planned on discussing until our next meeting.

**Next Meeting: April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 5:30 to 6:30 pm at the Tukwila Community Center.**