

ALLENTOWN COMMUNITY MEETING AGENDA
November 21, 2023, at 5:30pm
Tukwila Community Center

MINUTES

Welcome and Introduction from Mark Hafs, EIS Project Director

- City officials and staff present: Mayor Ekberg, Councilmember Tosh Sharp, Councilmember Tom McLeod, Councilmember Kate Kruller, City Administrator David Cline, Deputy City Administrator/Parks Director Pete Mayer, Public Works Director Hari Ponnekanti, Parks Manager Kris Kelly, EIS Project Director Mark Hafs, Catrien de Boer, Public Works Analyst.
- Also, introduced were newly elected Councilmembers Jovita McConnell and Dennis Martinez.
- Community Attendance: About 35
- Mark reviewed the meeting agenda, as well as the shared goals and guiding principles.

Tukwila Community Center Landscape Planning – Kris Kelly

- Kris Kelley, Parks Manager, provided an overview of the Department's goal to improve the City's open spaces. He emphasized the need for the parks to reflect the community values and input. Kris also mentioned that community members can get involved via the poster boards in the TCC lobby, via QR code on social media, or directly reaching out to City staff to share one's insight.

Truck Reroute EIS Updates -- Mark Hafs and Scott Johnson, HDR

- Mark Hafs provided an overview on the project so far, explaining that we have been making progress on this project in 2021, beginning with identifying the project area and working on ways to reroute freight trucks to/from the BNSF Railyard.
- Mark also introduced Scott Johnson, lead project engineer, from HDR.
- Mark and Scott have had four meetings with representatives from BNSF thus far. During these meetings, Mark and Scott shared the three route alternatives that are progressing.
- Scott provided an overview of the existing BNSF Campus:
 - o There is a gated entrance/exit at the east end of S 124th St that professional drivers use to enter and exit the campus for drop of/pick up. There also is a layover/storage area on the site where freight is held until it is picked up, which may sit for several days. Also on the site is storage for rail equipment that is used to move the freight around the property/onto trailers/between trains. He emphasized that there is almost always activity on the site as trains/trucks come in and out. There is also an employee parking lot and an administrative building.
 - o Trains mostly enter the site from the north, which is where the freight is first unloaded and then moves to the southern part of the campus where it is stored. On the western edge of the campus is overflow storage.

Truck Reroute Alternatives: The study began with five alternatives. Now, only three alternatives are being considered:

- **Alternative 2: New BNSF entrance from Airport Way S**
 - o This alternative would create a new entrance at the northern end of the BNSF intermodal facility, connecting to Airport Way S. A new roadway in the BNSF facility, parallel to the existing

railroad maintenance road, would be constructed as a 2-way, 2-lane roadway providing access to the intermodal facility.

- The new roadway would require building a tunnel under the existing bridge that passes under S Boeing Access Road.
 - The existing check-in/check-out facility, truck queuing lanes, operations and administrative buildings, chassis parking, the truck storage access road along the western edge of the facility would need to be relocated to the north end of the BNSF facility, requiring property acquisition, likely in the Seattle Police Athletic Association's property.
- **Alternative 3B: Improvements to South Gateway Dr, new bridge over Duwamish River (new alternative)**
 - This alternative would create a new entrance at the south end of BNSF's facility with an access route that would connect westward to Interurban Ave S via the south end of Gateway Dr, a new roadway on the north side of the former YRC Freight company yard, a new bridge over the Duwamish River, an at-grade crossing of Railroad Ave S, and a new roadway passing under the S 129th St Bridge.
 - Q: Would the bridge be open for public access, as well?
 - A: We do not know at this phase of the project. Once the environmental and traffic studies are conducted, we will know better whether this is possible or advisable.
 - **Alternative 4: New Bridge From SR-900 (MLK Jr Way) to S 129th St**
 - This alternative would create a new BNSF entrance and access road at the facility's south end, along the east side and south end of 51st Pl S. The entrance would connect to MLK Jr Way to the east via the S 129th St Bridge over I-5 and a new roadway. The eastern end of the S 129th St bridge would be widened and the wooden structure on the bridge's west side would be replaced. A noise wall would be installed between the new entrance road to the BNSF facility and 51st Pl S. to reduce the impacts of truck noise to nearby residences.

Next Steps

- Mark and Scott emphasized that identifying viable alternatives is challenging, and that all options would have both potential benefits and adverse effects.
- The project is currently in phase 2 in which the team solicited information from community members and stakeholders as the alternatives were being drafted.
- We are pivoting from the initial planning and engineering to preparing the draft environmental impact statement, in which the team will study the potential effects of each alternative. Aspects of the study may include noise, traffic, social services, air quality, water quality, habitat, and cultural resources.
- Once the study is complete, a publicly available report will be released that will outline the potential benefits and adverse impacts of each alternative.
- With the study in hand, City administration and elected officials will select a preferred alternative. We expect that this process will take about 9 months.

Questions & Answers

- Q: Are the alternatives presented today the top three?
 - Yes, these are the best alternatives with the least number of effects. The EIS will produce the preferred alternative among these options.
- Q: Is the status quo a no build alternative?

- Yes. The study will also consider the pros/cons of the current truck route.
- Q: It was mentioned that the team has met with BNSF several times. Did they come to the table with a genuine interest/consideration to reroute?
 - Yes, BNSF devoted time and resources to make a good faith effort to find an alternative that supports both the City's goals and theirs, and we hope that this effort will lead to a continuing partnership with BNSF.
- Q: Can you talk more about the meetings with BNSF? What is being said?
 - Most recently, BNSF explained their layout and operations of their Tukwila facility, and explained potential impacts the three proposed alternatives could have on their operations. They suggested possible revisions to the project engineers' designs and agreed to review the alternatives as design on them progresses.
- Q: Do they (BNSF) have any willingness to reroute?
 - We believe that their willingness to engage with the project team to the extent they have indicates a willingness to consider new freight truck access routes.
- Q: How long is the BNSF Campus?
 - About 1.4 miles running from North to South.
- Q: Was there a conversation about having separate entrance and exit gates?
 - No, this has not been discussed yet. What has been top of mind is finding a solution that allows trucks to safely move in and out to pick up/drop off among all the active traffic on the site.
- Q: Have you talked to Sound Transit about this project? Especially with the Sounder/Light Rail running through the area.
 - Yes, we have talked to them about this project, and they confirmed that the proposed alternatives do not conflict with their current plans.
- Q: Will the Port of Seattle or other agencies also need to be involved?
 - We expect there will be significant coordination with the City of Seattle, King County, WSDOT, Port of Seattle, and other agencies throughout this process. We also expect the need for traffic moderations in and around the site and proposed intersections to accommodate the trucks, which will require additional coordination with other agencies.
- Q: Is there a preferred alternative? Will the EIS overrule community input?
 - It's too early in the process to select a preferred alternative. The EIS will help determine a preferred route by analyzing potential effects of alternatives, but the final decision will be made by Tukwila's elected officials with input from the public. Public input is specified by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which requires us to present the reroute alternatives to the public and invite community feedback at a public hearing. Also - we'll continue to update you as the alternative designs progress, and give you advance notice of the opportunities to comment on the designs and the design process.

Other Topics:

Upcoming Sound Transit projects that might affect Tukwila

- Q: Who from the City is on top of Sound Transit Light Rail extension projects?
 - David Cline, City Administrator, shared that Sound Transit recently began their extension for their new site projected to open around 2032. He shared that Brandon Miles, City of Tukwila Business Relations Manager, is the City's point of contact for any updates.

- Mark also shared that Sound Transit has a community engagement process and encourages interested community members to get involved.
- Mark will ask Sound Transit for information about upcoming projects and share the info with the Allentown community.

Traffic Cameras

- Q: Are there any updates on the traffic cameras in the neighborhood?
 - Not yet, the Tukwila Police Department is working with a contractor to plan and design the traffic camera system, but TPD believes that this will be an extended effort.

Raised Crosswalk at S 119th St

- Q: What is the update with the newly constructed raised crosswalk?
 - We will be installing Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFB) to monitor speed - possibly as soon as January.
 - The City is going to move the existing speed radar sign northward, toward Duwamish Park.

Closing:

- Mark explained that there was a mix-up in dates for the November meeting and apologized for any inconvenience. Moving forward, we plan to meet every other month on the fourth Tuesday.