



DRAFT

1 Project Overview

The D-to-M Streets Track & Signal Project is a 1.2 mile section of new track to be constructed by Sound Transit on acquired right-of-way connecting Tacoma Dome Station with Sound Transit's Lakeview Subdivision. The rail line will cross a lowered Pacific Avenue on a grade-separated bridge, giving traffic on this major arterial unimpeded access to points north and south of the line.

2 Meeting Purpose

Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma gathered the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to discuss technical issues, design options, construction phasing, and redevelopment as it relates to the D-to-M Streets Track & Signal Project in Tacoma, and to receive the PAC's input.

3 Introduction

Angie Thomson, meeting facilitator, welcomed everyone to the fourth PAC meeting and thanked them for coming. Since there were a number of late-comers, Angie asked the Dome District Group to report on their previous meeting, held earlier in the week with the Hillside Development Council, before proceeding with the evening's agenda items.

- 4 [Darrell Bowman] The Dome District Development Group has a memo we would like to read regarding this committee. [The memo, as read aloud, is reproduced below.]

Memo:

Over the past couple of months a number of citizens have been meeting with the Sound Transit Design Team and City of Tacoma representatives for the design review of the extension of the Sounder Train from D Street and M Street. During this period a number of issues have been revealed which are summarized in this memo.

The issues and comments include:

- 1 The community and local groups defined a list of 6 general principles to consider in the design of the extension. These were submitted at the first*

meeting of the group. It appears that the Design Team and Sound Transit are not taking these general principles seriously. It is the strong recommendation that these “general guiding principles” become the committed “design criteria” for the project.

- 2 A number of key elements may have affected the intent of the “Term Sheet” that was signed by the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit last year. It is recommended that the City of Tacoma/City Council review this “Term Sheet” to determine if it needs to be revisited. The grades and impacts proposed by Sound Transit certainly seem to have changed a number of factors in the agreement.*
- 3 The design seems only to respond to the rail needs, whereas the primary design issue needs to be the people affected by this extension through the emerging urban area.*
- 4 Meeting notes were taken by a Sound Transit scribe and these notes were to be converted to minutes of the meetings. The first meeting minutes were submitted to the group at the second meeting with no prior review. Before the third meeting the citizens reviewed the minutes and responded to a number of erroneous statements in the minutes. To date:
 - a. The first meeting minutes have not been submitted to the group with corrections noted by the citizens (see attachment).*
 - b. No minutes of the second and third meetings have been distributed. (The minutes were received by e-mail midday today so there is not time to review the minutes prior to the meeting.)**
- 5 The tenor of the meetings has not been consistent:
 - a. At the first meeting the Sound Transit design team wanted to rush to design judgment and have the citizen group's blessing on what Sound Transit was presenting. The citizens distributed the "general guiding principles" and a couple of diagrams suggesting that these principles should be the basis of design.*
 - b. The second meeting seemed to be an attempt by the Sound Transit design team to be sensitive to the citizens' design issues. The dialogue was somewhat encouraging.*
 - c. The third meeting turned the discussions 180 degrees. The presentations were blunt responses to the needs of the rail, with impacts to grades and streets being more serious than previously thought. The Sound Transit design team did not appear to be working toward a people/urban friendly solution.**
- 6 This memo is the results of a number of community gatherings since the last Sound Transit design team/citizens meeting.*

- 7 *A number of key questions have surfaced:*
 - a. *What should be done about the closing of A Street and what is the mitigation?*
 - b. *Why is South C Street now being closed?*
 - c. *Why are the potential problems of the at grade crossing at East D Street not being addressed?*
 - d. *What should be done at Pacific Avenue? The group is now told that Pacific Avenue will be lowered almost twice as far as indicated at the time of the Term Sheet.*
- 8 *There may be other considerations that need to be addressed in this project:*
 - a. *Should more grade separations be considered? (i.e. A Street, C Street)*
 - b. *What about the impacts of the trains through the rest of the City as it moves through South Tacoma? Recent articles have pointed out some serious concerns about safety along the entire route.*
- 9 *Action Steps that Citizens believe need to be taken:*
 - a. *The citizens believe that the City of Tacoma needs an independent "rail specialist" and independent "urban design team" to address the concerns of the City and the community that are not high priorities in the design solution by Sound Transit.*
 - b. *Sound Transit needs to provide approved minutes of all the meetings, with the first draft of the minutes well in advance of the next meeting day.*
 - c. *The three tiers of meetings that are outlined in the "Term Sheet" need to be coordinated. Information from the "Project Management Team" and the "Executive Oversight Committee" need to be transmitted to the Design Team citizens group. Perhaps a citizen of the City needs to be represented on these committees.*
 - d. *Information with complete backup data needs to be shared early with all participants so that consensus can be achieved with clear understanding.*
- 10 *The citizens believe that a collaborative approach that really addresses the impacts on the urban area and the quality of life for its community can be achieved. We just need to reorder the priorities.*

Attachments:

General Guiding Principles

Meeting #1 Minutes with citizen comments in red

[End of memo read by Darrell Bowman.]

- 5 [Keith Stone] The photos we brought are to show the tracks going through Tacoma and showing businesses working within 20 feet of the track and utilizing good urban design.

We're less concerned about the look of the bridge, but are more concerned with having the pieces in place for economic development.

Photos:

- a. Ruston Way
- b. 36th St and Ruston (Puget Park)
- c. Portland Ave (Sound Transit)
- d. Portland Ave
- e. Overpass at Portland Ave
- f. Heading towards Puyallup
- g. Portland Ave crossing

Keith Stone explained that each photo represents a good example of how development can occur immediately adjacent to an operating rail line, or how the railroad bridges and retaining walls can be built to be both simple and attractive.

- 6 [Jim Merritt] We tried to get photos of the elevated mainline train that goes through downtown Spokane because the Spokane residents like it (architects included) and even though it goes through a main area, people don't notice it. We'll get them next week to show how the right-of-way works and how it looks.

Sound Transit team response to memo

- 7 [Mark Johnson] Thank you for the guiding principles. I think there has been some miscommunication here if the group believes the design team has ignored their "Guiding Principles." We've developed many aspects of the design using them. I think you'll be pleased with what we have to share with you today, however I don't think that every person here is going to be happy with everything in the project at the end of the process, that's just how a public process works—each of us must compromise on some aspects of the project.
- 8 [Rollie Herman] There is there a place to see all of this, we have uploaded everything we have to www.hdctacoma.org/soundtransit
- 9 [Chris Larson] I can e-mail it to everyone as well. There are some questions or statements from the memo that we need to expand on. We haven't talked about East D Street at all because it's an existing at grade crossing and Sound Transit will actually improve that intersection. Let's put that on a future meeting agenda.
- 10 [Forrest German] On East D Street, we're concerned about how traffic will be able to leave quickly when there is activity at the Tacoma Dome because East D Street ties to Puyallup Avenue.

- 11 [Darrel Bowman] We need to reorder the priorities of this committee. We keep going down the agenda and ignoring the main concerns that we have with the priorities.
- 12 [Forrest German] The points under number seven have gotten worse for us. The solution is not an acceptable solution. A Street is closed, South C Street is closed, Pacific Avenue looks bad.
- 13 [Jim Merritt] With East D Street, we'd like to address the future needs. Once Urban Waters opens [on the Thea Foss], East D Street will become a major arterial and traffic will approach Pacific Avenue levels.
- 14 [Keith Stone] If we are closing A Street and South C Street, East D Street becomes the best route and when there is an event at the Tacoma Dome, East D Street will be the only option, and it is the quickest option for me right now. You can't take our grid away.
- 15 [Kate Howe] I am the project manager from VIA Architecture working on the downtown plan and representing the City of Tacoma. It is a reality that A Street might close but we can come up with design options that make that positive. It is a reality that the BNSF Prairie Line might close A Street near its intersection with Dock Street as well, so that should be out there on the table.
- 16 [Darrel Bowman] Before we go forward, we need to talk about the things in this document [the Dome District Group's memo]. We need to get minutes in time. What about getting coordination with the three tiers of meetings? What about looking at getting a rail specialist to represent the City of Tacoma? We need to address these concerns. We want to hear from Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma that we will see a good faith effort. We understand that we can't get everything we want, but often the majority does, so we'd like some answers to our concerns.
- 17 [Chris Larson] My understanding is that VIA Architecture has been hired to help us with this project and the downtown Dome District plan, and to focus on the urban design considerations.
- 18 [Kate Howe] We have been working with the Dome District on a new subarea plan. This project is a natural out-growth of that plan.
- 19 [Chris Larson] That serves the urban design issue raised in the Dome District Group's memo.

- 20 [Mark Johnson] The PAC is the City of Tacoma's committee so they will get you the notes but I will commit to getting the minutes to Chris [Larson] in a week. I apologize for the notes coming late for the first meeting but we took some time in the first meeting to attribute statements to the individuals who made them, per your request.
- 21 [Keith Stone] I need to take the notes back to my committee of people. The minutes help me remember what we talked about.
- 22 [Mark Johnson] We didn't intend this committee to be a representation of the community but rather a group composed of people who know about this project and this community. That said, I recognize your problem, and we will make an effort to get the minutes to you early.
- 23 [Rollie Herman] These meetings are relatively short. We beat up on each other outside of the meeting so that we can have a more constructive meeting here. We need those meetings for our outside work.
- 24 [Rollie Herman] The Tacoma City Council said that there are three sets of meetings at the City. We'd like to be involved with the Executive Oversight Committee. I don't think there is enough conversation between the Tacoma City Manager and staff, and the Tacoma City Manager and this community.
- 25 [Mark Johnson] There are a number of meetings: Joni Earl, Sound Transit CEO, Andrew Neiditz, City of Lakewood City Manager, and Eric Anderson, City of Tacoma City Manager do meet regularly, but I do not attend those meetings. There is a second set of meetings between the cities' public works directors and the Sound Transit capital projects director, the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC). The third set of meetings, which I think that you might be interested in, is the project management team (PMT) meetings, and we can get you the minutes from those monthly meetings.
- 26 [Rollie Herman] Getting the meeting notes would be great but can Chris attend those meetings as well?
- 27 [Jim Merritt] We weren't sure what the levels of those meetings were. It doesn't seem like there is conversation between the different meetings.
- 28 [Mark Johnson] Today we put together three technical memoranda for the City of Tacoma staff to review that lay out, in an objective, rational way, the criteria for making

decisions on three aspects of this project. You're welcome to have copies of these memoranda, too.

- 29 [Rollie Herman] Can we get things sent to us electronically?
- 30 [Darrel Bowman] Can we get the agendas a day or so early so that we know what we're going to discuss?
- 31 [Mark Johnson] Yes, we will get those to you earlier than we did for this meeting.
- 32 [Keith Stone] You say that you want expertise from the neighborhood but after last meeting, we felt like you weren't listening to us or not caring enough to listen to the issues.
- 33 [Mark Johnson] I also left the meeting with the feeling that we weren't communicating. We spent a good deal of time putting together the materials to illustrate design issues and principles, but the committee didn't engage in these discussions. We talked a lot about that internally. We want to communicate with you better, but there are also things that we can't change. For example, I'd love to keep A Street open – I share your concern about the grid and I've pushed the team hard to look at all the options – but we know that the closure has to be made for vehicles based on objective engineering standards. We documented that for the 2 October 2008 PAC meeting, and we brought the drawings to show why an at-grade crossing couldn't work there. I don't want this to be an adversarial process. I know that we're going to argue and discuss, which can be productive, but there are things that have to happen. A year ago, the Tacoma City Council endorsed this project that includes an at-grade crossing at D Street and a grade-separated crossing at Pacific, all in response to public and City feedback in 2006 and 2007. It also included a pedestrian crossing at A Street, which would close A Street to vehicles.
- 34 [Keith Stone] In 2007 that was not a decision of the Dome District, that was the Tacoma City Council.
- 35 [Darrel Bowman] The criteria have changed since then and that's why we need to look at the term sheet again.
- 36 [Forrest German] Everything has changed. Elevations have changed since the term sheet was signed.

- 37 [Mark Johnson] At the location of the bridge we are within a couple feet of where we originally said we were. We have been working with Chris on the pedestrian and bicycle crossings at those intersections.
- 38 [Forrest German] The solution has been exaggerated in a negative way. How do you change that?
- 39 [Kate Howe] There are engineering things we can't circumvent. We have someone in our firm who has built a lot of rail line. We have to provide a clear, comprehensive district and look for opportunities. We can use the "bowl" design at Pacific and 26th, and turn it into a good thing. For example, we can add plantings and turn it into a gateway.
- 40 [Forrest German] If your firm is addressing this issue, that's helpful.
- 41 [Keith Stone] I know that it is a safety issue to run through an urban area. What if the tracks went from a 2.4% grade at the start and then rise to 2.85% grade up in the woods where there is no danger to pedestrians? There would have to be lots of digging in the woods, but it would be safer than here in an urban area.
- 42 [Jeanine Viscount] You would be depressing Pacific Avenue even more if you do that.
- 43 [Keith Stone] It just doesn't seem like you are addressing these issues or telling us why. We haven't seen any survey information.
- 44 [Mark Johnson] Are you saying the drawings don't communicate to you?
- 45 [Keith Stone] I don't think I'm getting answers to my questions.
- 46 [Keith Nakano] Later in this meeting, we're going to look at the model of the grades. We brought stills of the model that we showed you in October. We have not changed the design since last meeting.
- 47 [Chris Larson] What happens to 25th and 26th streets, how steep are they? Have we seen those yet?
- 48 [Keith Nakano] We're looking at 16-18' of cut at the intersection of South Tacoma Way, 26th Street, and Pacific Avenue.

- 49 [Chris Larson] Are there engineering plans that we can e-mail to the PAC? *Keith Nakano said that they would e-mail the plans.*
- 50 [Forrest German] Eighteen feet is a two-story building.
- 51 [Mark Johnson] I was going to open today with the things you've said that have influenced our design. But I'm hearing that we're not listening and that what is happening here is not relevant to what the design team is working on. For these meetings to feel productive, we must attempt to answer these questions better.
- 52 [Forrest German] How will our architects be involved? How can they help us? They're professionals.
- 53 [Mark Johnson] We need to document not only the engineering aspects of our project but also the urban design elements. VIA Architecture will be great at giving us input.
- 54 [Forrest German] Do we work with VIA so that we can work with you?
- 55 [Chris Larson] Yes, that's my understanding.
- 56 [Kate Howe] We will act at the third party to negotiate with the Dome District and Sound Transit.
- 57 [Rollie Herman] As citizens, we are seeing the degradation of our street grid in Tacoma and not a lot of thought being put into the overall downtown plan. One of our major concerns was 21st Street and how you get off the freeway and it wasn't included in the downtown plan. It doesn't give me confidence in the city or the people they hire.
- 58 [Kate Howe] In planning projects, you have to negotiate the different ideas from different districts and stakeholders, and find the overall community benefit. The 21st Street issue wasn't a specific action item in the draft but it was in the final version. There were a lot of partners that needed to be negotiated with on that particular issue. What we bring is the ability to work with all of those partners to reach an agreement for the final outcome.
- 59 [Rollie Herman] The grid is our number one concern.
- 60 [Jim Merritt] I'd like to look at one alternative that may solve our issue. Why don't we lower A Street even more so that Pacific Avenue and A Street both use underpasses for vehicles? That's why the Spokane thing worked, because it kept the grid intact.

61 [Forrest German] We have accepted the dimensions and we will work within those parameters.

62 [Mark Johnson] We haven't looked at lowering 26th Street but we can take a look at that. We might find that the City won't accept reduced vertical clearance for the overpass. What does A Street look like where it meets 26th? What are the effects on adjacent properties? We heard clearly that the community didn't want retaining walls that parallel streets, so we are only putting those in where they are required to keep buildings intact. I want you to know that the rail line rises as quickly as possible after crossing East C Street. We've set the tracks as high as we can get them at A Street, and we want it high there for the underpass designed for pedestrians and bicycles. That would also be the best situation for a lowered A Street, if that can be engineered to work for vehicles.

63 [Doug Tooley] You don't seem to have a sense of the traffic in this area. You can't close A Street. What will you do with the Dome District traffic?

64 [Forrest German] You might look at taking the Lighthouse Dive Shop property. We never talked about what that area is going to be.

65 [Mark Johnson] We have been talking about what this might look like.

66 [Forrest German] The elevations have changed so much that we can't deal with it. What about stretching it out so that the bowl isn't so dramatic?

[At this point the meeting time had nearly run out. Mark offered to give a very brief overview of the items on the meeting agenda, none of which had yet been discussed. The committee requested the overview.]

Agenda items

67 [Mark Johnson] We want you to see how the design has developed based on your suggestions. The City of Tacoma and Sound Transit staffs will talk about the memo and a response to it. Here's a brief overview of the agenda items:

- **Typical rail section/ROW:** We are sticking with planning for two tracks and we're willing to talk to developers who want to submit a specific proposal to develop in the right of way, close to the tracks, or using air rights. Everything is on the table.

- **A Street pedestrian crossing:** We are doing further work on the undercrossing and pedestrian crossing designs. There will be a cost difference between them. We prefer an undercrossing because of its greater safety and ease of use from an urban design perspective.
- **Pacific Avenue & adjacent roadways:** We will continue to develop what we presented to you in October. “Simple and unobtrusive” was what this group asked for in a bridge design, and we brought six versions for you to see. We will bring them next time we meet and continue that discussion.
- **Walls:** We’ve done an evaluation of a single-track rail line with an embankment on both sides, of one with an embankment on one side and a retaining wall on the other side, and of one with retaining walls on both sides. Where we can use traditional embankments on both sides it is less expensive and provides more flexibility for future development. Even so, we can’t always do without retaining walls. They are required at Elephant Carwash, the Armor building and I-705. The walls will be parallel to the tracks, as described in the Dome District Group’s “Guiding Principles.”
- **South C Street closure:** There is nothing new to report on this issue. Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma are working together to evaluate the potential closure. Chris Larson recently sent Sound Transit a letter with a number of questions about Sound Transit’s recommendation to close South C Street. Sound Transit has prepared a response and sent it to the City on Tuesday, 18 November 2008. Sound Transit continues to recommend a closure of South C Street at the rail line. We concur with the request in the Dome District Group’s memo that the City of Tacoma hire an independent rail consultant to work.

68 [Doug Tooley] I don’t see much in the way of pedestrian overpasses on the A Street. There are pedestrian and bicycle paths that will be in the area and they should fit in.

69 [Darrel Bowman] What about air rights? Have you negotiated with the city to give air rights to them?

70 [Mark Johnson] Yes, we’ve had a discussion and the City is not interested in air rights or parcel development at this time. Our term sheet says that air rights will be transferred under mutually acceptable terms. Sound Transit is legally bound to sell air rights at fair market value. If the City of Tacoma wants to explore development in the future, we have an agreement in place about how those air rights can be transferred to the city or a private developer.

71 [Darrel Bowman] How do I find out what they’re worth?

- 72 [Mark Johnson] You would need to hire a real estate appraiser.
- 73 [Keith Stone] We have a term sheet in front of you with the air rights and it's never been talked about.
- 74 [Mark Johnson] We have touched on that at past meetings, that the opportunity to develop over the tracks using air rights is established.
- 75 [Keith Stone] I would like the spot elevations from the survey e-mailed to me, the ones at A Street, Pacific Avenue, East C Street, and South C Street. I'd like to know the elevation at the center line of the tracks where it crosses the center line of the street. *Keith Nakano said he would email those points to Keith Stone within a week.*
- 76 [Chris Larson] I'd like to update you on the status of the term sheet. The term sheet is a memorandum of understanding to create another legal agreement. We will take the information in term sheet, add detail and make that part of the project agreement.
- 77 [Mark Johnson] We will have a draft of the project agreement to send to the city next week for their review, but I don't think that it will be available to the public.
- 78 [Keith Stone] We want to negotiate the A Street closure before it goes into the final draft.
- 79 [Rollie Herman] It would be useful for us to get together and discuss what went on tonight and report back to you about where we'd like to go.
- 80 [Darrel Bowman] We'll have minutes in a week, then we'll have three weeks to discuss.

Next steps

- 81 [Mark Johnson] We will look at another approach to A Street along the lines proposed by Jim Merritt to lower A Street sufficiently to allow vehicles to pass under the rail line. We're going to talk to the Tacoma Police Department's CPTED specialist about the pedestrian underpass, and AHBL will work with VIA. The South C Street closure issue is still open. However, my design team needs to keep working so we have to move forward on some issues.

- 82 [Kate Howe] During this meeting I heard a lot of design ideas proposed, I imagine you've (Sound Transit) looked at different design options. Are there decision making points that we could look at? Once we understand the key determinants, we can roll up our sleeves and start working.
- 83 [Mark Johnson] We don't really have plans in the form you want them because this group has spent the last year working through the issues remaining after the alignment was selected to complete the concept design for the project.
- 84 [Chris Larson] City staff can sit down with you (VIA) and talk about how we got to this point.
- 85 [Ed Davis] Our concern is that the design will go too far and we won't be able to offer input about the issues. Our main concern is the grid. We don't want streets to be closed without our knowledge, and then we have to live with it for 20 – 100 years.
- 86 [Mark Johnson] We have taken in a lot of information over the last year and a half. We have a schedule and a budget and we must move the project forward to fulfill our charge from the Sound Transit Board. Until I get direction from the Board to do something else, my job is to keep this project moving. You can talk to your City Council members and City staff, and we appreciate constructive feedback. What I'm hearing is that the agreement entered into in January 2008, the term sheet, is not acceptable to you. I recognize your concerns and know that you will do what is appropriate to make your concerns heard.
- 87 [Forrest German] Why did the elevation grades change in a year? The elevations were there, why weren't we dealing with these facts a year ago?
- 88 [Mark Johnson] When we were conducting feasibility studies to determine the project's alignment, we used topographic information from aerial surveys. That information is accurate enough for concept design and avoided spending money surveying areas through which the rail line isn't running. You'll recall that we studied a new alignment every couple of months. This year, we spent the first six months hiring a design team and now we're surveying topographic information on the ground, which gives us more accurate data than aerial surveys.
- 89 [Forrest German] It sounds like we've made false assumptions for a year.

- 90 [Jeanine Viscount] That work [in 2006 and 2007] was at the basic planning level and they used aerial photographs to derive elevations. When we were hired, we developed the concept further and have more specific data available.
- 91 [Forrest German] We spent a lot of money to get to this point.
- 92 [Keith Stone] In other Sound Transit projects, designs have been changed based on what citizens want. Rainier Valley now has an at-grade alignment as a result of citizen input. So don't tell us that you're going to cruise through this project without listening to us.
- 93 [Mark Johnson] You're right that in Rainier Valley there was a good deal of citizen input. Sound Transit proposed an elevated alignment in the Rainier Valley, while the community wanted light rail to run in a below-grade tunnel, as it does in downtown Seattle. There was not sufficient funding to build a below-grade alignment, so the at-grade solution was a compromise acceptable to both the community and the Sound Transit Board. However, once the at-grade alignment was selected and the project was designed, they got to work building it.
- 94 Angie thanked participants for coming and said that the next meeting will be Dec. 11, 2008 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Attendees

Sound Transit Team

Mark Johnson	Tom Wilson
Jeanine Viscount	Angie Thomson
Keith Nakano	Kristina Walker
Melissa Flores Saxe	

City of Tacoma Staff

Chris Larson	Matt Roewe, VIA Architecture
James Coffman	Kate Howe, VIA Architecture
Lihuang Wung	

PAC Members/Public

Jim Choi	Tom O'Connor
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Keith Stone
Darrel Bowman
Ed Davis
Forrest German

Jim Merritt
Rollie Herman
Douglas Tooley
Edward Berntsen