



**Freighthouse Square – Dome District Development Group  
DRAFT Meeting Summary**

Date: December 9, 2013

Time: 4:30 p.m. to approximately 6:00 p.m.

Location: Freighthouse Square (FHS), West End

Present: City of Tacoma: Ian Munce, Robert Thoms, Don Erickson  
WSDOT Rail Office: David Smelser, Carol Lee Roalkvam, Jason Biggs, Frank Davidson  
Sound Transit: Eric Beckman  
Freighthouse Square Owner: Bryan Borgelt  
VIA Architects: Mahlon Clements, Trey West  
Dome District Development Group: Janice McNeil, Jori Adkins, Rick Semple  
New Tacoma Neighborhood Council: Elizabeth Burriss  
AIA SWW: Ko Wibow, Aaron Winston  
Coalition for Active Transportation: (?)  
Tacoma News Tribune: Peter Callahan, Kate Martin  
Others (3)

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The following is a draft summary of this meeting. Please send any suggested revisions or clarifications to Frank Davidson at [DavidsF@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:DavidsF@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov)

**1. Introductions**

- Ian Munce called the group to order.
- Janice McNeil, President of the Dome District Development Group, introduced herself and asked that everyone introduce themselves.

**2. Project Overview and FRA Review**

- David Smelser thanked the group for gathering for an update on the Tacoma Station Relocation portion of the Point Defiance Bypass project and recent developments with the station. He gave a brief overview of the Point Defiance Bypass project, which is one of multiple projects funded through a grant administered by the Federal Rail Administration (FRA).

- Ian Munce asked David to start with a status of discussions on the platform between C and D Streets for Freighthouse Square (FHS) and parking, as he said this was the impetus for convening the Dome District Advisory Group in the first place.
  - David reviewed the original concept as presented in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). David explained that the existing FHS platform will accommodate the Cascades service, but to accommodate the Amtrak Coast Starlight service, a longer platform is needed. The EA and FONSI identify an additional platform between East C and East D Streets as the location for this additional platform.
  - In the intervening months since the Point Defiance Bypass environmental review and decision-making (March 2013), Sound Transit completed the purchase of the timber trestle east of FHS, and initiated environmental review under FTA for a project to replace the single-track timber structure with a double-track trestle.
  - Sound Transit and WSDOT are mutually exploring the possibility of placing a portion of the passenger platform on the new trestle, thereby eliminating the need for a platform between C and D Streets. David stressed that the concept is in the preliminary stages and cannot be considered a “done deal” until all appropriate approvals are obtained.
- Ian stressed that the City was delighted with the possibility of locating the platform on the trestle rather than between C and D Streets, and acknowledged the work the WSDOT and Sound Transit have put forth to pursue this effort. He acknowledged that the City continues to push very hard to see that this is incorporated into the two projects.
- David noted that WSDOT and FRA carefully reviewed the public and agency concerns about the twice-a-day blockage at C and D Streets during the environmental review, as well as the more detailed recommendations presented by the Dome District Advisory Group the group last May. That input was very valuable.
- David gave a brief introduction to the FHS Amtrak station concepts and the design constraints. He explained that a consultant was hired to develop concepts (to a 30% design needed to seek approvals); today’s product is roughly at 15%. David then turned the presentation over to the consultant, VIA, to provide the status of the design development progress.

### **3. Presentation of Proposed Amtrak Station by VIA Architects**

- Mahlon Clements began the PowerPoint presentation titled “Tacoma Amtrak Station at Freighthouse Square” by describing the overall Point Defiance Bypass (PDB) project. Mahlon cited the opportunity to develop the station in the Dome District as a land use element that will be in line with the current Master Plan and proposed EIS.
- Mahlon reviewed the current Amtrak route, and the proposed PDB route, noting that Freighthouse Square is the selected location for a passenger train station in Tacoma.
- Mahlon reviewed the status of concept development of the station at Freighthouse Square. He explained the background on how and why the west end of the building is

considered the best compromise for both the station operator and the building owner. He reviewed:

- The physical constraints posed by the building width, E 25<sup>th</sup> and E and D Streets, and the rail line.
  - The Amtrak requirements for a locked station that can perform specific functions for baggage, ticket windows, back-office duties, etc.
  - A diagram showing the suggested layout of the building to meet required function.
- Mahlon reviewed the various locations within the Freighthouse Square building that were investigated:
    - Far East - This location is problematic for Amtrak because of the extreme grade differences between East 25<sup>th</sup> Street and the passenger platform south of the building.
    - Middle - Freighthouse Square ownership does not want the present location of the food court revised. The portion of the building immediately adjacent to the Sound Transit atrium proved problematic to Amtrak and Freighthouse Square owners because the station would become too “stretched” to accommodate the request for building connectivity between the west and east ends, or require Freighthouse Square pedestrians to move outside of the building when transiting east-west.
    - Far West - This is the approved compromise between WSDOT/Amtrak and the Freighthouse Square owners. Grade differences are accommodated within the building footprint, and visual clues guide outside pedestrians to Freighthouse Square.
  - Mahlon noted that the proposed form of the building follows the anticipated function. Mahlon then presented artist renderings of how the Amtrak terminal might look. Mahlon stressed that the “look” of the building is in the initial stages and that tonight’s meeting is the first view that people have had.
  - Brian Borgelt (building owner) reiterated that the station location and footprint is a compromise that he agreed to, and noted that he continues to work with WSDOT to refine the “connectivity” with the rest of Freighthouse Square. Brian also noted that the largest impact on property owners and tenants has come during construction of the numerous projects recently undertaken in the area.

#### **4. Comments and Questions**

- David opened up the floor to questions. A series of discussions ensued regarding the incorporation of elements perceived as historical into the project.
- Don Erickson noted that the building does not have status as a ‘historical’ structure.
- Ian Munce volunteered to collect all comments and forward to WSDOT no later than the end of the year.
- Jori Adkins expressed displeasure, saying this building (FHS) is an icon and the epicenter in the district (second to the dome itself).

- Kate Martin asked for a copy of the presentation. Carol Lee Roalkvam agreed to provide a copy once the word “draft” is added to each slide. Carol Lee pointed out that WSDOT is sharing these initial design concepts at the earliest opportunity.
- Several attendees expressed concern that the concept presented for the exterior of the station does not meld well with the rest of Freighthouse Square.
- David and Mahlon emphasized that they want to hear more from attendees about how it could better fit. Mahlon asked attendees to describe some the features that are most iconic, as well as other follow-up questions, to get at their concerns about look-and-feel for the terminal and the surrounding spaces.
- Questions were raised regarding the City’s design approval process.
  - Ian Munce noted that the project will proceed through the City’s plans approval process, but there is no City of Tacoma process for approving the “look” of the building; as long as the building use falls within the appropriate zoning designation.
  - Aaron Winston thanked WSDOT for providing an advanced look at the proposed station design, and acknowledged that the City typically does not approve the appearance of buildings.

## **5. Path Forward**

- WSDOT reiterated that they will take this input and consider it. WSDOT will continue to work with the City and community to achieve an acceptable design. Currently, WSDOT’s concepts are at the 15% or less design stage, so this input is very well-timed. WSDOT is targeting a refined design by the end of January.
- Ian Munce agreed to collect all comments and forward along to WSDOT for consideration prior to December 31.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 p.m.