

Amtrak Station Relocation Citizen Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Tacoma Municipal Building, Room 708 – Monday, February 25, 2013 – 4:30 pm

Attendees:

- Keith Stone (Dome District)
- David Talcott (Huitt-Zollars)
- Milt Tremblay (UWT)
- Janice McNeal (Dome District)
- David Boe (City of Tacoma)
- Mike Bergman (Sound Transit)
- Alisa O’Hanlon (City of Tacoma)
- Aaron Winston (BLRB Architects)
- Ricardo Noguera (City of Tacoma)
- Chris Larson (City of Tacoma)
- Cheri Gibbons (City of Tacoma)
- Jane Moore (Coalition for Active Transportation)
- Tina Lee (Pierce Transit)
- Brian Borgelt (Freighthouse Square)
- Shari Hart (City of Tacoma)
- Ian Munce (City of Tacoma)
- Chelsea Levy (Sound Transit)
- Les Gerstmann (BLRB Architects)
- Ben Fields (AIA)
- Marty Campbell (City of Tacoma)
- Don Erickson (Chair, City of Tacoma Planning Commission)

Welcome

Chair Erickson welcomed the group and led a round of introductions.

Point Defiance Bypass Project

Chris Larson, from the City of Tacoma’s Public Works Department, provided a brief history of the Point Defiance Bypass Project to date. The Bypass project is part of the larger Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor Project and a summary of the project and goals are highlighted as follows:

- The \$89 million Point Defiance Bypass Project is part of the larger Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor Project funded by the Federal Railroad Administration.
- The intent of the project is to move non-freight rail service off the existing BNSF waterfront track between Tacoma and Nisqually.
- Passenger rail will share the Sound Transit commuter rail line between Freighthouse Square and South Tacoma (66th Street).
- A 3.5 mile second track will be constructed next to the Sound Transit track between South Tacoma and Lakewood.
- The existing track between Lakewood and Nisqually will be improved.
- The Tacoma Amtrak Station will be relocated, possibly to Freighthouse Square.
- At current service levels, 12 Amtrak Cascade and two Starlight service trips would use this daily; Sound Transit operates 18 trains per day between Freighthouse Square and Lakewood.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed by WSDOT and submitted to the US Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration on October 1, 2012, for review and ruling. In November of 2102, Tacoma Public Works and the Community and Economic Development Departments prepared a letter for the City Manager for submittal to WSDOT providing comments to the Point Defiance Bypass EA. The City supported the inland route and relocating Amtrak Station to Freighthouse Square.

However, the City expressed concerns that there may be blockages of East 'D' and East 'C' Streets by the 1,200 foot long Coast Starlight train each evening. As a result, the City has requested additional analysis to review impacts and mitigation. The new Amtrak Station should be planned to increase density in the Dome District and not create a less dense, suburban-type development. Additional surface parking is not the best use of land and is not acceptable in the core of the Dome District. The EA should recognize and analyze potential impacts of parking and provide mitigation. In addition, the EA should review train noise and vibration, review the use of quiet zones and wayside horns for all Tacoma crossings, review rail crossing safety at all crossings, and review impacts to traffic congestion and safety at the arterial crossings.

Informal Discussion

After listening to the summary provided by Chris Larson, the group engaged in informal discussion about the project and the next steps to take in the process. Discussion points from the group included:

- Concerns about the blockage of 'C' and 'D' Streets, especially during events at the Tacoma Dome
- Emergency response (Police, Fire) times may be affected due to traffic or street blockages
- The desire to promote a multi-modal transit hub and dense development in the area rather than increase surface parking lots
- An interest in structured parking in association with mixed-use development is desired
- Noise from trains needs to be addressed
- Exploring the option of utilizing the existing trestle/viaduct to the east for the Amtrak trains to provide an area to stop the trains without blocking traffic
- A desire to visualize potential alternatives for the Amtrak station with representatives from the AIA

Next Meeting

- Update on Sound Transit's trestle/viaduct – Chelsea Levy, Sound Transit
- Principles of transit-oriented development and update – Tina Lee, Pierce Transit
- AIA's Ten Principles for Livable Communities – Aaron Winston, BRBL Architects
- History of planning in the Dome District – Ian Munce

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on March 11, 2013 at the Tacoma Municipal Building in Room 708 at 4:30 pm.