

**Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion
Tacoma, Washington
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2014)**

| Summary Description | |
|---|---|
| Proposed Project: | Light Rail 2.4 Miles, 6 Stations |
| Total Capital Cost (\$YOE): | \$166.01 Million |
| Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE): | \$74.99 Million (45.2%) |
| Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2021): | \$4.80 Million |
| Current Year Ridership Forecast (2013): | 4,100 Daily Linked Trips 1,212,700 Annual Linked Trips |
| Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2035): | 8,600 Daily Linked Trips 2,106,900 Annual Linked Trips |
| Overall Project Rating: | Medium-High |
| Project Justification Rating: | Medium |
| Local Financial Commitment Rating: | High |

Project Description: The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) proposes to extend the Tacoma Link light rail line by 2.4 miles. The existing Tacoma Link light rail travels 1.6 miles through downtown Tacoma. The proposed project will extend the line from the existing Theater District Station into a historic business district known as the Stadium District, through the Medical Mile, which is a complex of hospitals, to the Hilltop District, a historically diverse neighborhood. The project would include transit signal priority, five vehicles, and six new stations. During weekdays, service would operate every 10 minutes during peak hours and every 20 minutes during off-peak and evening periods. On weekends, service would operate every 10 minutes.

Project Purpose: The project will improve mobility and access to the regional transit system for Tacoma residents, employees, and visitors by connecting the existing Tacoma Link system with the City's major activity centers and destinations. The project will serve traditionally underserved populations and neighborhoods in Tacoma while providing economic benefit to the City as a whole. It will serve the "Medical Mile" hospital complex, which includes Tacoma General, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital, Community Health Care Center, and St. Joseph's Medical Center.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: FTA approved the project into project development in August 2014. Sound Transit expects to select a locally preferred alternative (LPA) in early 2015, and get it adopted into the region's fiscally constrained long range transportation plan in early 2015. Sound Transit anticipates completion of the environmental review process with a Documented Categorical Exclusion in February 2015, receipt of a Small Starts Grant Agreement in late 2015, and the start of revenue service in 2021.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

| <u>Source of Funds</u> | <u>Total Funds (\$million)</u> | <u>Percent of Total</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Federal: | | |
| Section 5309 Small Starts | \$74.99 | 45.2% |
| FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation Air Quality) | \$5.33 | 3.4% |
| FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Program) | \$0.27 | |
| Section 5307 Formula Funds | \$6.00 | 3.6% |
| Local: | | |
| Sound Transit Local Tax Revenue | \$51.01 | 30.7% |
| City of Tacoma Local Tax Revenue and other Contributions | \$28.40 | 17.1% |
| Total: | \$166.00 | 100.0% |

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population and employment densities within ½-mile of proposed station areas, as well as the share of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the corridor compared to the share in the surrounding county(ies).

- Average population density across all station areas is 7,600, which corresponds to a medium rating according to FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is 27,100, corresponding to a low rating.
- The proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the county through which the project travels is 4.67, which corresponds to a high rating.
- The average daily parking cost in the central business district (CBD) is \$9.15, which corresponds to a medium rating. Existing parking supply in the CBD is 21,300 spaces or about 0.7 spaces per employee, which corresponds with a low rating.
- The existing project corridor/station area features a diversity of land uses, including mixed retail/commercial space, schools, medical centers, parks, and single- and multifamily residential development.
- The sidewalk network within ½-mile of the proposed stations is nearly 100 percent complete. There are sidewalks on both sides of every block accessing each proposed station. Many sidewalks have been significantly improved in the last few years, with new landscaping, wider sidewalks, street trees, curb ramps, bulbouts, and improved marked crossings.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The project is within downtown Tacoma, which is a designated Regional Growth Center per regional growth management and transportation plans. These plans project population to roughly triple in the alignment’s study area by 2035. Three subarea plans move forward with regional and municipal plans to support transit-oriented development, reduce parking, and enhance pedestrian-friendly design.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Existing zoning in most station areas already supports moderate-to-high density mixed use development. Parking requirements are reduced for developments near transit stops and mixed use zones allow for additional building heights for the incorporation of public benefit features, including ground floor street frontage and transit stop improvements.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Public outreach efforts included stakeholder and technical advisory groups, direct mailings, open houses, advertisements, and more. Tacoma’s multifamily property tax exemption program was established to encourage multifamily housing in Hilltop and Stadium mixed-use centers and 15 other mixed-use centers. Downtown On The Go, sponsored in part by Pierce Transit, the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, also reaches out to financial institutions and major employers in its efforts to promote living and working in downtown Tacoma. The City of Tacoma has implemented a Transfer of Development Rights program in its mixed-use centers and downtown zoning districts.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Forty-one separate developments have been built within the station areas since 2003. These developments are all categorized as mixed-use, multifamily residential, medical, office, or hotel. Nineteen separate developments are planned or proposed for the station areas. Just over 2,200 residential units were added over a decade to a base of approximately 6,000 study area households, suggesting a growth rate of approximately 3.1 percent annually.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* The corridor has capacity for just over

30,000 new households and just under 57,000 new employees, with current zoning in place. Downtown Tacoma appears well-positioned to capture an increasing share of regional employment growth due to its similar amenity profile and considerable price/rent advantage. The overall household projected growth rate for the City of Tacoma overall is 2.1 percent annually between 2010 and 2035. For the project corridor, the rate is much higher, at 4.7 percent annually.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium

- Tacoma presently needs an estimated 14,100 additional affordable housing units for its present population of low-income households who are paying unaffordable amounts for housing. Tacoma has several tools for encouraging developers to build and maintain affordable housing, including height bonuses, tax exemptions, loans for repair, rehabilitation, homebuyer assistance, and affordable housing development, affordability covenants, and rent controls. Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan has also proposed using accessory dwelling units as a tool to implement affordable housing, while increasing density.

TACOMA LINK EXPANSION

TACOMA, WA

PROJECT MAP



Legend

- Proposed Stations
- Existing Stations
- Existing Alignment
- Proposed Alignment
- Existing Operations and Maintenance Facility Site
- Proposed Operations and Maintenance Facility Expansion Site
- Rail Line
- Existing Bus Route
- Park



Date: 9/19/2014