



June 15, 2020

The Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Tacoma
747 Market Street, Suite 1200
Tacoma, WA 98402

RE: Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group – Progress Report No. 1

Honorable Mayor Woodards and Members of the City Council,

On behalf of the Tacoma Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG), we are submitting our Progress Report No. 1 (attached). This document summarizes and outlines our progress to date and in particular relays our thoughts and recommendations concerning the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) project to Sound Transit in a timely manner, as the project is quickly moving into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process.

The TODAG is a broad-based advisory group established by the City Council on April 16, 2019, per Resolution No. 40303, to review and make recommendations on the various projects impacting regional and local public transportation facilities in neighborhoods and business districts where transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities are transpiring. We are currently tasked to review three projects, i.e., the TDLE, the Pierce Transit Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, and the City's pending Puyallup Avenue design project.

Since our first monthly meeting in August 2019, we have been focusing our reviews and deliberations on the TDLE project, for reasons stated in the opening paragraph. Our monthly meeting agendas have consisted of detailed evaluation, presentation and discussion with various organizations, case study analysis, and review and analysis of existing relevant reports and documents. We also conducted a walking tour and on-site discussion of the Tacoma Dome Station Area in February 2020.

To guide our review and assessment of the TDLE project, we developed the following Design Principles, which are based on Sound Transit's Guiding Principles while providing a clearer emphasis on local social, cultural and equity considerations:

- (1) Multimodal Connectivity
- (2) Economic Development Opportunities
- (3) Placemaking/Urban Form
- (4) Social + Cultural Impacts
- (5) Community Benefit

As detailed in the attached Progress Report No. 1, we offer the following preliminary recommendations:

- A. Design Principles** – The above mentioned five Design Principles, along with the respective subsets of criteria, have proven to be a very practical and effective tool that guided us through the review of the TDLE project. We will continue to apply these principles for the review of other TOD related projects. We recommend that Sound Transit incorporate the five Design Principles into the TDLE's EIS process.
- B. Tacoma Dome Station Area** – For the Tacoma Dome Station area, we recommend that the "Close-to-Sounder" alignment and station option be the Preferred Alternative. We believe it exemplifies the optimal realization of the five Design Principles and represents a consensus of our group's deliberations. Conditions exist with this recommendation, as it will involve air-rights



Mayor and City Council

TODAG Progress Report No. 1

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considerations over existing private property or possibly the acquisition of the Freighthouse Square site. Either way this will require the development of public/private partnerships and development agreements. Critical to this option will be the development of interlocal agreements between Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma to ensure that the areas between East 'G' Street and East 'D' Street under the elevated tracts and station above, will be developed with retail and other pedestrian-oriented uses at street-level along the East 25th Street frontage, with possible mixed-use office/housing uses above.

- C. East Tacoma Station Area** – For the East Tacoma Station area, we defer our recommendation at this time, since we feel further study and engagement with the Puyallup Tribe and WSDOT are required for making a sound recommendation. We expect to formulate our recommendations for this station area in a subsequent Progress Report No. 2 in the near future.
- D. Future Considerations** – As we continue to stay engaged in the TDLE and other significant projects, we recommend that the Puyallup Tribe and WSDOT be invited to actively participate in our dialogue and review process, especially at the East Tacoma Station Area. We also recommend that the City of Tacoma build on this unique opportunity and advance TOD in these areas by pursuing and updating effective planning and development activities, such as but not limited to: subarea master planning, massing analysis, connectivity and accessibility analysis, integration of transportation and land use, parking studies, public/private partnership strategies, and capital improvement program and financing strategies.

This Progress Report No. 1 is being forwarded to the City's Transportation Commission, as Resolution No. 40303 requires that "proposals by the TODAG will be forwarded to and reviewed by the City's Transportation Commission, for concurrence with adopted transportation and land use plans and policies." We are hereby respectfully soliciting the Commission's feedback on the report. We are confident that our thoughts and recommendations are consistent with all TOD-related policies of the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan.

This Progress Report No. 1 is also being forwarded to Sound Transit's project development director for the TDLE. We hereby request that this report be incorporated into the DEIS process as part of the public comments. We also acknowledge and appreciate that Sound Transit has been well represented in our monthly meetings and deliberations.

We appreciate the opportunity to reflect the community vision and the values of Tacoma on this important project through the collective expertise, knowledge, talents and passion of the TODAG membership. We are optimistic for a great future for the Dome District and the East Tacoma area. If you have any questions about this submittal, please contact TODAG's staff liaison, Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, Planning and Development Services Department, at (253) 573-2389 or bboudet@cityoftacoma.org.

Respectfully,



Imad H. Bahbah, RA, SARA
Chair of TODAG

Enclosure: TODAG Progress Report No. 1, May 2020

- c. Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, Planning and Development Services Department
Tacoma Planning Commission
Tacoma Transportation Commission
Curvie Hawkins Jr., TDLE Project Development Director, Sound Transit



TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY GROUP

PROGRESS REPORT NO. 1

May 2020

A. Executive Summary

About This Report

This Progress Report No. 1 summarizes and outlines the accomplishments to date and the next steps of the Tacoma Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG). In particular, the report delivers the TODAG's current thoughts and recommendations concerning Sound Transit's Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) project, which is moving into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) phase. This report includes the following sections:

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Evaluation Methodology
- C. Sites Under Consideration
- D. Recommendations
- E. Next Steps
- F. Membership

Establishment of TODAG

The TODAG is a broad-based advisory group established by the City Council on April 16, 2019, per Resolution No. 40303, to review and make recommendations on the various projects impacting regional and local public transportation facilities in neighborhoods and business districts where TOD opportunities are transpiring. The TODAG is currently tasked to review three projects, i.e., the TDLE, the Pierce Transit Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, and the City of Tacoma's Puyallup Avenue design project. The TODAG's website, which includes membership information and meeting agenda, presentations, and notes, is: www.cityoftacoma.org/TODAdvisoryGroup.

Evaluation Methodology and Design Principles

The TODAG has been meeting monthly since August 2019 (up until March when meetings were temporarily placed on-hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and focusing our reviews and deliberations on the TDLE project. Our monthly meeting agendas have consisted of detailed evaluation, presentation and discussion with various organizations, case study analysis, and review and analysis of existing relevant reports and documents. We conducted a walking tour and on-site discussion of the Tacoma Dome Station Area in February 2020.

We developed five Design Principles along with review criteria to guide our review and assessment of the TDLE project. These principles and criteria have proven to be a very practical and effective tool, which we will continue to apply for the review of other TOD-related projects. The five design principles are:

- (1) Multimodal Connectivity
- (2) Economic Development Opportunities
- (3) Placemaking/Urban Form



- (4) Social + Cultural Impacts
- (5) Community Benefit

Recommendations

The TODAG offers the following recommendations concerning the TDLE project:

1. Design Principles:

We recommend that Sound Transit incorporate the above-mentioned five Design Principles into the TDLE's DEIS process.

2. Tacoma Dome Station Area:

For the Tacoma Dome Station area, we recommend that the "Close-to-Sounder" alignment and station option be the Preferred Alternative. We believe it exemplifies the optimal realization of the five Design Principles and represents a consensus of our group's deliberations. Conditions exist within this recommendation, which can be found in the body of this report. At the same time, the other 3 station locations have been identified as adding negative attributes to the neighborhood. See the body of this report for details.

3. East Tacoma Station Area:

For the East Tacoma Station area, we defer our recommendation at this time, since we feel further study and engagement with the Puyallup Tribe and WSDOT are required for making a sound recommendation. We also recognize that the two design alternatives still under consideration are fairly similar.

4. Future Considerations:

We recommend that the Puyallup Tribe and WSDOT be invited to actively participate in our dialogue and review process, especially at the East Tacoma Station Area.

We also recommend that the City of Tacoma build on the opportunities in both station areas by continuing to pursue effective planning and development activities and implementation strategies.

We appreciate the opportunity to reflect the community vision and the values of Tacoma on this important project through the collective expertise, knowledge, talents and passion of the TODAG membership. We are optimistic for a great future for the Dome District and the East Tacoma area.

This report is prepared and submitted by Imad Bahbah, Chair, and Donald Erickson, Vice-Chair, as entrusted by the TODAG membership and with technical assistance provided by staff of the City's Planning and Development Services Department.

B. Evaluation Methodology

Governance and Guidance

1. The Tacoma Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG) is a broad-based advisory group established by the City Council to review and make recommendations on the various projects impacting regional and local public transportation facilities in neighborhoods and business districts where TOD opportunities are transpiring.
(City Council Resolution No. 40303, April 16, 2019, establishing TODAG)
2. The TODAG is tasked to review three major projects: the Sound Transit Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE), the Pierce Transit Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, and the City's pending Puyallup Avenue design project.
(City Council Resolution No. 40303, April 16, 2019, establishing TODAG)
3. The TODAG is to provide a multiparty venue for the discussion of the project details from the TDLE and the BRT, somewhat comparable to the earlier Amtrak Station Design Citizen Advisory Committee that helped make recommendations about design considerations, routing, and how to leverage the transit to promote TOD in the Dome District.
(Comment by Councilmember Robert Thoms, District 2, August 19, 2019)
4. Having additional citizen input into the design of these major transit projects is very useful, which could help shape future transportation funding decisions.
(Comment by State Representative Jake Fey, Transportation Committee Chair, August 19, 2019)
5. For the TDLE to truly function as a catalyst for transit-oriented development, the system, and particularly the stations, must be developed as "development-oriented transit" – a system designed to maximize the opportunities for dense development and limit the impacts to the function of the urban environment, particularly in well-established, high-intensity, mixed-use urban areas and neighborhoods such as the Dome District of Tacoma's Downtown Regional Growth Center.
(Part of City Council's comments on the EIS Scoping for TDLE, Resolution No. 40346, June 11, 2019)

Leadership and Administration

The TODAG meets on the 3rd Monday of each month, at 4:00 p.m., and has met on the following dates: August 19, September 16, October 21, November 18, and December 16 of 2019, and January 27 and February 24 of 2020. The scheduled meetings in March, April and May 2020 were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The TODAG elected Imad Bahbah as the Chair and Donald Erickson as the Vic-Chair at the meeting on January 27, 2020. In the absence of a presiding officer, all meetings in 2019 were facilitated by Keith Walzak, VIA Architecture. Staffing support has been provided by the City's Planning and Development Services Department.

Agendas, notes and review materials associated with these meetings are posted on the TODAG's website at www.cityoftacoma.org/TODAdvisoryGroup.

Evaluation Methodology

Since August 2019, we have been focusing our reviews and deliberations on the TDLE project. Our monthly meeting agendas have consisted of detailed evaluation, presentation and discussion with various organizations, case study analysis, and review and analysis of existing relevant reports and documents. We also conducted a walking tour and on-site discussion of the Tacoma Dome Station Area on February 24, 2020.

Listed below are some of the subjects reviewed and discussed:

- TDLE Status Report (presented by City staff, 8/19/19)
- Tacoma Dome Area Visioning (VIA Architecture, 8/19/19)
- Sound Transit ST3, TDLE and Tacoma Hilltop Link Expansion (Sound Transit, 11/18/19)
- Dome District TOD – Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel Report (ULI, 11/18/19)
- Amtrak Station Design Context (Don Erickson, 11/18/19)
- Tacoma Dome District Overview (City staff, 12/16/19)
- Station Design Best Practices – Design Principles and Case Studies (VIA Architecture, 12/16/19)
- TDLE Station Design Concepts (Sound Transit staff, 12/16/19 and 1/27/20)
- Walking Tour – Tacoma Dome Station Area (Imad Bahbah, 2/24/20)
- Additional resources referred to TODAG members for review:
 - South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS (document)
 - Sound Transit TDLE (website)
 - Pierce Transit BRT (website)
 - The Urbanist (article)
 - Railway Age (article)
 - The Suburban Times (article)
 - City of Tacoma websites for Planning and Development Services, Community and Economic Development, Public Works, and Tacoma Venues

Design Principles and Evaluation Matrix

We have also developed five Design Principles along with the respective subsets of criteria to guide our review and assessment of the TDLE project. These principles and criteria have proven to be a very practical and effective tool, which we will continue to apply for the review of other TOD related projects.

The five design principles are:

- (1) Multimodal Connectivity
- (2) Economic Development Opportunities
- (3) Placemaking/Urban Form
- (4) Social + Cultural Impacts
- (5) Community Benefit

Depicted on the next two pages are a summary of the five design principles and the associated criteria (Figure 1), followed by an example of how these principles and criteria are used to evaluate the TDLE station design options (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Design Principles and Review Criteria
(Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group, December 2019)

TACOMA DOME LINK EXTENSION STATION LOCATION AND DESIGN REVIEW CRITERIA/PRINCIPLES

Sound Transit is seeking input on the 6 preliminary station locations and design concepts as presented as part of the Draft EIS process. The TODAG is asked to consider Sound Transit's proposed Guiding Principles as well as the Design Principles presented and provide input on the preliminary designs. The TODAG input is NOT intended compare the 6 alternatives at this time (that will happen later in the process), but rather provide input on each alternative presented, taking into consideration how the preliminary, high-level station and track alignments may be adjusted (basic layout, location, station components, and access features), if at all, to better address the Design Principles below.

Multi Modal Connectivity

- Does the option enable *multiple modal connections* in close proximity to the station location?
- Does the option provide *direct and safe connections* between the station and Sounder, Tacoma Link, city bus, Amtrak Station and others?
- Does the option provide for *legible wayfinding and navigation*?
- Does the option optimize *pedestrian and bike safety / security*?
- Does the option help improve traffic management (access to parking, Amtrak Station, Tacoma Link, businesses, residential uses, and Dome entertainment activities)?

Economic Development Opportunities

- Is the station located in a way to *stimulate development / redevelopment* opportunities?
- Does the option provide for opportunities to support *new mix-use, affordable housing and/or civic spaces* adjacent to the station site?
- Will the station location help promote *employment* opportunities in the area?

Placemaking / Urban Form

- Does the option provide for a unique *placemaking experience*?
- Does the station provide for a potential *iconic architectural response* (if desired?)
- Does the option enhance the *District neighborhood identity*?
- Does the option provide for a *signature amenity space or other public spaces*?

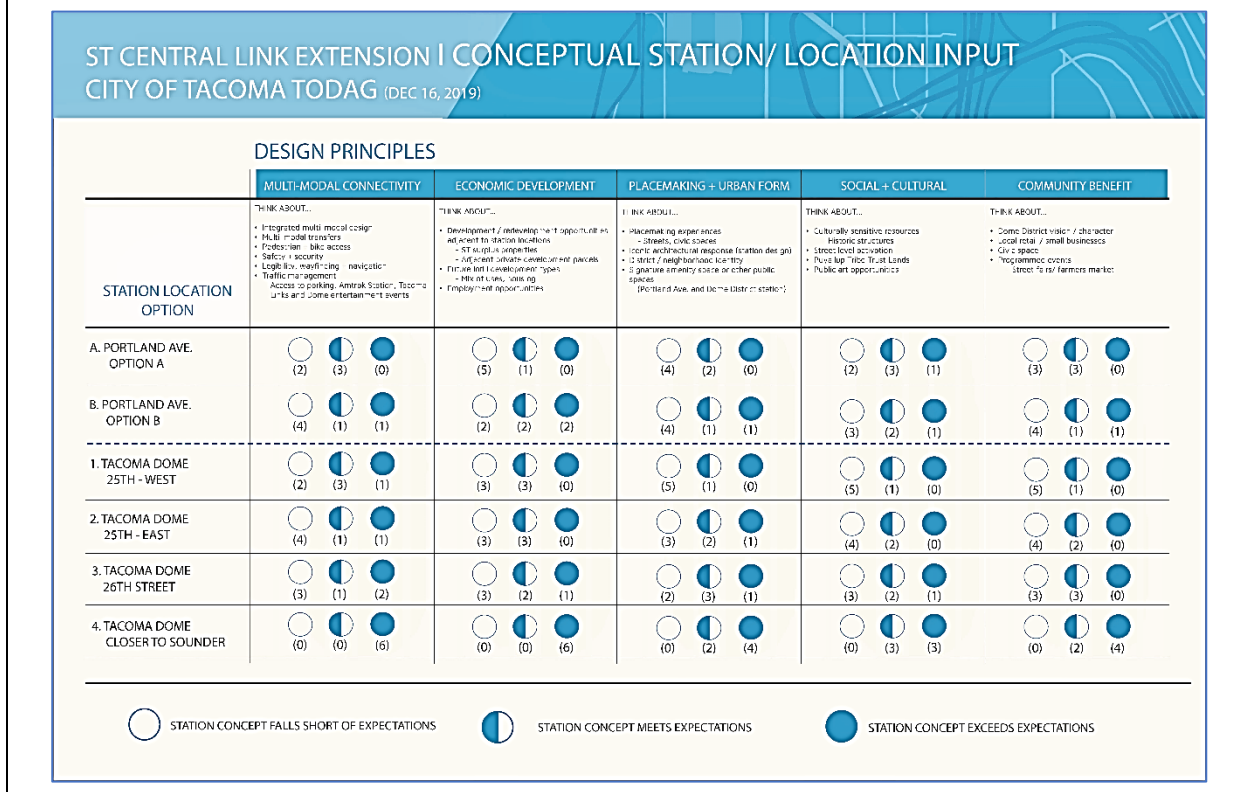
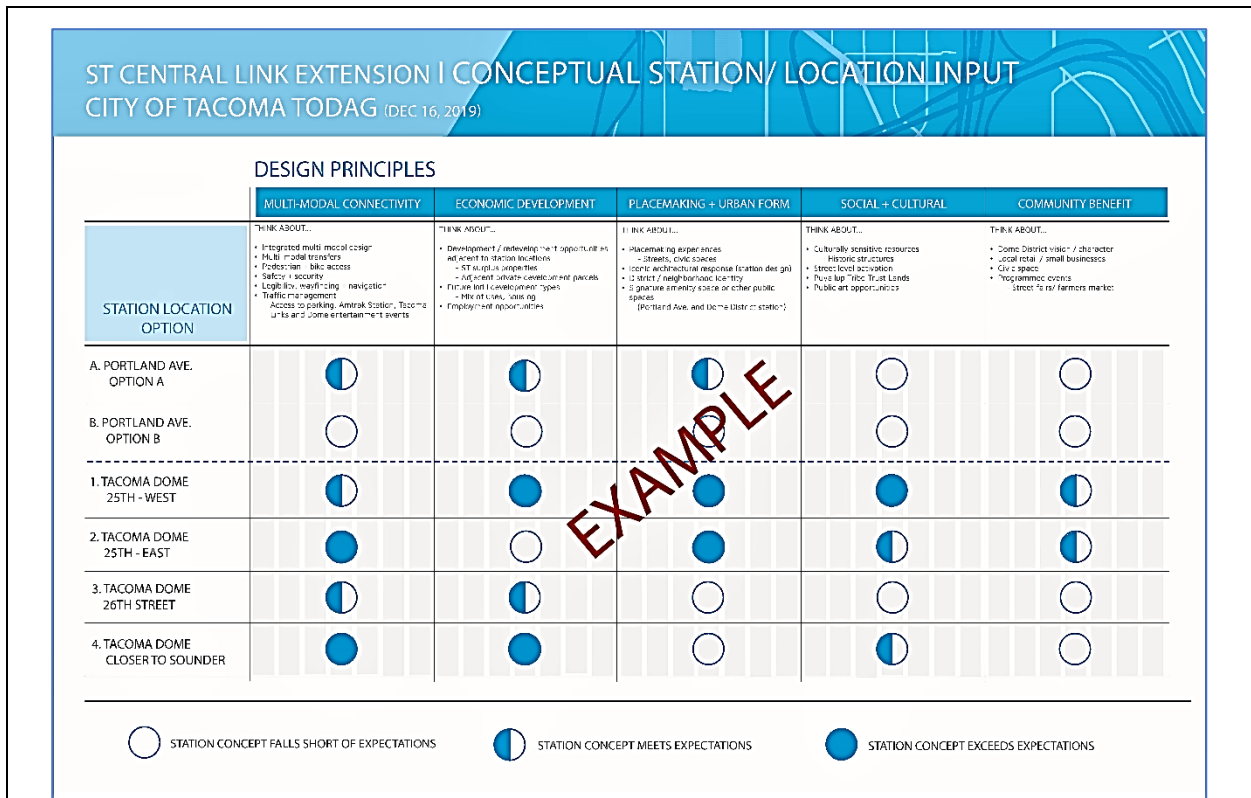
Social + Cultural

- Does the option support local *culturally sensitive / significant resources* (building structures)?
- Does the option provide for *street level activation*?
- Does the option provide opportunities for future *public art* enhancements?

Community Benefit

- Is the option consist with the District's *vision and character* objectives?
- Does the option support *local retail businesses* at and around the station location?
- Does the option provide opportunities for future *programmed events*?
(Farmers markets, Dome events)

Figure 2. Evaluation Matrix
 (Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group, December 2019)

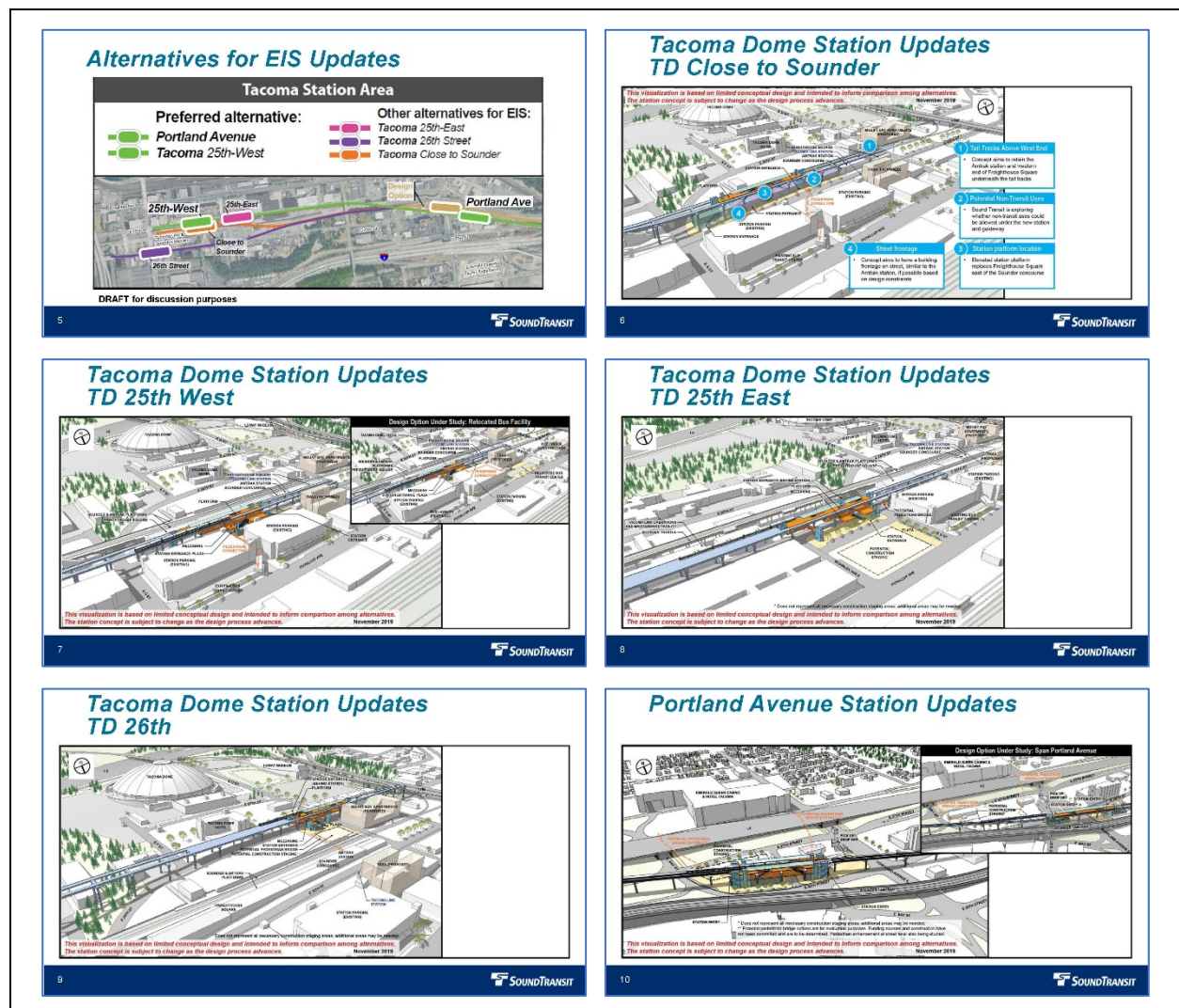


C. Sites Under Consideration

The TODAG reviewed the following six station location alternatives and the associated preliminary design concepts (all with an elevated station platform), the first four in the Tacoma Dome Station Area and the last two in the East Tacoma Station Area, as also illustrated in Figure 3:

1. **Tacoma Dome Close to Sounder** – Located between Freighthouse Square and the Sounder railroad tracks, along the eastern half of the Freighthouse Square building;
2. **Tacoma Dome 25th West** – Located on East 25th St. to the west of East 'G' St.;
3. **Tacoma Dome 25th East** – Located on East 25th St. to the east of East 'G' St.;
4. **Tacoma Dome 26th** – Located on East 26th St. straddling East 'D' St.;
5. **Portland Avenue** – Located along East 26th St. to the east of Portland Ave.; and
6. **Span Portland Avenue** – Located along East 26th St. straddling Portland Ave.

Figure 3. TDLE Station Location Alternatives and Design Concepts
(Sound Transit, Tacoma Dome Link Extension, www.SoundTransit.org/TDLink, November 2019)



D. Recommendations

Through thoughtful evaluation and vigorous deliberations, members of the TODAG have reached a consensus on the follow recommendations concerning the TDLE project. We are submitting these recommendations to Sound Transit for their timely consideration as the TDLE project is moving forward into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement phase. We are also providing these recommendations to the Transportation Commission, as Resolution No. 40303 requires that “proposals by the TODAG will be forwarded to and reviewed by the City’s Transportation Commission, for concurrence with adopted transportation and land use plans and policies.” We are confident that our thoughts and recommendations are consistent with all TOD-related policies of the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan.

1. Design Principles:

We recommend that Sound Transit incorporate the above mentioned five Design Principles (also listed below) into the TDLE’s DEIS process: (1) Multimodal Connectivity, (2) Economic Development Opportunities, (3) Placemaking/Urban Form, (4) Social + Cultural Impacts, and (5) Community Benefit.

2. Tacoma Dome Station Area:

For the Tacoma Dome Station area, we recommend that the “Close-to-Sounder” alignment and station option be the Preferred Alternative. We believe it exemplifies the optimal realization of the five Design Principles and represents a consensus of our group’s deliberations.

Conditions exist with this recommendation, as it will involve air-rights considerations over existing private property or possibly the acquisition of the Freighthouse Square site. Either way, this will require the development of public/private partnerships and development agreements.

Critical to this option will be the development of interlocal agreements between Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma to ensure that the areas between East 'G' Street and East 'D' Street under the elevated tracts and station above, will be developed with retail and other pedestrian-oriented uses at street-level along the East 25th Street frontage, with possible mixed-use office/housing uses above.

In contrast, our group feels that the other three elevated station locations would create a negative urban environment in this neighborhood in many ways including;

- Hindering the pedestrian experience by creating dark, shadowy streetscapes
- Diminishing the vitality and viability of adjacent development sites because of a direct physical adjacency
- Reducing the potential for activated pedestrian and vehicular plazas, especially at the two East 25th St. station alternatives.
- Impacting traffic and parking by nature of a multi-story structure over the urban street grid
- Impacting vehicular and pedestrian traffic during Tacoma Dome events, especially at the East 26th St. station alternative.

3. East Tacoma Station Area:

For the East Tacoma Station area, we defer our recommendation at this time, since we feel further study and engagement with the Puyallup Tribe and WSDOT are required for making a sound recommendation. We expect to formulate our recommendation for this station area in a subsequent Progress Report No. 2 in the near future.

4. Future Considerations:

As we continue to stay engaged in the TDLE and other significant projects, we recommend that the Puyallup Tribe and WSDOT be invited to actively participate in our dialogue and review process, especially at the East Tacoma Station Area.

We also recommend that the City of Tacoma build on this unique opportunity and advance TOD in these areas by pursuing and updating effective planning and development activities, such as but not limited to: subarea master planning, massing analysis, connectivity and accessibility analysis, integration of transportation and land use, parking studies, public/private partnership strategies, and capital improvement program and financing strategies.

E. Next Steps

Moving forward, the first priority for the TODAG is to finalize our Work Plan for 2020-2021, based on the draft Work Plan for 2020 that we had started developing in December 2019. Once finalized, the work plan will provide a road map for us to continue fulfilling the directives from the City Council as set forth in Resolution No. 40303.

The TODAG Work Plan for 2020-2021 is expected to include the following work items, subject to modifications and further elaborations. Many of them are referenced in the section of “Recommendations” above, as part of the “Future Considerations.” These work items are numbered for easy reference, but not necessarily presented in order of priority:

1. Continue to review/monitor the Tacoma Dome Link Extension and relevant ST3 projects
2. Develop recommendations for TDLE’s East Tacoma Station
3. Review TDLE Station Design Concepts
4. Develop visualization concepts
5. Review Pierce Transit’s Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project
6. Review City’s Puyallup Avenue Design Project
7. Engage Puyallup Tribe and Washington State Department of Transportation in the TDLE review process, especially at the East Tacoma Station Area
8. Review Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel’s Dome District TOD Report
9. Develop TOD policies for the Dome District
10. Review Tacoma Dome District Parking and Access Report
11. Review Sound Transit and Pierce Transit ridership studies and projected ridership demographics for the light rail and local transit
12. Review upcoming development plans and new initiatives
13. Review Tacoma Link (“streetcars”) Hilltop Extension
14. Review City’s Street Operations & Maintenance Program
15. Define “Transit Oriented Development”
16. Review historic preservation and owner rehab programs in relation with TOD
17. Review affordable housing issues in relation with TOD
18. Conduct subarea master planning – updating the South Downtown Subarea Plan
19. Conduct massing analysis
20. Conduct connectivity and accessibility analysis
21. Conduct parking studies
22. Develop public/private partnership strategies
23. Review City’s and Pierce Transit’s infrastructure/capital improvement programs
24. Develop capital improvement program and financing strategies
25. Seek feedback from developers on TOD related pros/cons
26. Refine Dome District Urban Design Program Priorities
27. Explore the formation of a Public Development Authority

F. Membership

Members

- Imad Bahbah, Chair
- Donald Erickson, Vice-Chair
- Kim Bedier (Adam Cook, Alt.)
- Brendan Nelson
- James Ceccanti
- Daren Crabill
- David Daniello
- Kiara Daniels
- Ben Ferguson
- Ryan Givens
- Kerri Hill
- Rory Jens
- Chris Karnes
- Justin Leighton
- Evette Mason
- Janice McNeal
- Cathy Reines
- Roberta Schur
- Rick Semple
- Amber Stanley
- Andrew Strobel
- Micah Tucker

Supporting Staff

- Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, Planning and Development Services Department
- Ian Munce (retired), Planning and Development Services Department
- Lihuang Wung, Planning and Development Services Department
- BT Doan, Planning and Development Services Department
- Aubrey Pike, Planning and Development Services Department
- Pat Beard, Community and Economic Development Department
- Dana Brown, Public Works Department
- Keith Walzak, VIA Architecture

Transit Representatives

- Sue Comis, Sound Transit
- Austin Neilson, Sound Transit
- Andrew Austin, Sound Transit
- Tina Lee, Pierce Transit
- Rebecca Japhet, Pierce Transit

-END-