

Building A Better Bellevue



Public Hearing on MOU and Property Tax Increases To Pay for Light Rail

A public hearing is scheduled for **Monday, November 7th at 8:00 PM at Bellevue City Hall** seeking input on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Bellevue and Sound Transit and dramatically increased taxes to pay for a downtown tunnel and Transit Oriented Development.

- The MOU requires Bellevue to pay \$160 million in cash, assets and services towards a tunnel for the downtown because Sound Transit is in financial difficulty. We already pay, and will pay millions more in sales tax dollars and vehicle licensing fees to Sound Transit! In addition, our City has tacitly committed to nearly \$200 million in future debt and taxes for infrastructure support of light rail and transit oriented development in the Bel-Red corridor.
- The MOU authorizes a 30-foot wide light rail line swath on the east side of Bellevue Way in Mercer Slough Park and along the eastside of 112th Ave SE, in the shoreline. The track then crosses to the west side of 112th into the Surrey Downs neighborhood and Surrey Downs Park, **taking nearly 60 homes** in its route to Main Street. The **hundreds of homes left** in Enatai, Bellecrest, Bellefield Park, and Surrey Downs will be **negatively affected by train noise, visual impacts, and pre-condemnation blight**.
- The Bellevue City Council majority (Davidson, Lee, Wallace, Robertson) has voted **in favor of a freeway corridors alternative alignment** that runs east alongside I-90 across Mercer Slough, north on the abandoned BNSF railroad and then along I-405 and into Downtown, (aka B7R/C9T). This **alternative alignment avoids the extensive neighborhood and environmental impacts called for in the MOU**, and would close the South Bellevue Park & Ride lot that would **return 11.5 acres to Mercer Slough Park for park and wetland use**.
- **Sound Transit refuses this alignment** even though it benefits our environment, has far less impact on neighborhoods, is cheaper, has faster travel time and provides the same or better ridership. Reason -- **Sound Transit and its Board is driven by ideology that seeks increased residential densities along their rail lines**. (<http://www.betterbellevue.org>)
- **A variation of this alternative alignment, B7R/C14E**, provides an elevated downtown station adjacent to the freeway, which connects to the heart of the downtown via a covered moving sidewalk. This **avoids the disruption and expense of the tunnel and saves taxpayers over \$300 million**. (<http://crosscut.com/2010/03/02/eastside/19630/Why-Bellevue-s-Vision-Line-makes-some-sense/>)
- The **MOU requires the City of Bellevue to relinquish and waive its environmental standards and laws, permitting authority, noise ordinances, legal remedies, and Comprehensive Plan Policies**. This **would not be required with the B7R/C14E alternative**.
- Our City of Bellevue staff has proposed raising our city's debt ceiling to allow for more borrowing to finance the tunnel and the Bel-Red area development. In addition **the revenue proposal includes raising the city property tax by 3% each year for nine years. By the ninth year your city property tax will be 31% higher**. And our city's ability to fund future parks, sidewalks, and other neighborhood improvements will be severely compromised for many years.
- **Loss of revenue** to our downtown businesses, as a result of tunnel construction disruption, is estimated by Hebert Research **to exceed \$900 Million**. 1 out of 3 businesses will lose more than 1/4 of their revenue, many will close permanently, and **more than 2,700 downtown workers will lose their jobs**. (<http://www.FastForwardBellevue.com>)
- **Urge our City Council to do the right thing -- reject this MOU and demand that Sound Transit adopt B7R/C14E**, – the regional transportation corridors routing that was promised when voters supported Eastlink in 2008.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!

Your input is required on this MOU before it is finalized including thoughts on the freeway corridors alternative and on raising our property taxes to pay for the downtown tunnel. Please attend the hearing, write, or e-mail the Bellevue City Council with your comments for the record. Thoughtful comments and e-mails are effective. council@bellevuewa.gov

Please try to carpool as parking space is limited.

UNPRECEDENTED INTERFERENCE BY SEATTLE INTERESTS IN BELLEVUE POLITICS

The Seattle Times' recent article (http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2016600157_bellevue25m.html) regarding the political involvement of Wright/Runstad failed to address the real issue: the infusion of tens of thousands of dollars by Seattle-based special interest groups in our elections. Their goal is simple: elect candidates that support Transit Oriented Development City-wide, beginning with South Bellevue's single-family neighborhoods.

What many Bellevue citizens are now coming to understand is that Transit Oriented Development efforts being pursued by these "out of towners" and by Sound Transit will:

- cost all of Bellevue's taxpayers multiple hundreds of \$millions of added property taxes for which we will receive little direct benefit;
- add to the tax costs already being paid to accomplish the downtown tunnel primarily for the benefit of the same out of town developers; and
- fundamentally and forever change the character of South Bellevue's neighborhoods, and of our City's single most significant environmental jewel - Mercer Slough Park.

Just think how Seattleites would protest if a similar rail line plan were proposed to run along the west side of Washington Arboretum, Seattle's environmental jewel, with its own unique and wonderful single-family homes across the street.

The City of Bellevue and its citizens, have offered, with well-founded research, an alternative for Sound Transit in South Bellevue that would completely avoid the catastrophe of neighborhood density up-zoning in South Bellevue's founding single family neighborhoods, as well as avoid the degradation of our City's Mercer Slough Park natural environment.

Nevertheless, Sound Transit, also another outsider, completely refuses to seriously consider this offered alternative, and has, in fact actively gamed the analysis to defeat its further consideration. Their justification — as was spoken so clearly and directly to representatives of South Bellevue neighborhoods by Sound Transit's own South Bellevue Project Director, Sue Comis ("**Why Would We Ever Do That, We Can't Do Any TOD Over There [on the B7 route]**") four years ago--is just one more piece of the evidence as to why Sound Transit, and its advisors are also now seeking to overturn the political interests of our Bellevue citizens.

The real battle here is over the issue of whether Bellevue taxpayers should subsidize Wright/Runstad's Transit Oriented Development project, in addition to paying for a tunnel we have already paid for with our sales taxes, and also likely having to pay to attempt, and most likely fail, to mitigate the unnecessary, unacceptable impacts of light rail in our Mercer Slough, and in our quiet neighborhoods.

Thank you for your attention. We would greatly appreciate your sharing this message with your friends and acquaintances across our City. We also thank you for your continued help in fighting this battle. Your donations, your continued attendance at these meetings, your letters to the City Council, and your help is most appreciated.

The Building A Better Bellevue Steering Committee