



West Seattle Link Extension

Final Environmental Impact Statement

West Seattle Link Extension | Final Environmental Impact Statement | September 2024

Sound Transit
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September 20, 2024

Dear Recipient:

The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Sound Transit (Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority) have prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed West Seattle Link Extension project. Sound Transit is the project proponent. The Final EIS was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 to 4370e) and the State Environmental Policy Act (Ch. 43.21C Revised Code of Washington) to inform Tribes, the public, agencies, and decision makers about the environmental consequences of building and operating the West Seattle Link Extension in the city of Seattle. This Final EIS examines project alternatives, including the preferred alternative identified by the Sound Transit Board in July 2022.

The Draft EIS published for the West Seattle Link Extension in January 2022 evaluated both the West Seattle Link Extension and the Ballard Link Extension together as one West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project. In July 2022, the Sound Transit Board directed that further studies be prepared for the Ballard Link Extension to evaluate additional station options and other refinements (Motion M2022-57). Some of these project options and refinements require additional conceptual engineering and environmental review. Rather than delay completion of the environmental review process for the West Seattle Link Extension while additional review is conducted for the Ballard Link Extension, Sound Transit and FTA have decided to move forward under separate environmental reviews for each extension.

As described in the Draft EIS, the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions will operate as separate lines, and the extensions are stand-alone projects with independent utility. Proceeding with separate environmental review processes for each extension enables Sound Transit and FTA to minimize delay in delivering the West Seattle Link Extension while further studies are undertaken on the Ballard Link Extension. Accordingly, this Final EIS is for the West Seattle Link Extension only. The Ballard Link Extension will undergo separate environmental review, building on the analysis already completed.

This West Seattle Link Extension Final EIS includes responses to comments received on the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft EIS that are specific to the West Seattle Link Extension or that would apply to both projects (See Appendix O, Draft EIS Comments). Comments specific to the Ballard Link Extension and those that apply to both projects will be responded to as part of the environmental review process for the Ballard Link Extension Project.

Major choices for the West Seattle Link Extension involve the route of the light rail line and station locations. The Sound Transit Board will consider the alternatives evaluated in the Final EIS, comments on the Draft EIS, and other information before selecting the project to be built. After the Sound Transit Board selects the project to build, FTA is expected to issue a Record of Decision, which will state FTA's decision on the project and list mitigation commitments to reduce or avoid impacts.

The printed Final EIS copies include a flash drive with appendices, technical reports, and responses to comments on the Draft EIS. The printed Final EIS Executive Summary copies include a flash drive with the main volume, appendices, technical reports and responses to comments. Please see the Final EIS Fact Sheet regarding availability of hard copies and who to contact for further information.

Sincerely,

Lauren Swift

Lauren Swift, Corridor Environmental and Business Operations Manager

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**WEST SEATTLE LINK EXTENSION
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Submitted pursuant to
the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 United States Code 4322(2)(c))
and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Ch. 43.21C Revised Code of Washington)
by the

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION
and
CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY**
(Sound Transit)
in cooperation with
UNITED STATES ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
PORT OF SEATTLE
CITY OF SEATTLE

8/5/2024

Date of Approval

Signed by:

Susan Fletcher

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Susan Fletcher, Regional Administrator
NEPA Responsible Official
For Federal Transit Administration, Region 10

8/5/2024

Date of Approval

Signed by:

Perry Weinberg

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Perry Weinberg, Deputy Executive Director
Office of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability
SEPA Responsible Official
For Sound Transit

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Fact Sheet

Proposed Action

The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) is proposing to expand Link light rail transit service along a 4.1-mile corridor from SODO to West Seattle. The West Seattle Link Extension Project (the project) would be within the city of Seattle in King County Washington, the most densely populated county of the Puget Sound region. The project would include stations at SODO, Delridge, Avalon, and Alaska Junction. The project is part of the Sound Transit 3 Plan, funding for which was approved by voters in 2016 (Sound Transit 2016).

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates multiple Build Alternatives in the project corridor, including different alignments and design options. The Final Environmental Impact Statement also includes a No Build Alternative. This allows an analysis of the potential impacts of not building the project and provides a basis for comparing the Build Alternatives to a future baseline condition. The Final EIS also includes a minimal operable segment from SODO to Delridge for analysis in the event the full project cannot be built at one time.

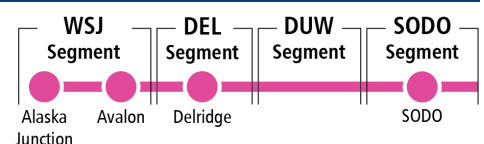
In 2022, the Sound Transit Board of Directors (Board) identified one preferred alternative or design option for each of the project segments. A preferred alternative is not a decision on the project to build; instead, it is a statement of preference based on currently available information. The Final EIS evaluates all alternatives, including a No Build Alternative. The Board is not bound by its identification of a preferred alternative. The Board will not make a final decision on the project to be built until after the Final EIS is issued. At that time, the Board may select from among any of the alternatives evaluated in the EIS.

Project Proponent

Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit)
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826
www.soundtransit.org

Dates of Construction and Opening

The West Seattle Link Extension is expected to open in 2032. When the Sound Transit Board identified alternatives for study in the Draft EIS, early cost estimates indicated that alternatives with a tunnel in West Seattle could have required additional funding; that is, funding beyond what was assumed in the Sound Transit 3 financing plan. Additional funding for these alternatives would have needed to come from contributions from partner agencies outside of Sound Transit, such as the City of Seattle or others. Since the publication of the Draft EIS, more specific cost estimates were reviewed by Sound Transit. Due to the rising price of real estate, tunnel alternatives would not necessarily cost more than elevated alternatives. However, based on current cost estimates and revenue projections, the preferred alternatives and design options for the West Seattle Link Extension are anticipated to exceed the assumptions in Sound Transit's realigned financial plan.



Sound Transit, City of Seattle, and King County acknowledge there may be shared responsibility to address the additional cost difference between the final project to be built and the realigned financial plan through either additional funding or cost-savings opportunities. As described in Sound Transit Board Motion 2023-57, the City of Seattle and King County provided letters to Sound Transit on March 23, 2023, indicating their intent to work with Sound Transit to further analyze costs and funding sources over the next year and develop funding terms in advance of the Board action to select a project to be built.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Lead Agency

Federal Transit Administration
915 2nd Avenue, Suite 3192
Seattle, Washington 98174-1002
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/regional-offices/region-10/region-10>

NEPA Responsible Official

Susan Fletcher, Regional Administrator for Region 10
Federal Transit Administration
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Seattle, Washington 98174-1002

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Responsible Official

Perry Weinberg, Deputy Director, Office of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability
Sound Transit
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826

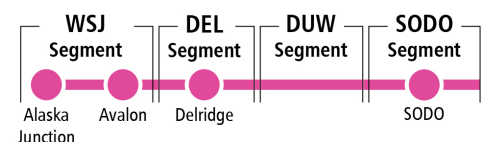
Contacts for Additional Information

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Federal Transit Administration

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Anticipated Permits and Approvals

Federal

Federal Transit Administration:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Final EIS and Record of Decision
- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review
- United States Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund 6(f) (if needed)

Federal Emergency Management Agency:

- Conditional Letter of Map Revision (if needed)
- Letter of Map Revision (if needed)

United States Army Corps of Engineers:

- Clean Water Act, Section 404
- Rivers and Harbors Act, Section 10
- United States Code Title 33 Section 408 Review

United States Coast Guard:

- United States Coast Guard Bridge Permit

United States Fish and Wildlife Service:

- Federal Endangered Species Review

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service:

- Federal Endangered Species Review
- Essential Fish Habitat Review
- Marine Mammal Take Incidental Harassment Authorization (if needed)

United States Department of the Interior:

- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review
- United States Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund 6(f) (if needed)

State, County, and Regional

Sound Transit:

- SEPA Project Approval

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:

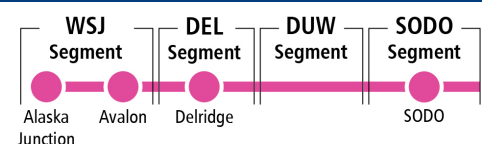
- Hydraulic Project Approval

Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation:

- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review

Washington State Department of Ecology:

- Coastal Zone Management Consistency Certification
- Dam Safety Permit (if needed)



- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Discharge Permit, Clean Water Act Section 402
- Underground Storage Tank 30-day Notice
- Wastewater Discharge Permit
- Water Quality Certification: Clean Water Act Section 401

Washington State Department of Ecology and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency:

- Notice of Construction (Air Quality)

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

- Aquatic Lands Lease

Washington State Department of Transportation:

- Air Space Lease
- Utility Franchise

Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund 6(f) (if needed)

City of Seattle

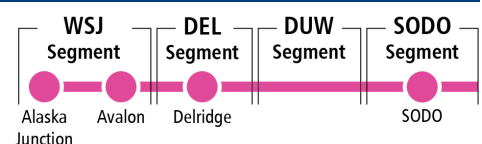
- Master Use Permits
- Construction permits, such as building, grading, and demolition permits
- Environmentally Critical Area Review, including wetlands, streams, steep slopes, critical habitat, and buffers
- Shoreline Substantial Development Permits
- Noise variances for construction
- Permanent, interim, or temporary street use permits
- Access or use easements for city-owned properties
- Reviews and approvals: Planning, Design, and local Landmark Districts
- Street or alley vacations and street improvement permits, including urban forestry permits
- Revocable use permit
- Utility major permits

Utility Providers:

- Pipeline and utility crossing permits
- Easements and use agreements

Principal Contributors

This EIS was prepared by consultants at the following firms: Jacobs Engineering Group, HNTB, Fehr and Peers, Heffron Transportation, Cross-Spectrum Acoustics, Michael Minor and Associates, Turner Engineering Company, Community Attributes, Irwin Writing/Editing, and EnviroIssues. See Appendix A for a detailed list of preparers.



Date of Issue of Final Environmental Impact Statement

September 20, 2024

Next Actions

Following publication of the Final EIS, the Sound Transit Board of Directors will select the West Seattle Link Extension project to build. After the Board's decision, FTA is expected to issue a Record of Decision.

Related Documents

- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Long-Range Plan Update (Sound Transit 2014)
- Sound Transit 3 Plan (Sound Transit 2016)
- WSBLE Early Scoping Information Report (Sound Transit 2018a)
- WSBLE Early Scoping Summary Report (Sound Transit 2018b)
- WSBLE Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 Alternatives Development reports (Sound Transit 2018c, 2018d, 2019a)
- WSBLE Scoping Information Report (Sound Transit 2019b)
- WSBLE Scoping Summary Report (Sound Transit 2019c)
- WSBLE Initial Assessment Results (Sound Transit 2019d)
- West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Sound Transit 2022)

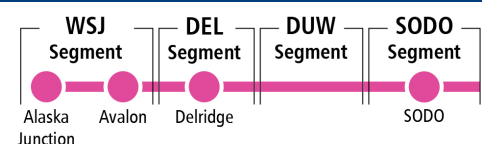
All the above Sound Transit documents are available on the Sound Transit website, www.soundtransit.org.

Cost of Document and Availability for Review and/or Purchase

The Final EIS is available for public review in a variety of formats and locations. It is available on the Sound Transit website (<https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/west-seattle-link-extension>) and <https://wslink.participate.online/>. It is also available on a flash drive at no cost. Paper copies are available for the cost listed below, which does not exceed the cost of reproduction:

- Executive Summary – free
- Final EIS – \$25.00
- Technical Reports – \$15.00 each
- Conceptual Design Drawings – \$15.00

Paper copies of these documents are available for review or purchase at the Sound Transit offices, Union Station, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington, 98104. To request any of the documents, please contact Dominique Jones at (206) 689-4783 or



Dominique.jones@soundtransit.org. To review them, please call the Sound Transit librarian at (206) 398-5344 weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to arrange an appointment.

Paper and flash drive copies of the Final EIS documents are also available for review at the following public places:

- King County Library System:
 - Burien Library, 400 Southwest 152nd Street, Burien, WA 98166
 - White Center Library, 1409 Southwest 107th Street, Seattle, WA 98146
- Seattle Public Libraries:
 - Beacon Hill Branch, 2821 Beacon Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144
 - Central Library, 1000 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104
 - Columbia City Branch, 4721 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118
 - Delridge Branch, 5423 Delridge Way Southwest, Seattle, WA 98106
 - High Point Branch, 3411 Southwest Raymond Street, Seattle, WA 98126
 - International District Branch, 713 8th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98104
 - New Holly Branch, 7058 32nd Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118
 - Rainier Beach Branch, 9125 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118
 - Southwest Branch, 9010 35th Avenue Southwest, Seattle, WA 98126
 - West Seattle Branch, 2306 42nd Avenue Southwest, Seattle, WA 98116
 - University of Washington-Suzzallo Libraries, 4000 15th Avenue Northeast, Seattle, WA 98195

Appeals

Washington SEPA challenges to this Final EIS are governed by Sound Transit Resolution R2018-17 and the SEPA rules and regulations (Chapter 43.21C Revised Code of Washington and Washington Administrative Code 197-11-680). Sound Transit Resolution R1018-17 is available online at:

https://www.soundtransit.org/st_sharepoint/download/sites/PRDA/FinalRecords/2018/Resolution%20R2018-17.pdf.

As provided in Resolution R2018-17, appeals of SEPA determinations must be made in writing by filing a letter of appeal and paying the required fee within 14 days following the date the environmental document is issued under SEPA. Letters of appeal should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, Sound Transit, Union Station, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington 98104-2826. For this Final EIS, appeals must be received by Sound Transit on or before 5:00 p.m. on October 4, 2024. Additional details about the appeals process and requirements are set out in Resolution R2018-17 and in the SEPA rules and regulations.

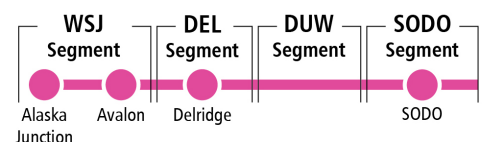
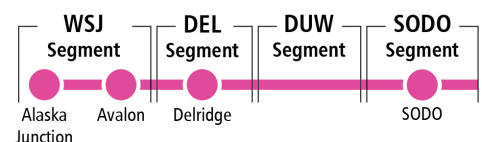
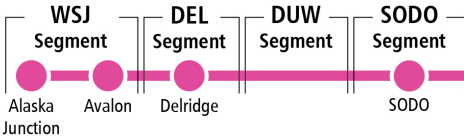


Table of Contents

FACT SHEET	III
1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR WEST SEATTLE LINK EXTENSION.....	1-1
1.1 West Seattle Link Extension Project.....	1-1
1.2 Purpose and Need for the West Seattle Link Extension Project	1-4
1.2.1 Purpose of the West Seattle Link Extension Project	1-4
1.2.2 Need for the West Seattle Link Extension Project.....	1-4
1.3 Planning History of West Seattle Link Extension Corridor	1-11
1.4 Applying the Purpose and Need to the Project.....	1-12
1.5 Next Steps and Schedule.....	1-12
1.5.1 Final Environmental Impact Statement and Project Decision.....	1-12
1.5.2 Project Schedule	1-13
1.5.3 Benefits and Disadvantages of Delaying Implementation	1-13
1.5.4 The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Continuing Importance of Transit	1-14
2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED	2-1
2.1 Build Alternatives	2-2
2.1.1 Sound Transit Board Direction on Modified EIS Alternatives	2-4
2.1.2 Components of Build Alternatives.....	2-4
2.1.3 Build Alternatives and Design Options.....	2-13
2.2 No Build Alternative	2-50
2.3 Operations and Maintenance	2-50
2.3.1 Vehicles and Operation	2-50
2.3.2 Maintenance.....	2-51
2.4 Minimum Operable Segment.....	2-52
2.5 Alternatives Development and Scoping.....	2-52
2.5.1 Development of Draft EIS Alternatives.....	2-53
2.5.2 NEPA and SEPA Scoping Process.....	2-54
2.5.3 Alternatives Carried Forward for Evaluation in the Draft EIS.....	2-54
2.5.4 Alternatives Not Carried Forward for Evaluation in the Draft EIS	2-56
2.6 Draft EIS Public and Agency Comments Suggesting New or Modified Alternatives.....	2-56
2.7 Construction Approach.....	2-59
2.7.1 Construction Sequence and Activities.....	2-60
2.7.2 Typical Construction Activities	2-61
2.7.3 Elevated Light Rail Construction.....	2-63
2.7.4 At-grade Light Rail Construction	2-64



- 2.7.5 Retained-Cut Light Rail Construction.....2-64
- 2.7.6 Tunnel Light Rail Construction.....2-64
- 2.7.7 Bridge Light Rail Construction – Over-water Crossings2-66
- 2.7.8 Temporary Light Rail Track Construction.....2-67
- 2.7.9 Staging Areas and Construction Easements.....2-68
- 2.7.10 Duration of Construction Activities2-69
- 2.8 Environmental Practices and Commitments..... 2-69
- 2.9 Project Funding and Cost Comparison..... 2-70
 - 2.9.1 Project Funding2-70
 - 2.9.2 Cost Comparison.....2-70
- 3 TRANSPORTATION ENVIRONMENT AND CONSEQUENCES3-1**
 - 3.1 Summary 3-1
 - 3.2 Introduction and Methodology and Assumptions 3-3
 - 3.3 Regional Context and Travel..... 3-6
 - 3.3.1 Affected Environment and Operation Impacts.....3-6
 - 3.3.2 Construction Impacts.....3-8
 - 3.3.3 Mitigation.....3-8
 - 3.4 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Transit..... 3-9
 - 3.4.1 Affected Environment3-9
 - 3.4.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-11
 - 3.4.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-11
 - 3.4.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-17
 - 3.5 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Arterial and Local Street Operations 3-17
 - 3.5.1 Affected Environment3-17
 - 3.5.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-19
 - 3.5.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-19
 - 3.5.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-28
 - 3.6 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Parking 3-32
 - 3.6.1 Affected Environment3-32
 - 3.6.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-32
 - 3.6.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-32
 - 3.6.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-36
 - 3.7 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Non-motorized Facilities..... 3-37
 - 3.7.1 Affected Environment3-37
 - 3.7.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-37
 - 3.7.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-38
 - 3.7.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-42



3.8 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Safety 3-43

 3.8.1 Affected Environment3-43

 3.8.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-44

 3.8.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-44

 3.8.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-47

3.9 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Navigation..... 3-47

 3.9.1 Affected Environment3-48

 3.9.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-50

 3.9.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-51

 3.9.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-53

3.10 Affected Environment and Impacts during Operation – Freight Mobility
and Access 3-53

 3.10.1 Affected Environment3-54

 3.10.2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative3-54

 3.10.3 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives3-54

 3.10.4 Mitigation for Operation Impacts3-56

3.11 Construction Impacts 3-56

 3.11.1 Impacts Common to All Alternatives3-57

 3.11.2 SODO Segment3-61

 3.11.3 Duwamish Segment3-64

 3.11.4 Delridge Segment.....3-72

 3.11.5 West Seattle Junction Segment.....3-78

 3.11.6 Mitigation for Construction Impacts.....3-85

3.12 Indirect Impacts..... 3-90

 3.12.1 Regional Travel3-90

 3.12.2 Transit Service and Operations3-90

 3.12.3 Arterial and Local Street Operations, Freight, Parking,
Non-motorized Facilities, and Safety3-91

 3.12.4 Mitigation for Indirect Impacts.....3-91

4 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.....4-1

4.1 Acquisitions, Displacements, and Relocations 4.1-1

 4.1.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.1-1

 4.1.2 Affected Environment4.1-2

 4.1.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.1-2

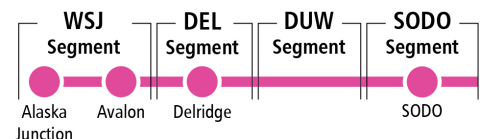
 4.1.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation...4.1-2

 4.1.4.1 SODO Segment4.1-6

 4.1.4.2 Duwamish Segment4.1-6

 4.1.4.3 Delridge Segment.....4.1-7

 4.1.4.4 West Seattle Junction Segment.....4.1-7



4.1.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.1-8

4.1.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.1-8

4.1.7 Mitigation Measures 4.1-9

4.1.8 Sound Transit Real Property Acquisition and Relocation Policy, Procedures, and Guidelines Summary 4.1-9

4.1.9 Relocation Opportunities 4.1-10

4.2 Land Use 4.2-1

4.2.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.2-1

4.2.2 Affected Environment 4.2-1

4.2.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.2-4

4.2.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation 4.2-5

4.2.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.2-11

4.2.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.2-11

4.2.7 Mitigation Measures 4.2-14

4.3 Economics 4.3-1

4.3.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.3-1

4.3.2 Affected Environment 4.3-1

4.3.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.3-5

4.3.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation 4.3-5

4.3.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.3-15

4.3.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.3-20

4.3.7 Mitigation Measures 4.3-22

4.4 Social Resources, Community Facilities, and Neighborhoods..... 4.4-1

4.4.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.4-1

4.4.2 Affected Environment 4.4-1

4.4.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.4-12

4.4.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation. 4.4-12

4.4.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.4-20

4.4.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.4-23

4.4.7 Mitigation Measures 4.4-23

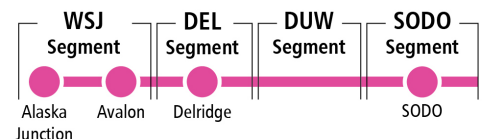
4.5 Visual and Aesthetic Resources..... 4.5-1

4.5.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.5-1

4.5.2 Affected Environment 4.5-2

4.5.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.5-5

4.5.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation... 4.5-5



4.5.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.5-30

4.5.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.5-31

4.5.7 Mitigation Measures 4.5-31

4.6 Air Quality 4.6-1

4.6.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.6-1

4.6.2 Affected Environment 4.6-1

4.6.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.6-4

4.6.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation... 4.6-4

4.6.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.6-6

4.6.6 Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change 4.6-7

4.6.7 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.6-11

4.6.8 Mitigation Measures 4.6-11

4.7 Noise and Vibration..... 4.7-1

4.7.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.7-1

4.7.2 Affected Environment 4.7-7

4.7.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.7-12

4.7.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation. 4.7-12

4.7.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.7-21

4.7.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.7-25

4.7.7 Mitigation Measures 4.7-25

4.8 Water Resources 4.8-1

4.8.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.8-1

4.8.2 Affected Environment 4.8-1

4.8.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.8-6

4.8.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation... 4.8-6

4.8.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.8-12

4.8.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.8-14

4.8.7 Mitigation Measures 4.8-14

4.9 Ecosystems 4.9-1

4.9.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements..... 4.9-1

4.9.2 Affected Environment 4.9-1

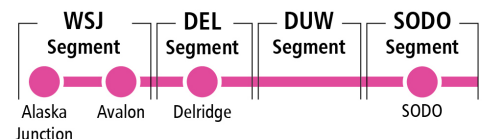
4.9.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative 4.9-7

4.9.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation... 4.9-8

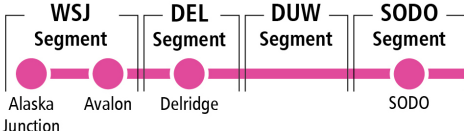
4.9.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction 4.9-14

4.9.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives 4.9-18

4.9.7 Mitigation Measures 4.9-18



- 4.10 Energy Impacts..... 4.10-1
 - 4.10.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.10-1
 - 4.10.2 Affected Environment4.10-1
 - 4.10.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.10-3
 - 4.10.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation4.10-3
 - 4.10.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.10-4
 - 4.10.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.10-5
 - 4.10.7 Mitigation Measures4.10-5
- 4.11 Geology and Soils..... 4.11-1
 - 4.11.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.11-1
 - 4.11.2 Affected Environment4.11-1
 - 4.11.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.11-4
 - 4.11.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation.4.11-4
 - 4.11.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.11-7
 - 4.11.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.11-9
 - 4.11.7 Mitigation Measures4.11-9
- 4.12 Hazardous Materials 4.12-1
 - 4.12.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.12-1
 - 4.12.2 Affected Environment4.12-1
 - 4.12.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.12-4
 - 4.12.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation.4.12-5
 - 4.12.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.12-10
 - 4.12.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.12-14
 - 4.12.7 Mitigation Measures4.12-14
- 4.13 Electromagnetic Fields..... 4.13-1
 - 4.13.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.13-1
 - 4.13.2 Affected Environment4.13-1
 - 4.13.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.13-1
 - 4.13.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operations.....4.13-2
 - 4.13.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.13-3
 - 4.13.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.13-4
 - 4.13.7 Mitigation Measures4.13-4
- 4.14 Public Services, Safety, and Security..... 4.14-1
 - 4.14.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.14-1
 - 4.14.2 Affected Environment4.14-1



4.14.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.14-7

4.14.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation.4.14-7

4.14.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.14-11

4.14.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.14-14

4.14.7 Mitigation Measures4.14-14

4.15 Utilities 4.15-1

4.15.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.15-1

4.15.2 Affected Environment4.15-1

4.15.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.15-2

4.15.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation.4.15-2

4.15.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.15-3

4.15.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.15-5

4.15.7 Mitigation Measures4.15-5

4.16 Historic and Archaeological Resources..... 4.16-1

4.16.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.16-1

4.16.2 Affected Environment4.16-2

4.16.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.16-5

4.16.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation and Construction.....4.16-6

4.16.5 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.16-20

4.16.6 Mitigation Measures4.16-25

4.17 Parks and Recreational Resources..... 4.17-1

4.17.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.17-1

4.17.2 Affected Environment4.17-1

4.17.3 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative4.17-6

4.17.4 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Operation.4.17-7

4.17.5 Environmental Impacts of the Build Alternatives during Construction4.17-16

4.17.6 Indirect Impacts of the Build Alternatives4.17-20

4.17.7 Mitigation Measures4.17-21

4.18 Section 4(f) Summary 4.18-1

4.18.1 Introduction to Resource and Regulatory Requirements.....4.18-1

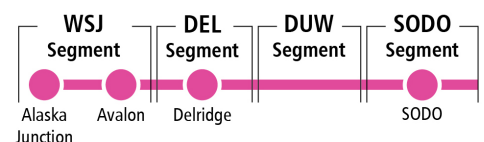
4.18.2 Affected Environment4.18-3

4.18.3 Section 4(f) Uses4.18-5

4.18.4 Avoidance Alternatives4.18-10

4.18.5 Measures to Minimize Harm4.18-10

4.18.6 Least Harm Analysis.....4.18-11



5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS5-1

5.1 Geographic and Temporal Boundaries of Cumulative Analysis 5-2

5.2 Past and Present Actions..... 5-3

 5.2.1 Past Actions5-3

 5.2.2 Present Development.....5-4

5.3 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions 5-5

5.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis 5-5

 5.4.1 Transportation5-6

 5.4.2 Acquisitions, Displacements, and Relocations.....5-8

 5.4.3 Land Use.....5-9

 5.4.4 Economics.....5-10

 5.4.5 Social Resources, Community Facilities, and Neighborhoods5-12

 5.4.6 Visual and Aesthetic Resources5-13

 5.4.7 Air Quality.....5-14

 5.4.8 Noise and Vibration5-16

 5.4.9 Water Resources.....5-17

 5.4.10 Ecosystems.....5-17

 5.4.11 Energy Impacts5-19

 5.4.12 Geology and Soils5-19

 5.4.13 Hazardous Materials.....5-19

 5.4.14 Electromagnetic Fields5-20

 5.4.15 Public Services, Safety, and Security5-20

 5.4.16 Utilities.....5-21

 5.4.17 Historic and Archaeological Resources5-21

 5.4.18 Parks and Recreational Resources5-22

5.5 Potential Mitigation Measures for Cumulative Impacts 5-23

6 ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION.....6-1

6.1 Meeting the Purpose and Need for West Seattle Link Extension..... 6-1

 6.1.1 Need #1: Increasing Roadway Congestion will Further Degrade Transit Performance and Reliability6-1

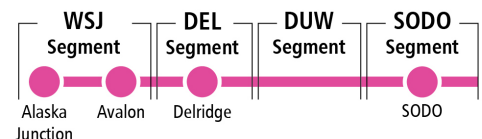
 6.1.2 Need #2: Regional Transit Capacity Constraints6-1

 6.1.3 Need #3: Regional and Local Plans Call for High-Capacity Transit.....6-2

 6.1.4 Need #4: Long-term Regional Mobility and Multi-modal Connectivity for the Region’s People and Communities Including Transit-Dependent People, Low-Income People, and Communities of Color.....6-2

 6.1.5 Need #5: Increased Density at High-Capacity Transit Stations and Increased Multi-modal Access6-3

 6.1.6 Need #6: State and Regional Environmental and Sustainability Goals.....6-3



6.2	Comparison of Alternatives	6-3
6.2.1	No Build Alternative	6-3
6.2.2	Build Alternatives.....	6-4
6.3	Benefits and Disadvantages of Delaying Implementation.....	6-20
6.4	Commitment of Resources.....	6-20
6.5	Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts	6-20
6.6	Areas of Controversy and Issues to be Resolved.....	6-21
7	COMMENT SUMMARY.....	7-1
7.1	Overview of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comment Period.....	7-1
7.2	Overview of Comments.....	7-1
7.2.1	SODO Segment	7-2
7.2.2	Duwamish Segment	7-3
7.2.3	Delridge Segment.....	7-3
7.2.4	West Seattle Junction Segment.....	7-4
7.3	Responses to Common Comments.....	7-4

Tables

Table 1-1	History of High-capacity Transit/Light Rail Planning in the West Seattle Link Extension Corridor	1-7
Table 2-1	Summary of West Seattle Link Extension Alternatives and Design Options Evaluated in the Final EIS.....	2-16
Table 2-2	Weekday Service Schedule	2-51
Table 2-3	West Seattle Link Extension Alternatives and Design Options Carried Forward.....	2-55
Table 2-4	Summary of Comments Asking for New or Modified Alternatives.....	2-56
Table 2-5	Major Construction Activities and Duration.....	2-69
Table 2-6	Estimated West Seattle Link Extension Cost Comparison in 2024 Dollars	2-71
Table 3-1	Transportation Key Findings	3-1
Table 3-2	Average Weekday Vehicle Miles Traveled, Vehicle Hours Traveled, and Vehicle Hours of Delay in 2042.....	3-7
Table 3-3	2042 SODO Segment Station Daily Boardings	3-14
Table 3-4	2042 West Seattle Junction Segment Station Daily Boardings.....	3-14
Table 3-5	2042 P.M. Peak Hour Station Trip Generation by Mode (Boardings and Alightings).....	3-15
Table 3-6	Bus Passenger Load Level of Service – 2042.....	3-17
Table 3-7	Potentially Impacted Intersections to be Considered for Mitigation.....	3-29

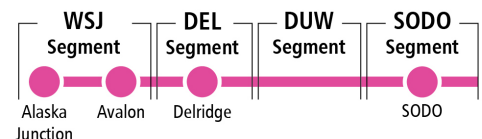


Table 3-8	On-Street Parking in Hide-and-Ride Study Areas.....	3-33
Table 3-9	Displaced On-Street Parking.....	3-35
Table 3-10	Key Existing Restrictions to Navigation on the Duwamish Waterway	3-51
Table 3-11	Key Construction Roadway Closures – SODO Segment.....	3-62
Table 3-12	Key Construction Roadway Closures for All Alternatives – Duwamish Segment.....	3-64
Table 3-13	Key Construction Roadway Closures – Delridge Segment.....	3-73
Table 3-14	Key Construction Roadway Closures – West Seattle Junction Segment.....	3-79
Table 4.1-1	Number of Potential Parcels Permanently Affected and Displaced during Operation, by Alternative – SODO Segment	4.1-3
Table 4.1-2	Number of Potential Parcels Permanently Affected and Displaced during Operation, by Alternative – Duwamish Segment	4.1-3
Table 4.1-3	Number of Potential Parcels Permanently Affected and Displaced during Operation, by Alternative – Delridge Segment	4.1-4
Table 4.1-4	Number of Potential Parcels Permanently Affected and Displaced during Operation, by Alternative – West Seattle Junction Segment.....	4.1-5
Table 4.2-1	Potential Permanent Conversion of Land Use to a Transportation-Related Land Use – SODO Segment.....	4.2-7
Table 4.2-2	Potential Permanent Conversion of Land Use to a Transportation-Related Land Use – Duwamish Segment.....	4.2-7
Table 4.2-3	Potential Permanent Conversion of Land Use to a Transportation-Related Land Use – Delridge Segment	4.2-8
Table 4.2-4	Potential Permanent Conversion of Land Use to a Transportation-Related Land Use – West Seattle Junction Segment	4.2-9
Table 4.3-1	Percent of Total General Fund Revenues for the City of Seattle, 2021	4.3-3
Table 4.3-2	Estimated Property Acquisition Impacts on Businesses and Employees from the West Seattle Link Extension.....	4.3-7
Table 4.3-3	Estimated Share of Property Acquisition Impacts on Employees from the West Seattle Link Extension by Land Use Type	4.3-8
Table 4.3-4	Estimated Direct Expenditures and Direct Employment from West Seattle Link Extension Construction.....	4.3-17
Table 4.4-1	West Seattle Link Extension Study Area Demographics	4.4-10
Table 4.4-2	Mural Displacements by Alternative, SODO and Duwamish Segments.....	4.4-15
Table 4.5-1	Duwamish Segment Visual Impacts to Concentrations of Sensitive Viewers.....	4.5-8
Table 4.5-2	Delridge Segment Visual Quality Impacts to Concentrations of Sensitive Viewers.....	4.5-12
Table 4.5-3	West Seattle Junction Segment Visual Quality Impacts to Concentrations of Sensitive Viewers.....	4.5-28

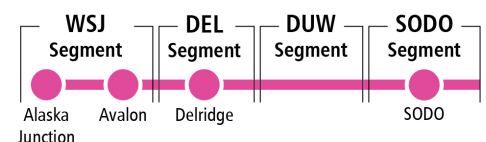


Table 4.6-1	Regional Vehicle Miles Traveled and Average Daily Traffic Change	4.6-5
Table 4.6-2	Greenhouse Gas Operational Emissions from Project Operation in Year 2042 (Metric Tons Carbon Dioxide Equivalent per Year)	4.6-8
Table 4.6-3	Greenhouse Gas Emissions during Construction.....	4.6-8
Table 4.7-1	Typical 24-hour Day-night Sound Levels and Land Use Compatibility.....	4.7-3
Table 4.7-2	Typical Vibration Level in Decibels and Human/Structural Responses.....	4.7-4
Table 4.7-3	Noise and Vibration Land Use Categories for Assessment	4.7-6
Table 4.7-4	Light Rail Noise Impacts – Duwamish Segment.....	4.7-13
Table 4.7-5	Groundborne Noise and Vibration Impacts – Duwamish Segment.....	4.7-14
Table 4.7-6	Light Rail Noise Impacts – Delridge Segment	4.7-17
Table 4.7-7	Groundborne Noise and Vibration Impacts – Delridge Segment	4.7-19
Table 4.7-8	Light Rail Noise Impacts – West Seattle Junction Segment	4.7-20
Table 4.7-9	Groundborne Noise and Vibration Impacts – West Seattle Junction Segment	4.7-21
Table 4.7-10	Recommended Noise Mitigation	4.7-26
Table 4.7-11	Recommended Groundborne Noise and Vibration Mitigation.....	4.7-28
Table 4.8-1	Summary of New Impervious Areas for West Seattle Link Extension Alternatives	4.8-8
Table 4.8-2	Summary of Bridge Guideway Column Volumes in the Duwamish Waterway.....	4.8-10
Table 4.8-3	Summary of Construction Impacts to the Duwamish Waterway	4.8-14
Table 4.9-1	Listed Species and Species of Concern Potentially Occurring in the Study Area.....	4.9-8
Table 4.9-2	Long-term Impacts to Ecosystems – Duwamish Segment.....	4.9-10
Table 4.9-3	Long-term Impacts to Ecosystems – Delridge Segment.....	4.9-13
Table 4.9-4	Construction Impacts to Ecosystems – Duwamish Segment.....	4.9-15
Table 4.9-5	Construction Impacts to Ecosystems – Delridge Segment	4.9-17
Table 4.10-1	Energy Consumption by Surface Transportation Mode for the No Build and Build Alternatives	4.10-2
Table 4.10-2	Energy Model Inputs.....	4.10-4
Table 4.10-3	Estimated Energy Consumed During Construction	4.10-5
Table 4.12-1	Number of Hazardous Materials Sites by Alternative – SODO Segment	4.12-2
Table 4.12-2	Number of Hazardous Materials Sites by Alternative – Duwamish Segment	4.12-2
Table 4.12-3	Number of Hazardous Materials Sites by Alternative – Delridge Segment ..	4.12-2
Table 4.12-4	Number of Hazardous Materials Sites by Alternative – West Seattle Junction Segment.....	4.12-3

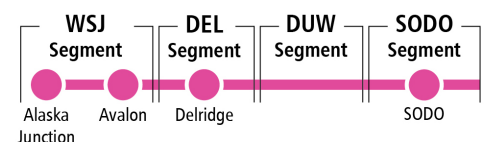
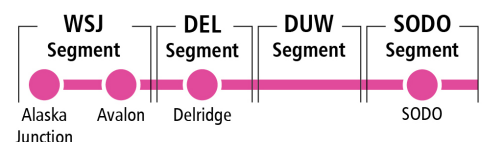


Table 4.12-5	Potential High-Risk Sites Affected by Alternative – SODO Segment.....	4.12-12
Table 4.12-6	Potential High-Risk Sites Affected by Alternative – Duwamish Segment....	4.12-13
Table 4.12-7	Potential High-Risk Sites Affected by Alternative – Delridge Segment.....	4.12-15
Table 4.12-8	Potential High-Risk Sites Affected by Alternative – West Seattle Junction Segment.....	4.12-16
Table 4.14-1	Public Service Providers in Study Area	4.14-1
Table 4.15-1	Summary of Existing Utility Providers in the Study Area.....	4.15-1
Table 4.16-1	Historic Built Environment Resources within the Area of Potential Effects.....	4.16-4
Table 4.16-2	Archaeological Resources within 0.25 Mile of the Area of Potential Effects.....	4.16-5
Table 4.16-3	Effects to Built Environment Historic Properties: SODO Segment.....	4.16-9
Table 4.16-4	Effects to Built Environment Historic Properties: Duwamish Segment.....	4.16-10
Table 4.16-5	Effects to Built Environment Historic Properties: Delridge Segment.....	4.16-17
Table 4.16-6	Effects to Built Environment Historic Properties: West Seattle Junction Segment	4.16-21
Table 4.17-1	Permanent Impacts to Parks and Recreational Resources in the Duwamish Segment.....	4.17-7
Table 4.17-2	Permanent Impacts to Parks and Recreational Resources in the Delridge Segment.....	4.17-11
Table 4.17-3	Temporary Impacts to Parks and Recreational Resources in the Duwamish Segment.....	4.17-16
Table 4.17-4	Temporary Impacts to Parks and Recreational Resources in the Delridge Segment.....	4.17-18
Table 4.18-1	Summary of Section 4(f) Resources in the Study Area.....	4.18-5
Table 4.18-2	Summary of Section 4(f) Use Determinations by Alternative for the Duwamish Segment.....	4.18-6
Table 4.18-3	Summary of Section 4(f) Use Determinations by Alternative for the Delridge Segment.....	4.18-7
Table 4.18-4	Section 4(f) Use Determinations by Alternative for the West Seattle Junction Segment.....	4.18-9
Table 6-1	Projected Ridership and Key Impact Differences – SODO Segment.....	6-5
Table 6-2	Key Impact Differences – Duwamish Segment	6-8
Table 6-3	Projected Ridership and Key Impact Differences – Delridge Segment.....	6-12
Table 6-4	Projected Ridership and Key Impact Differences – West Seattle Junction Segment	6-16
Table 6-5	West Seattle Link Extension Estimated Capital Costs.....	6-18
Table 7-1	Responses to Common Comments on WSBLE Draft EIS.....	7-5



Figures

Figure 1-1	West Seattle Link Extension Project Corridor	1-2
Figure 1-2	Link Light Rail System Expansion	1-3
Figure 1-3	Project Milestones.....	1-13
Figure 2-1	Connecting West Seattle Link Extension to Regional Light Rail	2-3
Figure 2-2	Typical Elevated, At-Grade, and Retained-Cut Guideway	2-6
Figure 2-3	Typical Cut-and-Cover and Mined Tunnel Sections	2-7
Figure 2-4	Typical Stations – Elevated, At-Grade, Retained-Cut, and Tunnel	2-9
Figure 2-5	Typical Overhead Catenary System.....	2-10
Figure 2-6	Typical Traction Power Substation.....	2-10
Figure 2-7	Signal Bungalow	2-11
Figure 2-8	Crossover Tracks.....	2-11
Figure 2-9	Tail Tracks	2-11
Figure 2-11	Ventilation Structure.....	2-12
Figure 2-10	Hi-Rail Vehicle	2-12
Figure 2-12	West Seattle Link Extension Segments and Stations	2-13
Figure 2-13	Alternatives.....	2-14
Figure 2-14	SODO Segment Alternatives.....	2-18
Figure 2-15	Plan and Profile for Preferred At-Grade Lander Access Station Option (SODO-1c).....	2-19
Figure 2-16	Plan and Profile for At-Grade Alternative (SODO-1a).....	2-20
Figure 2-17	Plan and Profile for At-Grade South Station Option (SODO-1b).....	2-21
Figure 2-18	Plan and Profile for Mixed Profile Alternative (SODO-2).....	2-22
Figure 2-19	Duwamish Segment Alternatives	2-24
Figure 2-20	Plan and Profile for Preferred South Crossing Alternative (DUW-1a)	2-25
Figure 2-21	Plan and Profile for South Edge Crossing Alignment Option (DUW-1b)	2-26
Figure 2-22	Plan and Profile for North Crossing Alternative (DUW-2)	2-27
Figure 2-23	Delridge Segment Alternatives.....	2-29
Figure 2-24	Plan and Profile for Preferred Andover Street Station Lower Height South Alignment Option (DEL-6b).....	2-30
Figure 2-25	Plan and Profile for Dakota Street Station Alternative (DEL-1a).....	2-31
Figure 2-26	Plan and Profile for Dakota Street Station North Alignment Option (DEL-1b).....	2-32
Figure 2-27	Plan and Profile for Dakota Street Station Lower Height Alternative (DEL-2a).....	2-33

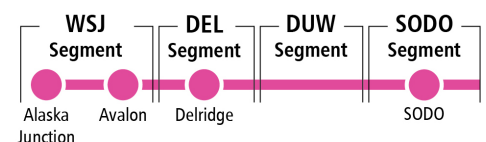


Figure 2-28	Plan and Profile for Dakota Street Station Lower Height North Alignment Option (DEL 2b).....	2-34
Figure 2-29	Plan and Profile for Delridge Way Station Alternative (DEL-3)	2-35
Figure 2-30	Plan and Profile for Delridge Way Station Lower Height Alternative (DEL-4).....	2-36
Figure 2-31	Plan and Profile for Andover Street Station Alternative (DEL-5).....	2-37
Figure 2-32	Plan and Profile for Andover Street Station Lower Height Alternative (DEL-6a).....	2-38
Figure 2-33	Plan and Profile for Andover Street Station Lower Height No Avalon Station Tunnel Connection (DEL-7)	2-39
Figure 2-34	West Seattle Junction Segment Alternatives.....	2-41
Figure 2-35	Plan and Profile for Preferred Medium Tunnel 41st Avenue Station West Entrance Station Option (WSJ-5b).....	2-42
Figure 2-36	Plan and Profile for Elevated 41st/42nd Avenue Station Alternative (WSJ-1)	2-43
Figure 2-37	Plan and Profile for Elevated Fauntleroy Way Station Alternative (WSJ-2).....	2-44
Figure 2-38	Plan and Profile for Tunnel 41st Avenue Station Alternative (WSJ-3a).....	2-45
Figure 2-39	Plan and Profile for Tunnel 42nd Avenue Station Option (WSJ-3b).....	2-46
Figure 2-40	Plan and Profile for Short Tunnel 41st Avenue Station Alternative (WSJ-4) ...	2-47
Figure 2-41	Plan and Profile for Medium Tunnel 41st Avenue Station Alternative (WSJ-5a).....	2-48
Figure 2-42	Plan and Profile for No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative (WSJ-6).....	2-49
Figure 2-43	Link Light Rail Train	2-51
Figure 2-44	Pigeon Point Typical Section.....	2-62
Figure 2-45	Construction of Guideway Columns	2-63
Figure 2-46	Construction of Elevated Guideway Showing False-work.....	2-63
Figure 2-47	Construction of Elevated Guideway Over Roadways	2-63
Figure 2-48	Retained-cut Construction.....	2-64
Figure 2-49	Tunnel Construction.....	2-64
Figure 2-50	Bridge Structure Types	2-67
Figure 2-51	Temporary Construction Tracks	2-67
Figure 2-52	Staging Area Adjacent to New Guideway Under Construction	2-68
Figure 3-1	Study Area and Screenlines.....	3-5
Figure 3-2	2042 Affected Intersections – Delridge Segment.....	3-25
Figure 3-3	2042 Affected Intersections – West Seattle Junction Segment.....	3-27
Figure 3-4	Existing and Planned Bike Facilities.....	3-39
Figure 3-5	Key Restrictions to Navigation, Duwamish Waterway – Duwamish Segment...	3-49

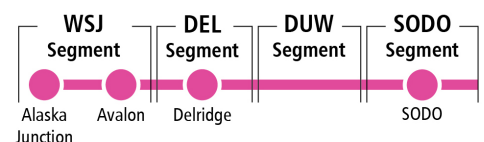


Figure 4.2-1 Future Land Use 4.2-2

Figure 4.4-1 Social Resources, SODO Segment..... 4.4-2

Figure 4.4-2 Social Resources, Duwamish Segment 4.4-3

Figure 4.4-3 Social Resources, Delridge Segment..... 4.4-4

Figure 4.4-4 Social Resources West Seattle Junction Segment..... 4.4-5

Figure 4.4-5 Neighborhoods 4.4-6

Figure 4.4-6 Snakes & Ladders, Mural by Jesse Brown, 2018 4.4-15

Figure 4.4-7 Escaping a Burning Culture, Mural by Baso Fibonacci and Jean Nagai, 2017 4.4-16

Figure 4.5-1. Visual Setting and Impacts – Duwamish Segment 4.5-7

Figure 4.5-2. Visual Setting and Impacts – Delridge Segment..... 4.5-11

Figure 4.5-3. Preferred Option DEL-6b: 32nd Avenue Southwest Converted to Cul-de-sac 4.5-13

Figure 4.5-4. Delridge Station 3D View for Alternative DEL-1a and Option DEL-1b 4.5-14

Figure 4.5-5. Delridge Station Cross Section for Alternative DEL-1a and Option DEL-1b... 4.5-14

Figure 4.5-6. Looking East along Southwest Genesee Street from Southwest Avalon Way..... 4.5-16

Figure 4.5-7. Delridge Station 3D View for Alternative DEL-2a and Option DEL-2b 4.5-18

Figure 4.5-8. Delridge Station Cross Section for Alternative DEL-2a and Option DEL-2b... 4.5-18

Figure 4.5-9. Delridge Station Cross Section for Alternative DEL-3 and Alternative DEL-4 4.5-19

Figure 4.5-10. Delridge Station 3D View for Preferred Option DEL-6b, Alternative DEL-6a, and Alternative DEL 7 4.5-21

Figure 4.5-11. Delridge Station Cross Section for Preferred Option DEL-6b, Alternative DEL-6a, and Alternative DEL 7 4.5-21

Figure 4.5-12. Visual Setting and Impacts – West Seattle Junction Segment..... 4.5-23

Figure 4.5-13. Preferred Option WSJ-5b: Looking South along 35th Avenue Southwest toward Intersection with Fautleroy Way Southwest 4.5-24

Figure 4.5-14. Avalon Station 3D View for Preferred Option WSJ-5b 4.5-25

Figure 4.5-15. Avalon Station Cross Section for Preferred Option WSJ-5b 4.5-25

Figure 4.5-16. Alaska Junction Station 3D View for Preferred Option WSJ-5b 4.5-27

Figure 4.5-17. Alaska Junction Station Cross Section for Preferred Option WSJ-5b 4.5-27

Figure 4.7-1 FTA Noise Impact Criteria 4.7-5

Figure 4.7-2 Noise Monitoring Locations and Vibration Measurement Sites, Duwamish Segment..... 4.7-9

Figure 4.7-3 Noise Monitoring Locations and Vibration Measurement Sites, Delridge Segment 4.7-10

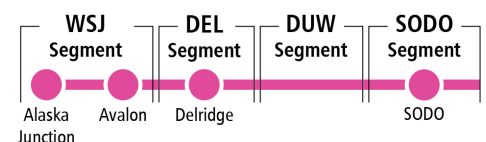
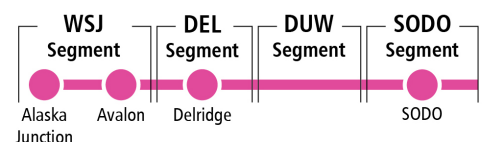


Figure 4.7-4	Noise Monitoring Locations and Vibration Measurement Sites, West Seattle Junction Segment	4.7-11
Figure 4.7-5	Noise and Vibration Impacts (before Mitigation), Duwamish Segment	4.7-15
Figure 4.7-6	Noise and Vibration Impacts (before Mitigation), Delridge Segment.....	4.7-16
Figure 4.7-7	Noise and Vibration Impacts (before Mitigation), West Seattle Junction Segment	4.7-22
Figure 4.8-1	Floodplains, Drainage Basins, and Outfalls.....	4.8-2
Figure 4.8-2	Siphoned Culvert at Southwest Genesee Street Dam Outlet	4.8-5
Figure 4.9-1	Ecosystem Resources – Duwamish Segment.....	4.9-2
Figure 4.9-2	Ecosystem Resources – Delridge Segment	4.9-3
Figure 4.12-1	High-Risk Hazardous Material Sites – SODO Segment	4.12-6
Figure 4.12-2	High-Risk Hazardous Material Sites – Duwamish Segment	4.12-7
Figure 4.12-3	High-Risk Hazardous Material Sites – Delridge Segment.....	4.12-8
Figure 4.12-4	High-Risk Hazardous Material Sites – West Seattle Junction Segment.....	4.12-9
Figure 4.14-1	Public Services – SODO Segment.....	4.14-2
Figure 4.14-2	Public Services – Duwamish Segment.....	4.14-3
Figure 4.14-3	Public Services – Delridge Segment	4.14-4
Figure 4.14-4	Public Services – West Seattle Junction Segment	4.14-5
Figure 4.16-1	Area of Potential Effects.....	4.16-3
Figure 4.17-1	Parks and Recreational Resources in the Study Area – Duwamish Segment	4.17-3
Figure 4.17-2	Parks and Recreational Resources in the Study Area – Delridge Segment	4.17-4
Figure 4.17-3	Parks and Recreational Resources in the Study Area – West Seattle Junction Segment	4.17-5
Figure 4.17-4	Harbor Marina Corporate Center at Terminal 102 Permanent and Construction Impacts – Duwamish Segment.....	4.17-8
Figure 4.17-5	West Duwamish Greenbelt and 22nd Avenue Southwest Street-end Permanent and Construction Impacts – Duwamish Segment.....	4.17-9
Figure 4.17-6	Delridge Playfield Permanent and Construction Impacts – Delridge Segment	4.17-11
Figure 4.17-7	View from Longfellow Creek Natural Area.....	4.17-12
Figure 4.17-8	Longfellow Creek Natural Area, Longfellow Creek Legacy Trail, and West Seattle Golf Course Permanent and Construction Impacts – Delridge Segment	4.17-14
Figure 4.17-9	View from West Seattle Golf Course	4.17-15
Figure 4.18-1	Section 4(f) Study Area	4.18-4



Appendices

Appendix A – List of Preparers

Appendix B – Distribution List

Appendix C – Acronyms and Abbreviations

Appendix D – Glossary

Appendix E – References

Appendix F – Public Involvement, Tribal Consultation, and Agency Coordination

Appendix G – Environmental Justice

Appendix H – Final Section 4(f) Evaluation

Appendix I – Mitigation Plan

Appendix J – Conceptual Design Drawings

Appendix K – Present and Future Development, Transportation, and Public Works Projects in the Study Area

Appendix L – Chapter 4 Supporting Information on Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts

L4.1 Acquisitions, Displacements, and Relocations

L4.2 Land Use

L4.3 Economics

L4.4 Social Resources

L4.6 Air Quality

L4.8 Water Resources

L4.11 Geology and Soils

L4.12 Hazardous Materials

L4.13 Electromagnetic Fields

L4.14 Public Services, Safety, and Security

L4.15 Utilities

L4.17 Parks and Recreational Resources

Appendix M – Summary of Alternatives Development and Initial Assessment Process

Appendix N – Technical Reports

N.1 Transportation Technical Report

N.2 Visual and Aesthetics Technical Report

N.3 Noise and Vibration Technical Report

N.4 Ecosystems Technical Report

N.5 Historic and Archaeological Resources Technical Report

Appendix O – Draft EIS Comment Summary and Response to Comments

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