

# MEYDENBAUER CENTER

Bellevue, Washington's Convention Center

February 2, 2009

Mayor Grant Degginger  
Bellevue City Council  
City of Bellevue  
P.O. Box 90012  
Bellevue, WA 98009

## **RE: East Link DEIS Comments**

Dear Mayor Degginger and Bellevue City Council:

As chairman of the Bellevue Convention Center Authority (BCCA) Board of Directors I would like to provide you and the Council with the Board's position on the alignment alternatives set out in the East Link Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The Board's focus has been on project impacts to the Convention Center's future operations and competitiveness. Given the importance of this project the Board has received two project briefings from Sound Transit, and Board members have spent time as individuals and as members of other eastside organizations familiarizing themselves with the alternatives.

The BCCA Board applauds the Bellevue City Council's leadership for ensuring that Bellevue will be well served by the expanded regional transportation system. We believe that the 200,000 national, regional and local visitors that utilize our facility annually will benefit from the improved transportation network. In fact, customer feedback suggests that a comprehensive regional transportation system is vital to maintaining Bellevue as a desirable convention/meeting destination.

The Board does not have a "preferred alternative" route for the downtown segment. All the alternatives maintain a Bellevue Transit Center station at its present location, which is convenient to the Convention Center.

However, the Board does have serious concerns about two routes, C1T and C2T, both of which would seriously impact NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Convention Center operations. We would urge the Council to consider our concerns and not select either route as a "preferred alternative."

Both alternatives, C1T and C2T, call for a tunnel that would head east from the transit center, cross under 110<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and then daylight in the middle of NE 6<sup>th</sup> St, in front of the Convention Center. It would become an elevated section at this point and proceed east over 112<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and I-405.

We have a number of serious concerns about the impact of these alternatives.

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### ***Negative Construction Impacts***

We recognize that construction of any major project will have impacts on our community and we understand that without pain there is no gain. We have been advised that construction on NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street would disrupt Convention Center operations for over two years. This would dramatically affect our ability to attract conventions and meetings to Meydenbauer and would have serious effects on our short and long term financial performance.

### ***Long Term Traffic Impacts***

Due to traffic capacity reductions on NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street we believe the Convention Center will suffer negative impacts long after the initial construction is completed. What is now a five lane corridor that provides primary access to the Center's front door and parking garage becomes a divided two lane road with one lane in each direction making access to Meydenbauer Center right turn only.

Of the over 300 events held annually at Meydenbauer Center, the majority begin and end during peak traffic hours, and conventions which require shuttle buses to area hotels often stage buses in front of the Center to load/unload throughout the day. With a single up hill lane, that staging area will be lost.

The new Bravern project will add additional traffic to NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Primary access to their loading docks (servicing over 300,000 sq. ft. of retail/restaurants) and condominium parking facilities (servicing over 400 condominium units) are located on NE 6th Street west of Meydenbauer Center.

In addition to Meydenbauer and Bravern traffic, busses will continue to compete for use of the single remaining uphill lane in an effort to service the Transit Center. We believe the negative traffic impacts to these three major NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street users would be unacceptably severe.

### ***Aesthetic Quality***

Bellevue prides itself on being a City in a Park, meaning we bring people into our community to access the beauty, services and vitality of our city. We only have one chance to make a good first impression and for many of our guests Meydenbauer Center is their first stop in Bellevue.

As proposed, the tunnel portal would be surrounded by concrete retaining walls in the center of the street. Where the walls end the elevated rail portion would begin, the convention center entrance would be effectively hidden behind concrete walls or visible underneath the elevated concrete rail line, between the supporting concrete pylons.

We believe it would be a mistake to impact the first impressions of the Convention Center in this manner.

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Additionally we understand there are a variety of uses being considered for the publicly owned land adjacent to NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, north of City Hall. That land could be developed in a manner that linked City Hall to the Convention Center in a grand master plan of public uses, worthy of a city like Bellevue. If a transit viaduct is raised over NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, that opportunity will be lost forever.

In summary, we suggest that you eliminate options C1T/C2T from consideration. The construction, traffic and aesthetic impacts of these alternatives would simply be too damaging to the future success of the Convention Center, a valuable community resource.

We appreciate the time and effort you have put into this process. We hope that you will also consider the impacts we have identified and work with us in creating a regional light rail system that is best for our entire community.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Baugh  
Chairman  
Bellevue Convention Center Authority

cc: Rick Carlson, Vice Chairman, BCCA  
Roger Anderson, BCCA Board Member  
Steve Dennis, BCCA Board Member  
Ron Hofilena, BCCA Board Member  
Bob Wallace, BCCA Board Member  
Dan Watson, BCCA Board Member  
Stacy Graven, Meydenbauer Center, Executive Director  
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