Seattle Design Commission

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

December 6, 2007

Projects Reviewed
Fire Station 39—Lake City
Woodland Park Zoo—West Entry
Woodland Park Zoo—Penguin Exhibit
Terminal 30—Alaskan Way South
University Link—UW Station and Pedestrian Bridge

Convened: 8:30am
Adjourned: 5:00pm

Commissioners Present
Karen Kiest, Chair
Tasha Atchison
Brendan Connolly
Mary Johnston
Juanita LaFond
Dennis Ryan
Darrell Vange
Darby Watson

Staff Present
Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Vivian Chang

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6 December 2007 **Project**: **University Link, UW Station and Pedestrian Bridge**

Phase: *Schematic Design*

Last Reviews: August 16, 2007 and September 6, 2007

Presenters: Ron Endlich, Sound Transit
Barb Luecke, Sound Transit
Barb Swift, Swift Company
Mark Reddington, LMN Architects

Attendees: Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Greg Ball, Northlink Transit Partners
Mahlon Clements, Planning Commission
Bob Corwin, Resident
Richard Johnsrud, Sound Transit
Dongyun Kwak, Chiba University of Japan
John Petterson, LMN Architects
Todd Schwisow, LMN
Ruri Yampolsky, Arts and Cultural Affairs

Time: 3.0 hours (SDC Ref. 121/RS0613)

Action:
For the record, the Design Commission is conducting University Link review with representatives of the Arts Commission and Planning Commission in a modified version of Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP).

The Commission thanks the design team for its presentations. The action is broken into two motions.

As a preliminary motion, Sound Transit has asked the Commission to provide a separate recommendation on the preferred approach to a grade-separated crossing at Montlake Boulevard as a station access feature. The Commission unanimously approves the concept of a pedestrian bridge instead of a tunnel for the following reasons:

- **There are no compelling reasons for a tunnel**
- **Bridge humanizes area, better supports pedestrian environment**
- **Bridge provides clearer campus connection**
- **The bridge, shown as an arc, is itself a compelling feature and could serve a major signifier of the transit terminal and a major sculptural element**
- **There are significant constructability issues with the tunnel, including potential impacts with 520-associated revisions to Montlake Boulevard**
- **The bridge is more sustainable, with fewer short and long-term construction, operations and maintenance issues.**

As the second motion, the Commission approves the schematic design, with the following comments addressing

1) Above grade elements (bridge, elevator, escalators, stairs)

- **Would like to see bridge again in February following University review of the project relative to the Rainier Vista Concept Plan underway**
- **Supports bridge in plan, but the sculptured arc is not integrated in 3D**
- **Take advantage of the bridge as a sculptural art element**
- **Straight railing sections along curve of bridge will be obvious.**
- **The beginning, middle and end of bridge as it goes to grade is undeveloped; ensure graceful transitions; consider bike access at south end of bridge to Montlake**

2) At grade Elements (station entrances)

- **Station and bridge provide great emblem for Sound Transit. Should be as compelling outside as it is inside.**
- **Unify the informal, random assortment of elements that exist at grade.**
- **Landscape intention to provide visual separation from Montlake should be reconsidered; trees hide station.**
- **Station house needs greater visual presence; needs to be clearly identifiable from Montlake**
- **Make less casual and more legible the landscape and architectural treatments.**
- **Support clearer tower element at Triangle**
- **Create a receiving place for bridge at Rainier Vista**
- **Further develop bike element**
- **Support development of kiss and ride area at this station, which may be a terminus station for several years.**
- **Urge Metro and UW to work with Sound Transit to make this station a good exchange point; need greater consideration of TOD opportunities; at the least, create amenities such as coffee carts, etc.**

3) Below grade elements (station)

- **Appreciates feature wall which connects series of disparate spaces.**
- **Support development of restrooms at this terminus station.**
- **Concur with Sound Transit that artist's work should be in station below grade.**

Note on Recusals and Disclosures: Design Commissioner Watson recused herself: she works at LMN, Architect for the project. Design Commissioner Hoffman disclosed his firm's ongoing involvement in TOD work for Sound Transit and Design Commissioner Kiest disclosed her firm's ongoing involvement in other aspects of Sound Transit Link Light Rail. Design Commissioners Ryan and Johnston noted they were employed by University of Washington. Planning Commissioner Clements disclosed his firm's previous involvement in ST Link Light Rail projects.

Proponent's Presentation

Project Background

University Link is a 3.15 mile extension project, adding two stations to the Sound Transit Link light rail line, adding 70,000 daily riders to the system. It is expected that the UW station will have the second highest ridership, attracting 27,000 patrons. The environmental process is complete, and University Link will open in 2016.

Some features of the UW station:

- circulation to station is symmetrical
- connects to Triangle Plaza, then to Rainier Vista
- station planning and design is coordinated with UW intercollegiate athletic facility plan, SR520 Pacific Interchange, Rainier Vista plan, and other campus planning initiatives
- analyzed circulation around campus on regular days and game days
- landscaping will link to campus and prevent jaywalking
- framing of space – buildings and landscapes, plus Rainier Vista, Montlake Blvd.
- station entry zone designed in detail
- 3 escalator moves to get from grade to platform
- One wall will go through the center of the sequence
    - Feature wall might be developed with artist, made of special material
    - Visible and legible from every part of the sequences
- Lots of bus functions on the triangle
    - Designed for 600 people in peak hour
- V shape on underside of elevated walkway
- Bridge needs to be subservient in relation to vista of Mt. Rainier
- Art plan is the same as for the Capitol Hill station. They will invest their budget below grade in the station in the central arcade.

UW architectural and landscape commissions are also reviewing the station, and it needs to be approved by the UW Board of Regents.

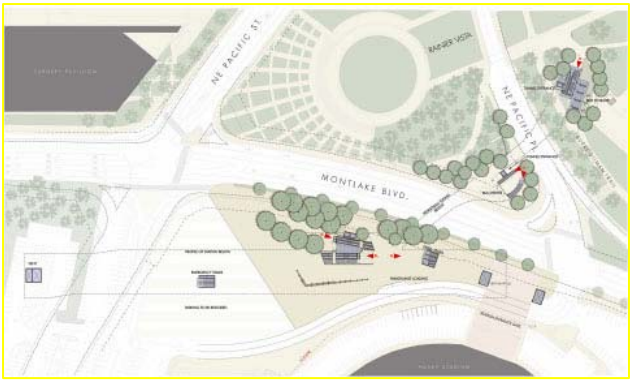
SDOT wants to see the pedestrian bridge vs. tunnel options explored. They are concerned about jaywalking across Montlake.

- The design team also explored a tunnel option. Sound Transit worked with city to amend ordinance clarifying the permitting process for bridge because it is part of a transit system, but they need to provide same level of design for tunnel to explore that option as well. There are precedents for both tunnel and bridges nearby. In the end, the design team chose bridge and UW agrees.

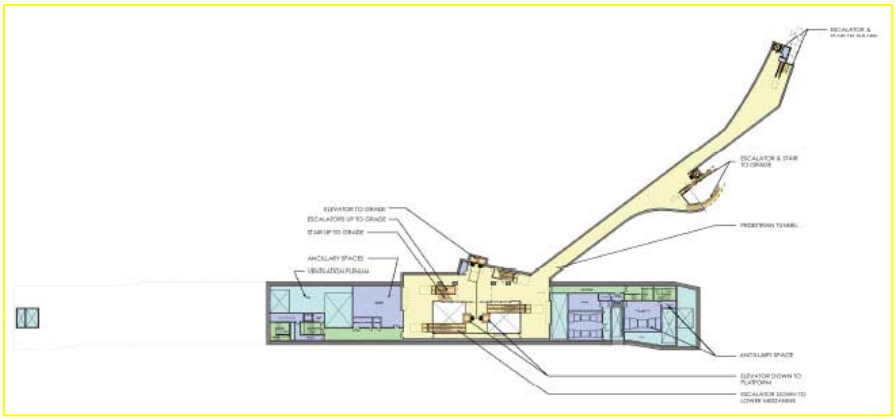
Pedestrian Bridge vs. Tunnel comparison:

- Station box remains the same
- 500 foot tunnel into mezzanine space
- Tunnel construction impact; need to temporarily close Montlake Blvd. lanes in phases.
- From the north entrance, need to descend 30 feet to pedestrian tunnel; would require major excavation
- Tunnel devoted to station, while bridge is more of a universal connector
- One would see the bridge not in its entirety but as a series of vignettes, one crossing at a time
- Visual impact of bridge is low
- Allows for views that don’t currently exist

U Link Pedestrian Bridge Plan



U Link Tunnel Option Grade Plan



U Link Tunnel Option Upper Mezzanine

Commissioner's Comments

- Three major items for the commission to think about today: 1) public realm, including the bridge vs. the tunnel (as SDOT wants the commission's opinion); 2) programming questions; 3) comments on design

Tunnel vs. Bridge

- What is cost of tunnel vs. bridge?
    - Bridge is cheaper by several million
- When line is extended, how does it sequence?
    - Build from north to connect to this station
- Likes bridge, it's not a new feature at the campus. Likes long arc, cost differential.
- Likes bridge for reasons already stated. Also it humanizes the intersection.
- **Commission unanimously prefers the bridge instead of the tunnel because it supports the pedestrian environment, stitches to campus, is in itself a compelling feature, lower cost, easier to construct and more sustainable.**

Design above grade

- Bridge is compelling in diagram but not integrated with features that connect it to grade and the station
- Seems rather undeveloped
- Cross section of bridge at triangle looks clunky

- Bring arc into it in elevation
    - Looked at other possibilities, but want profile to be simple and sleek
    - Bar grate railing to pronounce the sweep
    - Need to work on lighting
    - Don't want massive gesture
- Needs to be modeled in 3D, not convincing in drawing. Looks like a cheap bridge, insignificant. Details make the difference. At 30% design it's hard to see the details. Don't do off the shelf stuff.
- Is railing curved or in segments?
    - Small segments
- Connections to ground need visual connectivity. Look like functional units that are not integrated.
- There is an informal arrangement of things. Need to unify the pieces.
- Need a more formal expression of people arriving by car to encourage use.
- Landscape seems informal, compared to formal landscape at the UW. Need to be composed together.
- Needs kiss and ride since this is not a street grid system. Need to challenge convention. Kiss and ride will happen anyhow.
- Bridge should easily accommodate bicycles.
- Bridge should go down to grade beyond the head house behind the station.
    - UW athletics likes that idea but it requires more space.
    - Official bike trail uses a different route.
- Like to see a foot wide bike ramp along stairs.
- Lighting should be integrated into the structure.
- Landing point needs to respond to where it lands. Need good transition.
- Bridge becomes emblem of station. Don't see design evolution of the sculptural piece.
- Could introduce other curved forms to better integrate station pieces.
- Station should be visible to promote transportation.
    - UW doesn't want it to conflict with other UW features.
    - Design statement needs to be simple, respect the area.

<u>Design down to grade</u>

- Maybe the development should be phased.
- This area can't be like it is today 50 years from now. It needs to be a fabulous transit exchange point. It's not there now.
- The design offers too low of an impact.
- Station plaza and bridge is really part of UW, not Sound Transit.
- This place is a mess – the triangle. The tower could be artful. Something's missing.

<u>Design below grade</u>

- Where does ticketing happen?
    - At mezzanine level. After hours, station closed at surface, mezzanine not open, bridge is open.
- Restrooms?
        - A restroom for staff is provided. Public restrooms are not provided, in keeping with Sound Transit policy and King County Health Department's

preferences. Public restrooms in the station are not required by the City of Seattle.

- Bike parking inside?
    - Some at station entrance, but it's outside and not shown in 30% design. Most bike parking though is on the north side of the Burke Gilman Trail. This covered bike parking is located adjacent to the end of the pedestrian bridge.
- Could interior volumes be more open?
    - Challenge in a deep station is to control smoke in an emergency.
- Materials?
    - Still deciding. Need to price. Maybe an artist is involved.
- Station cross-section has power.
- Why is bridge not connected to head house?
    - Still in development. Integrate with escalator possibly.
    - Bridge elevator stops at grade and goes to upper mezzanine in the station.
    - Station entrance is pretty big, just not in comparison to Husky Stadium.
- Landscaping is sheltering this building, but the building should be revealed. It wants to be seen. It's hiding. It serves the stadium.
    - Used landscape to break up space into parts. Reflects UW master plan to establish scale. It may inform the trees.
    - Structures are far back from Montlake, which may be widened in the future.
- Worried that it will be too late at 60% design review to make changes.
    - 60% in June 2008.
    - Will go to back to UW in March
    - Could give an update on meeting with UW, probably at beginning of February.