

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 27, 2003
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance: Denise Lathrop, Vice Chair, Angela Brooks, Matthew Kitchen, Jeanne Krikawa, Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan, Paul Tomita.

Commissioners Absent: John Owen, Chair, Angali Bhagat, George Blomberg, Gregory Davis, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Tony To.

Staff: Marty Curry, Executive Director; Barbara Wilson, Staff

Visitors:

Design Commissioners: Donald Royse, Jack Mackie, Nic Rossouw, Cary Moon, David Spiker, Ralph Cipriani, *Other Visitors:* John Rahaim, Design Commission staff, Layne Cubell, Design Commission staff, Ethan Melone, SDOT, Martha Lester, City Council central staff, Mike Wong, Port of Seattle, Bob Greibenow, Seattle Monorail Project, Stephanie Stauffer, Seattle Monorail Project, Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Seattle Monorail Project, William Bascus, Seattle Monorail Project, Eileen Norton, Seattle Monorail Project, Michele Jacobsen, Seattle Monorail Project

Call to Order

Vice Chair Denise Lathrop called the meeting to order at 7:50 am.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the March 13, 2003 Full Commission meeting were approved unanimously as written.

Chairs Report

UPCOMING EVENTS

Denise announced that Northgate Subcommittee will be meeting immediately following the Commission meeting today. Mary Jean Ryan and Jackie Kirn will give a briefing on the Mayor's proposed Development Agreement with Simon Properties and other elements of the Mayor's proposed Northgate package. See invited other Commissioners who are interested to attend.

There will be City Council Brown Bag on South Lake Union on April 2, 2003 and there has been request for Planning Commission participation.

SPMA will hold a public workshop on Parking Access Issues, on April 26, 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., at the Washington Trade and Convention Center

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Follow up to Retreat – Vice Chair Lathrop thanked all who participated in the 2 part retreat. The retreat helped the Commission us prioritize its work and get a good start on several key topics. She stated that staff have typed up notes and will get a summary out to the Commission by early next week. This will include proposed assignments of Commissioners to the key topics and a complete work program.

Monorail – Vice Chair Lathrop announced that there will be three activities in coming months that the Commission will be involved in related to the monorail. She asked that Commissioners consider where they may be willing to participate. She outlined the three areas for involvement which include;

Project Review Committee – Denise stated that the Commission will need 3 people who will be willing to serve on the Monorail Project Review Committee (serving a similar function as LRRP)

Station Area Planning – Denise stated the Commission will need 3 – 5 people to provide guidance and participate in station area planning (working with 2 staff being hired in DCLU – advice on scope and process; assist with public process)

DEIS Review – Denise stated that the Commission must decide if SPC will do its own review or do it as part of the Project Review Committee

Marty Curry's Sabbatical - Vice Chair Lathrop reminded the Commission that Marty Curry will be gone from April 2 until June 4 on a sabbatical. Cheryl Sizov will be acting Executive Director during those 2 months, and spending half time in that capacity. Staff Barbara Wilson will be taking on a lot of the Commission administration activities.

DEBRIEF ON HOUSING CHOICES PUBLIC FORUM:

Marty Curry reported on the public forum held the previous evening. She made the following report; the public forum featured an open house with a lot of information and good graphic illustrations of these housing types, a panel discussion, and table discussions. Approximately 75 people attended -- a mix of developers, individual homeowners interested in detached ADU's, housing advocates and community organization representatives. Marty noted that we were competing with Michael Jordan next door, so we know that parking was particularly difficult -- one of those conflicts that are difficult to avoid given other meetings and conflicts.

Commission Chair John Owen moderated the forum, which began with brief presentations by DCLU staff on the two housing types. This was followed by the panel discussion. The panel featured 4 people, 3 of whom had participated in focus groups and a neighborhood planning steward (and member of the CNC Neighborhood Planning Committee). Former Commission Chair Chuck Weinstock moderated the discussion which focused on some of the key issues -- parking, privacy, development standards and design. The Q & A was lively and participants really engaged in the table discussions some of which extended beyond the official close of the meeting!

Marty noted that staff will be preparing and sending out a summary of both the focus groups and the public forum within the next few weeks. We will share this with DCLU staff that will use it in developing their proposals.

PRESENTATION:

Seattle Monorail Project--Preferred Alternative Designation for Environmental Review
Joint Session of Seattle Planning Commission and Seattle Design Commission.

Ethan Melone, Monorail Program Manager, City of Seattle

Ethan Melone reviewed the City's process and work in reviewing the Monorail project which is very preliminary in the design process. Review of the following is underway; the preferred alternative including look at the alignment types, station location decisions and consideration of design next steps and design package.

Michele Jacobson, Director of Design & Train Systems, Seattle Monorail Project (See attachment of PowerPoint presentation). Michele began her presentation on the preferred alternative by noting that SPMA staff will present the Preferred Alternative to the Monorail Board on April 2nd. She explained that the Preferred Alternative identifies the alignment type, station types and station locations. The proposed Preferred Alternative is based on public comment and numerous technical studies including urban design, engineering and operational studies and it also takes into consideration various principles that have been developed. She iterated that the preferred alternative is a recommendation, not a decision.

The next steps in the process will include: Parking and Access Workshop on April 26th, Station and Urban Design studies to begin in May, Draft EIS in July, DEIS Public Hearing in August, FEIS in November and choice of station alignment and station locations in December.

The preferred alternative, Jacobsen noted, seeks to prioritize connections to other forms of transportation, design of the guideway and stations, noise and vibration impacts, parking and access near monorail stations, predictability so that businesses and property owners know exactly what to expect during construction and views, neighborhood aesthetics and neighborhood livability.

Michele Jacobson then described the alignment types (i.e. traditional horizontal, tulip vertical, iris vertical), noting that the newest design – the iris – offers some design features that allow the stations to be less intrusive. She also described the various station types including side platform and center platform, both with and without a mezzanine. This brief overview of the elements was followed by a step by step presentation of the alignment, station locations and station types that are being proposed for the preferred alternative.

Ballard

Crown Hill Station at 15th NW and NW 85th

The alignment is proposed to go down the west side of 15th NW with the 85th St. Station across from a large Safeway. This will be the north end of the line. Station SW of intersection to minimize impacts and vertically aligned to be more compact. Commissioner Paul Tomita asked if there was a tail track at this location. Michele responded that there will be storage for an extra train at the end of the line with an extra 50' for the switching mechanism that will be required here. Design Commissioner Jack Mackie asked how long the station will be. Michele stated that it will depend on the contractor design and may vary a bit among stations.

Ballard/15th NW – goal is to not interfere with left turn lanes and access to businesses.

NW 65th St. This station will have a side-by-side configuration and will be located just south and across the street from Ballard High School. Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa asked what the assumed platform length is; Michele Jacobson answered that it is 175 ft.

NW Market- The ship canal crossing is a consideration in the location and design of this station. SPMA was asked by the Port to keep the station close to the bridge.

Interbay

Howe and 15th- “Future” station because of development interests and various issues being sorted out about the future of Interbay.

15th and Elliot – Minimizing impacts to through traffic is a consideration. Jacobsen stated that the monorail’s operations center may be in Interbay.

Elliot and Mercer- propose station here to capture higher job and residential populations. Ethan Melone pointed out there are trade offs between the alternative stations in Interbay and Seattle Center. There was a detailed discussion among commissioners about utilizing this station to create better pedestrian access to the waterfront and which station location would do that best. Ethan Melone mentioned that there is 2.7 million dollars appropriated to bridge and pedestrian access to the park in general the Commissions agreed that accessing the waterfront should be prioritized in consideration. Commissioners noted that the station could be another crossing to the waterfront and that waterfront access for Queen Anne be prioritized.

Queen Anne and Seattle Center – Michele Jacobsen walked the Commissions through the new route alignment through the Seattle Center. Design Commissioner Cary Moon asked for an explanation of the new route and also noted that this route does not seem to meet the goal of minimizing curves. Michele Jacobsen noted that the Seattle Center was an exceptional case and asked Seattle Monorail Project staffer Rachel Ben-Shmuel to explain some of the thinking in the new route alignment proposal. Rachel explained the progression of thinking that included what was in the ballot, the goals and desires of various stakeholders and neighbors and the city council. She explained the effort to bring together this convergence of views.

Rachel Ben-Scmuel explained some of the considerations for a station at the NW rooms which include information gathered from ridership surveys which show a gain in ridership at this location. This station will accommodate large event crowds. Queen Anne residents favor this alternative because removal of the northwest rooms from this location will help to breakdown the walls between the community and the Center. Cary Moon encouraged the Monorail staff to optimize open space over building at the Seattle Center.

Seattle Center station near Broad Street,

There was a question about why the Seattle Center station is straddling John. Rachel explained that the goal is to get as close to Center as possible. Michele Jacobsen also noted that there is a goal to not preclude a possible connection to a potential future blue line. This alignment will allow for switching tracks at the curve.

Many commissioners had questions and suggestions about how the monorail development will be integrated with the Mercer and Aurora SR99 changes when the grid is reconnected. Commissioner's encouraged heavy consideration is placed on ensuring for a clean, safe and inviting pedestrian path and that the monorail design is very thoughtful in its role in helping to create this urban design feature.

Downtown/SODO

5th and Stewart

The commissioners advised that a tunnel connection needs to be looked at here for a smooth connection to light rail.

5th and Lander – station will be between Starbucks and School district to up ridership. Michele stated that a maintenance center is being considered at the Home Depot sight. Design Commissioner, Ralph Cipriani had questions about the overall philosophy of how the Monorail Project will address the lose of surface parking in this area and how property owner compensation would be dealt with. Commissioner cautioned that consideration and distinctions should be made about code required parking versus the property owner's perceptions of what they need.

Planning Commissioner Paul Tomita asked how existing buildings could be maximized when the station is planned for a preexisting building. He asked what kind of development plans are being considered in the footprint underneath the station. Michele Jacobsen said they were working with that in mind but the timing can be a challenge.

West Seattle

Delridge – changes in the topography and grade will lead to stations being higher, 50 feet to top of the beam. This area was also identified as a possible area for a park and ride. Delridge Neighborhood association is interested in exploring this area for future housing. Commissioner Lathrop pointed out that this station is located in area with low residential density and that an alternative station to the north, though it might conflict with truck traffic, has more potential for intermodal connections.

Fauntleroy and Alaska – Commissioner Lathrop recommended a study on access for this station because of surrounding auto oriented development. She noted this location has opportunities for high density, mixed use development. Commissioner Lathrop asked why they deferred the Brandon Street station. She noted that although she did not think the station was necessary she did wonder why one deferred station was being considered in the preferred alternative whereas another was not. Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa recommended that it is important to have consistency in this regard. Commissioner Matthew Kitchen encouraged SPMA to think about developing fewer stations at this time and to get a sense of how it will work with fewer stations. He believes there may be too many stations. Design Commissioner David Spiker noted that deferred stations rarely get built and therefore they should build everything they want to build now. He also noted that stations will stimulate development and density in these areas. Michele Jacobsen noted that some of their stipulations about stations are dictated by the intent of the vote.

Michele Jacobson then touched on Design Quality issues and mentioned that they would be working to develop system wide principles from April through June.

Michele Jacobsen finished her PowerPoint presentation and then opened up the discussion. Design Commissioner Cary Moon asked how SPMA was doing in terms of sticking to the cost estimates. She also stated her concerns about SPMA trying to please everyone. Pressure to do so could have high costs and will ultimately mean they will have to compromise the system overall. Michele Jacobsen stated that their cost estimates were pretty up to date.

Commissioner Paul Tomita asked to hear more about the things they have not yet seen such as maintenance facilities, substations, track switches, crossovers, and ancillary facilities. Michele noted they planned for 10 substations but have not picked the sites for them yet. For some decisions they would need to wait for the DBOM contractors to weigh in and the ultimate choice would impact some of those decisions. She also noted that they planned to build the system all at once. Planning Commissioner Tomita noted that the choice of the contractor and things like voltage options could significantly impact the preferred alternative. He cautioned that they should know the voltage requirements for Hitachi and Bombardier early on because that will impact the route significantly and what you can have around the system.

Design Commissioner Jack Mackie conveyed his concern about the Seattle Center route. He recommended that the joint commissions take a position on the Seattle Center route and send it to the board and the City Council. He also asked if the Design and Planning Commissions wanted to make a joint recommendation on the Preferred Alternative. Planning Commissioner Matthew Kitchen stated that the Preferred Alternative is not the place in the process for debate, but that we should articulate our concerns and not take a position. The Commissioners then decided they should send a letter to the SPMA board, the Mayor and the City Council on the preferred alternative and include recommendations and key points. Commissioner Kitchen pointed out that the Commissions are not suggesting that the scope change, but that SPMA consider how

alignment and station decisions will impact the EIS functions. In general, the Commissions were okay with the preferred alternative.

Commissioner Mimi Sheridan agreed that the commissions should begin indicating and outlining concerns. She also suggested that SPMA should begin to evaluate the environmental impacts of the two potential suppliers and include a range of technologies in the EIS.

Commissioner Moon recommended SPMA consider fewer stations. She also strongly recommended that SPMA do what is right for the entire City and not to get bogged down trying to please every individual property owner and every stakeholder. She encouraged that SPMA should prioritize the bigger needs of the citywide system over the needs and desires of individuals. And finally she recommended SPMA recast the consideration of route alignments at the Seattle Center to acknowledge the primary function of Seattle Center in providing vital and sacred open space for the city. Several Commissioners have noted, Seattle Center is about open space, not just about buildings and so the EIS analysis should include an alternative that does not go through the Seattle Center.

Commissioner Krikawa recommended looking at the transition points along the guideway and what structures would look like in the section and the impact of stacked to flat platform and rail conditions. She also recommended the monorail should consider and review the possibility of using the existing tunnel at 5th and Stewart to connect with light rail. There was strong consent from other Commissioners on this point.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy recommended more broadly that SPMA should design what they want to build consistent with the project principles.

Commissioner Mackie recommended that the EIS analysis should treat all deferred/future stations equally, rather than including some in the analysis and not others. For example, the SW Brandon Street station in West Seattle and NW 75th in Ballard should be analyzed in the EIS since these are areas with significant redevelopment and increasing housing density, and should be treated just like the deferred station at W. Howe and 15th in Interbay. He also asked that multiple views of all downtown view corridors from numerous locations be fully shown in accurate drawings.

Staff agreed to take back the various suggestions draft a letter that the joint Commissions will send the letter to SPMA Board, the Mayor and the City Council.