

Dome District – Hillside Development Council

Sound Transit “C to C”, an Urban Solution for an Urban Area

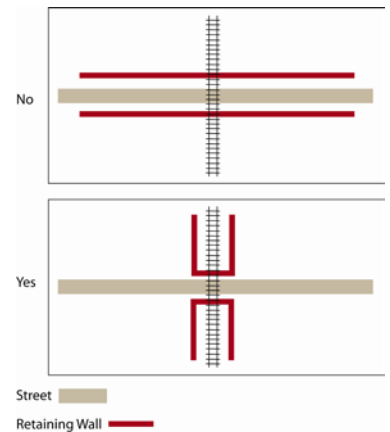
Term Sheet and Memorandum of Agreement

(Between the City of Tacoma & Sound Transit)

This solution reflects the December 2007 Term Sheet and Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit. We believe that this solution can be built without causing delay to the project.

General Guiding Principles Proposed by the Dome District and Hillside Development Council

1. Respect the fact that the train is moving through an urban area.
2. Maintain the complete urban grid of arterials and cross streets or the opportunity of future reestablishment.
3. Structures or retaining walls, if needed, will not be built parallel to the street right of way and property lines (all structures and retaining walls will be built parallel to the tracks).
4. The aesthetics of any structures (bridges, walls, and ect.) will be respected with community design review and incorporated in the project.
5. The full air rights over the track and the use of space under any structures will be deeded to the city to be used by the City or adjacent property owners.
6. Any surplus property will be sold for future development.



Executive Summary of Questions Posed by the City Manager

- A. Does South ‘C’ Street between South Tacoma Way and South 25th Street provide a valuable multi-modal transportation route for the area? Is it important for continued growth and redevelopment to keep South ‘C’ Street open to all transportation modes?
Yes
- B. What is the preferred design for the Pacific Avenue grade separated crossing?
A “low profile” structure designed to minimize the visual impact and fit with the existing bridge designs in the neighborhood. Supporting columns in Pacific Avenue are acceptable to reduce the span and the cost of the bridge.
- C. What type of structure should be used to elevate the railroad tracks above existing grade between East ‘C’ Street and the Tacoma Mission?
From East ‘C’ Street to South ‘C’ Street (“C to C”) the elevated railway should be on a “post and beam” structure, all elevated. The design should reflect the historic character of the area.
- D. How should we prepare for development of adjacent lots?
Using a “post and beam” structure rather than earth berms maximizes the potential for future development. Prepare all land outside of the 45’ maximum required by rail now along the entire length from East ‘D’ through South ‘C’ plus space under or over the 45’ track space for development.

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Discussion of Dome District / Hillside Development Council Consensus Points

The idea of an elevated structure from C to C has come from many hours of discussions between and within the Dome District and Hillside Development Council with input from City Staff on technical matters. We looked for a solution that would embrace our six guiding principles which this solution does, along with being sensitive to the mission of Sound Transit both in timing and expense. Our goal has been to arrive at an “Urban Solution to an Urban Problem” rather than Sound Transit’s Rural Solution to an Urban Problem. Outlined below are the twelve discussion points we offer to define our collective point of view:

- 1) Alignment of the track: At the Pacific Avenue crossing, move the track as far to the north as possible to minimize the depth needed for the “fishing hole”, the balance of the alignment is accepted.
- 2) Width of the track: The track right of way should be limited to 45’; the width of the elevated structure should be 30’ for Phase 1 with an additional 15’ for Phase 2.
- 3) Structure to carry the track: From “C to C” the track should be supported by a “post and beam” structure. Every attempt should be made to have the positioning of the posts respect lot lines. Footings and pilings should be deep enough to allow for future development especially around Pacific Avenue. Along with maximizing potential for future development this will minimize the potential for unknown costs such as settlement or utility relocation.
- 4) Berms & sloping earth areas: Since this is an urban area, berms and sloping earth areas should **not** be part of the solution for elevating the track. In the area around Pacific Avenue where the street will have to be lowered, sloping the earth back from the street and sidewalk at a 2:1 slope is endorsed (no retaining walls).
- 5) Retaining walls: Whenever possible, retaining walls are not to be used. We believe this solution is possible without any retaining walls from “C to C”.
- 6) Street closings:
 - a. South C Street: open for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles.
 - b. A Street: closed for vehicles, open for pedestrians and bicycles.
 - c. East C Street: open for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles.
- 7) At grade crossings: East D St., East C Street, South C Street
- 8) Grade separation at Pacific Avenue: The New Tacoma Neighborhood Council has requested that the bridge design fits into the urban fabric of the area. They wish to have a bridge that looks like it has been there “forever”. We feel that the bridge design needs to fit with the area both before and after redevelopment. The designs shown by Sound Transit do not meet the requirements of NTNC, Dome District or the Hillside Development Council. A simple solution that meets all parties’ needs is a “post and beam” structure similar to the one shown in the photo (downtown Spokane). It fits with the other bridges in the neighborhood and has minimal visual impact.



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9) Street grid impacts and mitigation:

a) Closing South C St. would be extremely detrimental to the street grid. It is the only North-South street west of Pacific Avenue until one reaches M Street.

b) 26th Street must be improved to handle the increased traffic it will see in future years.

10) Pedestrian paths: Logical pedestrian routes must be defined. They should be developed where it makes sense. The “post and beam” solution from “C to C” provides the most flexible opportunity for pedestrian and bicycle paths.

11) Property parcel dispositions: By building an elevated track with the minimum right of way width, Sound Transit maximizes the potential for property development, and their ability to sell unused property at the maximum price.

12) Air rights: Sound Transit must provide both air rights and the right to build under the elevated structure.

Additionally Sound Transit should allow for parking and pedestrian access at surface level. The City of Tacoma should calculate all of its “in kind” costs both from the Link Light Rail and the D to M Street Sounder train extension and accept the air rights from Sound Transit as reimbursement.

Summary

The “C to C” solution is an urban solution. It maximizes the potential for future development and allows the cleanest understanding of costs for Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma prior to construction. The six guiding principles are met other than the closure of South A Street which is made necessary by the geography. Disruption to the neighborhood during construction would be minimized by eliminating unknown issues.

We feel that the “C to C” solution is the right choice for the City of Tacoma.