

November 13, 2008

To: Sound Transit

From: Citizen of Tacoma

**Re: Sounder Train, D Street to M Street Extension**

Over the past couple of months a number of citizens have been meeting with the Sound Transit Design Team and City of Tacoma representatives for the design review of the extension of the Sounder Train from D Street to M Street. During this period a number of issues have been revealed which are summarized in this memo.

**The issues and comments include:**

1. The community and local groups defined a list of 6 general principles to consider in the design of the extension. These were submitted at the first meeting of the group. It appears that the Design Team and Sound Transit are not taking these general principles seriously. It is the strong recommendation that these "general guiding principles" become the committed "design criteria" for the project.
2. A number of key elements may have affected the intent of the "Term Sheet" that was signed by the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit last year. It is recommended that the City of Tacoma/City Council review this "Term Sheet" to determine if it needs to be revisited. The grades and impacts proposed by Sound Transit certainly seem to have changed a number of factors in the agreement.
3. The design seems only to respond to the rail needs, whereas the primary design issue needs to be the people affected by this extension through the emerging urban area.
4. Meeting notes were taken by a Sound Transit scribe and these notes were to be converted to minutes of the meetings. The first meeting minutes were submitted to the group at the second meeting with no prior review. Before the third meeting the citizens reviewed the minutes and responded to a number of erroneous statements in the minutes. To date:
  - a. The first meeting minutes have not been submitted to the group with corrections noted by the citizens (see attachment).
  - b. No minutes of the second and third meetings have been distributed.(The minutes were received by email midday today so there is no time to review the minutes prior to the meeting.)
5. The tenor of the meetings has not been consistent:
  - a. At the first meeting the Sound Transit design team wanted to rush to design judgment and have the citizen group's blessing on what Sound Transit was presenting. The citizens distributed the "general guiding principles" and a couple of diagrams suggesting that these principles should be the basis of design.
  - b. The second meeting seemed to be an attempt by the Sound Transit design team to be sensitive to the citizens' design issues. The dialogue was somewhat encouraging.
  - c. The third meeting turned the discussions 180 degrees. The presentations were blunt responses to the needs of the rail, with impacts to grades and streets being more serious than previously thought. The Sound Transit design team did not appear to be working toward a people/urban friendly solution.

6. This memo is the results of a number of community gatherings since the last Sound Transit design team/citizens meeting.
7. A number of key questions have surfaced:
  - a. What should be done about the closing of A Street and what is the mitigation?
  - b. Why is South C Street now being closed?
  - c. Why are the potential problems of the at grade crossing at East D Street not being addressed?
  - d. What should be done at Pacific Avenue? The group is now told that Pacific Avenue will be lower almost twice as far as indicated at the time of the Term Sheet.
8. There may be other considerations that need to be addressed in this project:
  - a. Should more grade separations be considered? (i.e. A Street, C Street)
  - b. What about the impacts of the trains through the rest of the City as it moves through South Tacoma? Recent articles have pointed out some serious concerns about safety along the entire route.

**Action Steps that Citizens believe need to be taken:**

1. The citizens believe that the City of Tacoma needs an independent “rail specialist” and independent “urban design team” to address the concerns of the City and the community that are not high priorities in the design solution by Sound Transit.
2. Sound Transit needs to provide approved minutes of all the meetings, with the first draft of the minutes well in advance of the next meeting day.
3. The three tiers of meetings that are outlined in the “Term Sheet” need to be coordinated. Information from the “Project Management Team” and the “Executive Oversight Committee” need to be transmitted to the Design Team citizens group. Perhaps a citizen of the City needs to be represented on these committees.
4. Information with complete backup data needs to be shared early with all participants so that consensus can be achieved with clear understanding.

The citizens believe that a collaborative approach that really addresses the impacts on the urban area and the quality of life for its community can be achieved. We just need to reorder the priorities.

Attachments:

1. General Guiding Principles
2. Meeting #1 Minutes with citizen comments in red

End of Memo.