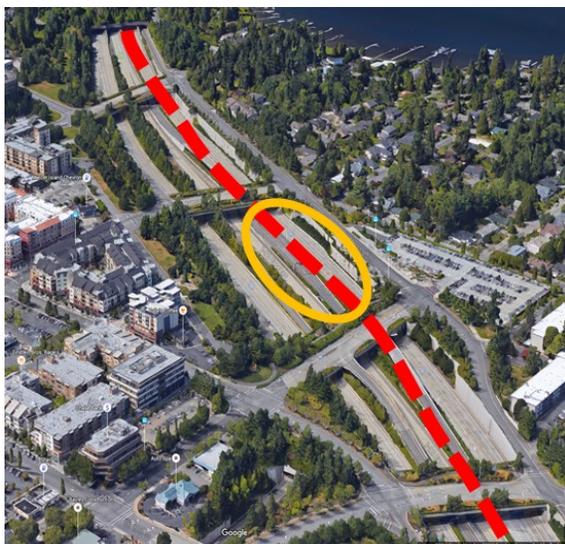


LIGHT RAIL & I-90 ACCESS ISSUES

WHAT IS THE LIGHT RAIL PLAN FOR MERCER ISLAND?

Sound Transit's East Link line is a voter-approved project to expand light rail from downtown Seattle to the Eastside with stations serving Mercer Island, south Bellevue, downtown Bellevue, Bel-Red, and Redmond's Overlake area. East Link will connect to the Central Link light rail system already operating between downtown Seattle and Sea-Tac Airport. Central Link opened an extension to the University of Washington in early 2016, and a further extension to Northgate opens in 2021.

East Link has completed most of the final design phase (trackway, stations, art installations and construction methods, including sequencing and mitigation) and has now begun initial construction in Bellevue. By mid-2017, construction activities are scheduled to begin on Mercer Island too. Once all construction components are complete, Sound Transit plans to test and open the entire East Link corridor all at once, in **2023**. A ride from MI to the UW campus will take 20 minutes with no transfers. The rail line will use the Center Roadway Express Lanes as its trackway, meaning vehicles will no longer have access to those lanes after mid-2017; substitute HOV Lanes are under construction.



*Aerial view of light rail alignment (red)
and station area (yellow)*

WHAT WILL CONSTRUCTION LOOK LIKE?

While the benefits of predictable, gridlock-free travel to Seattle or Bellevue are pretty apparent, the construction of any large public works project also brings some adjustments for residents, just like we experienced when "The Lid" was built over I-90 in the late 1980's.

The City and Council have been working diligently to gain the maximum transportation benefit possible for the community while minimizing undesirable changes to the daily routines of all Islanders.

Since light rail will use the Center Roadway Express Lanes as its trackway, direct construction impacts on the Town Center area should be fairly contained and will be subject to the City's noise, dust and time-of-day regulations. The future Mercer Island station will sit above the rails, between 77th Avenue SE and 80th Avenue SE (yellow oval), just south of the existing Sound Transit Park-and-Ride,

on land owned by the Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The City is currently negotiating with Sound Transit over mitigation measures (such as access to I-90, commuter parking, new signals, on-Island transit, etc.) related to loss of mobility and light rail construction impacts.



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RELATED CHANGES TO I-90

In order to construct light rail, Sound Transit has proposed changes to various on- and off-ramps serving I-90, and also alterations to some carpool/HOV/Bus access lanes. Two current issues are of great concern to the City and need swift resolution:

Use of Future R8A/HOV Lanes

WSDOT is adding one new R8A/HOV Lane for carpools and buses along each direction of I-90. The Center Roadway Express Lanes cannot be

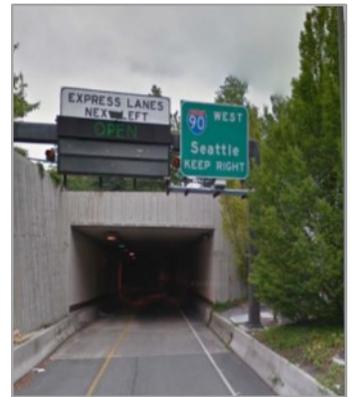


closed to vehicles until these new HOV lanes (known as the “R8A Project”) are operational. In the past, due to historic agreements, traffic to and from Mercer Island traffic has been allowed to use the Express Lanes even as a single-occupant vehicle (SOV). Recently, the

Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) advised the City and WSDOT that this practice could not continue once light rail construction begins. This contradicts many previous decisions and the City is opposing the determination.

Access to I-90 via HOV On-Ramps

Currently, the ramp at Island Crest Way allows westbound SOV’s to enter the Express Lanes, providing residents a very convenient access point since all other (non-Island) traffic using the Express Lanes must be HOV (High-Occupancy Vehicle). In August



2016, the FHWA determined that SOV’s from Mercer Island heading to Seattle in the morning commute cannot have access to the new HOV Lanes via the Island Crest Way entrance, once light rail construction is underway. This decision could create significant local traffic congestion as many drivers will need to find another, less convenient entrance. The City is fighting this decision and has proposed a number of policy alternatives.

THE MONTHS AHEAD

The next few months will be challenging as the City seeks to oppose the recent FHWA decisions over future access, as well as continue mitigation discussions with Sound Transit. These negotiations have been informed by extensive citizen input gathered during the 2015 listening session, and via other channels. The Council is as frustrated as residents are about the pace of progress towards a resolution, but is working vigorously and tirelessly to find a positive solution. The City is leveraging its relationships with Congressional, state and county elected representatives, all of whom support our work.



Your City Councilmembers will continue to ensure that residents’ concerns and ideas are voiced at every step of the process. There will be a City-sponsored open house in the fall of 2016, and a number of informative presentations to various community and civic groups in the coming months.

Learn more about East Link at
www.MercerGov.org/Rail
or I-90 Access at
www.MercerGov.org/R8A