



Seattle Multimodal Terminal at Colman Dock Project

Scoping Report for NEPA Environmental Assessment

November 2012

Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Ferries Division (WSF), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are in the planning phase of a project to replace the aging and seismically vulnerable components of Colman Dock in Seattle in order to maintain the Seattle Terminal's role as a regional multimodal transportation hub into the future.

A formal scoping comment period for the Seattle Multimodal Terminal at Colman Dock Project was held from February 8 through March 15, 2012, as part of the project's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA) process.

The purpose of this document is to provide information on the comments that were received during the scoping comment period, and to discuss how those comments have been addressed in the project description, and as part of the Environmental Assessment.

Environmental Elements Anticipated During Scoping Period

At the beginning of the scoping process, FTA and FHWA identified thirteen elements of the environment for study in the Environmental Assessment. These elements were shared at the agency and public scoping meetings, and were as follows:

- Transportation
- Land Use
- Social Elements and Environmental Justice
- Water Resources
- Ecosystems
- Hazardous Materials
- Geology and Soils
- Navigation
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Energy and Greenhouse Gas
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Visual Quality

Review of Comments Received During Scoping Period

As summarized in the Scoping Comment Summary (Spring 2012), approximately 200 people participated in the public scoping activities, and 196 comments were received from agencies and the public. FTA and FHWA have carefully reviewed the comments received during the scoping period, and have determined that several revisions will be made to the NEPA analysis as a result of this input. In addition, revisions to the project have been made in response to agency coordination and scoping comments received.

Revisions to Project Design

The most frequent comment received about the project during the scoping period was related to the proposed removal of the passenger-only ferry operation, currently located on the south side of the Seattle Terminal. Following this input, WSF coordinated throughout the summer with passenger-only ferry operators, including King County, Kitsap County, the Port of Kingston, and the Port of Port Townsend, to identify and assess options for maintaining passenger-only ferry operations at or near Colman Dock. As a result, WSF has now revised the project to include a two-slip passenger-only ferry terminal on the south side of the Colman Dock facility.

WSF has also proposed to revise the project's Purpose and Need Statement to clarify that passenger-only ferry service will be preserved at Colman Dock, and has proposed to revise the Project Description to include preservation of passenger-only operations.

WSF has also coordinated with the City of Seattle in response to the City's scoping comments. While design details have not yet been developed, WSF has agreed in principle to include street-level retail activities along Alaskan Way as a future project phase, should funding become available, and to analyze those activities in the EA.

The Port of Seattle also commented about the future retail/vendor spaces. The Port asked whether the on-site space dedicated to future commercial development would be better used for additional vehicle storage to reduce off-site traffic impacts. Because the anticipated retail space would be located above the parking level or adjacent to Alaskan Way, it would not displace vehicle storage in loading/unloading lanes, and would not increase off-site traffic impacts.

Several comments were received that suggested other revisions to the project description. These included suggestions to reduce the project footprint by adding a second deck to the vehicle loading platform in order to develop a migratory corridor for salmon (US Fish and Wildlife Service) and to remove Pier 48 (King County Wastewater Treatment Division). FTA and FHWA have determined, in consultation with WSF, that incorporating a second deck for vehicle holding, and removal of Pier 48, are not consistent with the project's Purpose and Need Statement and will not be incorporated into the Project Description.

Revisions to Scope of Review in the Environmental Assessment

FTA and FHWA have determined that the initial list of environmental elements remains generally appropriate for analysis in the Environmental Assessment. Because of the project revision to preserve passenger-only ferry operations, several changes to the analysis will be required. In particular, the Transportation section of the analysis will address pedestrian movements, not only to and from the WSF service but also to and from passenger-only ferry operations. This analysis will be documented in the Transportation section of the EA.

In response to comments received from the Seattle Historic Preservation Office and the Pioneer Square Historic District, the Area of Potential Effects related to cultural and historic resources will be expanded slightly, to include consideration of the Washington Street Boat Landing (to the south of Colman Dock) and Seattle Fire Station No. 5 at Pier 53 (to the north).

Conclusion

FTA and FHWA, as NEPA co-leads for environmental review of the proposed Seattle Multimodal Terminal at Colman Dock project, have completed review of comments received during the formal scoping comment period for the project. In response to comments received, WSF, in consultation with FTA and FHWA, has revised the project description to retain a passenger-only ferry facility at the site. The scope of review for the Environmental Assessment is now modified to address the passenger-only ferry facility as an element of the project.