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Snohomish County is planning for the arrival of light rail to unincorporated Snohomish County. According to Sound Transit, light rail service to the City of Everett is expected to start in 2036. One light rail station is planned at 164th St and I-5 Urban Center and one at 128th St and I-5 Urban Center.

In the spring of 2018 the County began the first phase of the Light Rail Communities project; Station Area Planning. Completed at the end of 2019 following a robust stakeholder and public process; “locally favored station locations” were identified for the 128th and 164th St Urban Centers. These locally favored station locations along with other data gathered during Station Area Planning form much of the starting point for Subarea Planning. The complete Station Area Planning report is available [here](#).

It is important to note that Snohomish County’s planning efforts do not include the design of the light rail stations, construction, mitigation, operation or maintenance of light rail; those are the responsibility of Sound Transit. Final decisions on the actual station location and alignment will be made by Sound Transit in 2025.

The following is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to the Light Rail Communities project. A glossary of terms is available [here](#).

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PLANNING

Q: Why did Snohomish County select “Locally Favored Station Locations”?

A: In order to support work of the Urban Core Subarea Plan and better plan for future infrastructure it was necessary to select a locally favored station location for the 128th and 164th Urban Centers. Completing the next phase of the project, subarea planning, includes decisions on land use, zoning and access around a light rail station. Drafting the subarea plan will occur more efficiently when only looking at one station location per urban center.

In addition, the County desires to have influence in Sound Transit’s alternatives analysis process for Everett Link Extension expected to start later this year. By selecting a locally favored station location for the 128th and 164th Urban Centers the county is better positioned to advocate for their inclusion in this process.

Q: What happens if Sound Transit chooses a location that is different from the County’s locally favored option?

A: Based on information provided by Sound Transit, it is expected their Board will make a preliminary decision on preferred station locations to include in the environmental review process for the Everett Link Extension in the fall of 2021. The timing of this decision does allow the County to adjust assumptions within the subarea plan. The subarea

plan is expected to be adopted by June 30, 2024. A final decision on station locations by the Sound Transit Board is expected in the fall 2025. Should the final decision not match the subarea plan there are mechanisms to amend the subarea plan to be consistent with Sound Transit's decisions.

Q: What kind of future can we expect around light rail stations?

A: Predictably, how the areas nearby future planned light rail stations might look in the future will depend on a wide range of factors. The subarea planning process and community engagement will help answer this question. For an indication of what the future might hold, we can look at recent development in similar markets in nearby Lynnwood and Mountlake Terrace.

Neighborhoods within the subarea planning area will change. To the greatest extent possible, the subarea plan will identify mitigation strategies to minimize impacts to neighborhoods. While not all impacts can be mitigated, the extension of light rail is simultaneously a once in a lifetime opportunity to capitalize on a major transportation investment by considering strategic changes that further improve our great communities as the county grows into the future.

The county is dedicated to the future of these communities, which is why we are investing heavily in studying and planning for the subarea nearby light rail, with an emphasis on engaging with the public in pursuit of creating the conditions most likely to lead to the best communities possible.

Q: Will there be an increase in the number of tall buildings?

A: Under current county zoning, buildings up to 125 feet (10-12 stories) are possible in the 128th St and 164th St Urban Centers. A [market analysis](#) completed for the project indicated a strong future for mid-rise, 6-12 story residential structures. The subarea plan and implementing development regulations will include careful consideration of where it is most appropriate to allow tall buildings.

Q: How much growth can be expected due to the presence of light rail?

A: The actual amount of population and employment growth between today and 2044 for the subarea plan won't be determined until 2022. However, [Puget Sound Regional Council's Draft Vision 2050 Plan](#) anticipates approximately 75% of the population and employment growth to be near high capacity transit.

Q: What areas will be included within subarea planning process?

A: The Urban Core Subarea Plan will cover a large area of unincorporated Snohomish County between the Cities of Everett, Lynnwood, Mill Creek and Mukilteo. See the [Urban Core Subarea Plan Vicinity Map](#) for the detailed boundary.

Q: What role will the cities play in the subarea planning process?

A: The Cities of Everett, Lynnwood, Mill Creek and Mukilteo are important partners in the planning process. Much of the area being planned is located within their future annexation areas. The project team has solicited feedback from these cities at different points in the process. As work on the subarea plan moves forward, conversations with these cities about the future of this area will be frequent and ongoing.

Q: Will the subarea plan address criminal activity?

A: The subarea plan will not directly address criminal activity. It is a goal of the subarea plan is to create strong, safe communities built around the two light rail stations.

Q: I don't live where the light rail route is expected to operate, so why should I care?

A: People who live in north or east Snohomish County can benefit from light rail. Light rail provides a transportation option for a large number of people, more choices, increased mobility, and greater reliability. Much of the county's

economic development (e.g. aerospace manufacturing) is dependent on access to major transportation corridors. If light rail can take vehicles off congested county arterials and state highways, the flow of commerce can improve.

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SOUND TRANSIT/LINK LIGHT RAIL

Q: When will light rail get to Everett?

A: Sound Transit has stated that the 16-mile Lynnwood to Everett light rail line will open around 2036. It is important to note that this is the longest segment Sound Transit is constructing under ST3. Snohomish County, the City of Everett, and the City of Lynnwood have committed to do our part to ensuring light rail gets to Everett by 2036.

Q: Why does it take so long to build light rail?

A: There are many steps in the process, including (but not limited to):

- Planning and environmental review
- Engineering and designing the alignment and stations
- Permitting
- Purchasing property and coordinating with utilities
- Construction

Sound Transit is also relying on federal funding to construct light rail to Everett, which adds a number of requirements that affect the time needed to complete the steps listed above.

Q: Who is paying for light rail?

A: People who live in the [Sound Transit Regional Transit Authority District](#) pay for light rail through their taxes. Voters in the district approved the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) plan in 2016. The tax is paid via property taxes, sales tax, and motor vehicle excise tax.

Q: Why does the light rail go to Paine Field instead of following I-5 to Everett?

A: The Paine Field area is home to tens of thousands of jobs with many more are expected over the next two decades. Also, commercial passenger airline service at Paine Field began in 2019 and has proven to be popular. Light rail provides future employees with additional commuting options.

Q: Is a station planned at SR 99 and Airport Rd?

A: Currently there is a provisional station at SR 99 and Airport Rd, but it is not funded. ST3 stipulates that the station will be built if the Everett Link Extension comes in under budget or other funding sources become available. The subarea plan will be looking at land use and transportation access assuming construction of a station.

Q: Where will the tracks go?

A: Based on the 2016 voter approved alignment under Sound Transit 3, elevated tracks for light rail will be constructed for much of the route between Lynnwood and Everett. It is difficult to predict with certainty, at this time, exactly where tracks will go. Sound Transit has final authority on that decision. Under Sound Transit's schedule, a decision on the location of light rail tracks could come sometime in 2025 following extensive public outreach.

Q: When will construction start on light rail between Lynnwood and Everett?

A: Construction of light rail stations and tracks is not expected to begin until 2030. With service between Lynnwood and Everett set to begin in 2036.

Q: How frequent will light rail trains run?

A: Currently, light rail trains operate every six minutes from 6:00 am to 9:30 am and from 3:00 pm to 6:30 pm on weekdays. During the midday and evening hours on weekdays and all day on weekends trains run every 10 minutes. Frequency is reduced to every 15 minutes during the early morning and late night hours of all days.

Q: How long will it take to get to Seattle?

A: Everett to Lynnwood will take approximately 33 minutes. Everett to downtown Seattle will take approximately 60 minutes.

Q: Where does light rail currently operate?

A: Currently, riders can travel on light rail from Angle Lake (south of SeaTac Airport) to Husky Stadium in Seattle. The ST3 plan will build another 120 miles of light rail that, when complete, will stretch from Everett to south of Tacoma and from west Seattle and Ballard east to Redmond and Issaquah.

Q: When will other segments of light rail open?

A: Additional segments of light rail will open on the following schedule:

- UW to Northgate—2021
- Downtown Seattle to Microsoft Redmond Campus—2023
- Northgate to Lynnwood—2024
- Microsoft Redmond Campus to Downtown Redmond—2024
- Angle Lake to Federal Way—2024
- Federal Way to Tacoma—2030
- Downtown Seattle to West Seattle—2030
- Downtown Seattle to Ballard—2035
- Bellevue to Issaquah—2041

Q: What is an operations and maintenance facility (OMF)?

A: Expanding the Sound Transit voter-approved light rail system requires the building of an OMF North to receive, store and service a larger fleet of trains. Sound Transit requires approximately 40-50 relatively flat acres (for reference, one football field is 1.3 acres) near an operating light rail line. Sound Transit operates a central OMF at South Forest Street in Seattle. The agency is building a second facility in Bellevue (near I-405 and SR 520) and will build an additional OMF between SeaTac Airport and Tacoma as part of system expansion plans.

Q: How can I get more information on Sound Transit's process?

A: Visit Sound Transit's Everett Link Extension web page for more information. <https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/everett-link-extension>.

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COMMUNITY TRANSIT/BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Q: What is bus rapid transit?

A: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast and efficient service that may include dedicated lanes, busways, traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, elevated platforms and enhanced stations. In Snohomish County, Community Transit currently operates two BRT lines ([SWIFT Blue and Green Lines](#)). Swift operates every 10 minutes Monday-Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., and every 20 minutes early mornings, nights and weekends.

Q: Where does bus rapid transit go?

A: Community Transit’s Swift Blue Line, opened in November 2009. It serves a 17-mile route between Everett and Shoreline. The Swift Green Line opened in March 2019 and serves a 12.5-mile route between Paine Field/Boeing and Canyon Park/Bothell. Future SWIFT lines will include the Orange Line running between Mill Creek and Edmonds Community College and the Red Line from Smokey Point to Everett. Community Transit is also planning to extend the SWIFT Blue line to connect with the 145th St Light Rail station being constructed as part of the Lynnwood Link Extension.

Q: How will transit be integrated with light rail?

A: By co-locating light rail and bus rapid transit stations together, transfers become seamless with minimal delay.

Q: Will I still be able to ride the bus to Seattle once light rail opens?

A: Community Transit is evaluating how to restructure routes once light rail begins service to Northgate in 2021. More information can be found [here](#).

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TRANSPORTATION

Q: Will light rail improve traffic?

A: Light rail can move a large number of people, provide more choices, increase mobility, and provide greater reliability. While large transit systems don’t solve congestion, they do provide convenient options for many commuters.

Q: Will there be road improvements to provide access to the light rail stations?

A: Improvements to arterial roadways will be necessary to support increased transit access to light rail station areas. It is also likely that new local roads will be added, especially in the station areas. These new local roads, constructed by new development, are desirable in order to create smaller, more walkable blocks and to improve circulation. Improving walkability and local circulation is an important goal of the Light Rail Communities project.

Q: Our roads can’t handle this much growth.

A: The County has already begun planning for transportation improvements necessary to serve to the increased activity in the light rail station areas. This includes the [East-West High Capacity Transit Access Study](#) completed in 2017 and the Light Rail Communities Station Area Planning Study completed in 2019. These studies will be incorporated in the Subarea Plan.

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PARKING

Q: Will there be parking near the light rail station?

A: Yes. Sound Transit will be adding an additional 500 parking spaces to the existing ~700 spaces at the Mariner Park and Ride as part of ST3. The amount of parking at the Ash Way Park and Ride will remain the same.

Q: Why isn’t there more parking at the stations?

A: It is not possible to construct enough parking for everyone to drive to the light rail stations. It is expected that many people will use transit (such as Community Transit's Swift lines) to get to the stations. In addition, rideshare services and autonomous vehicles are anticipated to expand greatly over the next two decades, reducing the need for parking. Light rail also supports greater residential densities, allowing people a choice to live near stations further reducing the amount of parking needed.

Q: I am worried this is going to cause people to park in my neighborhood once the park and rides fill up.

A: There are ways the county can address this, but at this time it is too early to know the potential impacts.

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HOUSING

Q: How will you handle displacement of existing residences?

A: Work on the subarea plan will include identifying a range of strategies to minimize displacement. Due to market conditions and Sound Transit's land needs, it may not be possible to preserve all of the residences within the station areas.

Q: Will there be a requirement to provide affordable housing?

A: Work on the subarea plan will include identifying a range of strategies to provide affordable housing. In addition, under certain conditions, land that Sound Transit identifies as surplus could be used for affordable housing.

Q: Will this cause gentrification?

A: Neighborhoods change over time as people come and go; it's almost inevitable. Around the region, communities that have light rail have seen dramatic changes. In choosing to develop a subarea plan, the county hopes to the greatest extent possible to plan for this change and mitigate future impacts and protect the community assets while opening new opportunities.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Q: How will you handle displacement of existing businesses?

A: Work on the subarea plan will include identifying a range of strategies to minimize displacement. Due to market conditions and Sound Transit's land needs, it may not be possible to preserve all of the business within the station areas.

Q: Will light rail bring more jobs and businesses to the area?

A: Examining other areas of the central Puget Sound region with light rail shows an increase in economic development. The critical mass of population and employment around a light rail station is likely to facilitate an expansion of grocery, retail and entertainment options. Some employers list proximity to light rail as a factor in choosing where to locate office buildings.

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FUNDING/TAXES

Q: How will all the new roads and park improvements be paid for?

A: Part of the work on the subarea plan includes identifying a range of strategies to finance new improvements.

Q: Will my property taxes go up?

A: It's difficult to answer that question at this time as there are a variety of factors impacting property tax rates including voter approved measures.

Q: Will the government use eminent domain to take property?

A: Eminent domain is the practice of last resort for both Sound Transit and Snohomish County, and is only used after all other attempts at an agreed upon solution have failed. If necessary, eminent domain is only used for the development of public facilities such as roads or light rail facilities. It is not used to take private homes and businesses for private redevelopment purposes. Surplus land can be used for low-income housing. A significant amount of planning work is still required before the location of light rail tracks, station locations or new roads has been decided. At that time, agencies will work with local property owners in an effort to achieve a mutually beneficial solution as a way to avoid the use of eminent domain.

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CAPITAL FACILITIES/UTILITIES

Q: I'm concerned this will overload our already full schools and strain utilities capacity. What's the plan for them?

A: The Light Rail Communities project began engaging with the local school districts very early in the process. By conducting early planning for the arrival of light rail, we are able to give other public service providers time to plan for the increase in population.

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MARINER COMMUNITY CAMPUS

Q: What is the Mariner Community Campus?

A: The Mariner Community Campus aims to provide basic needs and resources to residents in the Mariner area with the goal of opening in 2026. The campus would be based on a permanent public-private partnership to:

- Build a safe and accessible community campus.
- Provide a community benefit meeting the basic needs of all residents.
- Support the Mariner area through integrated and high-quality services and amenities that reinforce healthy families and a strong community.

The project's guiding principles include:

- Free and equal access to resources and technology.
- Community opportunities.
- Connection to community.
- Social equity.

Q: How does the Mariner Community Campus fit within the county's planning for light rail?

A: The Light Rail Communities project is coordinating with the Mariner Community Campus coalition and has participated in several meetings over the past year. The project is an important piece in creating a strong and vibrant community around the Mariner Light Rail Station. As details of the project become more developed it will be incorporated into the Subarea Plan.

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