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LRT Construction Mitigation Studies

**SEATTLE, WASHINGTON:  
Central Puget Sound Regional  
Transit, Link Light Rail**

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For University Avenue Business Association  
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## Synopsis

Scheduled to open in July of 2009, the Seattle Link Light Rail line will be operated by the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) and will initially run 13.9-miles with a 1.7-mile extension coming on line that following December. Throughout the construction process the City of Seattle and Sound Transit have been careful to keep affected businesses and residents along the corridor abreast of

developments. To ensure community cooperation and involvement six individual Outreach Specialists (one for each construction area along the route) have served as invaluable liaisons between communities, the City of Seattle and Sound Transit. Working alongside community leaders, these Outreach Specialists have helped to deliver numerous mitigation services to ensure that businesses affected by construction along the corridor are able to remain

viable throughout this time of transformation.

Helping businesses to succeed has meant maximizing their ability to draw customers at a time when many people might shy away from the area. As such, Sound Transit has helped to

maintain traffic access to these businesses by working to preserve street parking and provide well-signed alternate routes to merchants. This access is highlighted by signage, provided by Sound Transit, informing customers that businesses remain open during the construction process. So as to ensure positive experiences for business patrons, Sound Transit has also taken on the mantle of keeping affected neighborhoods clean of debris and refuse from

construction activities

To further benefit affected businesses, Sound Transit has been encouraging employees and city workers to patronize merchants throughout affected construction areas so that neighborhood businesses may not just survive but thrive through construction. In the interest of looking forward, Sound Metro is providing affected merchants with various forms of business

consultation looking at succeeding during construction and beyond. This consultation, combined with a \$50 million fund – coming from the City of Seattle – to aid businesses should help ensure business success along the light rail corridor.



## **Community Outreach**

Experienced professionals at Sound Transit have worked throughout the project to ensure community members and business are provided with information, access to officials for public comment and opportunities to develop community-oriented solutions to problems as they arise. This includes communicating advanced notice of construction activities, maintaining a 24-hour hotline as a quick and effective means to contact Outreach Specialists or report construction related issues. Furthermore, regular community meetings, printed updates and electronic media along with targeted community construction meetings before, during and after stages of construction implementation have been made available to keep the public abreast of construction activities. This communication has been made available in a plethora of languages and interpreters have been available upon request for community meeting-events. (For Outreach contacts, see Appendix A.)

## **Community Development Fund**

In 2006 the Seattle City Council passed a \$50 million community-development fund to help support businesses affected by light rail construction. Supported by Sound Transit and the Mayor's office, part of the \$50 million fund was specifically set aside to assist businesses and homes displaced by the light rail. Displaced businesses could qualify for up to \$150,000 in grants and \$1.3 million in interest-free loans. A

large part of the \$50 million was designated to be set aside for a permanent bank account to be used to fund loans for projects deemed worthy by a committee of community members. Proposed projects qualifying for the fund include transit-oriented development, day-care centers and an apprenticeship program to train local residents to work on light rail construction jobs.

## **Business Consultation**

Sound Transit and the City of Seattle have provided access to expert business consultant services to affected businesses along the corridor. These have taken the form of marketing development plans, technical workshops, or one on one consultation. Consultations are focused on both seeing that business owners survive and thrive through the construction process and that they are well-prepared to succeed into the future employing the light rail as a business asset.

## **Maintain Traffic Access**

Sound Transit has worked alongside businesses during the construction process to ensure that alternate access is readily available for customers of affected merchants. Maintaining access means providing off-site parking for construction workers so that available street parking will be preserved for merchant customers and employees. Finally, access has been maintained where roads must be temporarily closed by working with businesses to design usable, signed, alternate routes for business patrons.

## **Work Site and Neighborhood Cleanliness**

Keeping neighborhoods desirable during construction is a responsibility falling to contractors and their crews to ensure that their visible impact is minimized. Leaving a minimal trace during construction has meant contractors having foremen monitor garbage, dust and debris while on-site. Because certain amounts of refuse and dust are inevitable construction crews have also been washing windows of businesses in active construction areas once every three months. Additionally, in the interest of continued neighborhood beautification, temporary public art has been applied to construction fencing along the corridor.

## **Provide Signage**

During construction Sound Transit has been responsible for keeping consumers informed that businesses in the active construction area remain open to patrons. This has been accomplished by posting “open for business” signs, providing detour signs to help consumers access businesses and erect temporary business directories and kiosks where appropriate.

## **Promote Corridor Businesses Viability**

Throughout the construction process it has been expected of Sound Transit that the company and its employees will participate in community events and maintain relationships along the corridor. This has come in the form of a regular “lunch bus” to bring Sound Transit and city employees and members of the public

to local restaurants along the corridor. Sound Transit community and construction newsletters have highlighted impacted businesses and the services they provide. Additionally, participation in such events as street fairs, farmer’s markets and parades to name a few, has helped to build strong relationships between Sound Transit employees and administrators and corridor business owners.



## Appendix A

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