



# ***Everett Link Extension***

## **Early Scoping Information Report**

***November 2021***

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EVLE	Everett Link Extension
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
OMF	Operations and Maintenance Facility
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
ST3	Sound Transit 3

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Everett Link Extension Early Scoping: November 1, 2021 to December 10, 2021**

Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are conducting an early scoping outreach effort to start the alternatives development and environmental processes for the Everett Link Extension Project in Snohomish County, Washington. The Everett Link Extension Project is part of the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Plan that voters approved funding for in 2016. The project includes light rail from Lynnwood City Center to the Everett Station area as well as a new light rail operations and maintenance facility along the alignment in Snohomish County. For environmental review purposes, FTA is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Sound Transit is the lead agency under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

The Everett Link Extension Project connects to the regional light rail system that will extend east to Redmond, and south to Seattle, West Seattle, and Tacoma. Figure 1-1 shows Sound Transit's current service and future projects.



Figure 1-1 Sound Transit System Map

## 1.2 About Scoping

Scoping is a process that engages the public, agencies and tribes in order to provide information and solicit feedback to help compare project alternatives and inform the decision-making process. The scoping outreach effort supports the overall planning, public involvement and state and federal environmental processes.

A series of meetings will be conducted as part of early scoping to initiate collaboration with the public, agencies and tribes to further define the project. It also provides an opportunity for the public to learn about and provide official comments on the project as it begins. Sound Transit is seeking public comments on the project purpose and need, the Representative Project included in the ST3 Plan, other potential alternatives, and the transportation, environmental and community impacts and benefits to consider when evaluating alternatives.

Based on the input received, Sound Transit will refine the list of potential alternatives and evaluate how well they meet the project's purpose and need. Potential project alternatives that meet the purpose and need will be evaluated further as part of the Alternatives Development process. The Alternatives Development process is described in Section 4 and includes a Level 1 and a Level 2 evaluation that will identify a set of reasonable alternatives that best meet the project's purpose and need.

If a formal decision is made to proceed with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Sound Transit and FTA will conduct EIS scoping, which will include another round of scoping meetings and a formal comment period, after the Level 2 evaluation is complete. This will allow the public, agencies and tribes an opportunity to comment on the results of the analysis and to weigh in on the alternatives presented. Informed by input from all interested parties, the Sound Transit Board is then expected to identify a preferred alternative and other alternatives to study in the Draft EIS. This document has been drafted assuming an EIS will be prepared.

## 1.3 Early Scoping Meetings

Early scoping includes a public comment period that is open until December 10, 2021. Virtual public meetings will be held at the following times:

- Wednesday, November 17, 2021 from 12-1:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 18, 2021 from 6-7:30 p.m.

Join a virtual public meeting at [everettlink.participate.online](https://everettlink.participate.online).

A separate early scoping meeting will also be conducted with agencies and tribes to present project information. Potentially interested tribes will be contacted and offered individual meetings, either in-person or virtually, at their request. Invitations to the agency and tribal early scoping meetings will be sent to the appropriate federal, tribal, state and local governmental units.

The public and agency meetings will be accessible via the internet and by teleconference.

## 1.4 Ways to Provide Comments

Written early scoping comments are requested by December 10, 2021 and can be mailed or emailed to the addresses below. Comments can also be provided via the online comment form available at [everettlink.participate.online](http://everettlink.participate.online) or left as a voicemail at the phone number below.

**Mailing Address:**

Sound Transit  
 Kathy Fendt, East and North Corridor Environmental Manager  
 401 S. Jackson Street  
 Seattle, WA 98104

**Email Address:** [everettlinkcomments@soundtransit.org](mailto:everettlinkcomments@soundtransit.org)

**Voicemail Phone Number:** 888-512-8599

## 2 THE EVERETT LINK EXTENSION AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

### 2.1 Sound Transit and the Region’s Mass Transit System

Sound Transit has been building out the region’s mass transit system since voters approved funding for Sound Move in 1996, followed up by Sound Transit 2 in 2008. In 2013, Sound Transit began planning for the next phase of investments to build on ST2. This work involved studying several possible high-capacity transit corridors and updating Sound Transit’s *Regional Transit Long-Range Plan* in 2014. The planning process culminated in voters authorizing funding for the ST3 Plan in 2016. The ST3 Plan includes light rail extensions east to Issaquah and South Kirkland, south to Tacoma Dome, and north to Everett, including the Everett Link Extension.

Figure 2-1 shows regional transit planning that has occurred over the years.

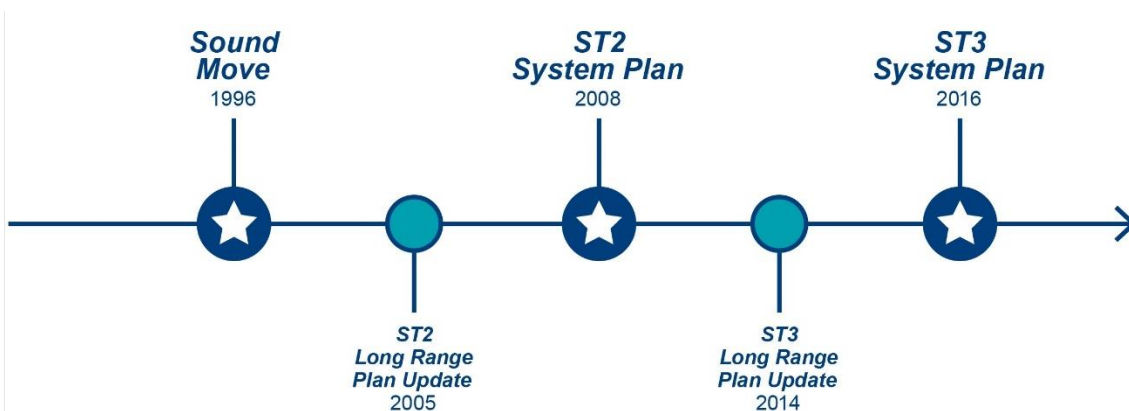


Figure 2-1 Regional Transit Planning Over the Years



## Mass Transit and the Region's Plans for Managing Growth

The Puget Sound Region, which includes urbanized King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties, has coordinated regional, county and local plans that guide growth in the region. Puget Sound Regional Council's 2018 *VISION 2050* and *Regional Transportation Plan* reflect Sound Transit's 2014 *Long-Range Plan* and have policies that focus growth in urban centers and areas planned for compact higher intensity development. County and city comprehensive plan policies reinforce the need for transit investments to support new population and employment growth in these centers and urban areas.

## 2.2 Previous Planning Studies

Light rail expansion to Everett has been contemplated since the *Regional Transit Long-Range Vision* in 1996, but more focused planning occurred with the *Lynnwood to Everett High-Capacity Transit Corridor Study* and the *Regional Transit Long-Range Plan Update Environmental Impact Statement*, both published in 2014. These studies looked at numerous modes and alignments to connect Lynnwood and Everett, culminating in the Representative Project presented in the ST3 Plan.

Local jurisdictions have also conducted independent studies that led to local decisions related to Everett Link Extension station locations. To learn more, see [Snohomish County's Light Rail Communities](#) and the [Metro Everett Subarea Plan](#). Sound Transit will consider this work during the Alternatives Development process, and these station locations are reflected in the other potential alternatives shown in Section 2.4.

## 2.3 Representative Project

Based on years of previous planning studies (discussed in Section 2.2), the ST3 Representative Project for the Everett Link Extension identified the mode, corridor and station areas for the project. It also informed the project's cost, schedule and operating needs.

The ST3 Representative Project would operate on a 16-mile elevated and at-grade guideway and extend Link light rail service north from the Lynnwood City Center Station to Everett Station. From Lynnwood, it would parallel I-5 to the Mariner area, and then travel westward along Airport Road to the SW Everett Industrial Center and eastward along State Route 526/Evergreen Way, before continuing northward along I-5 to Everett. The project would add six stations to the light rail network in the West Alderwood, Ash Way, Mariner, SW Everett Industrial Center, SR 526/Evergreen and Everett Station areas. One provisional (unfunded) station at SR 99/Airport Road would also be evaluated. Under the ST3 Plan, provisional stations are those where planning, preliminary engineering and environmental review are funded, but where design and construction are not. This early planning and engineering work will help ensure minimal delay in building the station and serving future riders if funding should become available to construct the station. Also included as part of the project is an operations and maintenance facility along the alignment in Snohomish County. The ST3 Representative Project did not specify the location of the OMF within the corridor, but it must be located within reasonable proximity to the proposed Link service.

Figure 2-2 shows the ST3 Representative Project for the Everett Link Extension.

## **2.4 Other Potential Alternatives**

Sound Transit has started to explore alignment, station and OMF locations as refinements to the Representative Project in coordination with local jurisdictions and the FTA. The potential alignment and station alternatives under consideration are illustrated in Figure 2-3 and Figure 2-4 and include those options previously identified by local partners as discussed in Section 2.2. The potential OMF location alternatives are illustrated in Figure 2-5. Figure 2-6 through Figure 2-12 show each station area in more detail.



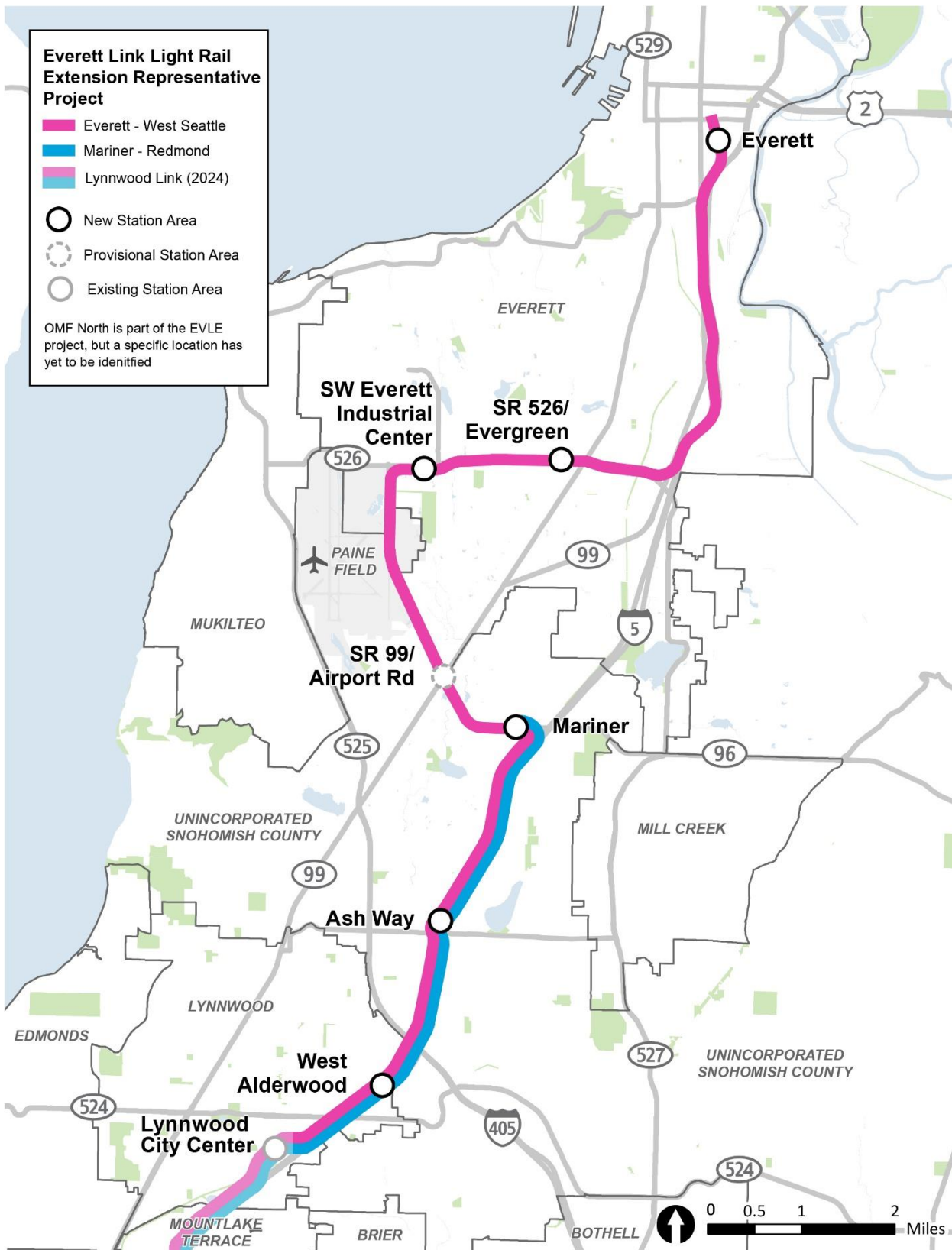


Figure 2-2 ST3 Representative Project for the Everett Link Extension

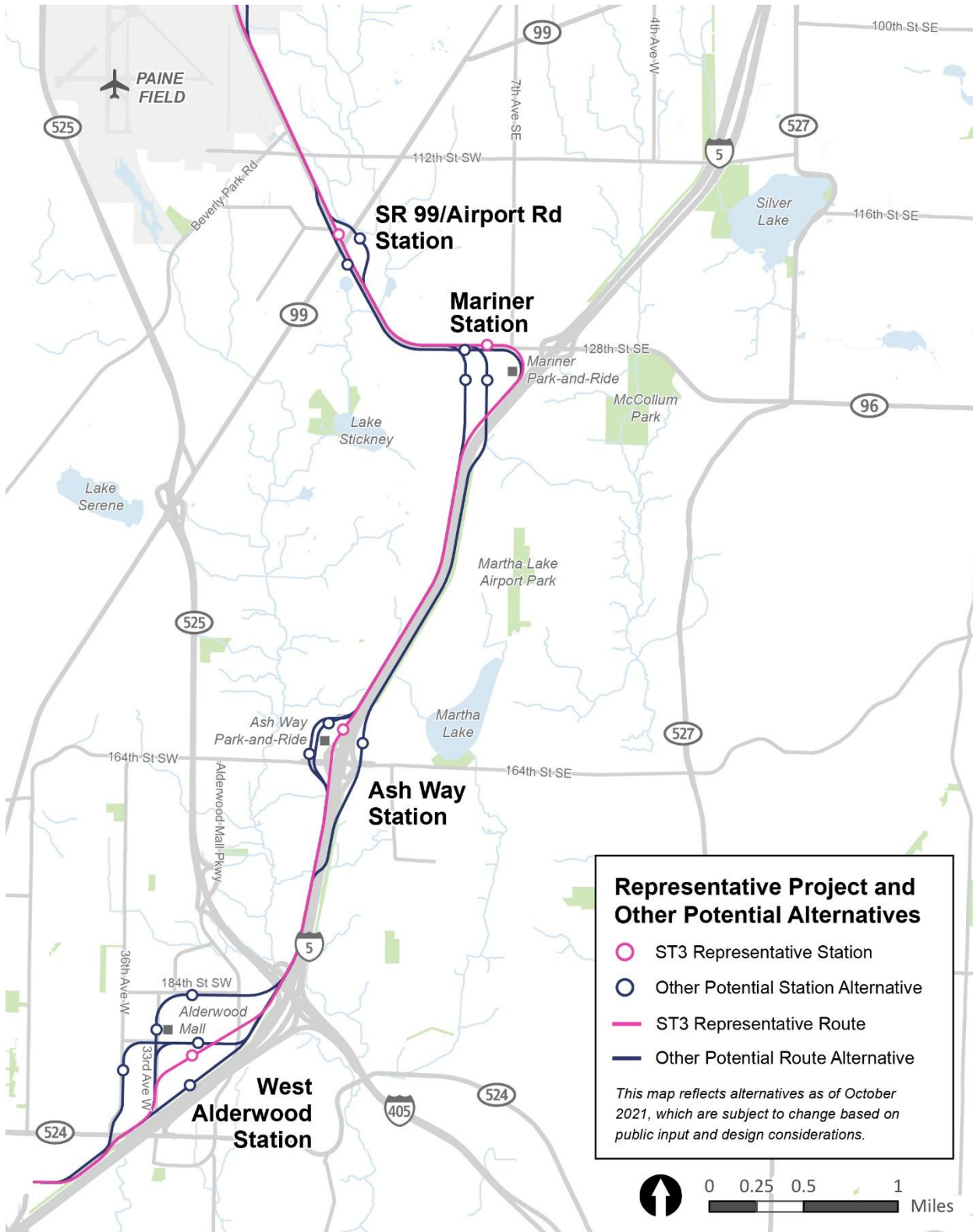
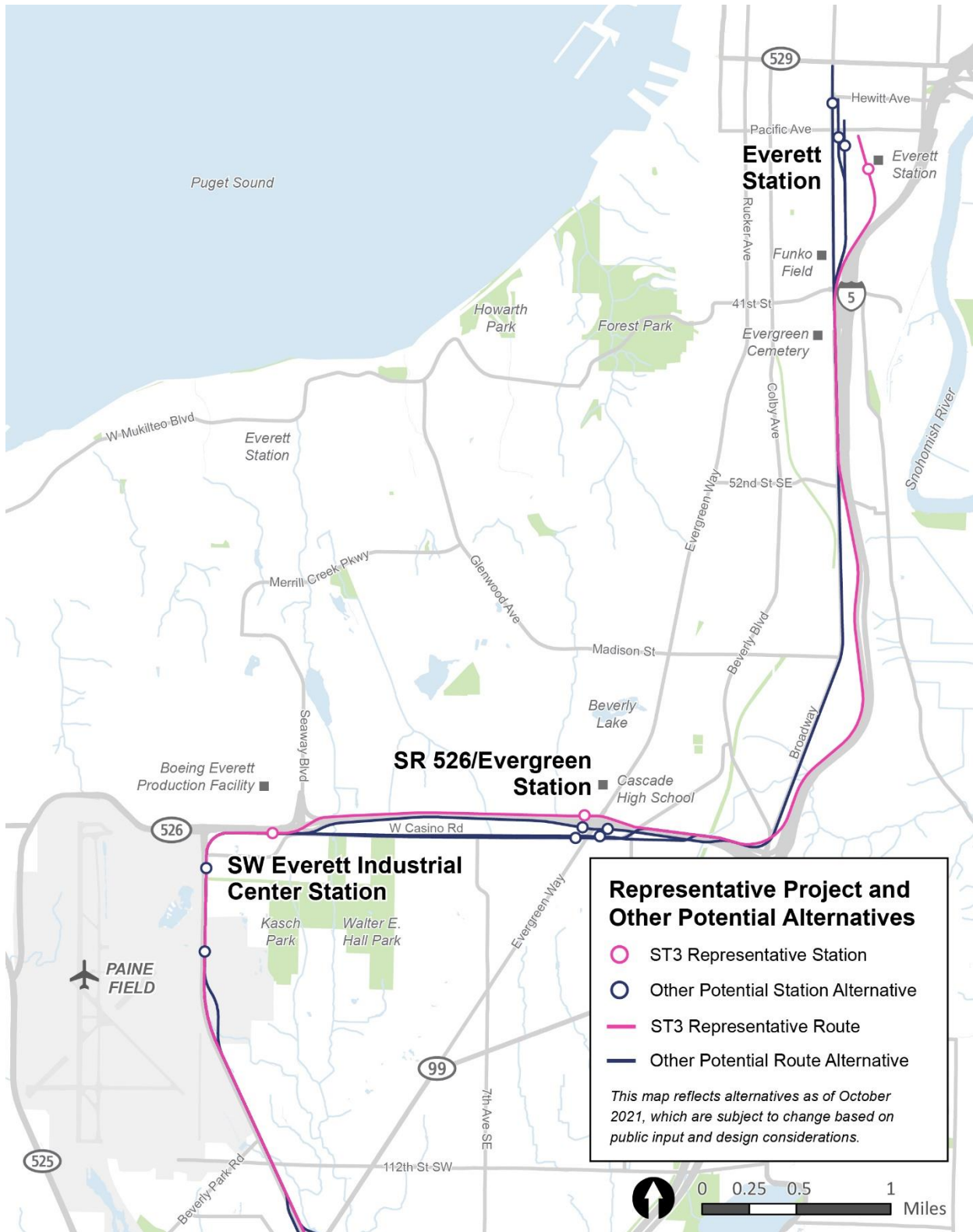


Figure 2-3 Representative Project and Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – South Section



**Figure 2-4 Representative Project and Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – North Section**



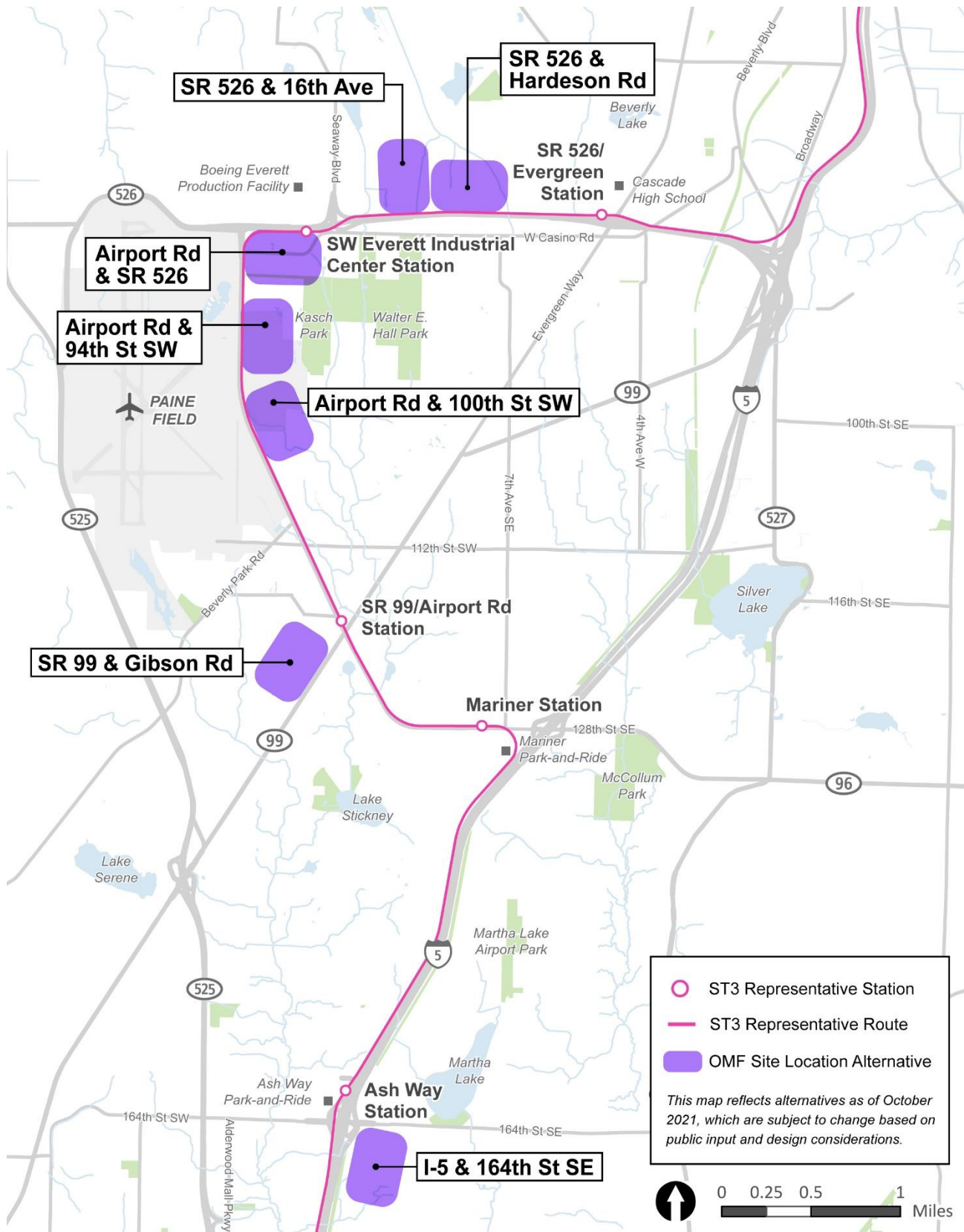


Figure 2-5 Operations and Maintenance Facility Location Alternatives

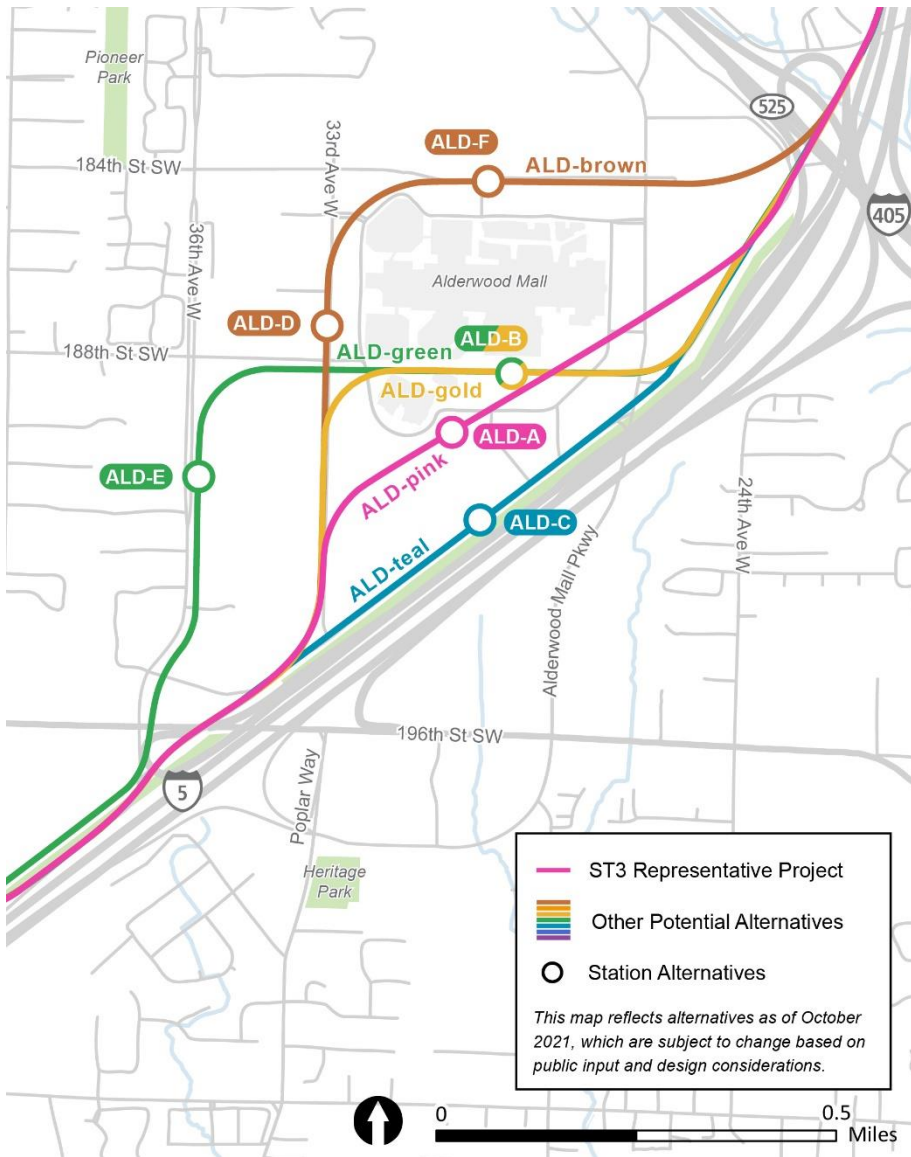


Figure 2-6 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – West Alderwood

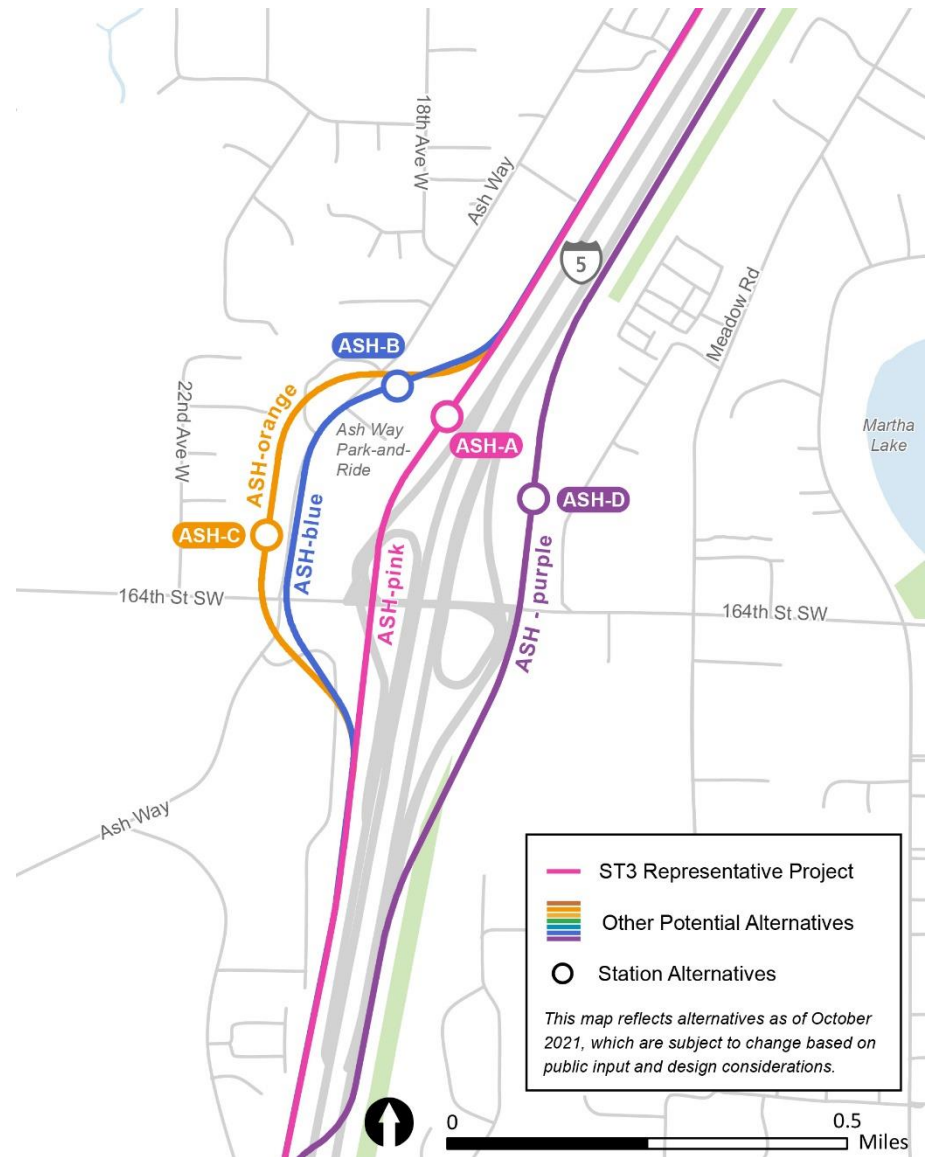


Figure 2-7 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Ash Way



Figure 2-8 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Mariner

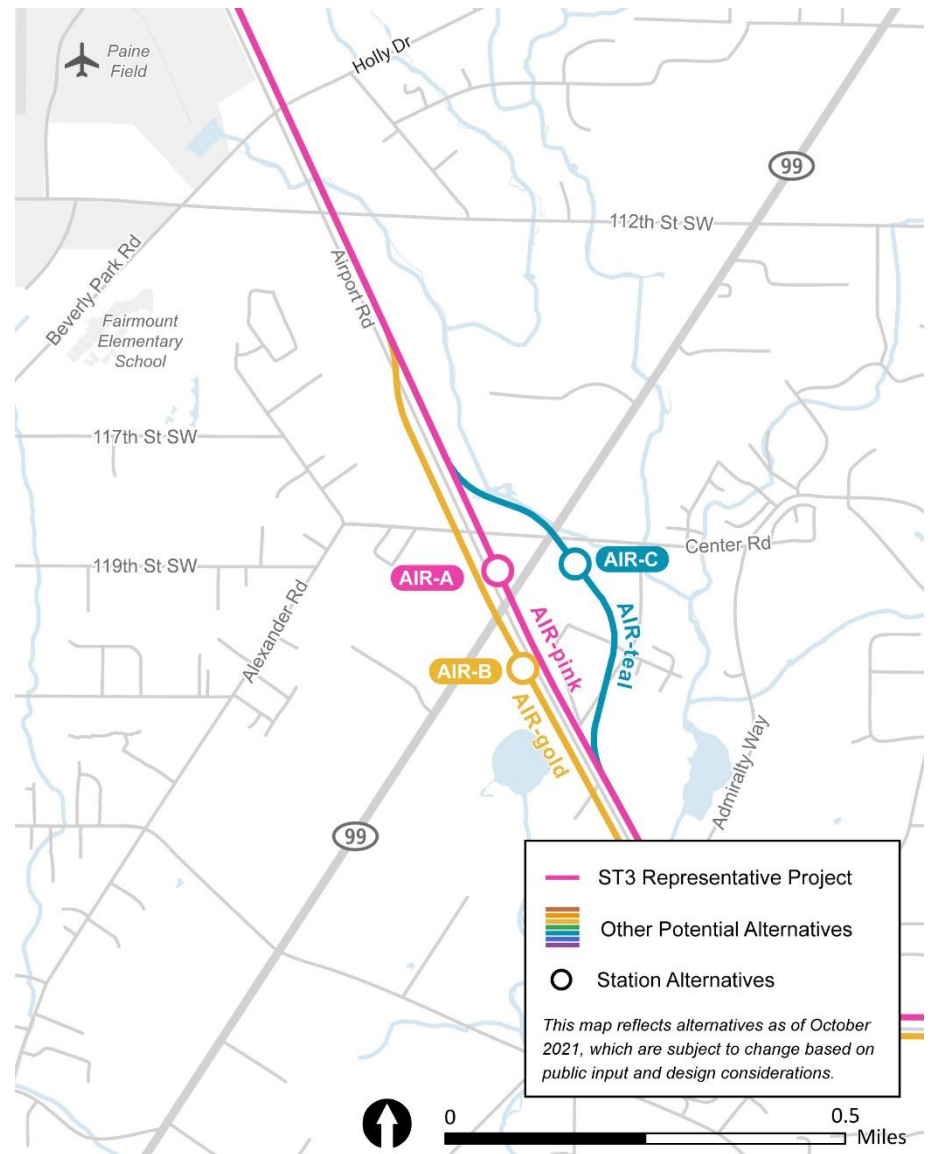


Figure 2-9 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – SR 99 / Airport Rd



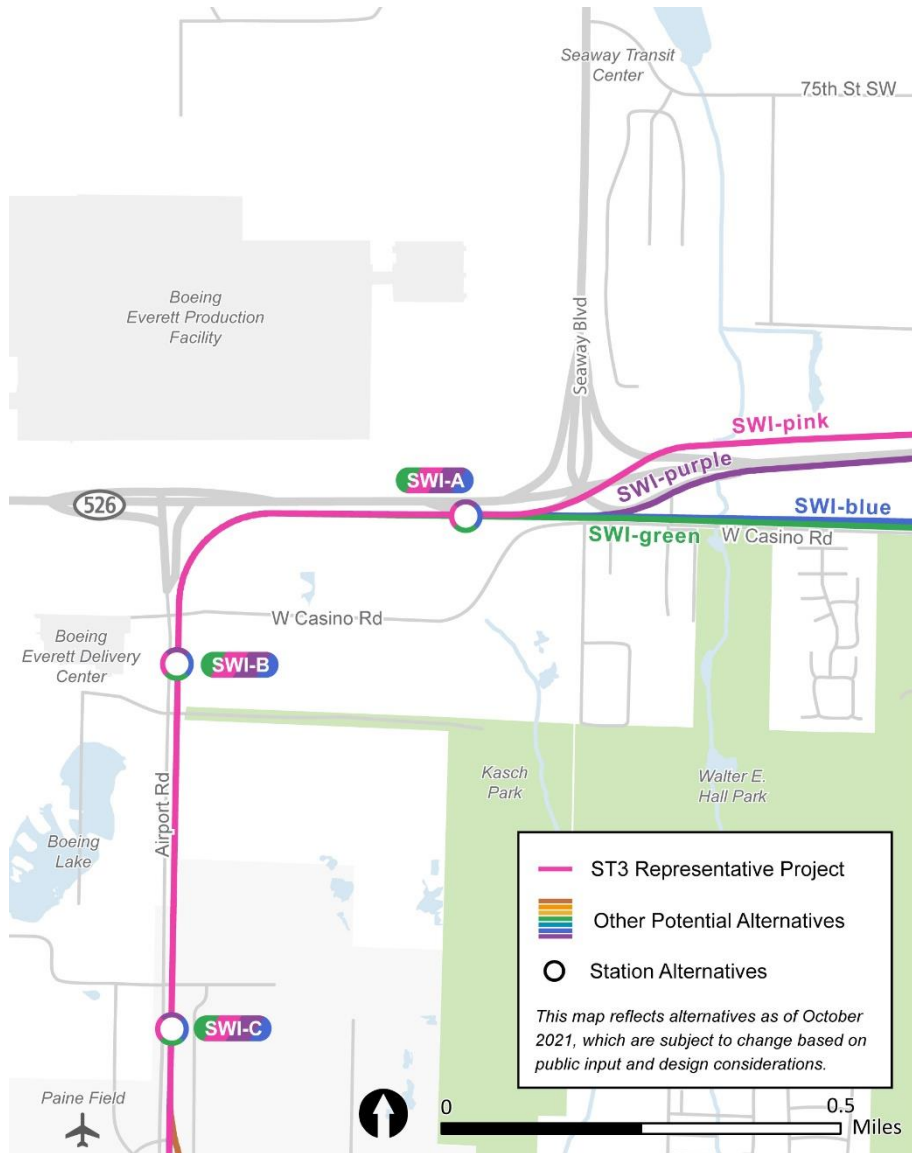


Figure 2-10 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Southwest Everett Industrial Center

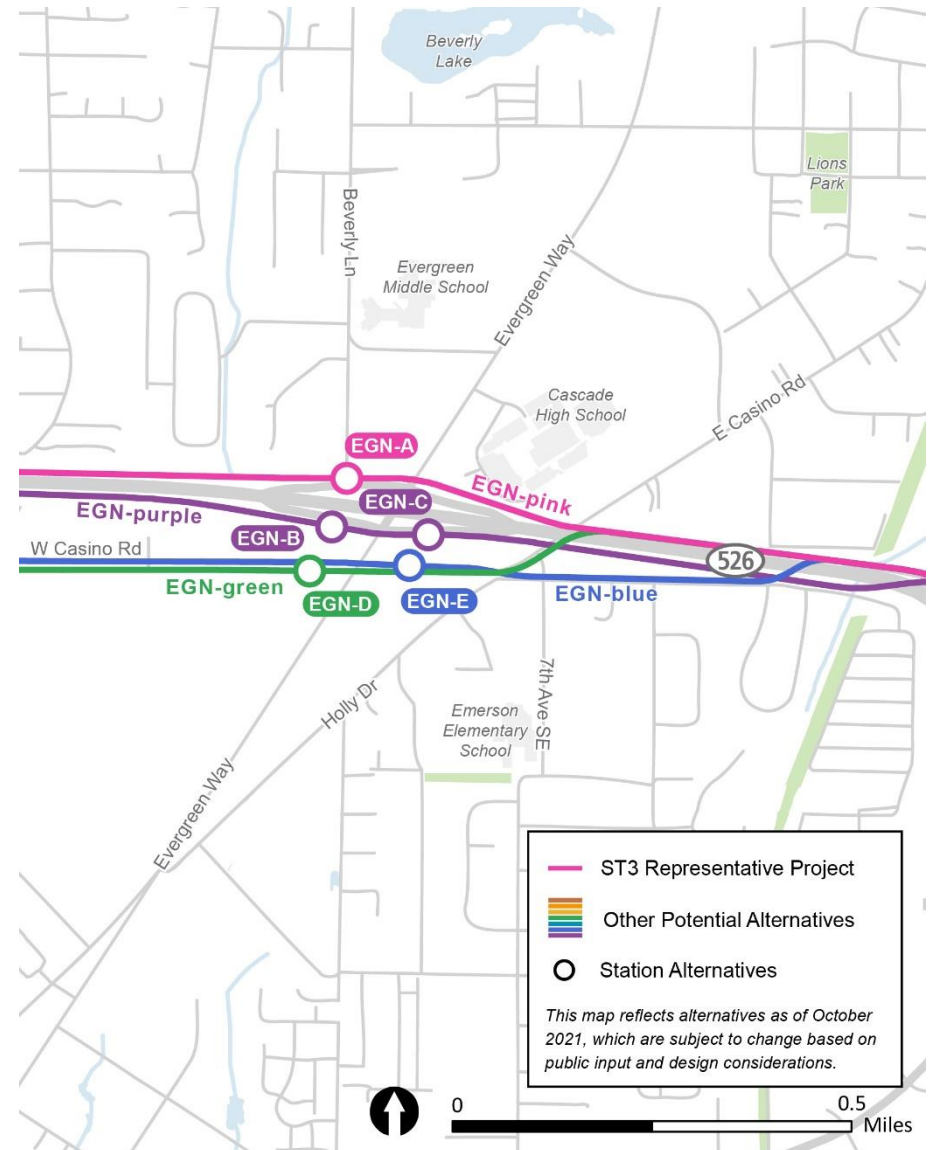


Figure 2-11 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – SR 526/Evergreen



**Figure 2-12 Other Potential Alternatives for the Everett Link Extension – Everett**



### 3 DEVELOPING THE “PURPOSE AND NEED”

To guide decision-making during the Alternatives Development process and to support the project’s state and federal environmental reviews, Sound Transit drafted a statement of why the project is being proposed and the needs to be addressed. This is known as the project’s purpose and need. Sound Transit will use this statement and criteria derived from it to evaluate alternatives and assist with the identification of a preferred alternative as well as other alternatives to study further in the environmental review process if an EIS is needed. The purpose and need statement will continue to be developed and refined to reflect public and agency comments as the project moves forward.

#### 3.1 Project Purpose

The purpose of the Everett Link Extension is to expand the Link light rail system from the Lynnwood City Center Link Station to the Everett Station area and provide an OMF in order to:

- Provide high quality, rapid, reliable, accessible and efficient light rail transit service to communities in the project corridor as defined through the local planning process and reflected in the ST3 Plan.
- Improve regional mobility by increasing connectivity and capacity in the EVLE corridor from the Lynnwood Transit Center to the Everett Station area to meet projected transit demand.
- Connect regional centers as described in adopted regional and local land use, transportation and economic development plans and Sound Transit’s Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Implement a system that is technically and financially feasible to build, operate and maintain.
- Expand mobility for the corridor and region’s residents, including explicit consideration for transit-dependent, low-income and minority populations.
- Encourage equitable and sustainable growth in station areas through support of transit-oriented development and multimodal integration in a manner that is consistent with local land use plans and policies, including Sound Transit’s Equitable Transit Oriented Development Policy and Sustainability Plan.
- Encourage convenient, safe and equitable non-motorized access to stations, such as bicycle and pedestrian connections, consistent with Sound Transit’s System Access Policy and Equity and Inclusion Policy.
- Preserve and promote a healthy environment and economy by minimizing adverse impacts on the natural, built and social environments through sustainable and equitable practices.
- Provide an operations and maintenance facility with the capacity to receive, test, commission, store, maintain and deploy vehicles to support the intended level of service for system-wide light rail system expansion.
- Develop an operations and maintenance facility that supports efficient and reliable light rail service and minimizes system operating costs.

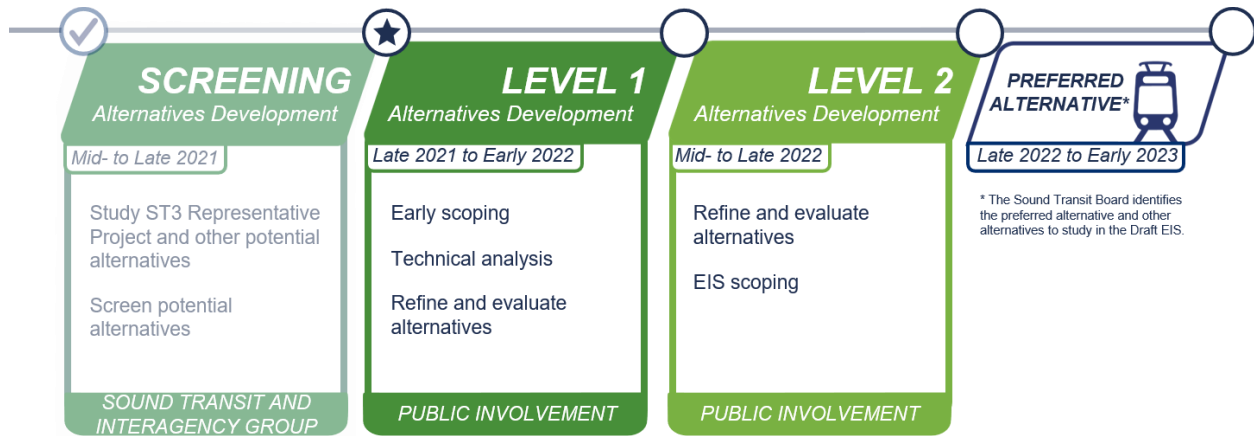
## 3.2 Need for the Project

The project is needed because:

- Chronic roadway congestion on Interstate 5 and State Route 99 – two primary highways connecting communities along the corridor – delays today’s travelers, including those using transit, and degrades the reliability of bus service traversing the corridor, particularly during commute periods.
- These chronic, degraded conditions are expected to continue to worsen as the region’s population and employment grow.
- Puget Sound Regional Council (the regional metropolitan planning organization) and local plans call for high-capacity transit in the corridor consistent with PSRC’s VISION 2050 and Sound Transit’s Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Snohomish County residents and communities, including transit-dependent residents and low-income or minority populations, need long-term regional mobility and multimodal connectivity, as called for in the Washington State Growth Management Act.
- Regional and local plans call for increased residential and/or employment density at and around high-capacity stations and increased options for multi-modal access.
- Environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region, as established in Washington state law and embodied in Puget Sound Regional Council’s VISION 2050 and Regional Transportation Plan, include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by prioritizing transportation investments that decrease vehicle miles traveled.
- The current regional system lacks an operations and maintenance facility with sufficient capacity and suitable location to support the efficient and reliable long-term operations for system-wide light rail expansion, including the next phase of light rail expansion in Snohomish and King Counties.
- New light rail maintenance and storage capacity needs to be available with sufficient time to accept delivery of and commission new vehicles to meet fleet expansion needs and to store existing vehicles while the new vehicles are tested and prepared.

## 4 ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Figure 4-1 shows the Alternatives Development process for the Everett Link Extension. During this process, Sound Transit will evaluate alternatives starting with the ST3 Representative Project.



**Figure 4-1 Alternatives Development Process**

Sound Transit identified other potential alternatives that could meet the project purpose and need, including alternatives developed through local planning efforts, as shown in Section 2.4. These comprise the other potential alternatives currently proposed that will be analyzed in the Level 1 evaluation. Following the early scoping comment period, Sound Transit will summarize the comments in an Early Scoping Summary Report. Sound Transit will refine the other potential alternatives and add any new alternatives suggested by the public, agencies or tribes as long as they are feasible and are able to meet the project’s purpose and need. Viable alternatives will be studied further during the Level 1 evaluation.

In Level 1, Sound Transit will evaluate in greater detail the Representative Project, other potential alternatives and any new alternatives that could meet the project purpose and need. This includes alternatives for route, station locations and OMF sites. The Level 1 evaluation will include additional conceptual design; analysis of potential environmental impacts or benefits; and coordination with the Elected Leadership Group, Community Advisory Group and Interagency Group. Alternatives will be evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative measures using criteria that reflect the project purpose and need. At this level of evaluation, alternatives will be analyzed in discrete sections to help evaluate tradeoffs in various locations. The goal is to reduce the number of alternatives that are carried to the next level of evaluation.

In Level 2, Sound Transit will evaluate full corridor alternatives in greater detail using even more quantitative measures and conceptual design. The intent of Level 2 is to identify the full corridor alternatives that best meet the project purpose and need. The results of the Level 2 evaluation will be presented to the public, agencies and tribes for comment during the EIS scoping comment period.

At the end of the Alternatives Development process, based on public, agency and tribal comments, results of the Level 1 and Level 2 evaluations, and recommendations from the Elected Leadership Group and Community Advisory Group, the Sound Transit Board is expected to identify a preferred alternative and other alternatives to study in the Draft EIS.

**Elected Leadership Group**

The Elected Leadership Group is composed of Sound Transit Board members and other local elected officials in the corridor. Its purpose is to build consensus around key decisions and work through project issues as needed.

**Community Advisory Group**

The Community Advisory Group is a forum for community members to inform the development of alternatives for EVLE. Its purpose is to build consensus around key project decisions and work through project issues as needed. The Community Advisory Group provides valuable input to elected leaders as they make project decisions.

**5 PROJECT TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS**

After the Alternatives Development process, Sound Transit will conduct further engineering, environmental impact analysis and public involvement work on the project and begin preparing the EIS. Environmental resource categories that could be evaluated in the EIS are shown in Figure 5-1.



**Figure 5-1 Environmental Resource Categories**

Sound Transit and FTA will publish a Draft EIS, provide an opportunity for formal public, agency and tribal comment, and publish a Final EIS that includes responses to those formal comments. After publication of the Final EIS, the Sound Transit Board is expected to make the final decision on the project to be built. Figure 5-2 shows the project’s current general timeline.

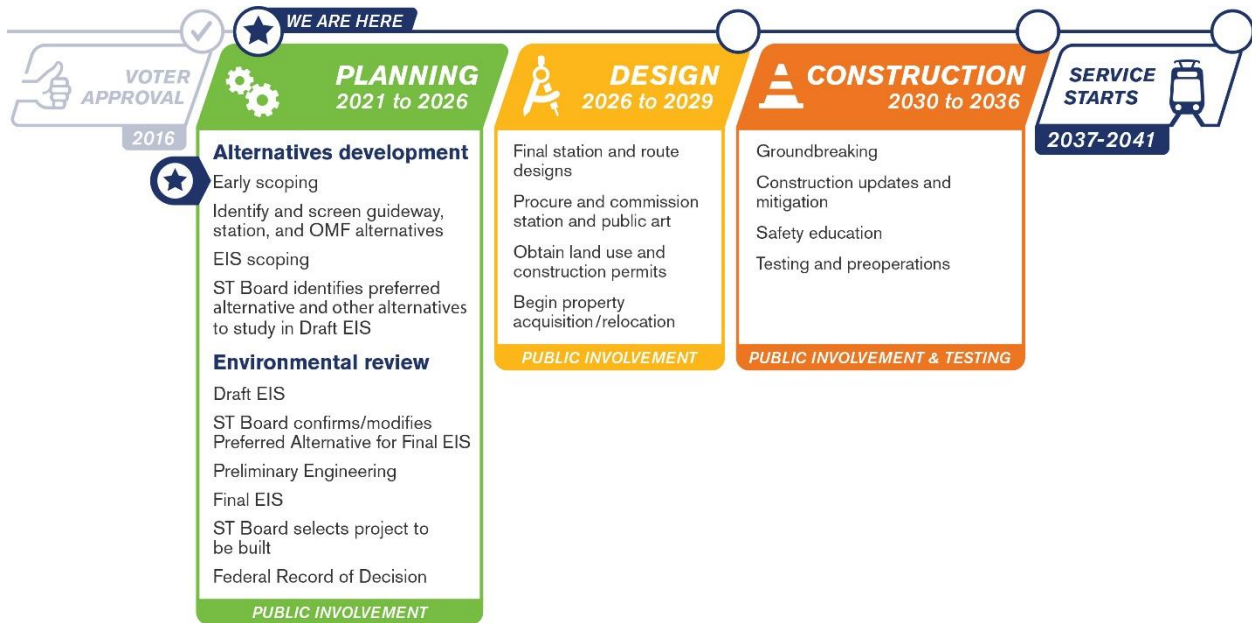


Figure 5-2 EVLE General Timeline

Sound Transit’s target schedule for extending light rail to Everett Station is 2037. Sound Transit is working to achieve this target and to close a forecasted affordability gap of approximately \$600 million. To reduce or eliminate this gap, Sound Transit seeks to increase funding and support at local, state and national levels, and work with partners and communities to reduce project costs. If it is not possible to close the gap, current financial assumptions reflect it will be affordable to open service to SW Everett Industrial Center by 2037 and to Everett Station by 2041. The OMF North will open in 2034 under both the target and affordable schedules.

*[soundtransit.org/everettlink](https://soundtransit.org/everettlink)*

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