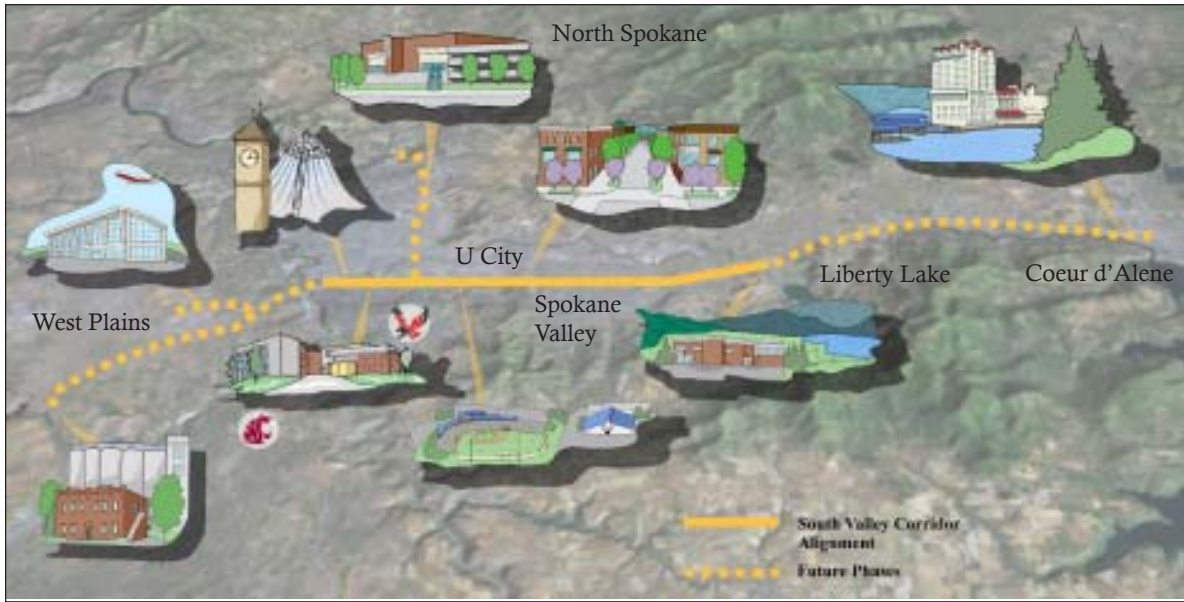




Let's *stalk*

SPOKANE REGIONAL LIGHT RAIL PROJECT NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3 • SUMMER 2005



A high capacity transit line could connect our region, offer more transportation choices, and relieve traffic congestion.

Getting There: It Starts with a Vision of a Better Tomorrow

Great communities don't happen by chance and good fortune; they are envisioned by the those who live in them and then are carefully planned and shaped to conform to that vision. People want to live in a community that has beautiful spaces and buildings, a pleasant environment, ease of movement, and an overall high quality of life, and they work to build those things in their cities and towns. Sometimes a vision is born out of a desire to solve a community-wide problem—like traffic congestion before it becomes unmanageable—and the solution to that challenge gives rise to numerous possibilities—like light rail or bus rapid transit.

Several options have emerged from pursuit of this vision, and it will soon be time for our community to decide which, if any, to advance.

Several years ago, leaders in Spokane recognized the growing road congestion problems in our area and decided to act before it becomes a crisis. Spokane County grew more than 15% in the last decade. Our economic region, composed of both Spokane and Kootenai counties, has a combined population of 521,000 people and is forecast to grow by *at least* 35% in the next 20 years. Our roads and highways will not have the capacity to accommodate this burgeoning development and, unless transportation alternatives are offered, we may find ourselves sitting in traffic, wasting time and money.

From Cheney to Coeur d'Alene, from North Spokane to Downtown to the South Hill, our region will be an integrated array of cities, towns, and neighborhoods that blend borders and connect in various ways. Giving residents and businesses a range of travel choices will build stronger communities and enhance economic development throughout the entire area.

A vision of greater mobility has arisen from understanding a problem and its inevitable growth, and we can see that it is more relevant than ever. When Spokane Transit asked our community if traffic congestion is *currently* a problem for our region, eight out of 10 people answered with a resounding yes. In the same survey, nine out of 10 people said they believe the government should look for solutions to congestion.

Several options have emerged from pursuit of this vision, and it will soon be time for our community to decide which, if any, to advance. This fall, the Spokane Transit Board of Directors will identify a high capacity transit locally preferred project alternative based on what it hears from you. So take a look at what's in store and let us know what you believe would be best for our region. In addition to reading this newsletter, we invite you to get more information from us at www.spokanelightrail.com, numerous public meetings, the interactive video kiosks in place at the Spokane Valley and Northtown Malls, or by calling us at 509-232-RAIL. Be part of the conversation!

Based on what it hears from you, the Board will select an alternative this fall.

The Turning Point: It's Time to Make a Decision

When we first began studying a transportation solution for the future, we focused exclusively on light rail. It became evident that we needed to broaden our study to include other possibilities so that we could find a high capacity transit option best suited to the unique needs of our region. This will give our citizens, civic leaders, and the Federal Transit Administration a full range of choices to consider before reaching a decision on a preferred alternative.

The Spokane Transit Board of Directors is expected to consider a variety of project alternatives for the South Valley corridor alignment between downtown Spokane and Liberty Lake. The project alternatives are:

- A light rail option with dual tracks running along the entire alignment from downtown Spokane to Liberty Lake. This allows for maximum schedule flexibility for both eastbound and westbound trains.
- A light rail option with a single or shared track along the entire alignment. This reduces the initial cost of a starter system for light rail and is expandable over time as future needs may require.
- A bus rapid transit (BRT) option. BRT offers premium, enhanced, and frequent bus service along existing roadways between Spokane and Liberty Lake.
- A combined light rail and BRT alternative, with light rail extending from downtown Spokane to the University City Transit Center. BRT would operate from the University City Transit Center to Liberty Lake.
- A "no build" option focuses on how the existing transit would operate into the future in the event that a "build" alternative is not selected.

The project's staff and citizens advisory, technical advisory, and steering committees have completed cost estimates, ridership projections, and conceptual design for all the options to give citizens and leaders solid information to make an informed decision on the preferred alternatives. Look inside for a further breakdown of each option.

www.spokanelightrail.com
509-232-RAIL

The Economy & Transit

Across the country, high capacity transit is having profound impacts on local economies. Could Spokane benefit in the same way?

A Real Connection

Success stories: light rail stimulates local economies around the US

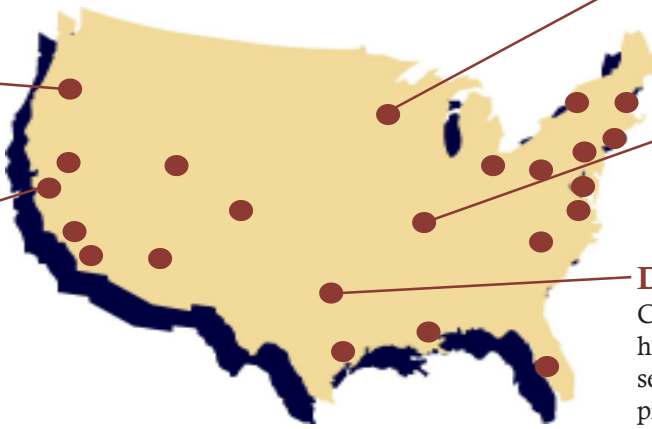
Light rail systems are in place throughout the United States. Here are just a few examples of what high capacity transit lines are doing to stimulate local economies.

Portland, OR

Approximately \$3 billion in transit-oriented development around 38-mile light rail system

Santa Clara, CA

Commercial property rents within walking distance of transit station are 23% greater than areas not considered transit-oriented



Minneapolis, MN

19 million square feet of new office space and more than 7,000 housing units around rail line

St. Louis, MO

\$1 billion in transit-oriented development since light rail transit system opened in 1993

Dallas, TX

Commercial office space valued 53% higher than corporate properties not served by light rail transit, and residential property values rose 39% near transit stations

With the right combination of uses, a transit station can become a hub of activity where people may choose to live, shop, and work. Restaurants, shops, offices, and a variety of housing all add up to create a transit-oriented neighborhood that reaps economic benefits and offers a higher quality of life in urban areas. All around the United States, cities like St. Louis, Dallas, Portland, and Minneapolis have seen the direct rise in property value, employment, and area beautification as a mix of multi-family residential, office, and retail development emerge around their high capacity transit lines. Could this happen in Spokane too?

The Light Rail Steering Committee commissioned an economic impact report to analyze the potential socioeconomic and revenue impacts of a new high capacity transit system along the South Valley corridor (*Marketek, Inc., and Applied Economics, Inc., April 2005*). Looking 20 years out to 2025, preliminary

indications are that a light rail line along the proposed right-of-way could positively influence land use, create new jobs, and stimulate economic development substantially--in addition to the growth that is already projected to occur (the "no build" option). Bus rapid transit, however, would not render the same level of economic benefit as a light rail system; this is because rail is permanent and immovable, making long-term investment more secure, while bus routes can be easily relocated and do not offer the stability that attracts developers. The complete economic impact study can be found at www.spokanelightrail.com.

Potential new jobs related to development could be in the industrial, retail, office, hotel, education, agriculture, and mining fields.

Liberty Lake, the Spokane County Fairgrounds area, Riverpoint Campus, and the University City area have been identified as locations well positioned for successful transit-oriented development. All of the affected cities have plans in place for development of their communities that include the type of mixed land use that is compatible with transit-oriented development. The decision of which alternative is preferred for the South Valley corridor may have a significant influence on how we accommodate growth in our communities.

By 2025, a light rail line along the proposed right-of-way would produce a positive impact in annual local economic output.



Pictured at top is a current photograph of East Riverside Avenue at Napa Street (looking west), which is on the proposed project alignment. The two images below it are an artist's rendering of the kind of development that could occur around a fixed transit route, similar to developments around high capacity transit lines in other U.S. cities.



At left is a current view of University City Mall in Spokane Valley. At right is a view of the same location, featuring possible future neighborhood enhancements that are typical of mixed use development around light rail transit stations: multi-family housing, office space, retail establishments, and spaces that are pedestrian-friendly and transit supportive.

The Options

After several years of study and evaluation, there are now a variety of new transit options in the South Valley corridor for the community and the Spokane Transit Board of Directors to consider. Each option is unique, offering different choices for our region. Here are the basics about the various choices:

Light rail is a form of public transportation that operates on standard railroad tracks, often at street level adjacent to automobile traffic but in its own lane, separated from traffic. It can also operate in an exclusive corridor reserved just for light rail. This exclusive pathway gives light rail vehicles the ability to travel without being delayed by traffic. Light rail vehicles can either be powered by electricity from overhead wires or by diesel (or biodiesel) motors. Electric light rail vehicles are virtually pollution-free and quieter than diesel vehicles. Use of diesel vehicles can be more cost-effective because no overhead electric power system is required. Some systems plan to start with

diesel vehicles and later convert to an electric system. Both types of vehicles have similar appearances and operating characteristics.

Bus rapid transit (BRT) is a premium, enhanced, and frequent bus service. BRT vehicles are different from standard buses and have the look and feel of a light rail vehicle. BRT operates on existing roadways and shares lanes with regular traffic, in reserved lanes, or on exclusive roadways. Frequent, limited stop service is ensured by giving BRT vehicles traffic signal priority at major street intersections.

The “no build” alternative--sometimes referred to as the “do nothing” option--is included as a choice because it helps define how the existing transit service would operate in the future should our community decide not to select a light rail or BRT alternative. This alternative is helpful when comparing costs and features with light rail and BRT options.



Dual Track Electric Light Rail

System Length: 16 miles, downtown Spokane to Liberty Lake
Transit Stations: 14
Service Frequency: Every 10 minutes
Vehicle Type: Electric
Construction Cost: \$658M (2008 \$)
Annual Operating Cost: \$17M (2004 \$)
Strengths: Rail service to the full corridor; two tracks provide most flexible operations; positive influence on economic development
Weakness: Most expensive option; new overhead electric wires are needed



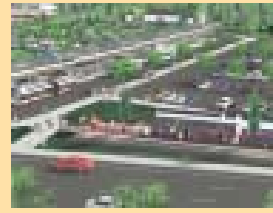
Shared Track Diesel Light Rail

System Length: 15.5 miles, downtown Spokane to Liberty Lake
Transit Stations: 14
Service Frequency: Every 15 minutes
Vehicle Type: Diesel
Construction Cost: \$408M (2008 \$)
Annual Operating Cost: \$11M (2004 \$)
Strengths: Rail service to the full corridor at reduced cost; positive influence on economic development
Weaknesses: Less frequency than separate, dual tracks; single track with passing tracks limits operations



Single Track Diesel Light Rail

System Length: 15.5 miles, downtown Spokane to Liberty Lake
Transit Stations: 13
Service Frequency: Every 15 minutes
Vehicle Type: Diesel
Construction Cost: \$226M (2008 \$)
Annual Operating Cost: \$6M (2004 \$)
Strengths: Lowest cost light rail to full corridor; positive influence on economic development
Weaknesses: Restricted operations; lower rider capacity



Combined Light Rail and BRT

Light rail from downtown to U-City Transit Center
BRT from U-City Transit Center to Liberty Lake

System Length: 16 miles, downtown Spokane to Liberty Lake
Number of Stations and Stops: 7 light rail stations and 9 BRT stops
Service Frequency: Every 15 minutes
Vehicle Type: Diesel light rail and diesel or alternative fuel high capacity bus
Construction Cost: \$157M (2008 \$)
Annual Operating Cost: \$6M (2004 \$)
Strength: Partial corridor light rail service at lower cost; positive influence on economic development
Weakness: Requires transfers for riders



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

System Length: 16 miles, downtown Spokane to Liberty Lake
Number of Stops: 24
Service Frequency: Every 15 minutes
Vehicle Type: Premium, high capacity buses powered by diesel or alternative fuels
Construction Cost: \$65M (2008 \$)
Annual Operating Cost: \$4M (2004 \$)
Strength: Lowest cost new high capacity transit option
Weaknesses: Longer travel times; less influence on positive economic development

“No Build” Alternative

System Length: No new high capacity transit system is constructed. Spokane Transit bus services continue to operate and improve
Number of Stops: As established
Service Frequency: Current bus service frequencies
Vehicle Type: Standard Spokane Transit buses along regular routes
Construction Cost: No new project constructed
Annual Operating Cost: No additional operating costs beyond regular bus service expenses
Strength: No new investment required
Weaknesses: No new high capacity transit service developed; purpose and need for project not satisfied; no new positive influence on economic development in the corridor

For ridership projections on each option, please go to www.spokanelightrail.com.

How would we pay for high capacity transit?

Funding for large scale transit projects is usually a shared arrangement among local, state, and federal sources. With the construction cost estimates for the various alternatives ranging from \$65 million to \$658 million, and annual operating costs ranging from \$4 million to \$17 million, it is difficult to project what the final funding package might look like.

In May 2004, Spokane Transit commissioned a study to evaluate funding options. Assuming limited federal assistance, all of the

proposed funding packages include increases to sales and/or property taxes for a period of time to finance construction bonds. Any proposal to increase taxes will require a vote of the residents in the public transportation benefit area. The Spokane Transit Board of Directors has also made it clear that final design and construction on any project alternative will not commence without approval of regional voters.

Community leaders, the Spokane Transit Board, and voters will need to evaluate the costs and benefits of each proposal carefully in order to make the right choice for the Spokane region.

Q&A

Why take this on now? Why not wait a few years?

Ultimately, the question of if and when the Spokane region will pursue a high capacity transit system will be in the hands of the voters. This current planning effort is more than 30 years in the making. Development of a starter light rail or bus rapid transit system is likely to be much less expensive now than in the future. As time goes on, the project will become more difficult and costs will continue to inflate. A major portion of the proposed South Valley corridor alignment sits on publicly owned former railroad right-of-way. As redevelopment encroaches on or near the alignment, it will make right-of-way acquisition costlier. At present, the alignment is relatively free from expensive encroachments.

Another consideration is that the Spokane region may not want to follow the pattern of other cities, like Seattle, that waited until

solutions to traffic congestion were far more limited and expensive. The goal of the Spokane project is to connect communities in the Spokane region, giving residents more travel choices before traffic congestion changes our quality of life. With this in mind, Spokane area cities can plan and grow around the new transit alignment. The sooner that enhanced transit is provided, the sooner we could benefit from economic development opportunities that often coincide with transit

Is Spokane big enough for high capacity transit?

With a regional population of over 520,000 people, a service area extending into Western Montana, and the location of Washington's third largest city, the Spokane area cannot be considered small. However, compared to most cities in the United States that operate light rail or enhanced transit systems, our region is on the smaller end of the spectrum.

Spokane's vision is big. We aim to connect communities and increase travel choices for residents over the next 50 years. This is a proactive approach, intended to avert growth pressures that impact our quality of life, such as traffic congestion and air pollution.

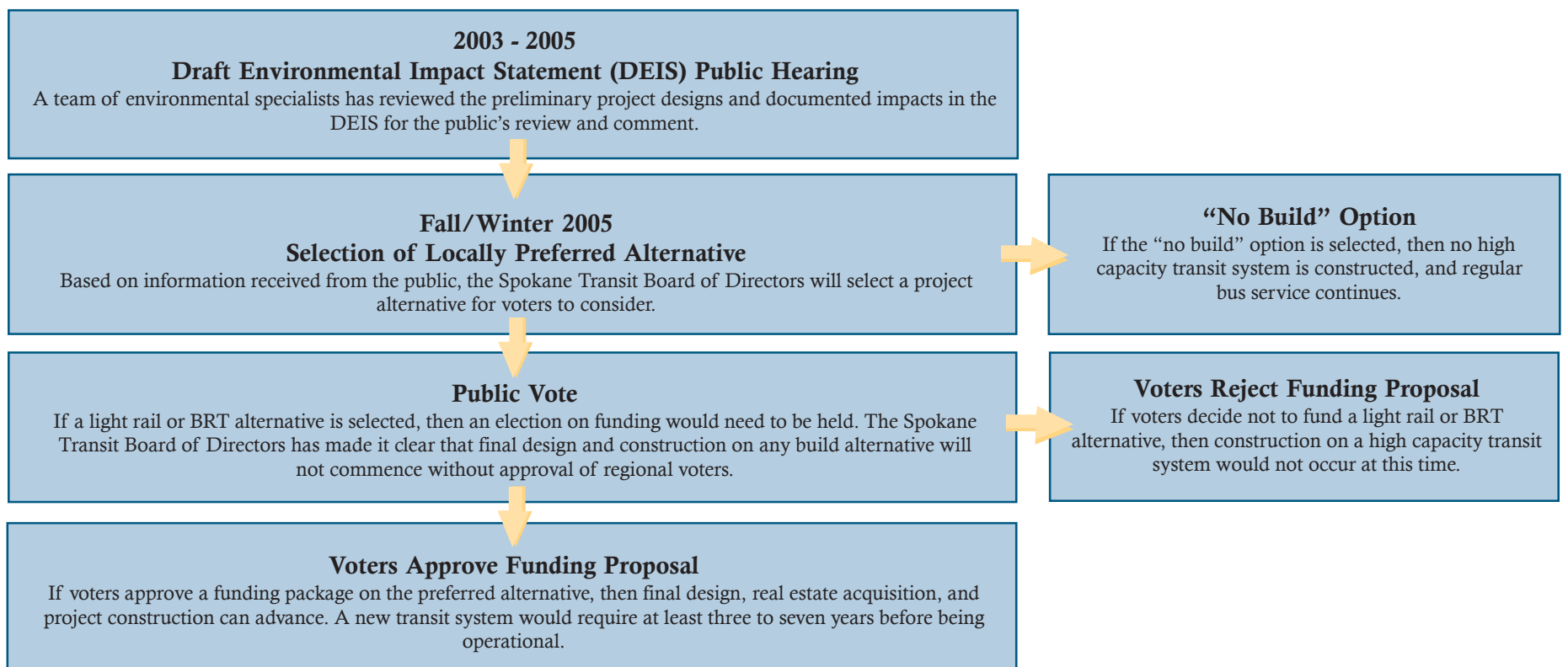
The question of size and feasibility is valid and

must be weighed against the overall cost of the transit alternative selected. Once we all agree on the option that is most compatible with our community, voters must decide if they are willing to pay for it. We hope that you will be part of that conversation and let leaders know if you think Spokane is ready to make the vision a reality.

Last year, voters approved an additional 0.3% sales tax to preserve the bus system. Are any of these funds being expended on the light rail project?

Since June of 2000, Spokane Transit has received federal funds to study high capacity transit options in the South Valley corridor. Receipt of this money was contingent on a 20% local funding match, which was also allocated in 2000. Since then, no additional funds have been allocated to the project. As we near completion of conceptual design and analysis of the alternatives, the community is approaching a point where a decision to proceed or not must be reached. No additional money can be allocated to the project without approval by the Spokane Transit Board of Directors. The Board has made it clear that final design, engineering, and construction of any alternative would not commence without voter approval.

Where are we headed? The decision schedule



This newsletter is a part of the public information program associated with the Spokane Regional Light Rail Project. This document cost 11 cents per piece to produce and is also available on the project website at www.spokanelightrail.com.

To receive copies of this publication and other news about the project electronically or via regular mail, or to request a presentation for a group meeting, please call 325-6090 or send an email to mmyers@spokanetransit.com. On request, alternative formats of this document will be provided for people with disabilities.

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Not pictured: Jim Chase (Spokane), Michele Maher (Spokane), Dan Mortenson (Spokane), Nick Nickoloff (Liberty Lake), Gordon Rathbone (Spokane), Harold Vanderpool (Spokane).



What do you think?

Which option do you think works best for our community?

Light Rail Bus Rapid Transit Neither

What would you be willing to pay in support of your preferred option?

\$1/month \$3/month \$5/month more than \$5/month

When should your preferred option be available?

now 6 years 10 years 20 years

What is your zip code? _____

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