

MERCER ISLAND COMMUNITY & EVENT CENTER (MICEC) COMMUTER PARKING EXPANSION PROPOSAL



For many years, the most frequent comment heard at every Sound Transit light rail open house, and every Metro bus service open house is: "How do we get more resident-only parking?" The current Park & Ride is typically full by 7:30 on weekday mornings, therefore preventing access to transit for many residents. The most effective solution is resident-only parking.

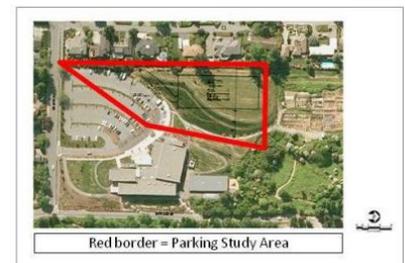
This proposal could solve a major problem for many residents without City tax implications. Sound Transit pays to build a parking facility, and after up to 5 years of operation, the City assumes sole control, and can restrict use to residents only from that point onwards.

Access to public transit is a critical component to any thriving community in the region, and will only become more important as light rail expands across Lake Washington. When the Mercer Island light rail station opens in 2023, the City must be ready for heavy ridership by Islanders eager to enjoy predictable, congestion-free transit to Seattle or Bellevue, and beyond. Many Islanders will need nearby parking to take advantage of light rail.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (*Updated 5 Dec, 2014*)

Where would the proposed parking be?

The site under consideration would be just north of the parking lot at the existing Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC) and south of the Pea Patch. The grassy hill that is now on the site was created from excavation material produced by the construction of the Community Center in 2004/5. The material was dumped there to avoid incurring the cost of hauling it off Mercer Island.



How much parking would this add?

The existing Sound Transit Park & Ride has about 440 spaces, and roughly half of the users have historically been Island residents (according to a license plate study). The new parking options would add approximately 200 spaces at the Community Center for commuter parking.

What are the proposed design options?

Both options are intended to provide approximately 200 new parking spaces. In both cases, the MICEC parking lot retains its current number of stalls (215), and the new proposed commuter parking would be accessed via a separate entrance to avoid impacts to MICEC users. Option 1 is a multi-level parking structure; Option 2 is a tiered surface parking lot only.

How would this impact the existing MICEC Parking?

Although the existing lot may be reconfigured, there will be no reduction in MICEC parking as the spaces that now exist are necessary for MICEC's programming requirements.

What is the approval process?

This idea arose from conversations between Sound Transit and the City as a means of solving the Island's problems accessing transit. Based on those conversations, Sound Transit has developed two proposed parking options. The City and Sound Transit have now embarked on a public input process to gather feedback on these options. Ultimately Council will decide whether to move forward on this proposal, but only after evaluating public input, traffic studies, and other significant factors.

Council had its first look at these concepts at a Study Session on [December 1, 2014](#).

[Click here](#) and select the Dec 1 meeting to view archived footage.

What happens next? NEW

During the December 1 Council meeting, the following next steps were identified: this concept will remain on the table, but Council and Sound Transit will continue to look at other options in the vicinity of the future light rail station. In each case, there will be an assessment of costs, impacts, and potential benefits to the community. There will be continued opportunities for public comment.

What would the timeline look like? UPDATED

In the previous version of this FAQ, the duration of Sound Transit parking lot operation was listed as *3 years*. Upon further clarification from Sound Transit, this period should be listed as potentially lasting *up to 5 years* due to the length of time it may take to expand the South Bellevue Park & Ride, and its adjacent light rail station. However, the following schedule (as published previously) remains the same: if this proposal proceeded, permitting might occur in 2015, construction in 2016, and opening sometime in 2017 (provisional dates).

What about traffic impacts?

Sound Transit is conducting a traffic study. Based on the study, the City and Sound Transit will determine and agree upon mitigation measures for any traffic impacts.

Who would pay for this?

Sound Transit has offered to fund construction and mitigation (including traffic impacts) for a parking facility on MI. This only applies if the structure provides required mitigation parking for up to 5 years while South Bellevue's Park & Ride is expanded from 500 to 1500 spaces, and the South Bellevue Light Rail station is constructed. After that 5 year period, control reverts to the City of Mercer Island, and only MI residents will be allowed to use the facility from that point on. The City anticipates that it would assume full control in 2021.

What about the cost of maintenance?

All parking facilities have maintenance costs, including the current MICEC parking. This will be included in the cost/benefit analysis underway at the City.

What about expanding the current Park & Ride structure?

This garage was not engineered for that, and cannot support additional levels. During construction of that garage, citizens asked for it to be only 2 stories tall.

Why not simply restrict the current Park & Ride to MI residents only?

Sound Transit owns the Park & Ride and tells us that it cannot legally restrict access; since federal dollars were used for construction, it must remain open to all.

Why not charge a parking fee for non-residents at the current Park & Ride in order to discourage them from using it?

Sound Transit tells us that it cannot charge a fee solely on non-residents, therefore this concept would not solve Mercer Island’s parking problem. Sound Transit is analyzing the results of a parking permit fee system tested at other locations.

Why not put the new facility in Town Center, closer to the future light rail station?

The City has explored other sites with shared parking or walk-off parking potential, including the current Walgreen’s site, and other smaller locations. The Walgreen’s site redevelopment did not occur, and the other sites proved unworkable. In addition, using private property and/or underground parking would add substantial cost to the project.

Why not look to other City land to site a new parking facility?

The City does not own any other property near the current Park & Ride. MICEC is only City property within 0.25mi (considered the maximum standard walking distance to transit).

Why not just enhance transit service to the current Park & Ride so that extra parking is not needed?

The City is simultaneously exploring on-Island transit options to deliver riders to the current Park-and-Ride. But these alone will not meet the often expressed demand for more commuter parking, and the significant costs for Island transit will have to be funded by the City.

Is the grassy hill area official City “Open Space”?

No, it is not. It is a minimally used, undesignated area on MICEC property.

Is this property part of Luther Burbank Park?

Luther Burbank Park was conveyed to the City by King County in Dec 2002, and did not include the MICEC parcel. The MICEC parcel, including the grassy hill area, was conveyed to the City by the MI School District to become a Community Center. Click to see the [recorded property boundary](#) from King County’s Parcel Viewer.

Isn’t the property listed in the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan?

Yes. The Master Plan, written in 2006, does include reference to this area as “West Hill.” Visit this weblink and scroll down to see the [Park Master Plan](#).

Would this proposal impact the Pea Patch area?

The Pea Patch area is within Luther Burbank Park and would remain untouched. Access to the Pea Patch would be improved.

What other benefits are there for Luther Burbank Park users?

During major community events and popular celebrations (such as the annual fireworks) this facility would provide much-needed extra parking for residents visiting the park.

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[Click here for Sound Transit proposal documentation](#)