



15 September 2021

## **PUBLIC NOTICE (06-21)**

The Commander, Thirteenth Coast Guard District has received a request for a preliminary navigation clearance determination (PNCD) from the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) in preparation for compiling a Coast Guard Bridge Permit application for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions light-rail transit project. A PNCD defines the bridge clearances which have been evaluated and determined to have a high likelihood of being approved by the Coast Guard and to help the applicant refine development of alternatives for a proposed bridge project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project is studying multiple light rail alternatives in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which may include a new rail-only bridge across Salmon Bay of the Lake Washington Ship Canal. The Coast Guard is seeking comments on the navigational clearances required to support waterway users (including vessels and facilities). The public is highly encouraged to carefully review this notice and provide comments, to include detailed and specific comments related to anticipated operational or economic effects associated with navigating through the waterway or accessing nearby marine facilities as a result of the proposed navigational clearances. Location and diagrams can be found at the end of the document.

**WATERWAY AND LOCATION:** Salmon Bay Waterway on the Lake Washington Ship Canal approximately between miles 2.3 and 2.5 in Seattle, King County, WA.

**CLEARANCE DETERMINATION:** The information and clearances listed below represent two potential bridge types and do not reflect a final decision on a chosen bridge type. Any bridge type will need to comply with navigation clearances determined by the Coast Guard through the PNCD. Final design and construction would only occur after environmental review is complete and a Coast Guard Bridge Permit has been issued.

The first over-water structure that restricts vertical clearance across the Lake Washington Ship Canal is the 160 foot overhead cable located upstream/east of the proposed bridge alternatives at waterway mile 3.2. The most restrictive vertical clearance on the Lake Washington Ship Canal is the existing Aurora Bridge at waterway mile 4.0, upstream/east of the proposed bridge alternatives with a vertical clearance of 136 feet over the 150 foot wide navigation channel at the center of the bridge. The structure with the most restrictive horizontal clearance on the Lake Washington Ship Canal is the Ballard Locks at approximate mile 1.3, downstream/west of the proposed bridge alternatives with a horizontal clearance of 80 feet. Additionally see the table below titled "Existing Aerial Structures in the Study Area". The proposed light rail project will potentially place a new

bridge which will become the first vertically limiting structure between the Ballard Locks and the overhead cable at waterway mile 3.2 at the west end of the Fremont Cut.

The BNSF Bridge No. 6.3, seaward of the Ballard Locks, is a drawbridge providing 43 feet vertical clearance above mean high water (high tide) in the closed position. It provides unlimited clearance in the open position. Inland of the Ballard Locks subsequent bridge vertical clearances are referenced to the Mean Water Level of Lake Union and Lake Washington, which is 21 feet above the mean lower-low water. Please see [NOAA Chart 18447](#) for an overview of the waterway.

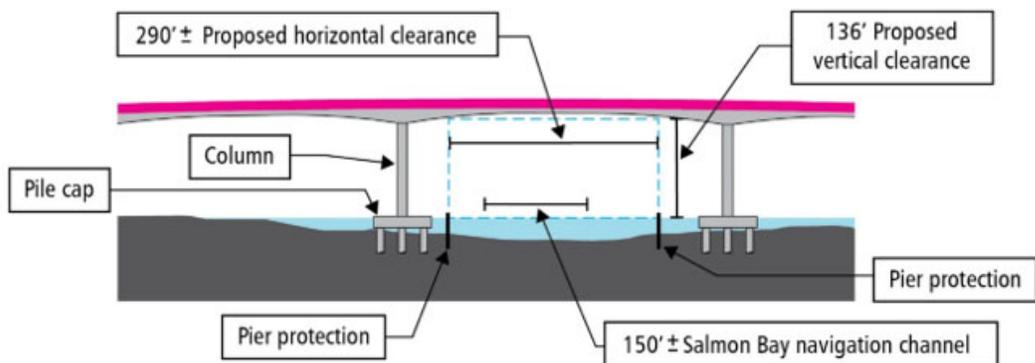
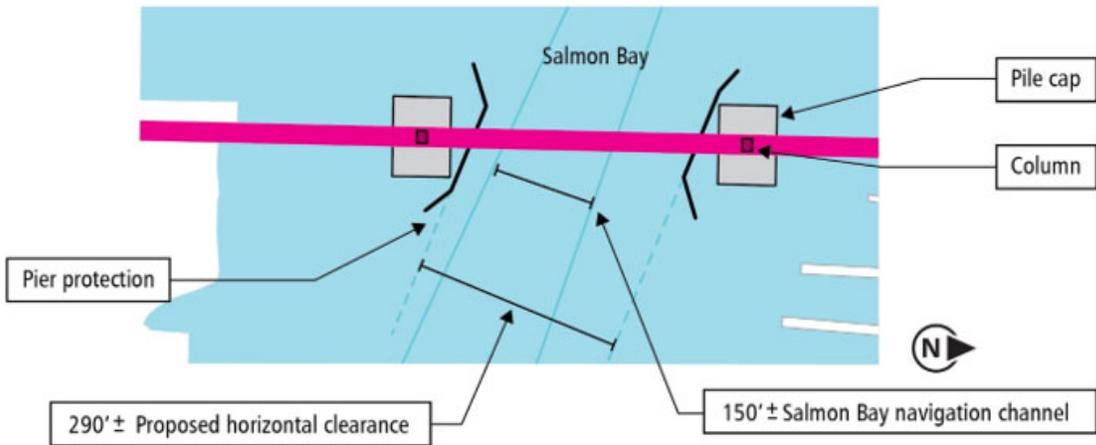
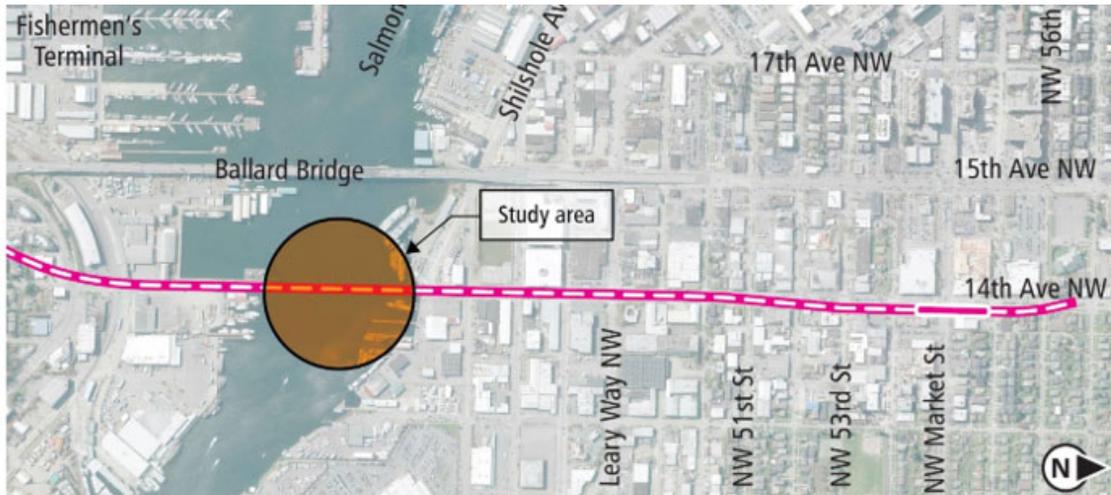
**Existing Aerial Structures in the Ship Canal**

Structure	Waterway		Clearance (feet)		Channel Depth (feet)	Waterway Width (feet)
	Mile	Type/Use	Vertical Closed/Open	Horizontal Closed/Open		
<i>Ship Canal</i>						
BNSF Bridge No. 6.3	1.1	Moveable (single-leaf bascule)/rail	43/ Unrestricted	150/150	36	360
Ballard Bridge	2.4	Moveable (double-leaf bascule)/road	29 (46 at center)/ Unrestricted	150	30	1,800
Overhead cable	3.2	Power	160	Unrestricted	32	330
Overhead cable	3.6	Power	160	Unrestricted	34	280
Fremont Bridge	3.9	Moveable (double-leaf bascule)/road	14 (31 at center)/ Unrestricted	150/120	36	290
Aurora Bridge	4.0	Fixed/road	73 (136 at center)	525 (150 channel)	30	770
Overhead cable	5.6	Power	182	Unrestricted	31	515
Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge	5.6	Fixed/road	127 (138 at center)	250	31	545
University Bridge	5.7	Moveable (double-leaf bascule)/road	30 (45 at center)/ Unrestricted	171/157	32	720
Montlake Bridge	6.6	Moveable (double-leaf bascule)/road	32 (48 at center)/ Unrestricted	146/129	31	150

Two of Sound Transit’s proposed alternatives and their locations along the Lake Washington Ship Canal are as follows:

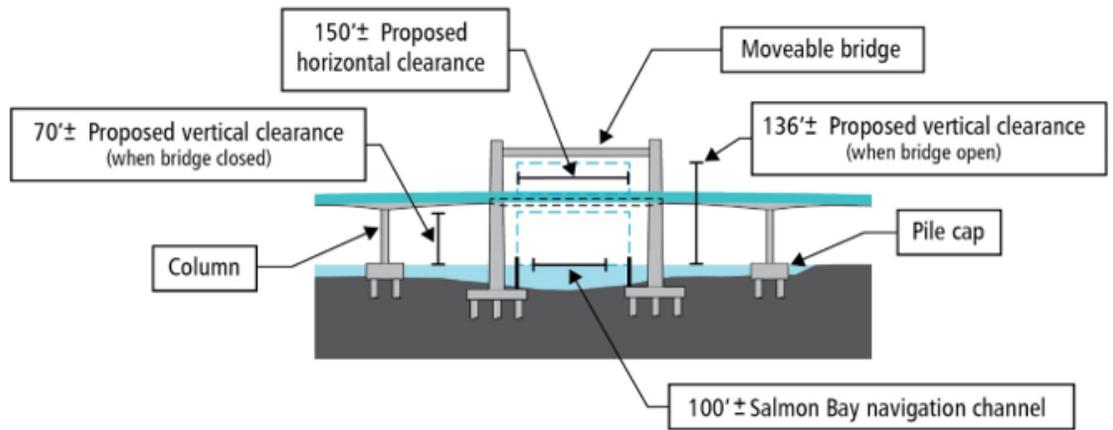
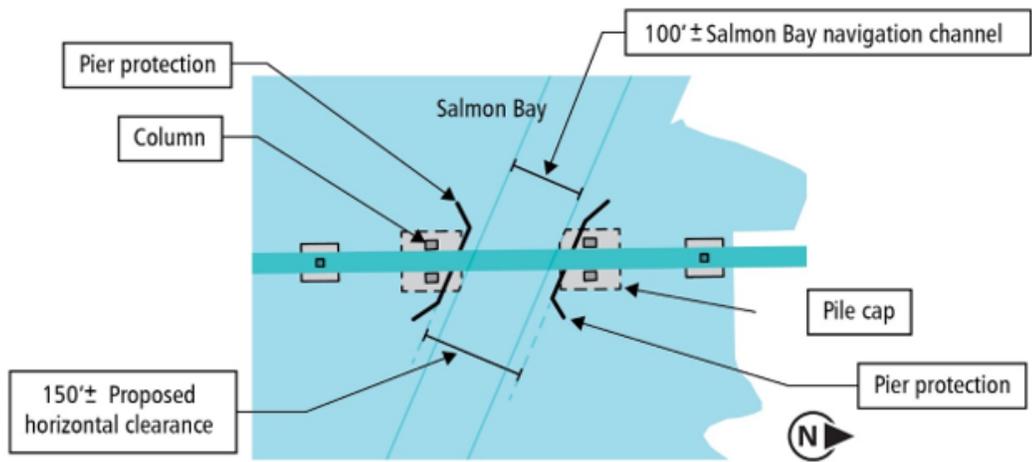
**IBB-1a (Fixed)** - Elevated 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue Alternative with a high-level fixed-span bridge (IBB-1a): Waterway Mile 2.5, 650 feet east of the Ballard Bridge:

Horizontal ~290 feet  
 Vertical 136 feet (MWL over navigation channel)



**IBB-3 (Movable Vertical-Lift) - Elevated 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Alternative with a movable, vertical-lift bridge (IBB-3):** Waterway Mile 2.3, 160 feet west of the Ballard Bridge:

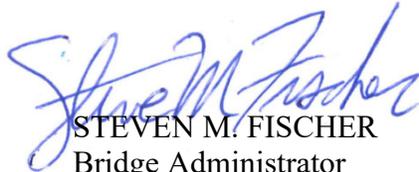
Horizontal	~150 feet
Vertical	70 feet (MWL when closed)
	136 feet (MWL when open)



**SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS:** Mariners and maritime stakeholders are requested to express views, in writing, on the proposed vertical and horizontal clearances of the two bridge alternatives and the possible impacts on navigation, if any, giving sufficient detail to establish a clear understanding of the reasons for support of, or opposition to, the proposed work. In accordance with NEPA, Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will solicit comments on environmental impacts and the Draft EIS separately, following publication of the Draft EIS.

Comments will be received for the record at the office of Commander (dpw), Thirteenth Coast Guard District, 915 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Rm 3510, Seattle, WA or via email at [D13-SMB-D13-BRIDGES@uscg.mil](mailto:D13-SMB-D13-BRIDGES@uscg.mil). Comments should be sent to arrive on or before 15 October 2021.

For additional information about the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project, please visit <https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/west-seattle-ballard-link-extensions>, contact (206) 903-7229 or email [wsblink@soundtransit.org](mailto:wsblink@soundtransit.org).



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By direction of the District Commander