EWWTS Community Briefings

Summary of Questions and Key Points

Last updated: 6/25/2025

King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) Elliott West Wet Weather Treatment Station Upgrade project staff held two virtual community briefings in May and June 2025. Neighbors of the current Treatment Station and other community members interested in the Elliott West Wet Weather Facility (601 Elliott Ave, Seattle, WA 98119) attended. Sound Transit Ballard Link Extension project staff were also present to discuss their project and answer questions.

Briefing Agenda:

- Explanation of WTD's Wastewater System and Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)
- Project Overview and Existing Site Conditions
- Design Highlights
- Project Timeline and Milestones
- Sound Transit Ballard Link Implications
- Questions and Answers
- Next Steps and How to Provide Additional Input

5/29/25 Briefing

Attendance: 10 registered attendees, estimated 7 attendees

All community questions or comments were recorded verbatim or as close to verbatim as possible.

Resident and Community Questions & Concerns

1) **Community Comment/Question:**
   Can attendees access the presentation after the briefing?

   WTD response:
   WTD has confirmed that a PDF version of the slide deck will be posted on the project website.

2) **Community Comment/Question:**

Participants expressed concerns about facility lighting affecting the Dark Sky Initiative. The community wants the design team to minimize light pollution and believes amber lights will hinder star visibility. They prefer unobtrusive lighting that complies with Dark Sky guidelines.

WTD Response:
The project will consider Dark Sky guidelines when evaluating lighting options. The proposed amber light would only be on when the facility is operating (i.e., during heavier rain conditions). Approximately 16 times per year but in general October through April – rainy season. All lighting will aim to reduce backlighting, uplighting, and glare (BUG). This is part of the project's effort to achieve third-party sustainability certification through Envision, An Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure certification. The project team plans to investigate lighting options through the DarkSky Initiative and assess in there are feasible options.

3) **Community Comment/Question:**
What is the rationale for the proposed building height? Why is the building planned to be over 40 feet tall?

WTD Response:
A previous survey respondent asked if the building could be less than 40 feet. At 30% design the new facility's height is 62 feet at the stairwell and 51 feet for the roof. The building's height is influenced by the elevation of the combined sewer and stormwater infrastructure already in use at the current facility and clearances need for the treatment and disinfection area.

The current treatment and piping system uses several pumps to lift water up from the system then allows gravity to move water through the treatment process and out to Elliott Bay through WTD's outfall in Myrtle Edwards Park. Primarily using gravity reduces cost, maintenance, and risk of treatment failure compared to needing additional pumps to move water. The current pumps will also be getting upgraded as part of this project.

Another reason for the height of the canopy is the need to accommodate large pieces of equipment used in the treatment and disinfection processes. These pieces of equipment must be lifted in and out of the treatment process areas via a crane system during periodic maintenance. This requires the canopy to be a certain height above the treatment platform area for safety and operability.

4) **Community Comment/Question:**
What is the timeline from the start of construction to project completion?

WTD Response:
WTD has confirmed that construction is expected to begin in 2028 and be substantially completed by 2031, with minor work happening in 2032. The WTD team is collaborating with the project's contractor now to develop a detailed construction schedule.
Separately, the Bridge Shelter, that currently residing at the project site, will begin transition from the site in 2026. WTD is also coordinating with Sound Transit about any potential conflicts with their Ballard Link Extension Project.

5) **Community Comment/Question:**
Why will this project take so long?

WTD Response:
The project involves significant upgrades, including excavation and structural work for a new building. Numerus mechanical and electrical systems will also need to be installed. Additionally, the project needs to consider constraints due to weather. The current facility must remain operational while the upgrade work happens. For example, the pumps at the existing facility need to be replaced, and that work can only happen during dry weather (roughly May through the beginning of October) to reduce the odds of when the facility will need to be activated.

Again, the facility is expected to operate roughly 16 times per year with a majority of those during the rainy season. But the facility may still need to operate in the drier months if Seattle gets a large precipitation event. The project will work with the contractor to streamline the schedule as feasible to reduce project impacts.

Lastly, WTD has an obligation to our ratepayers to balance multiple large infrastructure projects and their associated costs over time. Our three major treatment plants: South Plant in Renton, Brightwater in Woodinville, and West Point in the Magnolia neighborhood of Seattle, are also undertaking significant maintenance and upgrade projects. At the same time, WTD is maintaining, upgrading, and managing nearly 400 miles of wastewater pipes, 48 pump stations, 26 regulator stations, and five wet weather station – this includes Elliott West.

6) **Community Comment/Question:**
Who is the contractor?

WTD Response:

WTD has confirmed Kiewit as the contractor, already engaged in pre-construction services.

7) **Community Comment/Question:**
Please update on the current status of the art installation program and its future developments. For the Denny Outfall at the Thomas Street overpass, would the installation be at the facility or at the outfall?

WTD Response:
The Denny Regulator Station includes art from its original construction, such as artistic paneling and fencing that faces the plaza. We are currently collaborating with the 4Culture program to identify potential spaces within the new facility at Elliott West for additional art installations. We will have more to share about the art process in Fall 2025.

6/12/2025 Briefing

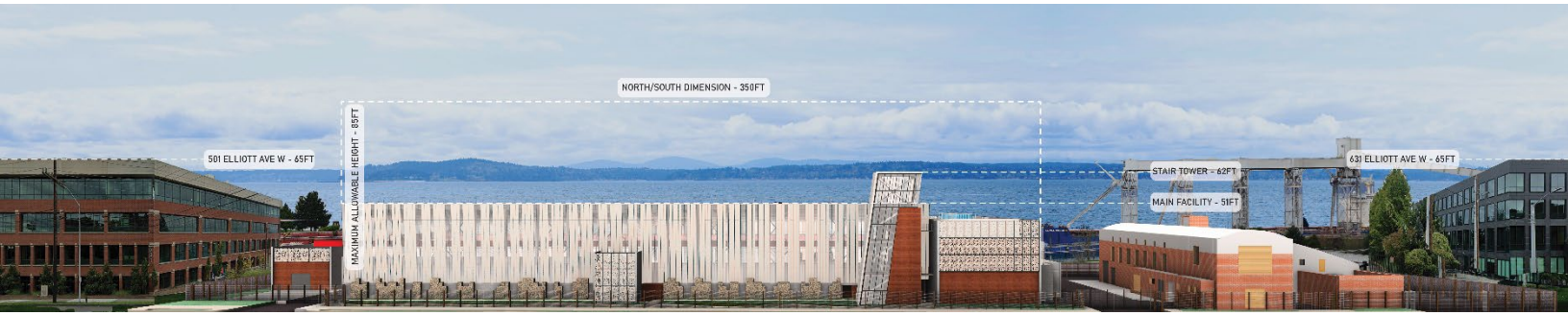
Attendance:18 registered attendees, estimated 8 attendees
All community questions or comments were recorded verbatim or as close to verbatim as possible.

Resident and Community Questions & Concerns

1) **<u>Community Comment/Question</u>:**
   What is the size of the new facility (height, length, width, stories)? How does it compare to the current facility?

   Associated comments:
   - I really like the consideration for the aesthetics, plant, lighting etc. However, it is simply too tall and large.
   - The current proposal (51ft plus) is way too tall. It will have tremendous impact.
   - No one who is losing their view is going to think "oh what a cool building"!

   <u>WTD Response:</u>



The tallest part of the current facility is 43 feet, with the main section being 36 feet tall. The new facility is 62 feet tall at the stairwell, with the main roof being 51 feet tall and the length being 350 feet at 30% design. This may change as design progress and the project team weighs constraints such as cost, maintenance, energy efficiency, geography, and operator safety.
The two buildings north and south of the project area and current facility are roughly 65 feet in height. The west side of Elliott Ave West is zoned "industrial" according to the City of Seattle. This allows buildings to be built up to 85 feet without additional approval from the City needed.

2) **Community Comment/Question:**
Has WTD done a cost comparison of lowering the roof?

WTD Response:
We did a cost estimation at 15% and 30% design. As a result, WTD was able to lower the roof from our 15% design estimates. At 15% the stairwell was 77 feet and the roof 57 feet to 62 feet for the stairwell and 51 feet for the roof at 30% design. WTD is continuously looking at ways to reduce the overall height of the facility throughout the design process. There are numerous design implications that impact the height of the facility.

Such as cost, maintenance of equipment, feasibility, and geography. A significant portion of the project's $500 million cost is the excavation of the project site roughly 30 feet down. Each additional foot down in excavation becomes progressively more expensive as more safety equipment and materials are needed during construction. Plus, the risk of groundwater intrusion increases, requiring dewatering equipment. Finally, going below the current piping may require additional pumps to move water through the treatment process. This would add upfront costs and maintenance costs.

As design progresses, we will continue to weigh these impacts and look for ways to reduce the height without dramatically increasing project costs to ratepayers.

3) **Community Comment/Question:**
How many feet between the north building with the radius roof and the new facility?

WTD Response:

The space between the current Elliott West facility and the new facility will be 47 feet at 30% design. This may change depending on how design progresses.

4) **Community Comment/Question:**
How far do the solar panels stick up from the roof?

WTD Response:
The solar panels will essentially be flat on the roof and are expected to extend less ~ 2-4 feet from the roof structure itself. The details are still being finalized. The roof slopes from east to west, or Elliott Ave W (higher side) to the waterfront (lower side).

5) **Community Comment/Question:**
Regarding art at the site, will there be coordination with the Waterfront project bringing art to the waterfront park and the grain elevators?

WTD Response:
We are coordinating with the Elliott Bay Connections Project , who is actively working along the waterfront parks, as it relates to WTD's Denny Regulator Facility in Myrtle Edwards Park. The EBC project will be modifying some existing art near WTD's Denny facility, with permission from the artist. Currently WTD is not coordinating any art projects with the Elliott Bay Connections Project.

6) **Community Comment/Question:**
Why can't we use pumps to have the roof even lower? How high would the roof be if we used pumps?

WTD Response:
The building's height is influenced by the elevation of the combined sewer and stormwater infrastructure already in use at the current facility and clearances need for the treatment and disinfection area.

The current treatment and piping system uses several pumps to lift water up from the system then allows gravity to move water through the treatment process and out to Elliott Bay through WTD's outfall in Myrtle Edwards Park. Primarily using gravity reduces cost, maintenance, and risk of treatment failure compared to needing additional pumps to move water. The current pumps will also be getting upgraded as part of this project.

Another reason for the height of the canopy is the need to accommodate large pieces of equipment used in the treatment and disinfection process. These pieces of equipment must be lifted in and out of the treatment process areas via a crane system during periodic maintenance. This requires the canopy to be a certain height above the treatment platform area for safety and operability.

7) **Community Comment/Question:**
Some installations of rooftop solar panels produce intense solar glare. Will (or can) the solar panels be positioned/mounted at an angle sufficient to eliminate glare that would otherwise be visible to QA/LQA/Interbay residents when the sun is low in the sky, especially the setting winter sun?

WTD Response:
In the current design, the solar panels lay flat on the roof but the roof slopes down toward the waterfront reducing the risk of glare. WTD will assess potential glare issues as design progresses.

8) **Community Comment/Question:**
Which agency will maintain the landscape upkeep?

WTD Response:
King County will be responsible for maintaining the landscaping at the facility within our property boundary. The City of Seattle may be responsible for maintaining the right-of-way or sidewalk area once construction is complete.

9) **Community Comment/Question:**
Could the adjacent BNSF tracks be utilized to haul away the waste sediment particles you mentioned rather than using trucks/Elliott Ave? This would create far less congestion.

WTD Response:
This is not being evaluated currently. Coordination with BNSF is ongoing as we proceed through the facility design process. The facility is expected to operate approximately 16 times per year during the rainy season - October – April, so hauling away screenings waste will correspond to facility operation.

10) **Community Comment/Question:**
Have you considered using a Selig building that is empty that is on the north side of you? Already built and views already obstructed.

WTD Response:
WTD has not considered this as it would likely require the complete removal of our current facility, relocating major underground infrastructure, and the purchase of property. This would dramatically increase costs of the project for our ratepayers and increase impacts for residents, workers and commuters in the area.

11) **Community Comment/Question:**
Regarding noise: The current - much smaller - facility uses Vactor trucks on a regular basis. That process is obscenely loud. How will the operation of the new facility compare? Will there be more/less use of Vactor trucks?

WTD Response:
WTD is taking steps to mitigate this issue. The existing wet well accumulates solids that require WTD to bring in Vactor trucks to remove solids roughly once per year and haul them out. In the current design for the upgraded facility, there will be flushing mechanisms in the wet well to remove solids and transport them by pipe to West Point Treatment Plant. This will reduce the need to use Vactor trucks at the upgraded facility.

WTD is committed to provide advanced notice to nearby residents when a vactor truck may be used. The best way to be notified is to subscribe to the Elliott West Upgrade newsletter if this work takes place.

12) **Community Comment/Question:**
Regarding odor: Is the new facility using open-topped vats for treatment/filtration? Or is the treatment process enclosed to trap odor? For reference, the facility at Discovery Park produces considerable undesirable odor.

WTD Response:
Odor at the station will largely come from the screening processes, which will be contained/enclosed and will include odor control equipment. WTD will be doing odor dispersion modeling and conducting on-site odor studies at the Georgetown Wastewater Treatment Station to inform odor control design and ensure odors are contained.

We do not expect the public to experience any adverse odors from the upgrade facility once it is complete.

13) Community Comment/Question:

Has there been any consideration for compensation for homeowners who are losing value to their property as a result of this design solution? What can be considered to mitigate the size?

WTD Response:

King County only compensates private individuals or companies when purchasing property rights from property owners. WTD is not expecting to purchase any additional property rights at this time because King County already owns the property and associated property rights to build the facility.

14) Community Comment/Question:

What are the additional forums available for influencing the design? I'd like for my neighbors to be up to speed on what's going on. They are unaware of the size and potential impact.

WTD Response:

There are several options to stay engaged in the design process.

1. Email Ryan Harlow, rharlow@kingcounty.gov, to set up briefing
2. Visit the Project Website - https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/waste-services/wastewater-treatment/capital-projects/elliott-west-upgrade
3. Sign up to receive email updates on Elliott West Wet Weather Treatment Station: https://bit.ly/3FuW0Fo

The project team will also be hosting an online open house this Fall to present more details about the project and updated design content. We will be seeking additional community feedback and ideas during this event.

15) Community Comment/Question:

If this new facility were already in existence, how often would it have been operating, say, over the past 10 years? Trying to get a sense for how often it will be running?

WTD Response:

The new facility is expected to operate an average of 16 times per year, some years more, some years less dependent on weather. Most of these operating events are during the wet weather season – October through April, but some may occur during the dry season. It depends on how intense precipitation events are. The facility currently operates slightly less

than 16 times per year, but climate change is expected to change the frequency and intensity of storms in the Puget Sound region.

16) **Community Comment/Question:**
What will vibration do to our street. Are you doing a survey of building foundations and the street? I'm very concerned about vibration issues. Refer to Robert Lee who was in charge of water main repair at the west end of Mercer Street in 2022.

WTD Response:
Yes, WTD will conduct a standard construction protocol and mitigation effort that includes taking photos and video (before, during and after construction), and placing vibration monitors near the project site as necessary. This will allow the team to constantly monitor for settling and cracking possibly due to vibration caused from construction.

17) **Community Comment/Question:**
Lighting – like the idea of doing something interesting but caution against color lighting.

WTD Response:
WTD appreciates the feedback we have received about lighting. Through our Third Party, Envision Certification for Sustainable Infrastructure, WTD is looking to reduce any glare, uplighting, and backlighting (BUG) while still ensuring site security and operator safety.

We will continue to share further design ideas that relate to facility lighting and any artistic lighting. WTD understands that light is an important design component to residents near our facility.

18) **Community Comment/Question:**
We need to have consideration of Sound Transit that the light rail doesn't add additional height and loss of view by homeowners.

Sound Transit Response:
The guideway height is influenced by a number of factors and physical constraints, including the depth and geometry of the guideway as it exists the future tunnel portal at Republican Street. We are currently at about a 10% level of design, and we will keep the public informed of updates as we advance the project, including through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

19) Community Comment/Question:
Will the Ballard Link Extension be delayed beyond 2039 due to current economic and financial challenges?

Sound Transit Response:
Our current schedule targets 2039 for project completion. We will certainly provide updated schedules should there be delays during the planning, design, or construction phases.

20) Community Comment/Question:
What would be the elevation of the Sound Transit line?

Sound Transit Response:
For the preferred alternative alignment, which is adjacent to the new EWWTS facility, the guideway height is approximately 50 to 60 feet tall.