COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM **Item No.** 7c

BRIEFING ITEM **Date of Meeting** November 22, 2016

DATE: November 14, 2016

TO: Ted Fick, Chief Executive Officer

FROM: Jeffrey Brown, Director, Aviation Facilities and Capital Programs
Mike Tasker, Senior Manager, Aviation Facilities and Infrastructure

SUBJECT: Airport Signage and Wayfinding Program Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Commission briefing is in advance of a future request for Commission authorization for the Chief Executive Officer to use the On-Call Planning consultant contract that was previously authorized to perform an airport-wide signage and wayfinding study, prepare recommendations to address short term deficiencies, and complete an airport signage and wayfinding master plan.

BACKGROUND

Effective wayfinding is one of the top factors customers use to rate their overall airport experience. Customers have identified signage and wayfinding as one of their top customer service priorities. Sea-Tac receives lower customer satisfaction scores relative to its peer airports for the ease of navigation through the airport.

This airport signage and wayfinding project supports the Port's Century Agenda for Sea-Tac to be the West Coast "Gateway of Choice". Additionally, the project is expected to improve the customer experience and the overall customer satisfaction with Sea-Tac. The airport's existing signage system and master plan was designed in 1999 when Sea-Tac operated primarily as an origin and destination (O&D) airport. Today, Sea-Tac is a hub for two major carriers with a mix of O&D and connecting passengers. The airport's operation has been transformed to be a major international gateway. Sea-Tac's signage system does not support our customers' ability to seamlessly navigate through all areas of the airport.

The signage and wayfinding project consists of three components that will be completed using the On-Call Planning contract: an airport-wide assessment, recommended solutions and the development of a master plan. The project will take a holistic approach to examine the Sea-Tac customer experience from arrival via airline, roadways or mass transit, to departure via an airline, and arrival via an airline and departure by various other ground transportation means. A signage and wayfinding assessment will be the first phase that will include an analysis of all passenger movement areas of the airport. The project scope encompasses all public areas,

including: airport roadways, airport drives, the parking garage, ground transportation service areas, the central terminal, concourses, satellites, train stations, and gate hold rooms. The signage and wayfinding master plan will provide effective management of change and will utilize an integrated and flexible system to communicate information using concise and unified messages.

Wayfinding challenges are diverse, but often center on connectivity—between the main terminal, concourses, satellites, and trains. Major elements for wayfinding include:

- Signage: Directional, identification, informational, and regulatory
- Intuitive architectural design: Clear paths of pedestrian flow and circulation, logical sequence of processing areas, spatial volumes, sightlines and visibility, lighting levels
- Landmarks: Architectural elements, artwork, retail/dining establishments
- People: Airport employees, designated information staff (Pathfinders, volunteers)

Wayfinding elements were incorporated into Sea-Tac's early, basic building design, and for many years provided excellent wayfinding for the airport campus. However, as the airport has expanded, in both facilities and the volume of people, the airport has become more complex and less intuitive. Today, maneuvering through the airport can be difficult and confusing.

Challenges include:

- Long walking distances
- Frequent, necessary level changes
- The complicated underground train system with three separate routes
- Fragmented, difficult connections among terminal, garage, and ground transportation modes

A holistic approach to studying passenger movement across the entire airport is needed. This comprehensive review will avoid utilizing a patchwork approach to meeting the airport's signage and wayfinding needs.

Additional Information:

(1) As an international hub, signage and wayfinding improvements at Sea-Tac are needed to better serve customers who travel great distances and speak multiple languages.
(2) The project will map the pedestrian path of customers and employees who use public transit, including Link Light Rail and the bus lines that serve Sea-Tac.
(3) Existing signage infrastructure limits the airport's ability to accommodate new airline growth and other changes that occur on the airport. Signage constraints in the ticket lobby and on the airport drives cannot accommodate airline growth. This project will evaluate and provide solutions like electronic signage that offer flexibility and are adaptable.
(4) An evaluation will be conducted and recommendations will be developed to improve our customers' ability to seamlessly use transportation services like Link Light Rail, taxis, and app-based ridesharing services.

(5) The study will consider all customer segments, O&D passengers, connecting passengers, and meeters/greeters.
(6) The project will develop recommendations based on the needs of the visually and mobility impaired customers.
(7) The signage and wayfinding master plan, once implemented, will reduce the visual clutter that is present and is expected to produce a simplified wayfinding experience for our customers.
(8) The signage and wayfinding master plan will be completed after the signage designs for the IAF and North Satellite projects are already completed. The master plan will review the signage designs for those projects.
(9) This project will coordinate with a separate project for the Parking Garage Elevator Modernization and Plaza Upgrade (C800789) that will have a signage and wayfinding component to it.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Signage systems at Sea-Tac have evolved over the years, since the first terminal opened in 1949. A simple, basic system for limited pedestrian movement expanded incrementally as four concourses were added to the original central terminal. On-grade, small-scale roadways and parking required only minimal signage. In 1971, new signage for the entire airport was introduced to support a much larger terminal complex, including the multi-level main terminal, two remote satellite terminals with a three-route train system, 8-level parking garage, and limited-access, structured roadways. Terminal and landside signage were updated again with additional major expansion between 1990 and 2004 in Concourses B, C, and D and the garage. The current signage system was implemented throughout the terminal, drives, and garage, beginning in 2004 as another significant construction program was initiated. This program provided an addition to the South Main Terminal, a new Concourse A and office building, the Central Terminal development, and the new remote Rental Car Facility.

Alternatives 1 - Status Quo – Do not conduct an analysis of signage and wayfinding and prepare a signage and wayfinding master plan

Pros:

(1) If this alternative were selected, the Port would avoid costs by opting not to conduct this study, nor to provide short-term signage solutions, nor to develop a new signage and wayfinding master plan.

Cons:

(1) The Port of Seattle will likely not reach its strategic performance target to improve the overall customer satisfaction Airport Service Quality (ASQ) rating. Sea-Tac's ASQ ratings will likely continue to decline.
(2) Customer anxiety when using Sea-Tac will continue, especially for international guests for whom English is not their primary language.

This is not the recommended alternative

Alternative 2 - Use Port in-house staff (not consultant experts) to perform an airport-wide signage and wayfinding study, prepare recommendations to address short term deficiencies, and complete an airport signage and wayfinding master plan

Pros:

(1) This alternative would have a lower cost for Port staff compared to the cost of a consultant expert.

Cons:

(1) This alternative would exclude the benefit of global aviation experts utilizing industry best practices.
(2) This alternative would exclude the benefit of a new subject matter expert with a fresh perspective to address existing issues with airport signage.

This is not the recommended alternative

Alternative 3. - Use and existing On-Call Planning consultant contract to hire an international airport signage and wayfinding expert to perform an airport-wide signage and wayfinding study, prepare recommendations to address short term deficiencies, and complete an airport signage and wayfinding master plan

Pros:

(1) The signage master plan will be used as the design basis of future implementation projects across all airport facilities, and it will help to maintain the system standards.
(2) This alternative provides a comprehensive review, it addresses the short-term needs and it provides long-term benefits with the development of a master plan.

Cons:

(1) This project requires funds to conduct the studies and further financial investment will be needed to implement the signage master plan recommendations.

This is the recommended alternative

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

None