

City of Seattle Transit Advisory Board Ground Rules

This set of informal rules guides the way members work together in an environment of mutual respect and trust. Ground rules should either be reviewed annually or as new members join the Board.

1. The Transit Advisory Board serves in an advisory capacity to SDOT, the Seattle City Council, the Mayor, and other City departments on transit issues and policies, including oversight of the Seattle Transportation Benefit District Prop. 1 implementation and the City's interface with King County Metro and Sound Transit.
2. Members do not formally represent any group, agency or council district, but do share the perspectives of their diverse communities. Boardmembers must be residents of the City of Seattle and should a Boardmember no longer reside within the city, should inform the Board leadership and SDOT staff liaison, and officially resign from the Board.
3. City of Seattle employees are not allowed to be members of City of Seattle boards and commissions.
4. Members who have relevant contractual relationships with the City of Seattle are asked to disclose that information to the SDOT staff liaison and the other members of the Board and to not participate in discussions or votes on related issues, per guidelines from the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission and City Law Department.
5. Members who cannot fulfill their duties on the Board should consider resigning. Attendance at meetings is an important part of fulfilling duties as a member. While strict attendance at all meetings is not a requirement, demonstrating a good faith effort to participate in Board business is. Members should communicate to the SDOT staff liaison and Board leadership if they cannot attend a meeting.

Members who have three consecutive absences can expect to be contacted by the SDOT staff liaison to discuss their ability to continue to serve on the Board and fulfill their duties. Members who miss 50% or more of meetings during their term are not likely to be recommended by SDOT for reappointment.

In addition to meeting attendance, other ways a Boardmember might demonstrate a commitment to fulfilling their duties could include participating in Board work that happens in between monthly meetings or contributing to meeting discussions in advance of a meeting s/he cannot attend.

6. Members who resign from the Transit Advisory Board are asked to provide a formal letter of resignation.

7. Members who are not able to attend a Board meeting cannot designate substitutes on their behalf.

8. The SDOT staff liaison will provide materials and information to the entire Board, not to individual members.

9. Meeting documents will be delivered in a timely manner via e-mail. Members are expected to review materials and prepare for each meeting.

10. Members of the Board should not represent themselves as speaking for the group unless directed by the group to do so. This rule in no way restricts individual members, in their capacity as residents, from interacting with elected officials, the media or community organizations. The Board leadership, or other members designated for this purpose, may act as spokespersons for the Board as directed by the Board.

11. Members of the public may attend Board meetings as guests but may not participate in group discussions and consensus deliberations. Non-members may provide brief comments or questions, at the discretion of Board leadership.

12. Members of the Transit Advisory Board have the right to be treated in a civil and respectful manner. "We can disagree without being disagreeable."
13. Board leadership shall endeavor to make time available for every member who wishes to speak to do so on each agenda item at each meeting.
14. The Board uses agreement-seeking consensus with fallback voting as its decision making model. If consensus cannot be reached after a few tries, the group can come to consensus to vote on an issue. If a member is not in attendance at a meeting when a decision is made, s/he can ask to express his/her opinion on the matter at a future meeting, but accepts that the decision is final. Boardmembers will be made aware in advance of a meeting if a decision making process will take place on any agenda item. If s/he has opinions about the decision, they are advised to express them to the SDOT staff liaison and Board leadership so they can be represented in the discussion in the Boardmember's absence.
15. Members are encouraged to direct any potential questions or concerns about other Boardmember behavior, Board discussions, or Board decisions to the SDOT staff liaison for resolution with Board leadership.
16. Board discussions on substantive issues may be subject to Washington State's Open Meetings Act. Members should exercise care and discretion with the use of the e-mail correspondence and should include the SDOT staff liaison on any e-mail discussions. These rules do not prohibit an individual member from conducting e-mail discussions with another individual member.
17. Members of the Transit Advisory Board who have a suggestion for an item on the agenda should contact both their Board leadership and the SDOT staff liaison with the agenda topic, why it is important for the Board to take it up and the intended outcome for the discussion. Placement on the agenda is at the discretion of Board leadership during agenda-setting discussions with the SDOT staff liaison. Either Board leadership or the liaison will contact the member after finalizing the agenda to inform him/her of the outcome of the discussion.