



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

TAB Members:

Priyadharshini Balan
Deborah Barnard
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*The Seattle Transit Advisory Board shall **advise** the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City **on matters related to transit** and the possible and actual impact of actions taken by the City upon all forms of public transportation.*

*The Board shall be provided the opportunity to comment and make recommendations on City policies, plans, and projects as they may relate to **transit capital improvements, transit mobility, and transit operations** throughout the City...*

*The Board shall help facilitate City policies, plans, and projects that support local and region-wide transit mobility efforts, to help **ensure a functioning and coordinated transit system** throughout the City and region.*

*The Board shall function as the **public oversight committee of revenues collected under Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD) Proposition 1**, as described in Resolution 12 of the STBD...*

The Board shall make an annual report to the City Council on the status of its work program and the achievement of its goals.

City Council Resolution
31572

City of Seattle
Seattle Transit Advisory Board

November 13, 2025

To: Seattle City Councilmembers and Mayor Harrell

Re: Budget Balancing Package Feedback

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers and Mayor Harrell,

The Transit Advisory Board (TAB) writes in firm opposition to Council Budget Action (CBA) SDOT-041-B-1, which amends and earmarks \$275,000 from the Seattle Transit Measure (STM) to fund a Chief Transit Security and Safety Officer (\$225,000 annually) plus \$50,000 for consulting services.

We would like to be extremely clear that safety is always a top priority for the TAB. We support the need for increased efforts in transit safety and security, and believe that transit operators and passengers deserve reliable, accessible, and sustainable transit without fear of harm. We stand opposed to SDOT-041-B-1 as we believe the amendment as written will not make meaningful strides towards transit safety and may even work against it.

1. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is not a transit agency.

Regardless of where the funds for this position are allocated it is not clear that SDOT should be where such a position should be housed or funded. King County Metro is responsible for the operations of the buses/streetcar and Sound Transit is responsible for the operation of the Link Light Rail and ST Express buses. While SDOT is involved in helping operate the Streetcars, there already is an existing Streetcar Chief Safety Officer position. Thus, while coordination with these transit agencies to achieve a safer city should be a priority, it is not clear from the amendment's language how this position will accomplish that goal.

Most of the position's responsibilities appear to be advisory in nature. This is fine, but it does not justify why this advisory capability can not be accomplished by existing SDOT staff. One of the specific responsibilities would be to implement "recommendations of the King County Regional Transit Safety Task Force." This, on its face, seems reasonable. However, of the

Task Force's recommendations, only one is actionable on the SDOT level. That is the workstream to "expand current youth internship and employment readiness programs" in the field of transit which SDOT is already tackling through the Transit Access Program (TAP) which is funded by the STM.

In fact, the City itself is only involved in two workstreams (8 and 13) which are about establishing a partnership between Metro and Seattle CARE team to better assist with behavioral incidents on Metro buses. If the concrete goal of this position is to aid in implementing those workstreams, it would make more sense if the position were funded within the CARE department. If that is not the goal of this position, then it is unclear how any of the Task Force's recommendations are intended to be implemented on a city level.

Coordinating with Metro and Sound Transit on safety makes sense. Funding this position through SDOT rather than the CARE department or even SPD, does not make sense.

2. **STM is not an appropriate funding source.** Even if this position is funded within SDOT, **the STM is not an appropriate funding source for this position as the position does not align with the purpose of the Measure and expressly funding this position at the expense of transit service further flies in the face of the measure's intent and negatively impacts riders.**

The Seattle Transit Measure was passed explicitly and solely for "maintaining transit service and access to frequent transit service,...associated maintenance and capital improvements that serve efficient operation of transit service,... programs to increase transit access for low income residents, seniors and students" and to support mobility needs during emergencies such as the West Seattle Bridge closure and the COVID-19 pandemic. This use of STM funds to fund an advisory security position is not only against the spirit of the measure, it is expressly against the letter. As the City-appointed public overseers of the use of the STM funds, the TAB cannot be more explicit: this use of funds is not in line with the intent of the STM and undermines the trust voters placed in the City of Seattle to use these funds to bolster transit service. The Council and Mayor post hoc expanding the allowed use of STM funds undermines voter trust at a sensitive time, with the STM renewal planned to go to voters next year.

The TAB understands that the budget is limited, with a large deficit facing the City as a whole. However, the City just recently passed the largest transportation levy in its history - a levy that includes millions of dollars earmarked explicitly towards transportation safety in numerous sections. The Council has just increased the City sales tax to provide millions in increased funding towards public safety. If the Council is insistent on the creation of the position (again, the TAB is not entirely sure what a city-level position would explicitly achieve), then there are clearly other funding sources that are much more in line with this position than the STM.

Removing bus trips that people rely on to fund an advisory role with vague, abstract responsibilities, and doing so by changing what a voter-approved levy can be spent on years after its passage, is wrong. It trades concrete rider and operator benefits for a position that may look good on paper, but does little to materially affect our transit users for the better.

3. During the 2026 City of Seattle Budget Process, the TAB continues to see the trend of the Mayor and City Council reallocating STM funds to fund gaps in City budget with little to no input from the

TAB. The TAB understands it is within the Mayor and City Council's purview to do this. However, this has created distrust from the TAB as we are having to be ever more diligent on how STM funds are reallocated and spent. It necessitates TAB having to be reactive, instead being able to work proactively with SDOT, the Mayor, and Council to support City transit goals. It is frustrating to have to respond to budget proposals that continue to stretch the letter and intent of STM, or as this CBA proposes, fully amend it. We again invite the Mayor and Council Members to discuss and present their budget proposals with the TAB, as we are always open to finding new ways of ensuring that the City of Seattle has access to safe, reliable, and sustainable transit.

In conclusion, the TAB believes that this new amendment and ordinance to fund a Chief Transit Security and Safety Officer goes against the purpose of the Measure. If the City of Seattle proceeds with funding the Chief Transit Security and Safety Officer position, we ask that the City Council and the Mayor rethink where the funding comes from. Taking away transit hours to pay for this position is a disservice to the voters who approved STM in 2020 and the people who rely on the additional service hours STM provides every day. As the oversight board for STM funds, we cannot be responsible parties to the voters if we allow uses that they did not approve to occur. We take our due diligence seriously and cannot be a party to any misuse of voter approved funding

Sincerely,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB)