



City of Seattle
Seattle Transit Advisory Board

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Date: April 27, 2022
To: Sound Transit Board
Subject: West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) Project

*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

**abstain from correspondence as employees of Sound Transit*

At our March 23, 2022, City of Seattle **Transit Advisory Board** (TAB) meeting, SDOT staff member Colin Drake briefed the TAB on the latest information about the WSBLE Project. After Colin’s presentation, TAB members elected to convey our comments and thoughts about these plans.

We are thrilled that WSBLE will bring high-capacity transit to new areas of the Puget Sound, a long-awaited connection. The TAB would like to ensure that climate, equity, and safety goals are at the forefront of this project. All decisions should be made under the umbrella of Sound Transit’s Racial Equity Toolkit, and make sure that all plans have not overlooked any communities that may not have been able to fully participate in the planning and implementation for the WSBLE Project.

Before detailing our specific station recommendations, we wish to emphasize that when choosing the final alignment, the Project should primarily focus on alignments and design that maximize ridership; well-sited and abundant station entrances as well as sufficient vertical conveyances are integral to an experience that will attract riders.

There are a variety of stations being planned, and the TAB would like to narrow its focus to the ones listed below:

SODO/Chinatown International District Station: the TAB agrees with community, business owners, visitors, transit riders, and residents that any decision made must not repeat the inequities and displacement that this community has experienced with major infrastructure projects such as the recent upzoning and the building of the former Kingdome. We support a plan that will not cause undue traffic, street closures, displacement, and surface construction, to the members of the CID. We also believe that in the long run the CID will benefit from a station that affords easy access to the neighborhood. The CID will also be a major transfer point, and it is critical for Sound Transit to center CID community voices while choosing the best alternative. Therefore, the **TAB Supports:** the CID-1a alternative, but also supports the supporters of a “cut and cover”, “true shallow” version which can result in cost savings and faster transfers between the existing transit routes already in place. We also hope Sound Transit will mitigate the displacement of large numbers of residents and businesses, if this alternative is chosen. In SODO, the **TAB Supports:** the preferred at-grade alternative, SODO-1a, as the at-grade alternative to minimize connection distances.

Delridge: the TAB envisions having the transit entrances and bus zones in close proximity to each other. The placing of distance between these two items is inequitable for those who are elderly, mobility challenged, differently

abled, families with children, or anyone or group where walking distances would serve as a barrier to service. Therefore, the **TAB Supports**: either DEL-5 or DEL-6, while neither is ideal, we support plans that don't impact residents and neighborhoods, as DEL1a/b-DEL-4 would, and for connectivity to the West Seattle Junction, we support the WSL-5's tunnel option and believe it will connect best to other West Seattle stations – while preparing well for any future extensions in later phases.

Downtown Segment (Midtown, Westlake, Denny, South Lake Union, Seattle Center/Uptown): the **TAB Supports**: DT-1 as our only choice, unless a DT-3 plan is created as an improvement on DT-2. The cost savings alternative to consolidate the SLU and Denny stations drastically moves the station to Dexter Avenue, far from the center of the neighborhood – the TAB recommends considering whether the significant cost savings is worth it (~\$575 million) vs long-term reduced ridership and mobility access (~ -10,000 riders). In Uptown, major event crowds make it of paramount importance that the station be sited as close to Seattle Center as possible. Siting the station away from Republican Street would require additional mitigation to ensure pedestrian safety.

Ballard Station: while the TAB appreciates both the 14th Ave NW and 15th Ave NW plans, the **TAB Supports**: IBB-2b, a tunnel station located on 15th Ave NW, as it would be a better fit for transit users, the community, business owners, residents, and future growth planning. If a 20th Ave NW option is revisited, the TAB would support this option over any DEIS alternative, to bring transit users into the central portion of Ballard, and we hope it will be reconsidered.

Alaska Junction Station: the **TAB Supports**: the WSJ-5, Medium Tunnel 41st Avenue Station Alternative. We would like to minimize impacts on the West Seattle community, so elevated structures are not supported, and minimizing displacements of residents (153), businesses (15), and employees (90) is crucial, along with controlling the cost of the project (\$1.1B).

These critical stations will serve transit riders well into the future. Do not put cost savings before safety, walk and bike connections, and other critical infrastructure decisions that will make these stations well used for generations.

We urge you to deliver projects on time, while centering communities where need is greatest in the decision-making process. It is a fine balance, but construction will only get more expensive, and promised voter-approved timelines are important not only for community trust, but for our regional mobility, climate impacts, and equitable access to resources that allow all of us to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and all you do to keep people moving.

The City of Seattle Transit Advisory Board