



Date: March 3, 2017
To: Members of the Seattle City Council &
One Center City Partner Agencies
Subject: One Center City Public Feedback

TAB Members:
Marci Carpenter
Carla Chávez
Kevin Duffy-Greaves
Jonathan Howard
Ron Posthuma
Zach Shaner
Erin Tighe
Katie Wilson

Dear One Center City Project Team,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board thanks the respective agencies for the opportunity to comment on One Center City’s short-term options for the 2018-2021 period. The TAB believes that while this extraordinary convergence of projects and constraints deserves substantial mitigation, we also believe that these challenges should not be an excuse to stall progress on creating a more walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly Center City.

Fundamentally, we believe that all mitigation strategies adopted should align with prior principles and commitments, including Vision Zero, the Bicycle Master Plan, the Transit Master Plan, Move Seattle, Sound Transit 3, Metro’s Long Range Plan, and the Pike-Pine Renaissance. We believe that all policies and restructures should seek to reward the 95% of new commuters that are choosing not to drive, and the 70% who already do so.

It is critical that the public has a full understanding of the urgency of One Center City short-term planning. If the primary constraint driving this process is the Washington State Convention Center expansion and the closure of Convention Place Station, we ask that the County consider asking the Public Facilities District and Pine Street Group to delay Convention Center construction for a few months, until the first batches of Siemens S70 light rail vehicles (LRVs) arrive. Doing so would allow Sound Transit to immediately replace lost tunnel capacity by running longer Link trains at higher frequency, allowing the DSTT to run at full capacity through the entirety of the 2018-2021 “period of maximum constraint.”

Additional information will provide clarity on the urgency of the short term projects. We note that even with additional DSTT capacity, a system depending on transfers to Link will work only if there is sufficient capacity on the receiving train and the transfer connections are smooth. Extended walks between transfer points and lack of pedestrian accommodations will only discourage choice transit riders. To maintain current travel time advantages and avoid oversaturating International District and University of Washington Stations, we suggest continuing to route routes 41 and 550, and perhaps one SR 520 route, all the way through downtown.
(continued on the following pages)

*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 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**

We urge that One Center City adopt the following positions:

1. **Maximize Capacity of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT).** We urge Metro and Sound Transit to maximize the capacity of the DSTT. We support turnback trains between University of Washington and Stadium Stations to boost core capacity, and we support temporarily lowering the fleet reserve ratio to deploy additional LRVs, knowing that new vehicles will arrive shortly thereafter.
2. **Select Option D for North-South Avenues.** Option D provides the most legible and complete transit network, with transit prioritized on 1st, 3rd, and 5th Avenues, and cars and protected bike lanes prioritized on 2nd and 4th avenues. Creating a new 5th Avenue transit spine aligns with a long term vision of local service atop Sound Transit's future Green Line, with a new major transfer hub at 5th/Madison between Link, Madison BRT, and local buses. 5th Avenue service also provides good service to Downtown's highest elevations for those who cannot walk the steep east-west streets.

While 2-way transit on 5th may seem radical or expensive, we note that it does not cost any more than Option A or Option B when added transit operating costs are considered. The only substantially cheaper option, Option C, is unacceptable on a number of levels; it delays the promised Center City Bike Network and even *worsens* existing conditions for people bicycling, is incompatible with Vision Zero, and decreases the legibility of the transit system by creating another couplet. Option D is functionally superior in every way, and is the only option that aligns with prior commitments and long-term plans.

3. **Select Option B for Pike-Pine.** For east-west mobility between Center City and Capitol Hill, we prefer Option B. We believe trolleybus service is best placed on Pine Street, and that Pike Street is suitable for a pair of Protected Bike Lanes east of 8th Avenue. Trolley wire already exists for the entire Pine Street corridor and would be suitable for use by Route 10 between 8th Avenue and Bellevue Avenue, in addition to Routes 11 and 49 that already use Pine Street east of 8th Avenue today.

We believe Option C's one-way couplet concept for Capitol Hill would be highly disruptive to Capitol Hill's street grid, which is otherwise 2-way throughout. The transitions to one-way operation at Broadway would further complicate an already fragile corridor. The creation of two travel lanes in each direction would incentivize speeding and dangerous passing around buses, and would contradict SDOT's preferred method of "letting the bus set the pace" on calmed single-lane corridors.

4. **Implement the SR 520 Restructure, but Only if UW Allows Station Improvements.** We support the truncation of SR 520 routes at UW Station, allowing fast and reliable connections between the Eastside and Downtown on Link. However, without additional mitigation at UW Station, we believe any time advantages will quickly evaporate, and could worsen travel times for most riders.

While little can be done between the Montlake Exit and UW Station due to WSDOT construction, any truncation plan should retime signals to give pedestrians longer crossing times, add additional bus stops on the east side of Montlake Boulevard directly adjacent to the station, and install new bus layover/turnaround space directly east of the station in the E-19 parking lot. These improvements would keep most SR 520 riders from having to cross Montlake on foot, improve bus reliability by taking additional pressure off of Pacific Street, and would shave 2-4 minutes off of each trip. Without cooperation from UW to implement improvements like these, we do *not* support truncating SR 520 bus routes.

5. **Cancel the Proposed Truncation of Route 550.** We believe that among all the truncations proposed in One Center City, the truncation of Route 550 at International District Station (IDS) is the most punitive and offers the least benefit for riders. We are highly skeptical of the ability of IDS to handle its current peak loads on Metro and Sound Transit buses, Link, Sounder, *and* Route 550.

In addition, we believe the I-90 corridor should have a legible service pattern for all routes (111, 114, 212, 214, 216, 217, 218, 219, 550, 554), allowing riders to take whichever route comes first. With a 550 truncation, we believe many riders would transfer to Routes 216 or 554 at Mercer Island Park & Ride rather than to Link at IDS. We believe this truncation will cause ridership in the corridor to drop significantly, when we need to be *building* ridership in the corridor ahead of East Link.

6. **Cancel the Proposed Truncation of Route 41.** We believe that the Center City street network can accommodate Route 41 on 3rd Avenue. At just 4-12 buses per hour, the addition of Route 41 would be more than offset during peak hours by the truncation of 24 peak buses per hour on Routes 37, 55, 56, 57, 113, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, and 123.

Route 41 is a flagship route that needs to retain its strong ridership base ahead of Northgate Link opening in 2021, and its movement through Center City should be prioritized. The proposed Union-Pike couplet would be moderately tolerable, but it would not directly connect to either Westlake or University Street stations, and we have concerns about the likely A.M. outbound pathway on Olive Way given the WSCC construction there. We ask that planners produce additional concepts for Route 41 that would allow it to directly connect with the DSTT.

7. **Implement the West Seattle-First Hill Restructure.** While we believe the proposed West Seattle truncations would be painful for riders, we also recognize that the constraints in the SR 99 corridor will be especially difficult between 2018-2021, with Viaduct removal, surface boulevard construction, and Center City Connector construction. There is no plausible surface pathway that would allow good connections between West Seattle through Downtown, so a restructure to serve Pioneer Square Station is regrettable but acceptable. We also appreciate the added benefit of boosting peak service to our First Hill hospitals.

To make this truncation work best for riders, we ask that SDOT remove parking where possible on 1st Avenue South between Royal Brougham and Yesler Way, to provide transit priority on Yesler Way between 1st Avenue and 8th Avenue, and remove parking on the Yesler Bridge. We also ask that Metro boost frequency and span of service on Route 50 to provide an additional transfer option for Admiral and Alaska Junction riders at Sodo Station.

8. **Maximize Off-Board Payment to Speed Boarding.** We support the installation of new fixed ORCA readers and increasing the use of staffed Portable Fare Transaction Processors (PFTPs).
9. **Provide Dedicated Resources to Transit Lane Enforcement.** Transit lanes are only as good as their enforcement provides deterrence to general traffic. We are dispirited by routine and unenforced violations of current transit lanes on 3rd Avenue, Battery Street, Olive Way, etc. We understand that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) does not have the resources to target these violations specifically, but we urge agencies to partner with SPD to provide funding for officers dedicated to enforcement. We believe that agencies could recoup any costs through reduced operating costs.

10. **Expand and Extend 3rd Avenue's Transit Priority.** We support the northward extension of 3rd Avenue transit priority through Belltown at least as far as Bell Street, but preferably as far as Denny Way.

A central reason for the high violation rate on 3rd Avenue by motorists during restricted hours is due to confusion or ignorance. By broadening the transit-only window to 6am-10pm on weekdays, or even to 24/7, motorists will be more likely to respect the restricted nature of the right-of-way. This phenomenon is consistent with high rates of compliance enjoyed by 24/7 transit-only lanes in other parts of Seattle such as SB Aurora Avenue south of the Aurora Bridge and SB Pacific Street adjacent to the UW Medical Center.

We appreciate the many challenges of this process, and the short timeline for implementation. We look forward to helping you succeed in maintaining mobility in Center City as we all look toward a radically improved system in 2021 and beyond.

Regards,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board