



City of Seattle

Transit Advisory Board

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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 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**

Date: April 29, 2016

To: Sound Transit Board

Subject: Sound Transit 3 - Draft System Plan and Policies

Dear members of the Sound Transit Board,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board is a group of Seattle residents who serve in an advisory capacity to the City in matters related to transit. We enthusiastically support an expansion of light rail in the Puget Sound Region and we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback.

Build Graham Street Station as part of "Early Wins."

We support prioritization of the Graham Street infill station. Seattle taxpayers have approved \$10 million in funding for Graham Street Station through the Move Seattle levy. The community around Graham Street Station is underserved by the current stations and providing access to high-capacity transit will connect them to jobs, schools and community centers.

Ensure 130th Street is funded in the Sound Transit 3 package.

The station at 130th street is currently identified as provisional and no funding is included. We believe Sound Transit should include funding for the 130th Street Station in ST3. The 130th Street Station would serve the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village and Lake City Hub Urban Village, which are the fastest growing Urban Villages in North Seattle while remaining some of the most affordable places to live in Seattle.

Build a high-quality Ballard to Downtown line.

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We support full grade separation along the Ballard - Downtown line. As this project has by far the highest ridership potential of all of the candidate projects, this is not the area to cut corners. Running Link at-grade has resulted in frequent conflicts and unnecessary delays in the Rainier Valley. As the line grows in length and operational risks compound, we do not endorse a repetition of those mistakes. It would be unacceptable for riders in Tacoma to be delayed because of at-grade conflicts miles away in Interbay. Vehicle and pedestrian collisions frequently stop Central Link, and the speed limit along Martin Luther King Jr. Way unnecessarily slows trains. Let's learn from our mistakes, and not plague the Ballard to Downtown line with the same problems.

We support greater protection from openings in the proposed Ship Canal crossing. A tunnel under the ship canal would allow the greatest protection from delays and malfunctions, as well as provide far better opportunities for further system expansion. Barring that possibility, we support a bridge that is high enough to minimize or eliminate openings. Although this would likely preclude bicycle and pedestrian access as part of the project, we feel that bicycle access across the Ship Canal is appropriately an SDOT project as part of replacing the current Ballard Bridge. Only Sound Transit can build light rail, but the City can create a separate bike-ped connection as part of a rebuild that is universally recognized as critically necessary.

Build a high-quality West Seattle to Downtown line.

We support full grade separation along the West Seattle - Downtown line, with the hope that tunneling under West Seattle between Delridge and the Alaska Junction can be studied in addition to the current plan for an elevated structure. The West Seattle Bridge is nearly at capacity now and traffic is projected to increase by 26-33% over the next 20 years. With a great deal of development already occurring in the Alaska/Fauntleroy/California area we support stations with a minimal footprint to limit impacts on the neighborhoods.

Build an urban network within a regional system.

Although Sound Transit operates a regional transit network, Seattle's urban environment requires a different design philosophy than can be applied in the suburbs. We support urban stop spacing (<1 mile) within

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the city limits, minimal station footprints, and prioritizing the maximization of access over travel time. This means we fully support infill stations at Graham Street, at 130th, and in the vicinity of SR 99 and Harrison Street. Rather than compromise urban stop spacing, we suggest Sound Transit explore turnback stations, passing tracks, and skip-stop operations as methods of speeding trains through the city center.

We support any and all efforts to minimize station footprints, reduce unnecessary mezzanines, and integrate stations into their urban surroundings. We suggest that the street-level access to new underground stations more closely resemble the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel rather than the large above-ground structures of University Link and Northgate Link. We also support station designs that maximize the possibility of transit-oriented development above and immediately adjacent to the station.

We are strongly supportive of RCW 81.112.350 and we would like to see language in the package that clearly articulates how this legislation will be implemented in good faith. We encourage Sound Transit to acquire plots in lots and sizes that can be used effectively for TOD and affordable housing, and we believe Sound Transit can and should offer favorable terms to affordable housing developers, enabling them to purchase land below market rate.

Improve Seattle's Rapid Ride bus routes.

Until the West Seattle-Ballard Link is completed, Metro's C and D Rapid Ride bus routes will be doing the heavy lifting when it comes to quickly moving people along these corridors. Sound Transit should invest in improving the quality of these routes to true Bus Rapid Transit by adding dedicated lanes, traffic signal priority, and more ORCA readers at stations lacking them currently. Additionally, Sound Transit 3 should also invest in similar improvements to Rapid Ride E, which is Metro's most popular route and growing, as well as the Madison Street BRT project and the new Rapid Ride routes identified in the Seattle Transit Master Plan - all of which connect riders with current or future Link Stations. Presently, Rapid Ride buses are key to regional mobility; their importance regionally will continue to grow before and after ST3 completion. Improving the quality and speed of the routes is a worthy goal of ST3 and an "early win" that can benefit Seattle residents and the region almost immediately.

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Appropriately fund regional light rail infrastructure.

The second Downtown Transit Tunnel is a key piece of regional infrastructure, without which the Link spine is not operationally possible. King County paid for the construction of the first downtown tunnel without the aid of other area counties, and the draft proposal suggests that North King again pay for 80% of construction costs, with Pierce County picking up the remaining 20%. This is an unacceptable distribution of funding. Under this proposal, Snohomish County's portion of the transit tunnels has been paid for entirely by King County. We suggest that all subareas contribute proportional funding to what is clearly a regional asset, and in particular we suggest the Snohomish subarea pay a fair portion of the costs of the second downtown tunnel, as they didn't have the opportunity to pay for the first. If regional contributions to the second tunnel cannot be secured, we support delaying the second tunnel in order to expedite and phase the Ballard-Downtown project, with the second tunnel being built as capacity needs dictate. In the interim, we support terminating the Ballard-Downtown line at a new Westlake station while funding accrues for the second tunnel.

Consider more progressive funding sources.

We are concerned that the proposed funding mechanisms for ST3 do not include the most progressive of Sound Transit's authorized funding sources: an Employer Tax of up to \$2 per month per employee. Instead, the heavy reliance on the regressive sales tax will disproportionately impact low-income people and communities. The current proposal asks consumers, car-owners, property-owners and renters to pay more in the form of sales tax, MVET, and property tax. It makes sense that businesses should also contribute to building a regional transit system that will connect employment centers. We would like to see projections for how much additional funding a \$2 per month Employer Tax would generate over the 25-year period. Adding the Employer Tax would increase the size of the package, enabling more projects to be funded and completed sooner.

Increase multimodal access funding.

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As part of ST3, the Seattle Transit Advisory Board supports increasing investments and sound planning for local transit, walking and biking access to high capacity transit. Access to high capacity transit should be affordable, sustainable and effective to attract new riders and make it possible for transit to be the first choice for getting around.

Transportation is the second highest household expense in the Puget Sound region and improving the connections to transit allows households to reduce their dependency on cars. Low-income households often rely on transit to get around - if they are unable to easily and safely access transit, they may be forced to buy a car, potentially adding thousands per year to their household expenses.

Plan for the future.

While we recognize that Sound Transit 3 is a good next step for Seattle and the region, we also realize that this shouldn't be the end of the line. We support funding for study and planning work to continue West Seattle Link to Burien, to extend Ballard Link to Bothell via Greenwood and Lake City, to continue planning for Link between Ballard and the University District, and to create the "Metro 8" from Belltown to Mt. Baker via South Lake Union, the Central District, and Judkins Park.

Sincerely,

Seattle Transit Advisory Board