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Date: May 30, 2018
 To: Seattle City Council
 Subject: STBD Legislation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Seattle Transit Benefit District Ordinance to authorize material scope changes to the Seattle Transportation Benefit District Proposition 1.

As Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB) members, we've had the opportunity to delve deep into the implementation of STBD Proposition 1. In this role, we have highlighted some of the constraints of the authorizing legislation and are pleased that the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) has listened to our ideas and concerns.

In our last letter to Council, the TAB advocated for investing in RapidRide routes, allowing for expanded partnerships with other agencies, capital investments, and expanding the definition of what is considered a Seattle route. We made these requests in anticipation of a levy renewal when the current STBD funding expires; we are excited that SDOT has taken the opportunity to put these improvements into effect several years before we expected them.

The proposed legislation addresses key concerns that the Board has shared previously and expands a successful program benefiting Seattle students. The Seattle TAB supports the proposed material scope changes that are being considered by the Seattle City Council:

ORCA Opportunity Program: Studies have shown that lack of access to reliable transportation can be an insurmountable barrier to moving up the economic ladder. Providing students with annual ORCA passes provides much-needed mobility, enabling them to hold jobs and participate in after-school programs. ORCA Cards that work not just during the academic year, but through the summer, will provide students with reliable transportation to additional activities, whether to summer school or to summer jobs and internships, without having an additional burden of transportation costs. It will also have the added benefit of reducing absences and tardies.

*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*

Updating the definition of “Seattle routes” from 80% of stops in the city to 65%: As Seattle experiences an affordability crisis, more and more residents are being pushed out to the edges of the city, where the STBD has difficulty funding routes due to the large proportions that serve other municipalities and unincorporated King County. Expanding the eligibility of what constitutes a “Seattle route” will allow investments that will ultimately improve reliability and reduce overcrowding for these Seattle residents. Moreover, it will direct investments to the areas that need it the most, without arbitrary and artificial barriers, and without the need for Metro to run buses along only part of the length of the route.

Investments in RapidRide lines serving Seattle: RapidRide routes carry some of the highest levels of ridership in Seattle and are poised to absorb much of the demand from a growing population. By investing in current and future RapidRide lines, we align our investments with broader transit plans like the Seattle Transit Master Plan and Metro CONNECTS, Metro’s long-range plan, and allow the city to cultivate rider markets in advance of RapidRide rollout.

Pilot Transit Services: The Board strongly agrees on increasing flexibility in the types of partnerships the City can invest in to deliver great transit service. The additional flexibility will allow for experimentation in first/last mile solutions, reduce reliance on a single transit agency and enable the development of public/private partnerships. We especially would like to see the city explore a pilot program to contract service from Sound Transit, or other local transit providers. As Metro’s service in Seattle is concentrated on a smaller number of corridors, we want to ensure that all residents see the benefits of the TBD--regardless of whether their stop is served by a green Metro bus or a white Link train.

Capital Improvements: The TAB is excited to be able to leverage our service hours with capital investments to make those hours carry more riders farther. As the region’s transit providers face difficulties recruiting operators, it is imperative that the city invest in right-of-way improvements to enable buses to run quickly and efficiently. The Board would like to see strategic spot improvements, as well as a larger program of transit-only lanes, to create a street network that will have long-lasting benefits for transit riders.

Again, the Transit Advisory Board fully supports the material changes to the scope of STBD funding. We look forward to delivering more and better transit service to Seattle residents and all who use Seattle’s transit system.

Thank you for your consideration,

Transit Advisory Board