

This document, which will be updated over time, answers frequently asked questions related to ST3.

1. Has the Sound Transit Board decided the contents or scale of the Sound Transit 3 ballot measure?

No. Staff provided technical and financial reports on the many different candidate projects that could be included in the final ST3 ballot proposal. Financial capacity estimates presented to the Board on Dec. 4 show the range of possibilities the Board can choose from. In the coming months the Board will discuss the potential projects for inclusion as well as size, duration, and revenue sources before the scheduled early spring release of a draft ballot measure for public input.

2. What are some projects that could be included in a ST3 measure?

In August the Sound Transit Board identified an array of candidate projects for ST3 and directed staff to study them. On Dec. 4 the soundtransit3.org website was updated with the results of those studies, which will support the Board in narrowing in on a draft package. While the Board has yet to decide what projects to include in ST3, members have indicated that their priorities include extending the light rail “spine” from Tacoma to Everett and east to downtown Redmond, as well as connecting the region’s designated centers, including but not limited to Ballard, West Seattle and Eastside cities.

3. What’s next? When and how will decisions be made about priorities and investment levels?

In January, meetings of the Sound Transit Board committees will give members the chance to talk about their priorities for the package. Those conversations will help inform discussion by the full Board on Jan. 28. Continued discussions in February will focus on shaping a draft Sound Transit 3 plan that the Board anticipates releasing in March for public input in April.

4. How big could a ST3 measure be?

The scale of a Sound Transit 3 measure depends on upcoming Board decisions about its comprehensiveness and duration. Options include but are not limited to the below three discussed at the Sound Transit Board’s December 4 workshop:

- A 15-year measure could generate up to a total of \$26 billion.
- A 20-year measure could generate up to \$26 billion for use in the first 15 years and an additional \$4 billion supporting other projects completed over the following five years.
- A 25-year measure that could generate up to \$26 billion for use in the first 15 years and an additional \$22 billion for other projects over the following 10 years.

Under collection of the full authorized revenues the estimated cost to a typical adult living in the Sound Transit District would be approximately \$200 more annually, or about \$17 more per month. A longer duration for investments would increase the amount of revenues collected over time but not the annual or monthly per-person costs. More information on funding options is available [here](#).

5. I’ve previously heard the figure \$15 billion cited in reference to a Sound Transit 3 measure. Where does that figure come from?

If the Sound Transit Board chose to propose and voters approved the full authority the Washington State Legislature granted in summer 2015, \$15 billion is the amount of revenue Sound Transit would receive within the first 15 years from the authorized new taxes. In addition to revenue from new taxes,

other funding would come from federal grants, existing taxes, fares and other sources. The potential size of a Sound Transit 3 package also increases with its duration. The legislation did not limit the duration of an ST3 plan to 15 years.

6. What are the main factors driving the costs?

In general the main factors that drive costs for light rail projects are:

- The length of the corridor (length affects the costs of LRT guideway, number of vehicles needed, and O&M facility needs and costs)
- Project profile (generally speaking, tunnels are more expensive than elevated guideways, which are more expensive than at-grade profiles)
- Operational assumptions (frequency of service, and size of trains)
- Other factors include topography; land value; competitive bidding environment; and coordination with multiple jurisdictions

7. What is “subarea equity” and will it be part of ST3?

In Sound Transit’s first two ballot measures, the Sound Transit Board used an approach it called “subarea equity” that reported which areas of the Sound Transit District would contribute funding for which projects. The approach designated five geographic subareas within the district and reported details for each, going beyond the “equity element” required in state law. The Board can continue that same framework in ST3 or refine how it maintains Sound Transit’s commitment to transparency and accountability. The statutory requirement for the ST3 ballot measure is to identify the “revenues anticipated to be generated by corridor and by county within the authority’s boundaries; ... the phasing of construction and operation of high capacity system facilities, services, and benefits in each corridor; ... [and] the degree to which revenues generated within each county will benefit the residents of that county, and identifies when such benefits will accrue.” When a ballot measure is adopted by voters its provisions become legally binding.

8. Why does it take so long to build these projects? Could at least some of the projects be built faster?

Major infrastructure projects require significant time to plan, design and build, especially in the context of the Puget Sound region’s high level of existing development and its challenging geography and geology, with significant requirements for elevated and tunnel alignments and water crossings. For more, see Sound Transit’s factsheet on project life cycles [here](#).

It should be noted that in a package that extends longer than 15 years, up to \$26 billion in projects and services would come online in the first 15 years under any of the scenarios the Board has discussed. A measure of longer duration could allow for completion of more projects without increasing the annual or monthly per-person cost.