



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) No. RTA/RI 0174-26

Ballard Link Innovative Technologies

SECTION 1: PURPOSE

Sound Transit seeks responses from qualified sources on strategies that could reduce project cost or speed delivery of the Ballard Link Extension (BLE) through innovative technologies. Strategies should complement the existing environmental review process and avoid additional disruption or delay to BLE. No contract award will be made as a result of this RFI.

All information contained in this notice is preliminary in nature and is subject to change. This notice is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a solicitation or a commitment on the part of Sound Transit to conduct a solicitation in the future. Sound Transit reserves the right to communicate with sources who provide feedback in response to this RFI. Any communications resulting from the RFI, whether communicated verbally or in writing, shall not be binding.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

BLE will connect Chinatown-International District and downtown Seattle with the Interbay and Ballard neighborhoods. It will also add a new light rail tunnel in downtown Seattle to operate the system efficiently. Voters approved this project in November 2016 as part of the Sound Transit 3 vote. The project is currently in the planning phase. Sound Transit maintains a repository of publicly available project-related information at:

<https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/ballard-link-extension>. Specifically, respondents may find the following links helpful:

- [Ballard Link Extension - Project purpose and need](#)
- [Ballard Link Extension: Scoping meeting materials](#)
- [Programmatic and Project-level Workplan Q3 2025 Update](#)

Respondents to this RFI should consider this information in their responses.

On May 28, 2026, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R2026-11, updating the ST System Plan ([Resolution R2026-11.pdf](#)). Attachment C, Section 1 of the resolution directed that “Sound Transit will actively identify and pursue every feasible opportunity to

reduce the overall cost and accelerate project delivery of the Ballard Link Extension” and directed that Sound Transit “initiate a Request for Information to identify strategies that reduce cost or speed delivery through innovative technologies. This expanded analysis should include evaluations comparing not only cost but also ridership capacity, service frequency, passenger experience, operational and long-term maintenance implications, and labor considerations. This expanded project analysis should complement the existing environmental review process and avoid additional disruption or delay. The RFI can be specific to BLE or expanded to other ST3 projects.”

SECTION 3: SUBMISSIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RFI / CONTACT INFORMATION

3.01 Response Content

Please respond with any materials that would provide the information requested below.

1. A cover letter including this RFI number #RI 0174-26, the title “Ballard Link Innovative Technologies”, submitter’s legal entity name and a point of contact (name, email address, and phone number).
2. A response to the questions in Section 4 is greatly appreciated.

3.02 Response Submittal Instructions

1. Please email responses to: Sound Transit – Procurement, Contracts, and Agreements, dccprocurementhelp@soundtransit.org
2. Sound Transit may, at its discretion, choose to meet with firms who prefer to share ideas in person. Meeting requests should be submitted to: Sound Transit – Procurement, Contracts, and Agreements, dccprocurementhelp@soundtransit.org. Meetings would need to occur before the response due date noted below in Section 3.03.

3.03 Anticipated Schedule/Response Due Date

1. **Response Due Date:** Responses to this RFI must be provided no later than **5:00 PM PT on October 5, 2026**. Sound Transit reserves the right to update the RFI due date.
 - a. Firms responding to this RFI shall assume full responsibility for ensuring electronic delivery of their responses on or before the date and time specified above.

- b. Sound Transit is not responsible for any delays associated with the electronic submission of responses.
2. Sound Transit may, at its discretion, schedule discussions/meetings with the firms that respond to this RFI to gather more information after review of responses.

3.04 Communications

Questions about this RFI must be emailed to Sound Transit at:

dccprocurementhelp@soundtransit.org

SECTION 4: RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Sound Transit seeks responses from qualified sources on strategies that could reduce project cost or speed delivery of the ST3 voter-approved BLE project through innovative technologies. Respondents must demonstrate that suggested strategies complement the existing environmental review process and avoid additional disruption or delay. For clarity, respondents must be mindful of the existing project definition and eschew strategies that could further jeopardize the project timeline. The strategies can be specific to BLE or expanded to other ST3 projects.

For each strategy, please (1) answer the following questions, and (2) provide evidence of demonstrated successful past performance implementing such strategy:

1. What would the project cost savings implications be (net of additional costs)?
Demonstrate that current market conditions are considered.
2. What would the project schedule savings implications be?
3. What would the ridership capacity implications be?
4. What would the service frequency implications be?
5. What would the passenger experience implications be?
6. What would the operational and long-term maintenance implications be?
7. What would the labor implications be?
8. How does this approach mitigate project risk?

Sound Transit would also appreciate responses to any or all of the questions listed in Attachment A.

SECTION 5: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

5.01 No Obligation

Sound Transit may use the information gathered from this RFI process in a future procurement. The release of this RFI, however, in no way obligates Sound Transit to such a

course of action. If, in its sole discretion, Sound Transit decides to undertake a future procurement, a competitive process will be used to select a firm.

5.02 Cost or Preparation

Sound Transit is not responsible for any costs associated with preparing or submitting a response to this RFI. All information provided is strictly voluntary and no reimbursement will be made by Sound Transit for any costs associated with providing a response to this notice or otherwise participating in market research activities.

5.03 Response Property of Sound Transit

All materials submitted in response to this RFI become the property of Sound Transit. Sound Transit has the right to use any of the ideas presented in such materials. Telephone calls will not be accepted or acknowledged. No feedback or evaluations will be provided to companies regarding their submissions. However, Sound Transit may contact sources to gather additional information as required. All information submitted will only be used for the purpose intended.

5.04 Public Disclosure

Pursuant to Chapter 42.56 RCW, responses submitted under this RFI shall be considered public records and with limited exceptions will be available for inspection and copying by the public. Firms must specifically designate and clearly label as “CONFIDENTIAL” any and all materials or portions thereof they deem to contain trade secrets or other proprietary information, which is exempt from public inspection and copying. The firm must provide the legal basis for the exemption to Sound Transit upon request. If a response does not clearly identify the “CONFIDENTIAL” portions, Sound Transit will not notify the firm that its response will be made available for inspection. If a request is made for disclosure of material or any portion marked “CONFIDENTIAL”, Sound Transit will determine whether the material should be made available under the law. If Sound Transit determines that the material is not exempt and may be disclosed, Sound Transit will notify the firm of the request and allow the firm 10 working days to take appropriate action pursuant to RCW 42.56.540. If the firm fails or neglects to take such action within said period, Sound Transit may release the portions of the response deemed subject to disclosure. To the extent that Sound Transit withholds from disclosure all or any portion of firm’s documents at firm’s request, firm shall indemnify, defend and hold harmless Sound Transit from all damages, penalties, attorneys’ fees and costs Sound Transit incurs related to withholding information from public disclosure. By submitting a response, the firm consents to the procedure outlined in this paragraph and shall have no claim against Sound Transit by reason of actions taken under this procedure.

5.05 Disclaimer

Sound Transit has issued this RFI solely for information and planning purposes, and the issuance does not constitute a solicitation, and will not result in an award of any kind. The issuance of this RFI and your preparation and submission of information do not commit Sound Transit to any contractual relationship, directly or indirectly.

ATTACHMENT A: Additional Questions for Respondents (optional)

1. What key drivers of construction cost differences between Sound Transit and other rail transit systems are within Sound Transit's ability to control? Be specific as to whether these examples are from US or non-US sources.
2. What opportunities could Sound Transit explore to further reduce station costs (e.g. to reduce station depth, optimize station box configuration and size, etc.)?
3. What opportunities could Sound Transit explore to further reduce corridor construction costs (e.g., tunnels, elevated guideway, utilities, etc.)?
4. What opportunities could Sound Transit explore to further reduce property-related costs?
5. Given BLE is an extension of the existing system, what project elements could Sound Transit incorporate to not preclude future increased degrees of automation of the entire system?
6. What existing or emerging technologies (e.g., communication-based train control) currently being employed in other US and non-US systems can support achievement of capacity and reliability needs, and what are potential benefits and risks of these emerging technologies?
7. What could Sound Transit do to avoid environmental process delays associated with potential changes to project definition?
8. What state and local approval or permitting reforms should Sound Transit explore to reduce cost and schedule?
9. What opportunities could Sound Transit explore to modify fire-life safety regulatory requirements without affecting safety?
10. What opportunities could Sound Transit explore for early construction contractor involvement to reduce cost or schedule?
11. What alternative project delivery approaches could Sound Transit explore to reduce project cost and schedule, while still meeting federal grant requirements?
12. What other federal, state, and local funding opportunities should Sound Transit explore?
13. What actions should Sound Transit explore to be better positioned to obtain more federal funding?
14. What contract models should Sound Transit explore to reduce costs, schedule and risk (while considering that BLE is an extension of the existing system)?
15. What changes to debt capacity policy should Sound Transit, or its partners, explore to provide additional financial capacity?
16. What opportunities should Sound Transit explore to leverage existing agency property and facilities to provide additional funding?

17. With consideration of Sound Transit's existing regulatory framework, what opportunities should Sound Transit explore to leverage Transit Oriented Development around stations and corridors?