

Sound Transit Public Hearing - Tacoma Link Fares Proposal
September 19, 2013

Verbatim Record of Proceedings



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SOUND TRANSIT PUBLIC HEARING

TACOMA LINK FARES PROPOSAL

VERBATIM RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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Tacoma, Washington

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APPEARANCES

Sound Transit Board:

Marilyn Strickland, Mayor

Staff Presenter:

Brian Brooke

Public Comments:

Sarah Morken
809 North Proctor Street
Tacoma, Washington

Jennifer Kilmer
1911 Pacific Avenue
Tacoma, Washington

David Rafferty
1717 Market Street
Tacoma, Washington

Laura Berry
1705 Dock Street, #358
Tacoma, Washington

Michaele Sein-Ryan
525 Broadway, #106
Tacoma, Washington

David Bart
31 Broadway, #202
Tacoma, Washington

Sue Pierce
615 Commerce, #102
Tacoma, Washington

Peter Benjamin
930 11th Street Southwest
Puyallup, Washington

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1 APPEARANCES (Continuing)

2

Vince Kueter
817 North Grant Avenue
Tacoma, Washington

4

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6 Also present: Chelsea Levy
Carol Masnik
7 Sunnie Sterling

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1 BE IT REMEMBERED that on Thursday,
2 September 19, 2013, at Tacoma City Council Chambers,
3 747 Market Street, First Floor, Tacoma, Washington,
4 at 5 p.m., before the Sound Transit Board, the
5 following proceedings were had, to wit:

6

7

<<<<<< >>>>>>

8

9 MAYOR STRICKLAND: All right. It
10 is now 5 p.m., and I declare this public hearing open.
11 If you do plan to speak today, please remember to
12 sign in so we have you for the record. We will
13 officially end this public hearing at 6:00, as
14 advertised.

15 So here are the rules right now. When you plan
16 to speak, you will approach the podium, adjust the
17 microphone so it's close to your mouth, and then you'll
18 have three minutes to speak. Please be mindful of
19 the clock to your right so you can make your comments,
20 and please limit your comments to three minutes so we
21 can be respectful of everyone who wants to speak.
22 You're not required to use all three minutes, but we
23 also want you to adhere to the rules.

24 Following presentation from staff, we will take
25 your testimony. And the comments received today will

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1 be part of the formal record, and the Board will
2 consider them as part of the decision-making process
3 in the implementation of fares on Tacoma Link light
4 rail. If approved, Sound Transit would start charging
5 fares in 2014, and the date that we set is sometime
6 in the fall of 2014. And I just want to make sure
7 that you understand that we are here to hear from you
8 and hear what you think about this. So no decision's
9 been made yet.

10 Another point of clarification is that the Tacoma
11 City Council is not the decision-making body. It will
12 be the Board of Sound Transit, which is a Board
13 comprised of elected officials from around the region.
14 Now, I sit on the Board of Sound Transit as Tacoma's
15 representative, but I also have colleagues as well.

16 At this time, I'd like to call upon Brian Brooke,
17 who's Research, Policy, and Development Director, to
18 give a staff presentation at this time. Brian.

19 BRIAN BROOKE: Thank you. On
20 September 26th, the Sound Transit Board --

21 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Can you all hear
22 him? Okay.

23 BRIAN BROOKE: All right. Yes. On
24 September 26th, Sound Transit Board will be considering
25 an action to begin charging fares on Tacoma Link light

1 rail service. Tacoma Link light rail was initially
2 implemented as a fare-free service. The reason for
3 that is an exception in Sound Transit's Board policy
4 which allows provision of free service if the cost of
5 collecting fares exceeds the revenue that would be
6 expected from those fares. That was initially the
7 case on Tacoma Link, given the ridership at
8 implementation.

9 Currently, ridership on Tacoma Link is about one
10 million rides per year. And with this ridership, we
11 do estimate that implementing a fare within a
12 reasonable range on Tacoma Link would raise significant
13 revenue to help offset the cost of operating Tacoma
14 Link. The cost of operating Tacoma Link is currently
15 about \$4.3 million per year.

16 To continue providing free service on Tacoma Link
17 would require a different action by the Sound Transit
18 Board of Directors, either a policy change that allows
19 for a provision of free fares beyond the current
20 policy or exercising a provision under current policy
21 which allows Sound Transit to receive third-party or
22 payment from the location jurisdiction in lieu of fare
23 revenues. That approach would require Sound Transit
24 to establish a percentage of that operating cost
25 expected to be covered by those third-party payments.

1 Other transit services operated by Sound Transit
2 and our partner agencies are subsidized by taxpayers
3 and are supported by user fees in the form of transit
4 fares. Sound Transit Express service, for example,
5 Express bus service, covers 20 percent of its total
6 operations and maintenance costs from fares. That
7 percentage on Sounder commuter rail service is 23
8 percent.

9 Currently, we are proposing a reasonable range of
10 fares to be from \$1 to \$2 per trip on Tacoma Link light
11 rail service. The implementation of fares would
12 require purchase and installation of fare collection
13 equipment. We would be looking at the same type of
14 equipment that we have on our other rail modes,
15 including Central Link and Central commuter rail
16 service.

17 These would be ORCA readers to pay your fare with
18 an ORCA card, and ticket vending machines, which
19 would accept cash, credit, or debit for a payment of
20 fare. Riders would be required to provide proof of
21 payment on board Tacoma Link light rail service.
22 Fares would be randomly inspected by fare enforcement
23 officers on board the train. The total estimated
24 cost of implementing fares on Tacoma Link is roughly
25 \$500,000 in upfront capital and equipment costs and

1 roughly \$500,000 per year in ongoing operations,
2 maintenance, and fare enforcement costs.

3 I should also note that under federal regulations,
4 whenever Sound Transit examines the prospect of
5 charging fares, we need to look at the potential
6 impacts on minority and low-income populations, defined
7 as Title 6 populations under federal regulations.
8 Based on our analysis, the proportion of minority and
9 low-income riders on Tacoma Link is higher -- is
10 higher in proportion than that for Sound Transit
11 service area as a whole. In this case, Sound Transit
12 then needs to look for strategies to minimize or
13 mitigate those disproportionate impacts on Title 6
14 populations with the implementation or change in fare.

15 Sound Transit is proposing as part of any
16 potential fare implementation on Tacoma Link to
17 implement mitigation measures in the form of discounted
18 and subsidized ride tickets distributed through human
19 service and social service agencies in Pierce County
20 for use on Tacoma Link light rail service.

21 But we're here to hear your comments today, so
22 that concludes my presentation. And please let's hear
23 what you have to say.

24 MAYOR STRICKLAND: All right. Thank
25 you.

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1 Okay. So I'm going to start calling on folks.
2 And just to briefly summarize what Brian said, it costs
3 about \$4.3 million per year to operate Tacoma Link.
4 The typical cost recovery percentage for public
5 transportation that Sound Transit provides is somewhere
6 between 20 and 23 percent. And if we were going to
7 offer free rides, it would require a policy change at
8 the Board level and the possibility of having a third
9 party pick up the cost.

10 So, for example, if there's a decision where
11 Sound Transit says that we want to offer free rides,
12 there could possibly be a private party who steps
13 forward. In Seattle, in the past, for example, the
14 City of Seattle picked up free Metro busses downtown.
15 So likely they would ask the City to help pay for it.
16 But there would probably be a request for someone to
17 pick up that cost of offering that service for the
18 residents free. And then also to be mindful that we
19 do have Title 6, which is federal law, to ensure that
20 we are mindful of impacts on low-income minority
21 communities, which we have a lot of in this service
22 area.

23 So at this time, I will call on Sarah Morken,
24 please. Please come forward. And again, as a
25 reminder, you'll have three minutes to make your

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1 comments. And please keep your comments respectful
2 and relevant. And you have a clock to your right.
3 Welcome, Sarah.

4 SARAH MORKEN: Thank you. This is
5 a question of priorities. Can you hear me okay?

6 MAYOR STRICKLAND: I can.

7 SARAH MORKEN: Do we want people to
8 be more dependent on cars or less dependent on cars
9 in Tacoma? Do we want to have more carbon emissions
10 in our city or less? We have a monument to
11 automobiles, the LeMay car museum, while our public
12 transit systems have to beg for funding or their
13 funding gets voted down. Transit should be free.

14 I know that the decision-makers will probably say
15 we can't, we don't have the funds. But it seems like
16 Heaven and Earth gets moved when they -- when there's
17 things that they want, like museums or tax breaks for
18 real estate developers. People are really getting
19 tired of this. This is just one more attack against
20 working people.

21 For example, students. I know a lot of U-Dub
22 Tacoma students use that -- that Link to get to and
23 from the parking garage at the Tacoma Dome. So I say
24 it's not fair. It's just not fair to charge people
25 to ride that. Thank you.

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1 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you.

2 (Audience applause.)

3

4 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Next we have
5 Jennifer Kilmer, followed by David Rafferty.

6 JENNIFER KILMER: Thank you. So I
7 understand the need for revenue, and it's up to the
8 Sound Transit Board to weigh the downside and upside
9 of this possibility. And that's above my pay grade.
10 But I do want to bring forward a negative impact that
11 I do believe will occur.

12 So I think this fare implementation will have a
13 significant negative impact on the cultural community
14 and towards the downtown Tacoma. The Link is exactly
15 that, a link between museums, a link between the
16 museum district and the theater district, and a link
17 between both districts to the Convention Center.

18 It's a selling point for groups who are looking
19 at coming to downtown Tacoma and families visiting
20 Tacoma that they can use the service for free. They
21 can have a convention at the Convention Center and
22 get around easily without having to deal with fare
23 cards and things like that. And I think it will impact
24 their decisions with regard to visitation to the city
25 and then among -- you know, in deciding to visit

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1 various additional institutions within the city when
2 they're here.

3 So I would urge you to consider these impacts as
4 we're trying to grow tourism, as we're trying to
5 support the cultural community in downtown Tacoma,
6 that adding a fare is essentially adding a barrier to
7 folks having that free travel among all the great
8 cultural institutions that have sprung up along
9 Pacific Avenue and further down to LeMay. Thank you.

10 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you,
11 Ms. Kilmer.

12 (Audience applause.)

13
14 MAYOR STRICKLAND: David Rafferty,
15 followed by Laura Berry.

16 DAVID RAFFERTY: Hi. Good afternoon.
17 I agree with what the others said, especially about
18 how charging a fare is going to change the behavior
19 of the riders and the potential riders. Like myself,
20 I live in -- I live in downtown, and I use it a lot
21 of the time as a convenience and as a way to get to
22 places I normally wouldn't go to. And if there was a
23 fare, then that might change my behavior as to whether
24 I would want to go to certain places, frequent certain
25 businesses, see certain places.

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1 It would require planning and more planning and
2 more -- and the fare would be part of my decision to
3 go certain places or to visit certain places in
4 downtown. And so I would prefer to continue -- for
5 it to continue to be a free service. I believe
6 charging a fare would fundamentally change what the
7 Link is.

8 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you,
9 Mr. Rafferty. Laura Berry.

10 (Audience applause.)

11
12 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Followed by
13 Michaele Sein-Ryan.

14 LAURA BERRY: Thank you. My name is
15 Laura Berry. I live in downtown Tacoma. I grew up in
16 Tacoma. Many years ago, I would not have lived in
17 this part of town, but it has truly been restored and
18 revitalized. And as a native, I'm very proud of that
19 fact. I think part of its continued success and
20 progress is free public access to the Link.

21 I concur with the comments made earlier. I want
22 to echo some of the points made by Ms. Kilmer, that
23 we've -- we have taken such great strides to build
24 tourism, to build the reputation of downtown Tacoma.
25 And to me, to charge a fare on the Link light rail

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1 effectively diminishes all of those efforts.

2 It's my understanding from an article I read in
3 the TNT that ridership is expected to decrease by 20
4 to 30 percent. And I have to wonder if the cost of
5 making this a profit-making Link is going to offset
6 such a substantial loss in ridership.

7 I'm also concerned, frankly, that the alternatives
8 being presented here don't appear to have been
9 explored, the alternatives of working with third
10 parties to explore just how funding -- passing the cost
11 to riders could be mitigated through a third party.
12 I don't see or hear evidence that that has been fully
13 explored. And I would like to know more about those
14 alternatives before a fare is imposed. Thank you.

15 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you.

16 (Audience applause.)

17

18 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Okay. Now we
19 have Michaele -- what's your name?

20 MICHAELE SEIN-RYAN: It's Michaele.

21 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Michaele. Thank
22 you.

23 MICHAELE SEIN-RYAN: Michaele
24 Sein-Ryan.

25 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Sorry. I can't

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1 read very well. David Bart followed by you. Go ahead.

2 MICHAELE SEIN-RYAN: Thank you,
3 Mayor Strickland. I -- many of the things I would
4 share have been shared already this evening, and I
5 certainly agree. I hate to ever be against anything.
6 I'm here in favor of a considered policy change.

7 As a person who both works and lives along the
8 Link route, I've observed this as a welcome mat for
9 tourists, friends, business partners, family members,
10 and suburban neighbors who -- to comfortably experience
11 the unique and diverse offerings along the few amount
12 of stops in our wonderful downtown, folks who I don't
13 believe would come as easily if it were another bus
14 to ride, so to speak.

15 It does help facilitate an awareness of a well-
16 kept secret that is Tacoma, at least to the out-of-
17 towners folk. It gets the conventioner beyond the
18 two-block radius of the Convention Center and the
19 hotel, and it helps the parents and grandparents and
20 aunts and uncles of 525 SOTA students learn about the
21 downtown that is their child's high school campus.

22 It is a safe and easy way for whole families to
23 experience downtown, often for the first time, and it
24 encourages our visitors to leave their car at the
25 Dome as long as they want while they easily join us

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1 for lunch, meeting, shopping, et cetera. It is
2 welcoming, inviting, and special. It makes this
3 place special. We have many cool things downtown,
4 but we still have too much vacant space and business
5 turnover. And the Sound Transit staffers that
6 project a fare implementation will result in 30
7 percent decrease in ridership, I don't think we can
8 afford to lose one percent of the feet on the street.

9 So until the Link goes further stops for this
10 little welcome mat, I really am in favor of looking
11 at a policy change. And to quote a Joni Mitchell song,
12 I don't think we'll know what we got till it's gone.
13 Thank you.

14 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you,
15 Michael.

16 (Audience applause.)

17
18 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Okay. Next we
19 have David Bart, followed by Sue Pierce.

20 DAVID BART: Thank you for allowing
21 me to speak today, Mayor Strickland, Brian. Currently
22 there's a lot of things that the Link doesn't allow
23 people who live and work here in Tacoma to do. One
24 of them is getting to work. The major job centers in
25 this area include Fort Lewis, the Nalley Valley,

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1 Seattle, and Olympia. And the Link doesn't go to any
2 of these places.

3 As far as leisure activities enjoyed by people
4 who live in Tacoma, such as Point Defiance, the mall,
5 Sixth Avenue, the Link does not go there. As far as
6 the essentials, the places you need to go if you want
7 to live in this town, like grocery stores or to go to
8 schools like TCC and UPS or Clover Park, the Link does
9 not go there.

10 Now, the few stops this Link makes, right, aren't
11 terribly useful as it is. And as far as the cost-
12 benefit analysis goes, coming from somebody that
13 lives and works in Tacoma, I don't think that I would
14 ride the Link at all if you were to charge me money for
15 it, simply because it runs less than two miles, 1.8
16 miles from here to the Dome and back, and that's it.
17 It doesn't go to any of the day-to-day life-essential
18 places that I need to go to.

19 By charging a fare, you're going to
20 disproportionately impact the environment. You're
21 going to encourage more and more of us who need to
22 get around town to drive cars, particularly now that
23 Pierce Transit is shrinking due to budget crunches.
24 It's going to negatively impact the working class who
25 need to be able to go to jobs, whether that's at Fort

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1 Lewis or the Nalley Valley. And it's going to
2 negatively impact the disabled who are not able to
3 drive and may have difficulty using the busses
4 because you have to get up and go down on the thing.

5 It's going to make it more difficult on those who
6 are too young to have a driver's license and those
7 who are too old to drive. There are a lot of
8 negative impacts to charging a fare. And if you are
9 going to charge a fare, just sheer cost-benefit
10 analysis alone, if you're not going to extend the
11 Link to go to anywhere useful, I think you're going
12 to kill the Link, because nobody that really lives
13 here and makes daily use of the thing is going to
14 continue to do so, not for a dollar fare to go
15 nowhere special. For the tourists maybe, but not for
16 the people (unintelligible). Thanks.

17 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you. Now
18 we have Sue Pierce.

19 (Audience applause.)

20

21 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Is there anyone
22 else who wishes to come forward to speak tonight whose
23 name I don't have yet? This is the last name I have.
24 Thanks. Sue Pierce and then Peter Benjamin.

25 SUE PIERCE: Hi.

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1 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Hi, Sue.

2 SUE PIERCE: I work in Tacoma. I've
3 been working in Tacoma for about 11 years now. I
4 commute from out of the area on a bus, and so I
5 understand public transit. As long as I've been
6 hearing about the Link and riding the Link, all I've
7 heard is "free, free, free": It's free. You can get
8 to the -- we encourage you to come into town and get
9 to the theaters and get to the museums and do some
10 shopping.

11 And I've seen businesses grow and come into town,
12 and I've seen the downtown get better over those 11
13 years, whether it's shopping in small shops, whether
14 it's cafes and restaurants. And as a result of being
15 able to ride the Link -- I'm not directly on it from
16 my office, but I'm within a couple of blocks -- I can
17 walk a couple of blocks to get to it and ride to an
18 expanded selection of shops and restaurants, whether
19 it be for lunch or for meeting a friend after hours,
20 still be able to get back to 10th and Commerce, close
21 to 10th and Commerce, and be able to catch my bus out
22 of the area to go home. So in that way, it's
23 benefitting me. But it's a convenience.

24 And I'm a little concerned that, of now and the
25 last few months is what I've heard -- and I've been

1 around and listening to things; maybe it's been
2 longer that the rumbling has been going on about
3 charging a fare -- that I'm a little bit concerned.
4 And as I read one of the flyers that I picked up
5 today at the open house, it says, We want to hear
6 what the community thinks about charging fares, what
7 the amount of fares should be, and suggestions for
8 mitigation and impacts.

9 I'm wondering why some of this -- in the past
10 other public hearings, agencies have come to the
11 public and said, This is what we're planning. What
12 do you think? Here's a starting point. Here's what
13 we want to do. Here's how much we want to charge.
14 And then they're able to adjust from there.

15 This leaves it wide open, which says to me that
16 the Board that's going to eventually make this
17 decision is going to do whatever they choose to do,
18 regardless of what happens at the public hearings and
19 the public comment.

20 I, for one, think it needs to be left free for
21 the time being. That's the way it's been advertised
22 for a very long time. And it's -- as other people
23 have mentioned, it's only one short route. As it
24 gets expanded, which could be six or eight years from
25 now, as it gets expanded and there's more places to

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1 go, that might justify charging a fare, because you
2 do have some more options for it. Thank you.

3 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you.

4 Okay. Now we have Peter Benjamin (inaudible) --

5 (Audience applause.)

6

7 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Peter Benjamin.

8 PETER BENJAMIN: Can you hear me

9 okay?

10 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Pull your mic

11 down a bit. There you go.

12 PETER BENJAMIN: All right. So I
13 am currently one of 4,000 students that go to U-Dub T.
14 As the student body, we are dealing rising loan debt,
15 rising tuition costs, and issues paying for resources
16 such as housing, transportation, and general
17 necessities, including food for myself.

18 U-Dub T, in general, is a commuter campus, which
19 is incredibly important to remember. There's only
20 one actual housing building on campus, and most of
21 the area is unavailable for apartments and such, so
22 folks need to commute to campus. There's already
23 issues concerning parking, including no viable
24 alternatives to the collection of Diamond-owned lots
25 that keep raising their prices quarterly up to -- I

1 think up to \$210 a quarter. So that's a three-month
2 span.

3 The Tacoma Dome is actually not available to the
4 majority of the students for parking currently. One
5 must park near the Dome and walk several blocks in
6 order to catch the Link, if they do indeed make it on
7 time and make it to their classes on time.

8 If there was a fare, the majority of students
9 would, indeed, opt out and choose to drive their cars
10 and park further away, increasing safety issues and
11 issues with the environment, and leave the business,
12 such as those in Freighthouse Square, without regular
13 traffic. Many of these businesses most definitely
14 rely on the Link. It is important to think of the
15 development of the Hilltop area as well. That area
16 has improved most definitely with the increased
17 traffic from the Link as well as with the increased
18 traffic from U-Dub T.

19 I also agree the local tourism will cease in
20 great numbers. And, frankly, it is unreasonable to
21 charge such prices for such a small ride. Outside of
22 us students as a market, it seems as though these
23 price increases are just a way to increase revenue
24 not necessarily for the City but indeed for Sound
25 Transit.

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1 I also concur with the person that last spoke,
2 that I don't feel as though these plans have also
3 been communicated effectively. There needs to be
4 more discussion with the community, in my view most
5 definitely the students, but also local business
6 owners, such as Metro Coffee, for example, or other
7 coffee places or retail shops on Pacific Avenue, and
8 how to think effectively about how this will actually
9 affect the businesses.

10 In relation, there's also been issues concerning
11 parking actually on Pacific Avenue where they have --
12 they will be raising prices. Not necessarily the
13 prices, but the time in which that you can park is
14 shortened, and they will raise that to 8:00. And so
15 with increased fares on the Link, that becomes even
16 more of an issue for the students to actually get to
17 school, get there on time, be resourceful, and be
18 confident as students, as we are dealing with a
19 material situation that is not necessarily in our
20 favor. I do greatly appreciate your time. Thank you.

21 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you,
22 Mr. Benjamin.

23 (Audience applause.)

24

25 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Is there anyone

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1 else in the audience who wishes to speak who hasn't
2 signed up yet? Anyone else? Did you fill out a form?

3 VINCE KUETER: Huh? What's that?

4 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Did you fill out
5 a form?

6 VINCE KUETER: I did.

7 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Okay. Thank you.
8 I just want to have it on record. I know who you are.
9 Okay. Go ahead, Vince.

10 VINCE KUETER: I'm Vince Kueter.
11 I'm a citizen of Tacoma, and I also work for SEIU 1199
12 Northwest. We represent hospital and other medical
13 workers throughout Pierce County and throughout the
14 state.

15 I'm not taking a direct position on whether fares
16 should be charged at this time for the Link or not,
17 and I actually can see arguments on both sides of
18 that -- of that issue. There are a segment of
19 workers who work for Community Health Care who right
20 now are fairly low-paid. They -- they commute either
21 by car or by public transit and get the Link
22 typically down by the Puyallup Avenue park-and-ride
23 and then take the Link in to where they work.

24 I -- if you charge -- if you charge, for instance,
25 a \$2 fare, approximately that would wind up costing a

1 typical commuter who uses this five days a week,
2 excluding holidays and things, about a thousand dollars
3 a year. If you -- if you earn \$25,000 a year, that's
4 a significant piece of your income. So I would ask
5 that as you -- as you consider whether or not to add
6 fares or not, that in addition to considering
7 low-income -- you know, ways to address low-income
8 populations generally, that you also address not only
9 people who may be receiving social services through
10 social agencies, but also, you know, what essentially
11 is the working poor as well. Thank you.

12 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Thank you.

13 (Audience applause.)

14

15 MAYOR STRICKLAND: All right. Is
16 there anyone else wishing to come forward at this time?

17 Okay. So I'll just -- I'll kind of go off-script
18 here. So what I heard is that you love the Link. So
19 I don't think there's any objection about the service
20 and how much you value it, which I think is really good
21 news. And it sounds like what we're trying to grapple
22 with as a community is, what is the opportunity cost
23 if we start to collect fares, how will it impact our
24 community, our businesses, our students, and the
25 people who rely on it.

1 So show of hands: For those of you who say that
2 it should be free, do you think it should be free
3 indefinitely or just free right now? So how about
4 indefinitely, free forever? Okay. How about free
5 when it gets extended up to Hilltop?

6 Okay. I was just curious, as I think about how
7 I'm going to talk with my fellow colleagues on the
8 Sound Transit Board. I just kind of want to get an
9 idea of what it is you're thinking. Because, you
10 know, it's a conversation about, should this always
11 be a free service in downtown Tacoma? Is this the
12 right time to add a fare? Should we wait?

13 And I think one thing I want to point out is that
14 two years ago, it was time to add fares to Tacoma
15 Link. But because of the parking meters coming
16 downtown and people having to get used to the idea of
17 free to paying, we decided to stand down on that. So
18 we figured, Okay, give the community time to adjust
19 to parking meters and what they do, and then we'll
20 come back and take a look at this. So that was the
21 rationale for bringing this forward. This is not the
22 first time that this has been discussed with the Board.

23 And I want to ask Chelsea too. Chelsea, how many
24 community meetings have we had in Tacoma to talk with
25 various groups about the potential fare discussion

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1 here?

2 CHELSEA LEVY: Hello, Mayor. I'm
3 actually going to look to Brian Brooke, who is
4 shuffling his papers. But I would say my estimate is
5 that Brian and I have probably spoken to at least 15
6 or 20 different groups. And that's in addition to
7 individual one-on-one conversations that we've had as
8 well as the online comments that we've received, both
9 via e-mail as well as the surveys that we've received
10 that people have filled out on our website.

11 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Okay.

12 CHELSEA LEVY: Is that a good
13 estimate, Brian? 15 to 20 different public
14 opportunities that we've spoken about this?

15 BRIAN BROOKE: Yeah. Including
16 the -- including the individual -- pardon me --
17 individual meetings with Tacoma City Council members,
18 that would be the right number.

19 MAYOR STRICKLAND: And over what
20 period of time, Chelsea, has that taken place?

21 CHELSEA LEVY: Over the course of
22 the summer.

23 MAYOR STRICKLAND: Okay. So starting
24 this summer, there have been conversations. Now, I
25 will admit that, you know, until something ends up in

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1 the newspaper, people don't know what's happening.
2 And so there wasn't a lot of press taking place as we
3 were meeting with different members of the community
4 and different groups. But I just want to say that we
5 appreciate all your input, and we do take it seriously.

6 This Board has not made up its mind about
7 anything. We have to, again, look at community
8 impacts, what it means. And if there's a desire to
9 have free service and we don't collect the fare
10 recovery like we typically do, because this is the
11 only free service with the entire Sound Transit
12 system, how do we make that up? Because, in many
13 ways, we do have responsibility as fiscal agents to
14 collect and recover fares, but we have to think about
15 the potential unintended consequences as well.

16 The Board is going to take this up in Seattle on
17 the 26th of September; is that correct? And if any
18 of you feel like coming up there to testify as a
19 citizen, a resident, or student of Tacoma, I invite
20 you to do that, and we welcome your remarks.

21 So I technically have to keep this open until
22 6:00, because it's advertised as a hearing that lasts
23 from 5 to 6. So I'm going to sit up here. If more
24 people trickle in, we'll hear from them. For those
25 of you who did come today, we thank you very, very

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1 much for coming. And your input is important to us.

2 And I will say that, you know, in 2003, when this
3 Link was launched in downtown Tacoma, people didn't
4 know what was going to happen. There were a lot of
5 skeptics. People said it would never get used. And
6 we have, you know, a million boardings, which is good
7 news. But the conversation is, you know, how does it
8 impact our community, how does it impact our riders,
9 and understanding that we plan to extend it as well
10 in the next few years, how does that impact the
11 community as well.

12 So, again, thank you for those of you who have
13 come so far. And if you'd like to get up and leave,
14 please do that. And you're free to hang out with me
15 until 6:00.

16 (Meeting concluded at
17 5:32 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF WASHINGTON) I, John M.S. Botelho, CCR,
2 County of Pierce) ss a certified court reporter
3 do hereby certify:

4
5 That the foregoing SOUND TRANSIT PUBLIC HEARING
6 was had in my presence and completed on September 19, 2013,
7 and thereafter was transcribed under my direction; that the
8 transcript is a full, true and complete transcript of the
9 proceedings;

10 That I am not a relative, employee, attorney or
11 counsel of any party to this matter, or relative or employee
12 of any such attorney or counsel, and that I am not
13 financially interested in the said action or the outcome
14 thereof;

15 That I am herewith securely sealing the said
16 transcript and promptly delivering the same to Brian Brooke.

17 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
18 signature this 23rd day of September, 2013.

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John M.S. Botelho



John M.S. Botelho, CCR
Certified Court Reporter No. 2976
(Certification expires 5/26/14.)