University Street Station renaming Public Outreach Report
January 2020

Introduction

This report summarizes outreach efforts undertaken to provide the Sound Transit Board with feedback for consideration of the University Street Station renaming. It includes a complete list of the outreach methods and examples of the tools used, as well as a summary of the results of the outreach.

The report will be included as part of staff recommendations that will be provided to Sound Transit’s Rider Experience and Operations Committee for their review January 16, 2020. A decision on the new name for University Street Station will be made by the full Sound Transit Board on January 23, 2020.

Background

The Sound Transit Board adopted the Facility and Link System Naming Policy in February 2012. The policy established a process, timeframe, and criteria for naming facilities. The process includes three phases: internally identify and evaluate potential names based on defined criteria; receive input from the public, local jurisdictions, and executive staff; and a decision and approval by the board. The policy states that station names should:

- Reflect the nature of the environment: neighborhoods, street names, landmarks, geographical locations;
- Be brief, easy to read and remember;

Snapshot of the Public Outreach

- Over 13,000 people provided feedback via the online survey
- 798 people participated at 4 in-person pop-up sessions
- 8,665 comments collected through the survey
- Over 29,000 impressions from three Facebook and Twitter posts
- 8 earned media stories regarding the name change
• Comply with federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines and requirements and be limited to 30 characters;
• Avoid commercial references because they may change, prove confusing to the public and be costly to change;
• Avoid similar names or words in existing facility names.

For years, Sound Transit has received feedback that the University Street Station name is confusing, especially with the opening of University of Washington Station in 2016. Sound Transit does not currently own University Street Station, part of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel. Sound Transit will take possession of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel from King County Metro sometime in 2020. Negotiations are currently underway.

CEO Peter Rogoff directed staff in March 2019 to undertake the renaming process for University Street Station to provide a better wayfinding experience for customers once Sound Transit owns the station. This will help riders avoid confusion with the current University of Washington Station and the future U District Station. The name change is proposed to go into effect timed with the Northgate Link Extension opening in 2021.

A cross-departmental internal staff group was formed to develop a list of names to present to the public. This group conducted research into historical names for the surrounding area, used previous studies from other agencies, and considered the geography of the area before presenting names to an executive leadership team. With the support of this team, six names were presented to the public through a public feedback process.

The goals of the public outreach effort were to:

• Inform the public that the name for the station will be changing
• Receive feedback from stakeholders on what name best represents the station, given station naming criteria.
To achieve these goals Sound Transit aimed to:

- Provide opportunities for members of the public to engage directly with project staff
- Directly inform and engage existing riders on Sound Transit services

The policy requires public and stakeholder input be received before presenting to the Board for a decision. The Board has final decision-making authority in this matter.

Public Outreach

Staff undertook public outreach activities that ran from September 9 through September 30, 2019. Staff informed both customers and the general public the opportunity to submit feedback on a name change University Street Station through a variety of methods. The complete list is compiled in Table 1.

Notification Methods

- Project website
- Project blog post
- In-person pop-up sessions
- Fact sheets
- Email and text updates
- Social media posts
- Community and partner briefings and notifications
- Press release and earned media

Project website

Background information on the project and proposed station names were available on a dedicated Sound Transit webpage. The webpage included links to the survey and offered dates for in-person engagement at the station.

Blog Post

The blog post explained the reasons for changing the name of the station, as well as criteria for name choices, name options, and how to participate. The post also included the timeline and some context for when riders would see these changes.
In-person pop-up sessions

Four in-person pop-up sessions were held throughout the comment period at different times of day and different days of the week to inform customers about the project, and provide them an opportunity to vote.

Fact Sheets

Information about the station renaming was distributed to riders in person through fact sheets (Appendix A) handed out at the University Street Station, as well as provided to stakeholder organizations to spread the word about the project. These explained what the project was, what the options were, and how to participate.

Email and text updates

An email and text rider alert was sent to over 24,825 Link light rail riders who have opted to receive updates concerning Link light rail service. They were notified of the name change and opportunity to weigh in on the options. An announcement was also included in the agency’s All Aboard Commute Trip Reduction September 2019 emailed newsletter.

Social media posts

Social media posts on Facebook and Twitter provided links to the website and survey.

Community and partner briefings

Community groups and businesses were contacted directly about the project. The purpose was to raise awareness of the change and provide an opportunity for any
feedback they might have. Several meetings were held, and two organizations sent letters of their interest in specific station names, which are included as Appendices E and F.

Seattle Art Museum asked that the Seattle Art Museum Station option not be considered, which staff removed before presenting to the general public. Benaroya Hall and the Seattle Symphony were in support of their names reflected in station options. The University of Washington and a consortium of business owners downtown prefer Midtown Station.

Press release and earned media

Sound Transit issued a press release on September 9th that was delivered to 280 standard media outlets. The project earned coverage from eight media organizations (See Appendix B).

Public Comment Methods

Sound Transit provided several methods for the public to submit their feedback and comments. The results of these were consolidated and provided to the Sound Transit Board prior to final action.

The primary tool for the public to provide feedback was through an online survey. The customer survey instrument is included as Attachment C and the results are in Attachment D (for all survey responses, please contact staff). There were also four in-person pop-up sessions held at University Street Station where the public was able to learn more and vote in real time. In addition, the public was invited to learn more about the project by phone, email or mail.

- Online: Survey posted on the agency’s website, accessed via https://www.soundtransit.org/rename-usstation/
- In-person pop-up sessions: 4 voting opportunities at University Street Station
- Email: alex.ko@soundtransit.org
- Phone: 206-903-7269
- Mail: Sound Transit | Attn: Alex Ko | 401 S. Jackson St. | Seattle, WA 98104

Comment Summary

Online Survey Method
A key element of the outreach for this project was a simple online survey. Sound Transit’s social media, website, and in-person pop-up sessions encouraged customers to take this survey. The survey was available from September 9 through September 30, 2019 and was completed by 13,264 respondents.

The survey asked respondents to rank their top three names from the six options:

- Arts District Station
- Benaroya Hall Station
- Downtown Arts District Station
- Midtown Station
- Seneca Street Station
- Symphony Station

The survey also included an open-ended question to solicit responses for anything else the agency should consider in this name change process, and additional information that respondents might want to provide. Sound Transit received 8,665 responses to this open-ended question. Many of the responses provided additional rationale for the naming option the respondent had chosen. Some used the question to posit other potential names for the station.
In person Survey Method

The other form of voting was in person using beans to select preference. Each participant was given three beans to put in the jars of their choosing, selecting up to three names or voting for the same name three times.

Survey Results

Two different survey methods resulted in a need to balance the two. The online votes were each given points in reverse order, so a first place vote received three points, a second place vote two points, and a third place one point. The beans then represented two points, so that each individual was given the same voting power.
Overall, respondents from both the online and in-person surveys preferred Symphony Station as their top choice, followed closely by Benaroya Hall Station and Seneca Street Station. Downtown Arts District Station was much more popular with those who took the survey in person than with those who took it online, finishing fourth in person and fifth in online voting (trading places with Midtown Station).

Symphony Station had the greatest total points, but Benaroya Hall Station got the most overall votes in the online survey (first, second or third place). This means that Symphony Station was far and away the most popular first choice, but that Benaroya Hall Station was more often selected as a second or third option.

Survey Feedback

The open ended question on the online survey received 8,665 responses. There were a wide range of comments, from suggesting new name options to giving more context for the chosen names. Below are some themes that emerged and were repeated numerous times.

1. Almost 100 people suggested naming the station Financial District Station.

“There is no mistaking where you are with either Symphony or Benaroya. But "Arts" and Downtown Arts District has a bit of vagueness to it (although SAM is there). Midtown sounds like Capitol Hill. And Seneca? Isn't that a block away?”
2. References to *The Stranger* article stating that Symphony Station was the only sensible choice.
3. 35 write-in comments suggesting Pike Place Station or some iteration.
4. The Seattle Symphony is an award winning and well known organization, worthy of a station being named after it.
5. Strong feelings both for and against Midtown Station as a name.
6. Interest in potentially renaming University of Washington Station.
7. Some concern that Benaroya Hall could be renamed in the future.
8. Buses serving the downtown core already call out the Midtown Post Office, so Midtown Station would fit well.
9. Frustration with having to pick three options.

“\nThe name of the closest street is simple and intuitive. The Benaroya Hall as a landmark also makes sense, but I prefer a station name that is more "public" and not tied to a family name”

Stakeholder Feedback – Appendices E and F

**University of Washington, Wright Runstad, Unico Properties**, and the **Fairmount Olympic Hotel** support **Midtown Station** as the name, siting the geographic character of the name and its inclusivity.

**Benaroya Hall** and the **Seattle Symphony** expressed their support for **Benaroya Hall** or **Symphony Station**.

**Seattle Art Museum** requested us not to use Seattle Art Museum Station as a potential name, and instead suggested Downtown Arts District Station, which was an option on our short list that we had considered and added as a result.
Appendices

A. University Street Station handout

B. Earned Media stories

C. Survey Design

D. Survey Results (abbreviated)

E. UW, Wright Runstad, Unico, Fairmont Olympic Letter

F. Benaroya Hall and Seattle Symphony Letter
Appendix A: University Street Station Handout

University Street Station renaming

September 2019

Background

Sound Transit proposes renaming University Street Station in downtown Seattle. Given the current University of Washington Station and the new U District Station opening in 2021, renaming University Street Station will reduce confusion and provide a better customer experience. We have developed six potential names that conform to our criteria, and we are seeking public input beginning September 9. The Sound Transit Board will make a decision by early 2020.

Station naming criteria

› Reflect the nature of the environment.
› Be brief, easy to read and remember.
› Avoid commercial references.
› Avoid similar names/words used in existing facilities.
› Limited to 30 characters (including spaces).
› Comply with ADA legislation.

Station name options

Location based names
› Midtown
› Seneca Street

Culturally based names
› Arts District
› Downtown Arts District
› Symphony

Landmark based names
› Benaroya Hall

For more information
Visit soundtransit.org/rename-usstation.

Timeline

Develop station name options April – August 2019
Public comment September 2019
Board decision Dec. 2019 – Early 2020
Name change with Northgate Link 2021

How to vote

Stop by University Street Station mezzanine during one of the in-person voting opportunities:

Thursday, September 12 / 3 – 6 p.m.         Thursday, September 26 / 6 – 10 a.m.
Tuesday, September 17 / 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.    Saturday, September 28 / 2 – 6 p.m.

You can also vote online: soundtransit.org(rename-usstation-survey)

One vote per person please. Your feedback will help inform the Sound Transit board when they make a final name decision later this year or early next year.
Appendix B: Earned Media Stories

1. *Help Solve Sound Transit's 'University' Name Dilemma* (September 9)  
   https://patch.com/washington/seattle/help-solve-sound-transits-university-name-dilemma

2. *Help rename the University Street Station* (September 10)  

3. *Sound Transit to rename station* (September 10)  

4. *Sound Transit seeks input on University Street Station Renaming* (September 10)  

5. *Sound Transit seeks input on name change for University Street Station* (September 10)  
   https://www.kentreporter.com/northwest/sound-transit-seeks-input-on-name-change-for-university-street-station/

6. *We Must Rename the University Street Light Rail Station Symphony* (September 12)  

7. *Sound Transit seeks input on name change for University Street Station* (September 16)  

8. *Help rename University Street Station* (September 16)  
Appendix C: Survey Design

Help us rename University Street Station

Sound Transit is planning to rename downtown Seattle's University Street Station, and we are asking for public input beginning September 9. With three new stations coming to the U District, Roosevelt and Northgate in 2021, renaming University Street Station will reduce confusion and provide a better customer experience. We have developed six naming options that conform with our station naming policy (see below), and the Sound Transit Board will consider public input before making a decision in early 2020.

For more information, visit soundtransit.org/rename-usstation

1. Which name do you prefer? Rank your top three choices top to bottom.
   Drag items from the left-hand list into the right-hand list to order them.
   - Symphony
   - Benaroya Hall
   - Midtown
   - Arts District
   - Downtown Arts District
   - Seneca Street

2. Why did you choose the names that you did? Is there anything that we missed?

Submit
# Appendix D: Survey Results

## Report for Help us rename University Street Station

### Response Counts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>13,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: 13,366

### Question 1: Which name do you prefer? Rank your top three choices top to bottom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
<th>Rank Distribution</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>No. of Rankings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symphony</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Rank Distribution" /></td>
<td>19,514</td>
<td>8,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benaroya Hall</td>
<td>2</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Rank Distribution" /></td>
<td>19,327</td>
<td>9,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca Street</td>
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<td><img src="image3" alt="Rank Distribution" /></td>
<td>15,607</td>
<td>8,056</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midtown</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Rank Distribution" /></td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>5,487</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downtown Arts District</td>
<td>5</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Rank Distribution" /></td>
<td>7,367</td>
<td>4,254</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts District</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Rank Distribution" /></td>
<td>6,323</td>
<td>3,774</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 2: Why did you choose the names that you did? Is there anything that we missed?

- downtown
- Seattle
- Hall
- Art
- Station
- Other
- People
- Area
- Location
- Names
- Street
- Landmark
- Specific
- Descriptive
- City
- Sounds
Appendix E: UW Letter

December 2, 2019

Dear Sound Transit Board,

RE: University Street Station Renaming

The University of Washington’s Metropolitan Tract property consists of eleven acres above Sound Transit’s University Street Station. The University takes pride in the fact that this station, like the street, references the historical location of the University’s original campus. That said, we also understand why renaming the station is necessary to avoid confusion with other stations along the line.

We believe the current University Street station is the gateway to the central district of the city. After reviewing the proposed new names, we strongly recommend adoption of the name “Midtown”. The name is geographically accurate; providing riders access to the center of the city while also conveying a level of sophistication. It’s also an acknowledgement that it provides access to the hotels and primary office tower locations in the city. We do not feel that “Arts District” or any name centered on one potential destination, such as the Symphony, adequately represents the locations in the city accessible from this central station.

The following parties support this letter and are happy to discuss with you further.

University of Washington – The University is the largest single property owner near the station.

Unico Properties – Unico has managed the properties above and around the University Street Station for over 60 years and also directly owns properties near the station.

Wright Runstad and Company – Wright Runstad is building the Rainier Square Tower, a 58 story office and residential tower one block from the station.

Fairmont Olympic Hotel – The hotel occupies the full city block where the original University campus building was located.

Thank you for considering our input on this topic.

Sincerely,

Tom Schappacher
Director – Metropolitan Tract
University of Washington

Dan Novack
Director, Real Estate Services
Unico Properties

Jeff Myers
SVP Property Management and General Manager
Wright Runstad & Company

Markus Treppenhauer
General Manager
Fairmont Olympic Hotel

UW Real Estate
University Facilities Building 3988 Jefferson Rd NE
Box 352210  Seattle WA 98195  206-616-3400  uwreco@uw.edu
Appendix F: Seattle Symphony Letter

January 8, 2020

Dear Sound Transit Board of Directors,

First, we applaud your inclusive process in selecting a new name for the University Street Station! We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback, and we gained invaluable insight from the thousands of riders who walk through Benaroya Hall every week at this station. We are submitting this letter to let you know why we highly recommend Benaroya Hall Station as the new name for the renaming.

Serving as a landmark for tourists and locals alike, Benaroya Hall embodies the strength and depth of Seattle’s cultural institutions. Benaroya Hall opened its doors in 1998 along with the Garden of Remembrance and, more recently, just added Octave 9: Raisbeck Music Center this past March. Today it is the most visited performing arts venue in Seattle. With approximately 400 public and private events each year, more than 430,000 people annually engage in the arts and humanities in this city-owned, state-of-the-art-building.

Benaroya Hall is home to the Grammy-Award winning Seattle Symphony. The Hall’s stunning acoustics and architectural beauty have been instrumental in propelling the orchestra to new heights while becoming a cultural ambassador of the city.

Benaroya Hall’s impact, however, extends beyond the orchestra. Of the 400 annual events hosted at the Hall each year, approximately half are presented by other organizations. Benaroya Hall has hosted civic leaders, scientists, and artists throughout the years. It is also the permanent home for dozens of Seattle cultural organizations, including National Geographic Live, Seattle Arts & Lectures, Seattle Men’s Chorus, Seattle Chamber Music Society, Seattle Philharmonic Orchestra, Seattle Youth Symphony, Seattle Jazz Repertory Orchestra, and the Seattle Classic Guitar Society. Benaroya Hall has also hosted major events and conferences, from the Microsoft Windows 95 team reunion to events for PAX West, the largest gaming convention in the country.

Both Benaroya Hall Station and Symphony Station are favorable, but we highly recommend the former. Choosing Benaroya Hall Station as the new name for this stop orient riders as they enter and exit the station. Benaroya Hall, which spans an entire city block, is connected to and operates just above this station. It places riders in this essential city landmark. Benaroya Hall was a key contributor to the revitalization of downtown Seattle and will continue to be a coveted home for daring performances, illuminating conversations, and meaningful gatherings for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration,

Krishna Thiagarajan
President & CEO, Seattle Symphony
Leslie Jackson Chihuly Chair

THE SEATTLE SYMPHONY UNLEASHES THE POWER OF MUSIC, BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER, AND LIFTS THE HUMAN SPIRIT.