

# 11/12/2020 System Expansion Committee Meeting Public Comment Submissions

## Submissions

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## Bill Hirt

ST CEO Rogoff's Incompetent COVID-19 Response,

Dear Sound Transit Board,

Sound Transit CEO Rogoff provided his response to COVID-19 in an October 14th presentation to the Sound Transit Board Finance and Audit Committee, "Financial Plan update & Proposed 2021 Budget". It can best be described as an "overview" with a series of charts showing the pandemic impact on both the "Long Range Financial Plan" and the "Proposed 2021 Budget".

The Long Range Financial Plan provides a reasonable explanation of the problem. The loss in available resources and the increase in expenditures along with the reduction in allowable debt will result in \$2.7B unfunded expenditures by 2041. That even a "moderate recession" required a "Realignment" consisting of a 4-year delay for some projects to avoid the projected need for debt exceeding the available debt capacity. A more "severe recession" could make even a 5-year delay unaffordable.

The 4-year delay also reduced Sound Transit debt at the end in 2041 from \$25B to \$20B. That's still more than the \$17B projected prior to the pandemic (It's never been clear how Sound Transit intends to pay off either level once ST3 funding ends)

Rogoff incompetence is exemplified by the plan's Proposed 2021 Budget. His "Major cost-saving initiatives in 2020-2021", eliminating 77 vacant positions is offset by his adding 42 positions. He claims they're needed for system expansion while delaying the expansions for 4 years. His 2021 revenue projection fare revenues will increase 64% with pandemic seems "optimistic". The major "other" revenue was listed as \$700M from TIFIA.

TIFIA apparently stands for the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act. TIFIA called the loan, "The largest single TIFIA loan to a transit agency in the country and the second largest TIFIA loan overall in the 25-year history of the program". Yet he neglects to include the apparent added \$700M debt in the charts showing pandemic effects on debt.

Rogoff demonstrates further incompetence with how he to uses the funds in response to pandemic. Rather than reducing 2021 "System Expansion" funding he increases it from \$2.242B to \$2.306B, funding his decision, "Current construction continues".

He refuses to recognize light rail extensions beyond Northgate or Angel Lake will do nothing to increase light rail capacity through DSTT or reduce I-5 congestion. That any riders added will reduce access to light rail for current riders.

Those extensions are the ones he should at least delay if not cancel. Rather than delaying the West Seattle-to-Ballard light rail link for 4 years he should expedite their far less expensive construction, reducing the pandemic effect on debt. Thousands of additional Seattle commuters would benefit instead of existing Central Link riders losing access because of Lynnwood and Federal Way extensions riders.

Rogoff waits until page 41 of the 43 pages to mention his approach to increasing tax revenue with pandemic with following agenda:

11/5-Public Hearing--budget and property taxes

11/5-Executive Committee--budget overview and property tax levy

11/19-Board Meeting--request for approval of a property tax levy

The board had previously increased property taxes by \$125.00 on a \$500,000 home in response to I-976 passage. Since I-976 was invalidated they could have ended that increase. Instead it's not clear how much additional he intends to ask for, how this affects the debt problem, or what limits the board authority to raise them.

The bottom line is a competent transit CEO would have used the loss in funds as a reason to expedite the less expensive West Seattle-to-Ballard light rail link. Thousands of Seattle residents would have benefitted and the debt at the end in 2041 would be far less.

CEO Rogoff didn't and isn't.

Sincerely

Bill Hirt

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## *Ravenna-Bryant Community Association Board*

November 2020

Kent Keel, Sound Transit Board Chair

Dow Constantine, King County Executive

Mayor Durkan, City of Seattle Mayor

Terry White, Deputy General Manager at King County Metro Transit

cc: Councilmember Alex Pedersen, Chair of the Transportation and Utilities Committee

cc: Nancy Bolen, Chair of Northeast District Council

Dear Officials,

Before the pandemic, RBCA spent a considerable amount of time reviewing Sound Transit's (ST) Montlake Triangle project which had been brought to our attention by other community groups and not Sound Transit nor Metro AND which was almost completed. Various community members expressed concerns over the goals, scope, technology, cost, and vision of the project.

A Sound Transit representative attended an RBCA meeting in February to brief us on the basically completed project. The project added busses to Montlake, constructed a ST-only bus cut-out, and impacts traffic by use of a bus driver-controlled signal switch. Here are our observations and concerns:

1. It appears "One Center City" was the only community group involved in the project planning. While "One Center City" is a large cross-represented organization, it does not appear that there are any representatives from the impacted area unless they happen to be private residents. For example, Children's Hospital, University Village, nor the University District were included let alone the many local, long-standing community groups both directly and indirectly affected;
2. ST Representative acknowledged that the project failed to consider the UW Master Plan which has been in the works for years and which will result in such significant changes to Montlake north of Husky Stadium to render any ST analysis mute if not almost mute;
3. By their own report, ST did not engage Seattle Metro until after their analysis had been completed (See report title "Technical Memorandum" provided by Parametrix). This reflects poorly on Sound Transit and reinforces the agency's reputation of being heavy-handed and not-collaborative;
4. ST's 3.x million dollar project failed to include any solution for the existing safety and traffic bus problems that exist yards away from the new ST bus cut-out. Currently, and still, buses stop in-lane causing (1) northbound (returning commuter hours) backups, (2)

cars to swerve, stop suddenly, or try to switch lanes at the last minute, and (3) safety issues for both cars and pedestrians in the area. We feel that was a serious, expensive neglected opportunity;

5. The busses added to Montlake are to transport passengers from the Eastside (Redmond, Bellevue) however, new light rail stations are being opened in both Redmond and Bellevue in the near future. The bus routes noted to be served or eliminated take passengers downtown (assumedly why “One Center City” was involved). It is not clear why eastside passengers would be bussed over to Montlake rather than be expected to take the light rail train being built for them, opening soon, and with direct connections to downtown;

6. We were told ST expects significant travel from University Light Rail to northern light rail stations. We’ve seen no evidence of this projection.

Quite frankly this is exhausting and discouraging. We are volunteer groups who have to spend hours poring over detailed reports and analysis to find out any truths let alone assess impact to our communities. This project was more than ¾ of the way completed before we were apprised of it at all (we were apprised ~Q3/Q4 2019). That’s not good governance on your part.

Even before the pandemic, this seemed to us like a questionable use of taxpayer money. In our new reality, we suspect this project would NOT have been approved given gutted budgets. But that’s exactly the way tax dollars should be treated at any time: as if they are precious resources to be used wisely not wasted.

Given the pandemic and the radical re-alignment that is taking place with citizens’ transportation choices, we will not ask for a post-implementation study of impact at this time. However, we feel we would be remiss if we let this whole thing slide without registering our opinions on this project and ST process. In the future, we expect to be briefed and included during concept and design phases of transportation projects affecting our neighborhood.

Sincerely Ravenna-Bryant Community Association Board (RBCA)

## *Youngstown, Avalon, and East Alaska Junction Neighborhoods’ Coalitions*

RE: Work plan for 2021 - Realignments of the West Seattle-Ballard Link Expansion and the DEIS findings

We are calling on the Sound Transit Board to stop Sound Transit from making a grave tactical error. We ask the Board to direct Sound Transit to pause the DEIS process for the West Seattle-Ballard Link Expansion, defer announcement of the results of the DEIS, and defer notification of property owners until the Board completes their realignment of revenue/funding and construction schedules.

We will explain why we are making this request.

In October 2020, the Youngstown Neighborhood Coalition (representing the North Delridge area of West Seattle) met with Sound Transit staff and received an update.

A significant new piece of information came to light. Due to the realignment taking place, there are consequential problems we foresee of which the Board needs to be aware.

In the meeting/update, we were informed that, upon completion of the DEIS in the spring of 2021, notices will go out to every property owner whose property could be impacted by all the various guideway alternatives being considered/studied. This notification will inform owners their properties could be seized by Sound Transit for light rail construction. Our guesstimate: 200+ property owners in the Youngstown and Avalon neighborhoods of West Seattle would receive these notifications. Similar scenarios will play out throughout the city. Notifications will prematurely and unnecessarily go out to many more owners of properties than properties that will actually be taken for construction.

Currently, the Sound Transit Board is going through the “realignment” of revenue and construction start dates. The Board is slated to make a determination of realignment sometime in 2021.

Before Sound Transit’s current funding crisis, construction for the West Seattle Link Extension was slated to begin 2025. According to ST’s budget staff, funding shortfalls will likely delay link expansion construction starts for West Seattle, potentially to a 2030 to 2032 timeframe.

We understand the desire for “shovel-ready” projects. But, if this realignment scenario becomes reality, construction will begin 9 to 11 years after the DEIS findings are released and 9 to 11 years after property owners are notified their properties could be acquired.

Here are the serious problems the Sound Transit Board needs to address:

1. Things are guaranteed to change in the 9 to 11 years between the DEIS findings and the start of construction. This could invalidate the findings of both the DEIS and the EIS.
2. Once notification is given to property owners, this will create a pall over their properties for the following 9 to 11 years. This adversely affects the mindset of the owners and negatively impacts the marketability and value of the properties.

Again, we respectfully ask the Sound Transit Board, for a period, suspend the DEIS process, defer announcement of DEIS results, and delay acquisition notifications to property owners until after the Board completes their realignment of revenue, funding, and construction schedules.

The Youngstown, Avalon, and East Alaska Junction Neighborhoods’ Coalitions.

Dennis Noland

Jane A. Taylor

Greg Thompson

Jake and Kate Silsby

Scott Caldwell

Connor Coleman

Ivan Stroh

Melinda Jankord-Steedman

John Steedman

Amit Kumar

John and Barbara Arenz

Sachit Muckaden

Christopher Coulter

Jen Gardner

M and Judson Miller

Brynne and Chuck Burkhalter

Kenrick and Amanda Williams

Danny and Jennifer Sizemore

Joe and Beth Bomgard-Zagrodnik

Rita Novotney & Quinn McLaughlin

Mark Forrer and Heidi Shininger-Forrer

John and Katie Kelly

Judah and Sarah Stevenson

Callie Byrd & Ray Beck

Mary and Chuck Heinze

Andy and Erin McGhie

Megan and Sergio Zamora

Kelly Bowers and David Lawson

Diane Hamilton

Alicia Gaynor and Sam Sherwood

Boyd Sugiki & Lisa Zerkowitz

Sally Phillips

Gary Reifel

Linda Braddock

Emily & Kevin Hansen

Bryan & Baylee Frost

Rene Commons

Suzanne Youles

Brandon Herman and Libby Rasmussen

Heather Bradley & Nathan Campbell

Aimee and Tim Riordan

Marc Bridner

Peter & Cathy DeVore

David Dow

Larry Wood

Jon Lipka

*Joe Kunzler*

Joe Kunzler here, I'll be acute. Maybe a Boardmember might want to ask about a naming convention for these new trains?

Be nice to name trains after our heroes like Heidi Wills, Shefali Ragnathan and more.

We need to tell our story and preserve our history.

Thoughtfully;

JOE