

03/25/2021 Board of Directors Meeting
Public Comment Submissions

Submissions

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[Doug Trumm](#)

The substantial content of this comment is included in a letter, attached at the end of this document.

Hello boardmembers,

Attached is a letter making our case for focusing on reducing parking structures when it comes to trimming ST3 costs. We believe the return on investment is low, and better spent elsewhere, especially from a climate lens and an equity lens.

Thank you for your consideration,

Douglas Trumm, *Executive Director*

Pronouns: *he, him*

[The Urbanist](#) | 320.237.4771



[Joyce Hengesbach](#)

Dear Board Members,

We appreciate the huge investment of time and effort that you and the Sound Transit staff have devoted to developing plans for the West Seattle light rail connection. We thank you for listening to the needs and concerns of West Seattle residents and business owners.

Given West Seattle's growth and mounting traffic problems, and the failure of the High Bridge, our residents and business owners know that getting connected to the Link network is an urgent matter. At the January 2018 elected leadership [meeting](#), CEO Rogoff noted how much worse things would get before Link could be delivered by 2030. While he acknowledged the complex logistics – including building a bridge across the Duwamish – unfortunately unforeseen events since then have added to the complexity, cost and timeline of project delivery.

It appears inevitable that the delivery date will slip past 2031. Even as many companies' employees work from home, traffic is already at “near normal” levels on many West Seattle roads. Our residents and businesses want a Link connection as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the popularity of gondola technology for urban applications has been growing. It travels on separate right-of-way, it is sustainable, and it can handle topographical challenges like the hills, waterways, highways and urban density we find in West Seattle.

In Germany, the government is [studying](#) ways to accelerate adoption of gondola technology into its public transit infrastructure. Though Germany has made huge

investments in diesel, electric, and trolley buses, light rail, trams, and subways, it is finding that gondolas provide more sustainable, cost-effective and reliable high-frequency transit solutions. The Bavarian government has already published a detailed implementation [guide](#).

In England, a recent [article](#) reported that gondolas are “quieter than ambient noise,” have “low carbon emissions,” and per passenger, are the “most energy efficient public transport mode.” It evaluated twenty urban aerial projects in the U.S., Algeria, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, France, Mexico, Turkey, the U.K. and Venezuela, and found three criteria critical for successful implementation:

1. “Connects two or more residential neighbourhoods, and/or educational, hospital or business districts,”
1. “Has at least one of its station close to a well-used public transport station or stop,” and
1. “The cable car is fare integrated with a city’s transit system.”

The West Seattle gondola line would satisfy all three criteria.

Sound Transit is charged with building a regional transit network that provides fast, reliable transportation. In 2014, Sound Transit identified gondola technology as a high-capacity option for feeding into Link. Section 2 of the ST3 measure allows the Board to make changes when proposed plans become unaffordable, infeasible or impractical.

We urge the Board to use gondola rather than light rail technology to deliver the grade-separated transit connection you promised West Seattle – sooner rather than later than planned. You will please West Seattle voters and benefit all of Puget Sound!
Joyce Hengesbach and Martin Pagel on behalf of the West Seattle SkyLink Team
www.westseattleskylink.org



The Urbanist

Examining urban policy to improve cities and quality of life
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March 24, 2021

Sound Transit Board of Directors
401 S Jackson St
Seattle, Washington 98104

RE: Program Realignment and Parking

Dear Boardmembers:

On behalf of The Urbanist and its supporters, I am writing to urge reevaluation of parking priorities in the agency's capital program. As you know, Sound Transit faces difficult choices in light of an \$11.5 billion affordability gap for Sound Transit 3. Some of these choices may become easier as additional third-party funding is secured, but the core challenge of higher project costs is unlikely to go away without some mix of program delay and scaling back project scopes.

One area of the overall program that represents a large share of cost is parking: more than \$1 billion in parking facilities is planned as part of Sound Transit 3. In recent projects, the agency has [clocked spaces costing as much as \\$160,000](#). This is an astronomical investment to provide access to regional transit facilities for a small portion of ridership.

We believe that the agency should pare back the level of parking planned and in construction. This could be a mix of deferring parking projects to the end of the capital program and/or cancelling parking projects. To mitigate this, we would encourage additional station access projects that focus on walking, rolling, and biking as well as additional interim local bus service. These investments would amount to more moderate capital and operational expenditures, freeing up revenue to keep the actual transit projects closer to the voter-approved timelines.

There are several practical benefits of this strategy beyond capital costs and program delivery timing. These include:

- Placing greater emphasis on more potential riders and connecting their communities with active transportation options;
- Encouraging more transit-oriented development in proximity to transit investments;
- Delaying the construction of more concrete and asphalt as well as vehicular trips that are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change; and
- Allowing the agency to see how the system performs without additional parking.

We hope you will take these comments into consideration as the realignment process proceeds.

Sincerely,

Doug Trumm
Executive Director
The Urbanist

The Urbanist is a grassroots Puget Sound organization dedicated to advocacy and journalism. We promote urban policy to improve transportation, housing, social and environmental justice, economic opportunity, and quality of life in our region and state.