

4/22/2021 Board of Directors Meeting Public Comment Submissions

Submissions

<i>Transportation Choices Coalition, Disability Mobility Initiative, Disability Rights WA, Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association, Feet First, Cascade Bicycle Club, Futurewise, Transit Riders Union, Snohomish County Transportation Coalition, Downtown: On the Go!</i>	2
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*Transportation Choices Coalition, Disability Mobility Initiative,
Disability Rights WA, Greater Redmond Transportation
Management Association, Feet First, Cascade Bicycle Club,
Futurewise, Transit Riders Union, Snohomish County
Transportation Coalition, Downtown: On the Go!*

The substance of this message is contained in a letter included at the end of this document.

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

Please find attached a comment letter regarding Capital Realignment and System Access from the Transit Access Stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Best,
Kelsey

Kelsey Mesher
Advocacy Director

Transportation Choices
1402 3rd Ave #310
Seattle, WA 98101

Joyce Hengesbach

We appreciate the public outreach effort Sound Transit is making this month – and has over the past several years. We realize that it is difficult to solicit input at a time when so many other issues and events are uppermost in people’s minds.

The SkyLink team has been discussing transit with West Seattle and SODO residents, businesses, and special interest groups for some time, and we’d like to relate back to you the main themes we’ve been hearing. These messages have also been expressed, independent of our communications, on local blogs and Facebook pages.

1. Most people have only been able to stay current with the most urgent transit issue -- the West Seattle bridge closure. Many were not familiar with Sound Transit’s light rail plans unless their homes or businesses might be affected, or they are members of an interested community group such as the West Seattle Transportation Coalition or District One

Community Network. A common response we hear from residents and business owners is, “I haven’t paid attention because it’s not going to be here for a long time.” People we talked to recently were not aware that Sound Transit is asking for input in April despite the many attempts you’ve made to reach them.

1. People expressed frustration with City, County and Regional transit agencies for not addressing transportation needs and problems in timely, cost effective ways. They feel their tax dollars are not being well spent. Some say that agencies haven’t delivered on past promises and are skeptical that they will.

1. We also learned that many people do not truly grasp the advantage of being connected to the Sound Transit network. When we explained the destinations they could reach (north, south, and east) and the reliability and speed of grade separated transit, it was clear they had been unaware of these benefits.

1. When asked what was important about a grade separated public transit option, here are the most frequent answers we heard:
 - Get it here as soon as possible – we need it now.
We’re concerned about disruption and damage to West Seattle (lengthy construction, demolition of properties, impact on streets, etc.)
 - Will our tax dollars be well spent?
The three station locations do not serve other more diverse, lower income Peninsula neighborhoods that could benefit from a better connection to the Sound Transit network.
Will light rail be easy to access and use? Will it be coordinated with other transit?

We offer this report as added information for the Board as it considers realignment for the West Seattle project. Our findings prompt us to inquire whether Sound Transit uses a “cost per rider” calculation to assess projects. It seems that it would be helpful in making realignment decisions.

In the last six months we have spent many hours educating the public about light rail plans and other transit options, including SkyLink. We feel it’s important that residents and businesses be aware of these matters since transportation is a critical component of quality of life in our growing region.

The response to the SkyLink alternative has been very positive in West Seattle and SODO. We believe that’s because it addresses what is important to voters and taxpayers better than light rail does. SkyLink could provide the high frequency, grade separated transit West Seattle needs years earlier, with less disruption and damage, and for at least \$2 billion dollars less than light rail. We urge Sound Transit to seriously consider SkyLink as a realignment choice for the West Seattle project.

Joyce Hengesbach on behalf of
West Seattle SkyLink
www.westseattleskylink.org

Tacoma City Manager Elizabeth Pauli

This comment is in the form of a letter, which is included at the end of this document.

April 21, 2021

To: Sound Transit Board of Directors

From: Transit Access Stakeholders: Transportation Choices Coalition, Disability Mobility Initiative, Disability Rights WA; Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association; Feet First; Cascade Bicycle Club; Futurewise; Transit Riders Union; Snohomish County Transportation Coalition (SNOTRAC); Downtown: On the Go!

Re: Realignment and System Access Opportunities

Dear Sound Transit Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on transit access and realignment. We are deeply appreciative of the recent Board discussions on the role of parking not only in realignment but in system access as a whole.

While we want to remain true to the spirit of the package, realignment is an important time to take stock of the future and where we are going as an organization in terms of equity and sustainability. We support delaying parking structures in favor of more affordable and environmentally sustainable access that allows us to move light rail investments forward as soon as possible.

If not, we are at risk of delaying -- or canceling -- the mobility of hundreds of thousands of people in the Puget Sound all for less than 1-2% of the system's users.

We agree with Board members that it is critically important to adhere to the analysis directed by the ST3 ballot measure language¹.

Sound Transit will evaluate potential locations for parking before implementing projects, including an analysis of access demand and how the investment will conform to surrounding land uses; opportunities for leased or shared parking; and/or parking built in conjunction with new TOD projects

We hope the Board will do this analysis before committing to any realignment scenario.

This analysis will give us important information on where and how parking should move forward, and where cost savings through alternative or more flexible access could reduce delay in delivering light rail. **We support updating the System Access Plan with equitable engagement, and using it in concert as a transparent and policy-based approach for directing these funds.**

Investing in parking lots and garages is unwise for several reasons: they are expensive, they generate polluted stormwater, they induce automobile demand, and they conflict with the

¹ https://st32.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Document%20Library%20Featured/8-22-16/ST3_System-Plan_2016_web.pdf

development of walkable transit-oriented communities, occupying land that could be used for better uses. We strongly support looking at parking dollars with the outcomes, not just the structures in mind. People with low incomes are statistically more likely to walk, bike, or take transit to a light rail station than they are to drive there. Investing in bus service with seamless transfers at light rail stations will facilitate more transit access. Approaching access to transit with an open mind is an important opportunity to talk directly with historically underserved community members about their access needs.

Sound Transit is an organization deeply committed to sustainability, to affordability, and to shaping the mobility of the entire region. We must be flexible and future thinking in this pivotal moment.

Thank you for your consideration. And we urge you to use a values-, policy-, and data-driven approach to system access.



City of Tacoma
City Manager

April 21, 2021

Sound Transit Board
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension – Betterment Agreement Support

Dear Sound Transit Board Members:

It goes without saying how excited we are to see the progress already made on the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension and how much we are looking forward to its completion. The investment Sound Transit is making in partnership with Tacoma will not only improve access, it is targeting major investment in one of our more underserved communities.

The project will reconstruct the entire infrastructure, curb to curb, including new pavement. The curb itself, however, will not be replaced, except in areas damaged by the contractor, Walsh Construction. As a result, the only area along the project alignment that will not have newly constructed curb (or curb that has been constructed within the past few years) is along sections of Martin Luther King Jr Way.

To resolve this and in an effort to meet our own equity goals, the City, as part of our Links to Opportunity project, is planning to construct new curb along Martin Luther King Jr Way in the sections not being replaced as part of the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension. To expedite the City's curb work and to minimize impacts to the surrounding community, the City and Sound Transit have agreed to have all of the curb work constructed by Walsh Construction as part of the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension. The City will pay for its share of the construction using the Betterment Agreement agreed upon by both parties.

The continued development of new infrastructure is vital to the City of Tacoma and the Puget Sound Region. These projects lead to job creation for a variety of reasons. Specific to East 25th Street, the City appreciates the collaboration that will result in the redesign and construction of new transportation elements, including miscellaneous utility and streetscape enhancements, concrete curbing, and new street paving. These elements include features to support new growth along the alignment and are designed for multi-modal purposes, including Link Light Rail, pedestrians, and vehicle transportation.

The City of Tacoma values and looks forward to our continued partnership on this very exciting project. We are committed to continuing to work closely with Sound Transit to ensure the successful and timely delivery of the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension project and appreciate their willingness to work with us to construct the new curb.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Pauli
City Manager
Enclosure

Cc: Mayor Victoria Woodards and Members of the Tacoma City Council
Jackie Flowers, Director, Tacoma Public Utilities
Peter Huffman, Director, Tacoma Planning and Development Services Department
Kurtis D. Kingsolver, P.E., Director, Tacoma Public Works Department
Jeff Robinson, Director, Tacoma Community and Economic Development Department
Rosa McLeod, Tacoma Government Relations Office