

6/2/2022 Rider Experience and Operations  
Committee Meeting Written Public  
Comment Submissions

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## *Doug Trumm – The Urbanist*

**The substance of this message is included in two letters, attached to the end of this document.**

**The letters are accompanied by approximately 600 co-signees as of the time of the meeting.**

Hello boardmembers,

Attached is a letter following up on our earlier vertical conveyance letter. We request both this letter and our previous (May 23rd) letter be posted and read out at the June Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting. We've attached the previous letter too for reference.

On behalf of [more than 575 co-signatories](#), we reiterate our request that the Board promptly address the elevator and escalator reliability issues and consider our 10 recommendations aimed at doing so to ensure that Sound Transit is meeting its core commitment to provide high quality, accessible transit service, which we believe should be considered “on the agenda” at every board meeting.

Sincerely,

**Douglas Trumm**, *Executive Director*

## *Lisa Pfeiffer*

Dear ST Board:

I am very disappointed to see that you plan to reduce the frequency of trains and use replacement bus service during a maintenance phase in July. The plans I see constitute an unacceptable level of service. There are cities all around the world that manage to do both routine and major maintenance OVERNIGHT, without disruption of regular service. The number one reason people quit riding transit is that they have to wait too long between trains. Please figure out a way to do your maintenance without such service disruptions.

Finally, I am constantly disappointed by the amount of time that escalators in transit stations are out of order. This is absolutely unacceptable. Again, there are cities around the world that manage to make their escalators work all of the time. Why should Seattle residents and visitors accept the large number of out-of-service escalators, forcing handicapped people, people with strollers, and elderly people to use the stairs or pack into elevators (during COVID!). This should be your first priority.

Sincerely,

Lisa Pfeiffer

Seattle resident and sound transit user

## *Austin Prince*

Hi,

Just reaching out to comment on the upcoming service reduction in sound transit during the summer. Wondering if there would be some way to minimize the service reduction as I use sound transit daily and reducing service to once every 20 minutes will make it much harder to get around. If there is another possible way to explore fixing the Columbia city station without the large service reduction that would be great. Thanks,

Austin

*Emrys Harper*

Good Morning,

Upon reviewing the upcoming Link Light Rail maintenance/system prep schedule and associated service disruptions, I am deeply concerned about the drastic reduction to 1 Line service for multiple periods during the 2nd half of 2022. In particular, the systemwide reduction to 3 trains per hour from 07-11-2022 to 07-24-2022 and from 08-22-2022 to 09-04-2022 and the reduction of service to 3 trains per hour in the DSTT during a period of "at least three weeks" in Q4 2022 are the most alarming. As a frequent rider who has grown dependent on 1 Line service and encourages as many others as possible to ride the Link at every opportunity, I am disappointed and concerned about these reductions. 20 minute headways across the entire 1 Line network for 28 days during the busy tourist and consumer season will inevitably cause considerable delays, packed trains and general inconvenience to those who rely on the 1 Line for their transportation needs.

I understand that the tile replacement work at Columbia City Station and other unspecified work will need to be completed in order to prepare the network for expansion, but I implore Sound Transit to consider a solution that will not disrupt service. The result of these planned disruptions will be, in my opinion, a borderline unusable service that puts more people back in cars and has the potential to lose ridership permanently.

A world-class transit system seeks to grow ridership at every opportunity by providing a fast, frequent, convenient and comfortable experience for current and future users. 20 minute servicewide headways for 4 weeks is unacceptable by these standards and I truly do hope that Sound Transit can find a way to accomplish the necessary work while simultaneously providing the service we expect and demand from our regional transportation authority.

Thank you,  
Emrys Harper

*Tyler B*

thought we didn't have trains overnight so maintenance could be performed but here you are reducing service during the busy season to replace stupid tiles. Do better please

## Commenter Name

Hi there,

I just received an email about the following construction that's going to be going on this summer: <https://www.soundtransit.org/blog/platform/plan-ahead-upcoming-1-line-maintenance>. The reduction of the train to once every 20 minutes is absolutely unacceptable. I have long been an advocate for public transit and light rail usage, and have myself used it daily as a way to commute to work and sporting events. It is getting increasingly harder to defend SoundTransit, and the light rail in general, when things like this keep happening. Already the trains are packed to the gills, especially during sporting events. Now with 20 minutes between each ride, this is absolutely going to be a nightmare.

Figure it out Sound Transit and do better than this. There has to be a better solution here.

Johnny

## Yoshi

Hi,

I read that Sound Transit plans or intends to make trains run every 20 minutes to conduct tile repairs at Columbia Station. These repairs should be done outside commuting hours.

You are disrupting the schedules of those who use the Light Rail by limiting trains to run every 20 minutes. This is a major inconvenience to your source of income.

How do you expect the general public to adopt a more public transit oriented lifestyle when there are constant disruptions with things like escalators, elevators, leaking roofs at newly built stations, unmaintained train platforms, and now limiting train availability?

You would be hard pressed to find a well functioning train system operating in the same way that Sound Transit has been operating.

Why shouldn't repairs occur when the Light Rail is closed? It seems like the most logical path.

Best,  
Yoshi

## Will Gagne-Maynard

Hello,

I'm writing to express my concerns with Sound Transit's plan to reduce frequency to one train every 20 minutes due to tile replacement at the Columbia City station. Reducing frequency to 20 minutes will

have an extremely negative impact on the utility of transit, both to residents at the multitude of summer visitors that we have.

I would like to see Sound Transit do everything possible here to reduce this impact on increasing train headways.

Will Gagne-Maynard  
413 17th ave E.  
Seattle, WA 98112

### Commenter Name

Dear Board,

The Future Ready plan being proposed will result in 20 minute headways for a significant amount of time this year leading into next year. This is not the service riders deserve, especially as everyone is trying to get back to using transit for work, school, or recreational activities (like sports games). I admired the work put in during Connect 2020 to try to mitigate the amount of disruption to riders. Please continue to refine the Future Ready plan to ensure frequent trains and minimal disruptions, including:

- Waiting until the completion of East Link to ensure redundant coverage on stations north of International District.
- Exploring uses of switches or turnarounds to keep frequency up.
- Close only one platform of stations such as Columbia City by single tracking past it
- change work schedules to be only in non-peak times or evenings.
- Making sure bus shuttles go to the airport instead of stopping only at TIBS. Run routes 97 and 97x to ensure one seat rides.

These are just some suggestions from riders, but I hope the excellent staff at Sound Transit can come up with other creative solutions to create the best rider experience during this work.

Thank you,  
Cole Gleason  
Sound Transit Rider  
--  
Cole Gleason

### Bernardo Chuecos

Hello,

My name's Bernardo Chuecos, a frequent rider of the link light rail. I recently read that sound transit is planning on changing the headways for trains to 20 minutes in order to do repairs at the Columbia City station. This is really alarming because the trains are already pretty full at peak hours when the trains run every 8 to 10 minutes, so decreasing that already low frequency to 20 minutes is unacceptable,

specially given that this is scheduled to go on for a month. Please reconsider this decision and keep us riders in mind. We need greater frequency in the trains, not less.

Thank you,  
Bernardo

## Anders

Hello Sound Transit Board,

I am emailing to express concern over this summer's plans to do future ready maintenance work, while I am excited for the expansions and recognize the need to do maintenance and preparations, the current plan is infeasible.

Reducing headways to 20 min in each direction is not only a huge inconvenience to riders who depend on your service every day, it's downright dangerous. Trains are already regularly at capacity and decreasing headways will only increase crushloads, which is not only unacceptable but a non-starter with riders.

Please come up with something better.

Anders

## Cheryl Herrick

As a regular user of the train and many forms of public transit across the puget sound region, I am extremely disappointed to learn of the upcoming service delays related to tile repair at the Columbia city (my home) station.

There MUST be a better solution than the one that has been proposed. Severely cutting service at the height of tourist season, with gas prices soaring, temperatures rising, and with rising COVID cases in king county is bordering on incompetence and negligence. Is the person who purchased the tiles the same who installed/repairs the escalators that never work.

As a healthcare worker from a one car family who has taken public transit throughout the pandemic, the thought of being crammed on a train (which will happen with 20 minute frequencies) with unmasked residents and tourists alike is troubling to say the least. This decision will undoubtedly result in terrible frustration, increased community spread of COVID and the eroding of public trust in the regional transit system. DO BETTER.

Do the people that make the decisions about service interruptions actually ride the train? All this for some TILES. TILES. Make it make sense.

Not so respectfully,

Cheryl Herrick

*Jenny Mital*

Dear Sound Transit Board,

I just read in the sound transit blog post that it will take 4 weeks total to repair the tiles at the Columbia City light rail station, and Link Light Rail frequency will be 20 minutes for the duration.

Why a whole month to complete this work? Frequent transit is crucial to those who rely on the 1 Line to get around Seattle, including me. If Seattle truly wants to have equitable transportation system for those without cars, and to combat climate change, this is not the way to do it. I urge you to take a second look at the maintenance plans and figure out a way to reduce the duration so that the Link is there when people need it.

<https://www.soundtransit.org/blog/platform/plan-ahead-upcoming-1-line-maintenance>

Sincerely,  
Jenny Mital

*Michael Goldman*

Hello Sound Transit Board,

Please do not delay service to every 20 minutes for four weeks this summer due to tile repair at Columbia City Station. The last time I was at Columbia City station the tile was fine. The photo Sound Transit uses on their blog post <<https://www.soundtransit.org/blog/platform/plan-ahead-upcoming-1-line-maintenance>> shows good-looking tile. Even if the tile is truly in need of repair, the four weeks of delay is unacceptable. Please fix this. It makes the board and agency look incompetent and bad at communication.

*Why is Sound Transit severely curbing service to fix the tile below?*

Thank you,  
Michael Goldman  
Seattle, WA

*Claire Taylor*

Hello,

I'm writing in response to the maintenance [announcement](#) from May 31 that stated that 28 days of 1 Line service will go to 20 minute headways due to tile work at Columbia City station. I find this solution unacceptable; such long headways will further dissuade folks from public transit during a time when we should be encouraging folks to see transit as a great option for getting around our city, especially as options expand with the addition of Eastlink.

I believe the Board should press for a solution that does not sacrifice the quality of service to the degree. We should not set a precedent that repair work at a single station can so negatively impact the entire system, more than doubling lead times during the busiest times. Below, I've outlined ways to potentially mitigate these impacts.

1. The construction work should happen at night, during normal maintenance hours, and the platform closure should be limited in scope so that parts of it are usable for normal service when work cannot be done without closing the track. Announcements and signage could alert riders that certain cars are not opening doors at Columbia City station. Or shorter trains could run alternately with full length trains, with shorter trains stopping at Columbia City at the usable parts and longer trains running express and skipping the station. This would provide more capacity and reduce headways for a large majority of riders.

2. Work at one station should not cause 25 miles of track to go to 20 minute headways. Can additional trains run north and/or south of the station during this time if the above solution isn't manageable? Again, why can't some portion of trains run express and skip Columbia City station to improve headways for every other station?

3. Work should be parallelized to minimize disruption to service. Efforts should be made to do DSTT and SeaTac catenary work concurrently with other disruptive maintenance to minimize impact to riders. Spreading these efforts means more days with disruptions.

Regards,  
Claire Taylor

[Matt Brannock](#)

Hello,

I'm writing in response to the news that 28 days of service will go to 20 minute headways due to tile work at Columbia City station. In my view, this is an unacceptable solution that will drive folks away from public transit at a time when we should be driving folks *toward* transit.

I believe the Board should press for a solution that does not sacrifice the quality of service. We should not set a precedent that repair work at a single station affects the entire system.

1. The work should happen at night, during normal maintenance hours, and the platform closure should be limited in scope so that parts of it are usable for normal service when work cannot be done legally. For example, some cars could leave doors closed at CC station, with appropriate announcements and signage.

2. Work at one station should not cause 25 miles of track to go to 20 minute headways. Why can't additional trains run north and/or south of the station? Why can't some trains run express and skip CC station to improve headways elsewhere? There must be solutions that limit the systemwide effect.

3. Work should be consolidated. Why can't DSTT and SeaTac catenary work coincide with other disruptive maintenance?

Respectfully,  
Matt Brannock

## *John Lestina*

Delaying the entire network to 20 minute headways for 4 weeks can't be the best option for the Columbia City tilework. Are there turnaround opportunities at SoDO/Stadium that could be used to keep headways low for the Northern part of the line? Or has there been an average roundtrip delay comparison between the 20 minute option, and closing just one side (North or South) at a time so that a few passengers will have to go one stop further half the time? Please take guidance from other systems, as competent systems don't fallback to such long headways for the entire network for tile replacement.

John Lestina, Seattle

## *Zach McKinney*

Hello,

I've recently become aware that the light rail along the 1 Line will be delayed to 20 minutes per train later this summer to maintain the tiles at the Columbia City light rail station. This seems outrageous to me. I live in Columbia City and was at the station this morning. The tiles seem fine - a little worn but they are seemingly secure in place, level, and with no obvious tripping or slipping hazard. They are certainly not in such bad shape that they need an immediate summertime slowdown of the entire light rail system.

I urge ST to delay this repair until they can develop a solution that doesn't result in system wide delays, especially during high-use summer months.

Zach McKinney

## *Joseph Barber*

Dear Sound Transit Board,

Please consider pausing the upcoming service interruptions due to tile replacement at Columbia City station until an improved plan can be put in place. It's simply unacceptable to reduce service so drastically for such an extended period of time for what seems to be a small project. People depend on your service every day and this is yet another plan that feels like it ignores the passenger experience. Why does it take a month of work to replace tile? And since the tile has shown to be inappropriate for this station, can a more durable replacement such as concrete be considered?

<https://www.soundtransit.org/blog/platform/plan-ahead-upcoming-1-line-maintenance>

Thank you,  
Joseph Barber

## *Doug Trumm – The Urbanist*

**The substance of this comment is within a letter, included at the end of this document**

Hello Boarmembers,

The Urbanist would like to submit this comment on the Future Ready maintenance plan recently announced. We have serious concerns about the impact to riders caused by the lengthy service disruptions, which we believe can be mostly mitigated by redesigning the work plan in a more thoughtful manner.

Thanks for your consideration,

**Douglas Trumm**, *Executive Director*



# The Urbanist

Examining urban policy to improve cities and quality of life  
[theurbanist.org](http://theurbanist.org) | [info@theurbanist.org](mailto:info@theurbanist.org)

Date: May 22, 2021

## **RE: Sound Transit Must Fix Its Broken Escalators and Elevators Mess**

Dear Sound Transit Boardmembers,

Sound Transit's escalator and elevator situation has reached a crisis level; they are [routinely out of service](#). In Downtown Seattle, Sound Transit reports its elevator availability reached a pandemic low of 82%, which the agency said it had increased to 96% by November (that's back down to 90% as of April), and escalator availability went from a pandemic low of 30% to 71% last fall, which is still abysmally low. The agency hasn't fully committed to [replacing all escalators and elevators in Downtown Seattle until 2031](#), which means problems will persist for almost another decade. That also means stations will remain a daily obstacle and inaccessible to riders for many years to come without more urgent action. This and other vertical conveyance issues throughout the system are doing serious damage to the Sound Transit brand and long-term ridership aspirations.

It's time for Sound Transit to address these problems head-on right now. With this in mind, we are urging the Sound Transit Board of Directors to take the following 10 actions to more urgently address this crisis:

1. Increase the target availability of escalator and elevators to at least 98%;
2. Fully commission and complete design work this year for replacement of all escalators and elevators in Downtown Seattle Link stations;
3. Complete replacement by the end of 2023 of all escalators and elevators in Downtown Seattle Link stations;
4. Cross-train staff to restart escalators for minor outages where possible;
5. Hire as much staff as needed to conduct repair and maintenance work during all system operational hours, including for rapid response;
6. Purchase sufficient spare equipment for spot replacement;
7. Improve real-time, widely available communications when equipment is offline;
8. Provide realistic estimates for equipment service restoration, including estimate notices on offline equipment;
9. Study best practices and equipment by major transit operators internationally so that this systemic problem is not replicated in the future; and
10. Set aside at least \$100 million to accelerate the above actions.

Additionally, we ask that Sound Transit boardmembers commit to regularly taking transit in order to ground their decisions and understand the repercussions of letting issues like dilapidated escalators fester. Regular transit riders can also understand the joy of when things go seamlessly. Boardmembers tuning into one or two digital meetings a month from home to make critical decisions around transit policies and projects isn't enough. Good decision-making comes from on-the-ground experience.

Riders of Sound Transit deserve having policymakers make knowledgeable decisions about their future. If boardmembers aren't willing to commit to providing high quality dependable transit service, they should step aside and hand their board positions over to leaders that will.

We have big issues facing transit. It's time to get to work on addressing them.

Sincerely,

Doug Trumm  
Executive Director

The Urbanist

PS: You can [read our full editorial about this pressing issue on The Urbanist](#).

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



# The Urbanist

Examining urban policy to improve cities and quality of life  
[theurbanist.org](http://theurbanist.org) | [info@theurbanist.org](mailto:info@theurbanist.org)

June 1, 2022

To: Sound Transit Board of Directors  
**RE: 'Future Ready' Isn't Ready to Proceed**

Dear Sound Transit Boardmembers,

On May 31, Sound Transit [publicly announced](#) its "Future Ready" program for the first time. The program involves a variety of critical maintenance projects over the next year. The earliest project starts in July with tile replacement at Columbia City Station and is then followed by overhead catenary repair and replacement in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel and Duwamish Valley. While we understand the need for maintenance, we are very concerned about the severe impacts of this work and the lack of public consultation prior to enacting planned work.

According to the plan, Sound Transit will reduce Link frequencies to every 20 minutes for months — not just days — this year. The first action alone will reduce service for 26 days this summer. Twenty-minute frequencies are devastating to riders, reducing the convenience and accessibility of the Link 1 Line — the region's single most important transit line. Put in context, the number of trains per hour would be reduced by 53% during peak hours and 50% during most other hours. This service reduction doesn't just make transfers to bus service worse, it also directly reduces system capacity and ridership systemwide. Connecting to low-frequency buses will involve huge transfer penalties that will discourage riders from even bothering.

Contrast this maintenance effort with Sound Transit's system expansion effort in 2020 when the agency implemented Connect 2020. Months ahead of time, the agency built a center platform at Pioneer Square Station to allow for timed transfers between trains while one track was closed at a time to do tie-in work for East Link. It was a tough time for riders, but the agency excelled at minimizing the pain that riders otherwise would've experienced with a less thoughtful approach. The agency also engaged early on with the rider community and communicated the process widely.

We appreciate that Sound Transit faces constraints like staffing and contract terms, but the Future Ready plan asks too much of riders and too little of agency creativity in limiting service disruptions. The agency should further consider limiting hours and locations of disruptive work, temporarily operating Link services in a bifurcated manner, implementing temporary crossover tracks, and doing everything possible to operate through construction zones where feasible (e.g., erect temporary barriers at Columbia City Station and close a single platform for remedial work while keeping both tracks open).

Future Ready sets up a very poor precedent for future maintenance activities on the Link system and raises serious questions about Sound Transit's commitment to the rider experience and providing transit, as we've already noted in our recent letters about the broken escalator and elevator crisis. We implore the Sound Transit Board of Directors to immediately halt Future Ready until staff have developed sufficient mitigation plans to greatly reduce rider impacts; this plan isn't fully baked.

Sincerely,

Doug Trumm  
Executive Director  
The Urbanist

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



# The Urbanist

Examining urban policy to improve cities and quality of life  
[theurbanist.org](http://theurbanist.org) | [info@theurbanist.org](mailto:info@theurbanist.org)

May 29, 2022

To: Sound Transit Board of Directors

## **RE: Sound Transit Must Fix Its Broken Escalators and Elevators Mess**

Dear Sound Transit Boardmembers,

On May 22, 2022, we wrote to you about the escalator and elevator crisis ahead of the May general board meeting. We write again because staff chose not to read out and post the hundreds of letters sent to you by constituents nor our own letter about this pressing issue. On behalf of [more than 575 people](#) at the time of writing this letter, we reiterate our request that the Board promptly address the following issues to ensure that Sound Transit is meeting its core commitment to provide high quality, accessible transit service, which we believe should be considered “on the agenda” at every board meeting:

1. Increase the target availability of escalator and elevators to at least 98%;
2. Fully commission and complete design work this year for replacement of all escalators and elevators in Downtown Seattle Link stations;
3. Complete replacement by the end of 2023 of all escalators and elevators in Downtown Seattle Link stations;
4. Cross-train staff to restart escalators for minor outages where possible;
5. Hire as much staff as needed to conduct repair and maintenance work during all system operational hours, including for rapid response;
6. Purchase sufficient spare equipment for spot replacement;
7. Improve real-time, widely available communications when equipment is offline;
8. Provide realistic estimates for equipment service restoration, including estimate notices on offline equipment;
9. Study best practices and equipment by major transit operators internationally so that this systemic problem is not replicated in the future; and
10. Set aside at least \$100 million to accelerate the above actions.

Additionally, we ask that Sound Transit boardmembers commit to regularly taking transit in order to ground their decisions and understand the repercussions of letting issues like dilapidated escalators fester. Regular transit riders can also understand the joy of when things go seamlessly. People who get around overwhelmingly via private vehicles tuning in to virtual board meetings will make less informed decisions.

Good decision-making comes from being in touch with the on-the-ground experience, and Sound Transit riders deserve as much from policymakers. If boardmembers aren't willing to commit to providing high quality dependable transit service, they should step aside and hand their board positions over to leaders that will.

Sincerely,

Doug Trumm  
Executive Director  
The Urbanist

PS: You can [read our full editorial about this pressing issue on \*The Urbanist\*](#).

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