

11/10/2022 System Expansion Committee
Meeting Written Public Comment
Submissions

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Bill Hirt

Terminate East Link at Chinatown Station,

The previous post opined Sound Transit needs to do more to “justify” transit projects. Assure the result of a transit project was a “product” that reduced congestion. At this point it’s too late to point out the result of the East Link project, an I-90 bridge center roadway confiscated by light rail, is a product that won’t reduce congestion.

This post details Sound Transit exacerbates that failure by extending East Link light rail train routes as Link Line 2 through the DSTT and eventually to the Mariner P&R. The result will be a “product” whose operation will share Line 1’s DSTT train capacity and incur problems merging with Central Link trains to UW and beyond.

For example, Link Line 1 trains currently run northbound every 8 minutes from Angle Lake to Northgate from 5:30 to 8:46 am. When East Link trains begin operation as part of Line 2 will Sound Transit replace half of the Line 1 trains, with both lines every 16 minutes, or double the frequency with both every 8 minutes? A “product” with 4 minutes between trains and capacity that far exceeds the number of I-5 commuters with access to transit and operating costs that dwarf fare box revenue. That will also be difficult to safely merge, with trains returning from different route lengths through DSTT with the 4-minute intervals.

Sound Transit could avoid both problems by terminating East Link at the International District Chinatown Station. Those wishing to go further can transfer to a Line 1 train. Central Link commuters won’t have to share whatever the DSTT train capacity when East Link debuts.

Separating East Link also allows scheduling its operation with number of light rail cars in each train and their frequency adjusted to meet east side demands rather than what’s needed along Line 2 to Northgate and beyond. Doing so has significant cost savings with light rail trains cars costing ~\$30 per vehicle mile. The 16-mile East Link and Redmond extensions cost nearly \$1000 for each car-round-trip. Limiting number of cars would enable more frequent trains, especially during off-peak operation.

Limiting operation to meet Bellevue transit requirements would also end Sound Transit need to use East Link to replace I-90 corridor buses for riders. It would end the need for Sound Transit to insist on a “Bus Intercept” agreement with Mercer

Island, despite nearly universal islander objections. I-90 corridor transit riders would no longer be forced to endure the hassle of transferring to and from light rail for their commute into and out of Seattle. Mercer Island would no longer be forced to share its access to light rail or have their station inundated with thousands of transferees.

The bottom line is, terminating East Link at International District/Chinatown Station, ends a “project” that spends billions for a “product” that reduces transit capacity into Seattle and increases I-90 corridor congestion. The following from an October 5th release of, “Agency Progress Report: Capital Progress, August 2022” facilitates doing so:

The East Link critical path this month continues to run through track remediation on E130, which is holding up E750 access to complete OCS and signal installation. The time required to complete all repairs is still being determined, which may result in an even longer path to completion. Other East Link Civil Contracts continue to be closely monitored for potential impacts to the E750 schedule.

Sound Transit should use the delay to implement terminating East Link at International District/Chinatown Station and mitigate the East Link debacle.

[Bill Hirt](#)

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ST System Expansion Committee Incompetence

The November 13 System Expansion Committee agenda includes the following:

Review of the Proposed 2023 Budget for system expansion projects

It’s a follow-up to the same agenda item in the November 3, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting. Both deal with the 2023 Financial Plan and Proposed Budget proposed \$3.1 billion expenditures with \$2,369 million on “Projects” and \$500 million on “Transit Operation.” That \$1,686 million of the project’s funding would be spent on Link system expansion in 2023.

It’s the 2023 version of Sound Transit’s plan to spend \$149.1B from 2017 to 2046 on “voter approved extension” for the “largest transit system expansion in the country”. The result in the 2023 “Ridership by Mode 2017--2046” chart is an increase in Link ridership from 22 million to 150 million. A “Capital Expenditures by Mode 2017—2046” chart showed about 90% will be spent on “Link Light Rail”.

The 2023 budget showed Sound Transit intends to increase light rail expenditures from ~\$1,700 million in 2023 to ~\$3,200 million in 2024 and ~\$3,100 million in 2025 spent completing extensions to Lynnwood, Redmond, and Federal Way. Yet none of those track extensions will increase the number of light rail cars per hour or the number of riders in each car. Thus, the extensions don’t increase a light rail train’s capacity into Seattle. Yet, the 2023 budget’s “Ridership by Mode 2017—2046” chart predicts the funds spent will increase ridership from 30 million in 2023 to 62 million in 2026.

The committee compounds their failure to recognize capacity limits with plans is to use light rail trains to replace bus routes into Seattle. They initiated that approach using Northgate Link trains to replace ST Express Bus and KCM routes into Seattle. It's more than a year since the Link debuted. Yet Sound Transit refuses to release their Quarterly Service Delivered Performance reports with how many of the predicted 41,000 to 49,000 riders the Link's three stations added. Instead, whatever riders were added reduced access for University Link riders.

Sound Transit could increase the number of light rail cars into Seattle by terminating East Link at Chinatown Station. Instead, they intend to use the extension to reduce all the I-90 bus routes into Seattle on light rail trains routed to Mariner P&R near Everett.

The bottom line is Sound Transit's Link ridership claims are delusional. The board's System Expansion Committee is about to approve a 2023 Financial Plan and Proposed Budget with another year of \$500 million spent on operations and ~\$1,700 million on light rail extensions that do nothing to increase capacity. Using light rail to replace bus routes will reduce the number of transit vehicles, transit capacity into the city, and access to transit for current riders.

The result of a transit board of well-meaning elected officials with no understanding of what constitutes effective public transit.

Sean Thorson

Good afternoon,

Thank you all for taking the time to consider the ACG & Sound Transit Master Agreement and Surplus property sale, benefitting Kinect @ Shoreline and the Shoreline North 185th ST Light Rail Station. These two developments truly represent an ideal synergy between public and private projects. Kinect @ Shoreline is ACG's first development in Shoreline and our 3rd TOD project near Sound Transit stations. We anticipate most of our residents living in our 240 unit mixed use development, including 48 affordable homes to utilize the light rail every day. Your approval of this development will not only benefit an increase in ridership from this station, but will also benefit from the commercial space we envision as a coffee shop, with direct access for Light Rail users. We greatly appreciate the System Expansion Committee's thoughtful consideration of our proposal and look forward to many years of this mutually beneficial partnership.

Sincerely,

Sean Thorson
Acquisitions Manager



Comments submitted after the meeting

Betty Lau – transcript of verbal public comment

Hello System Expansion Committee Members,

I'm Betty Lau, co-founder of Transit Equity for All. I have been attending Sound Transit open houses and the more recent workshops. They have been well organized and well attended with translations and interpretation. It's wonderful. We are especially interested in the 4th Avenue alternatives to 5th Avenue. As you know, a 5th Avenue route would be the most destructive to residents and businesses in the CID. The devastation is something that the national register Seattle Chinatown Historic District would not recover from since it calls for demolition of buildings eligible for historic listing.

Please continue to study the 4th Avenue alternatives and Stay off Fifth!

Thank you.

Brien Chow – transcript of verbal public comment

Good Afternoon,

I'm Brien Chow from the Chong Wa Benevolent Association, and I'm one of the co-founders of TEA, Transit Equity for All. I was also a member of the SODO/CID CAG, and I can tell you the difference between how community members were treated then and now is a big improvement. The improvements are collaboration with community and better transparency.

I would like the improvements to continue. I urge you to consider an alternative that was tried successfully in San Francisco for, I think, BART. In that plan, lids were built over impacted streets so traffic could still go through without being diverted to side streets. That should be done here, with a lid over 4th Avenue while light rail is being built there. Then when construction is done, the lid doesn't need to be removed. It can be turned into a park that would greatly enhance the area by adding a beautiful green space to the neighborhood. Studies show more green space is needed for both Pioneer Square and the CID.

Thank you.

Brien Chow

Transit Equity for All

Brien Chow

The documents referred to in this comment are included on the following pages.

Hello Sound Transit Board,

Attached you will find the:

1. **Union Station Park Project Alternative** - This alternative will solve the traffic impact, caused by any ST3 4th Ave Shallow alternative, to all the surrounding neighborhoods and create a green footprint in an area that has been neglected in the past. *A vehicle detour **lid** built over the railroad tracks, starting near 4th Ave & Dearborn St, running north parallel on the westside of 4th Ave, to 4th Ave & Washington St is the perfect way to divert traffic during the 8+ years of the construction of the 4th Ave Station alternative.*
2. **CID Station Alternative Ideas** - 4 of the 5 alternatives were brought to our attention and we wanted to be sure to share these ideas with the STB.

We do want to Move Forward on Fourth, not 5th. *I really feel that the Union Station Park alternative will improve light rail transit in the CID and Pioneer Square neighborhoods, provide the first substantial urban park shared by 2 historic districts, Chinatown ID and Pioneer Square, and improve the environment. A place for families, workers and tourists can relax and enjoy Seattle. At the same time provide a viable traffic detour for the 4th Ave ST3 construction time period.*

Making the decision to build the Union Station Park alternative will show that Sound Transit and the Sound Transit Board does care and support the surrounding communities.

The opportunity to leave a 100+ year legacy of care and love is now with the Union Station Park alternative.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brien Chow

Transit Equity for All

Union Station Park Project



1

Original



2

Phase 1



3

Phase 2



4

Finished

CID Station Alignment Alternative Ideas

First Hill - Mt Baker Loop

4th Ave "Shallow-er"

Union Station Park

Sky Train

Gondola

5th Avenue will not be accepted!



First Hill – Mt Baker Loop

Moving the entire line east, under First Hill, would solve many of the challenges with the current downtown stations, and overall make the system more useful. It would open up a lot more territory and greatly reduce the amount of redundant track miles being built.

Some advantages to this approach:

- Service to First Hill, Yesler Terrace and Little Saigon
- No displacement in Chinatown
- No need to destroy or relocate Metro's Ryerson Base
- No multi-year closure of Stadium Station
- No new overpasses required in SODO or transmission line replacement
- Opportunity to fix Mt. Baker
- Less frequent train gates in SODO as only the West Seattle line is running through it
- Easy transfers between lines at Judkins Park, which benefits Eastside riders headed to the airport (the current proposals require exiting to the street level and then going back down to get from Bellevue to SeaTac)

Some downsides:

- Beacon Hill riders have a 2-seat ride to most destinations
- Slightly longer commute to the airport from West Seattle
- A 2-seat ride to south downtown for some riders on the Ballard-Tacoma line
- Significant construction impacts along Rainier Ave N, between Mt. Baker and the CID



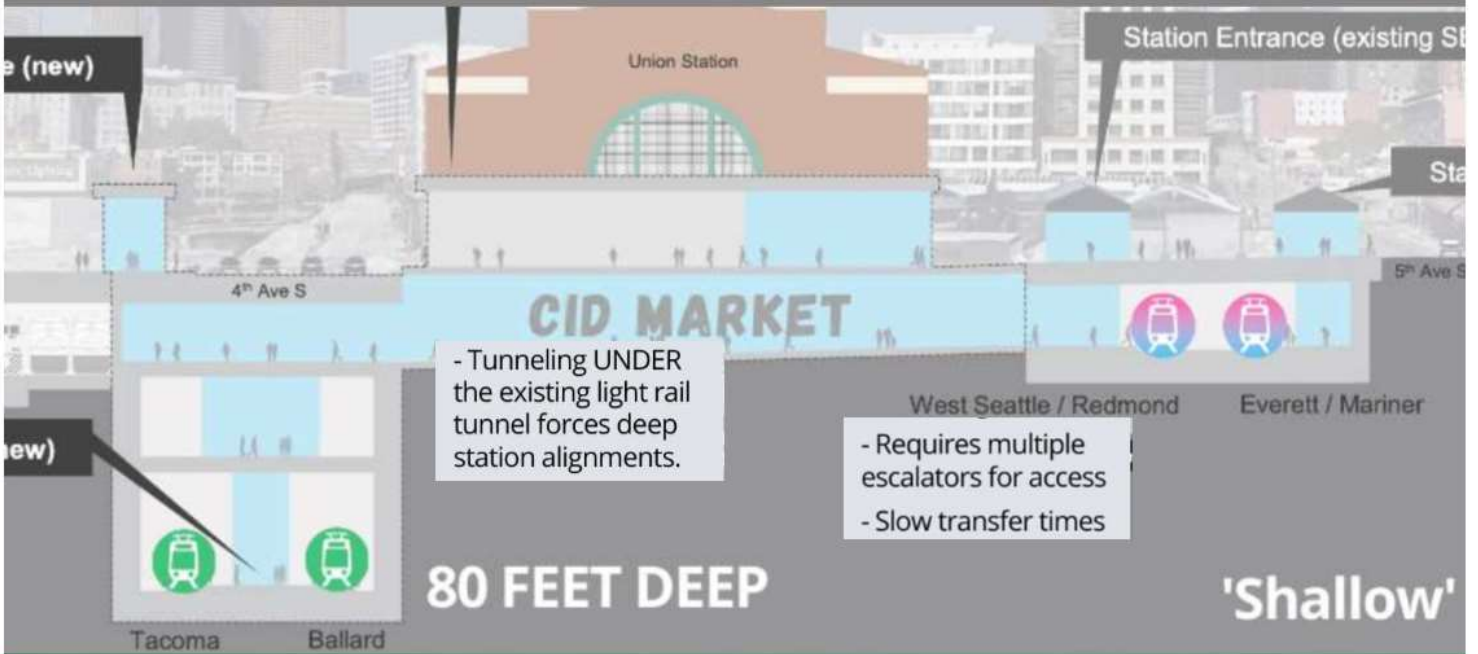
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CHINATOWN/INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT (CID)

Study a Shallower 4th Ave Shallow Option Crossing Over Existing Transit Tunnel

4th Avenue Shallow Alt (CID-1A) - *Current Alignment*

Too deep systemwide, slow construction, and bad user experience.



4th Avenue 'Shallow-er' - *Proposed Alignment*

Much shallower systemwide, faster construction, and excellent user experience.



Union Station Park Project



1

Original



2

Phase 1



3

Phase 2



4

Finished



Designed as a lightweight, intermediate speed, medium traffic volume, and low-cost transport system, it's expected to have huge market potential in scenic areas, mountainous regions, and major cities.

China's self-developed [#driverless](#) [#monorail](#) vehicle, known as "sky train", has successfully completed its trial run in [#Wuhan](#), C China's Hubei Province.



In New York, the proposed East River Skyway would transport commuters between Brooklyn and the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Courtesy of East River Skyway

