

# 11/16/2023 Board of Directors Meeting Written Public Comment Submissions

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## *Bill Hirt*

### More Sound Transit Board Incompetence'

A previous post detailed reasons why the October 26<sup>th</sup> Sound Transit Board's approval of the 2024 Rail Service Plan demonstrated they didn't "get it". That the board didn't recognize neither the East Link Starter Line nor the Lynnwood extension will increase the transit ridership needed to reduce congestion into the city. A precursor to similar results from Board approval of future Sound Transit "voter approved" extensions.

This post details another example of the Board approving transit system incompetence. Sound Transit's failure to recognize the folly of routing East Link and West Seattle Links to Northgate and beyond and routing Ballard Link to SeaTac and beyond. That terminating Ballard Link at existing Westlake station and terminating East Link and West Seattle extensions at the existing CID station would end the need to spend up to 10 years and \$13B boring a second tunnel and 5 stations for access.

Again, the Board could save the billions and years by modifying the existing CID and Westlake stations to accommodate terminating the Links. The modified CID station could provide what the Board had called, "a once in a lifetime for a space for people to transfer from light rail to light rail, to Sounder and Amtrack". Satisfying a year of nearly unanimous public comment at board meetings expressing desire for a "near CID" station. Instead, the Board abided Sound Transit ignoring the request for additional study of the "near CID 4<sup>th</sup> Ave location.

Terminating East Link and West Seattle at CID would allow operations to meet local demand rather than sharing what's needed for the route to Northgate. Ending the loss of half of DSTT trains diverted across I-90 Bridge. Also ending the difficulty in merging the return routes for safe passage of the two trains through DSTT.

East side commuters could easily transfer at CID to Line 1 trains to SeaTac or UW and beyond. Terminating West Seattle Link at CID will end those commuters accessing at SODO, further reducing Line 1 capacity to and from SeaTac.

Terminating Ballard Link at existing Westlake station would allow the Link to be expedited rather than wait for the second tunnel. Riders would not have to use “new Westlake station” to transfer to existing Westlake station for access to downtown Seattle.

The bottom line is an earlier post opined the Board doesn't recognize using “voter approved” light rail extensions to replace bus routes into Seattle reduces transit capacity and nothing to reduce congestion. Their decision to proceed with boring the second tunnel just needlessly adds \$13B and 6-10 years of disrupting downtown Seattle to the debacle.

The November 2<sup>nd</sup> Executive Board meeting included a 30-minute discussion on existing fare structure and rate and the rationale for a fare change now as the last Link fare change occurred in 2015. That the current fares are based on the distance from where you tap your ORCA card to get on and tap again to get off. If you don't tap when you get off, you are charged for the fare to the end of the line.

However, the ST2 system extensions have resulted in large distance-based table and more fare rates that would be even more complicated with future extensions. The result was to consider a single “flat” fare for all trips as shown on a chart comparing fares used by “peer transit” agencies, with some having a peak hour or airport surcharge.

The presentation concluded flat fares benefited from being “simpler to understand and budget for” and required passengers to only tap on. Sound Transit surveys had shown riders were split with 52% preferring distance-based fare and 48% preferring flat rate. The rider preference presumably reflected the distance of their commute.

The subsequent discussion about “Next steps” resulted in a "12/15: Board for potential action on Link fare". The board should consider a fairer approach for both commuters would be to set fares based on distance from where riders got on buses or trains to either CID or Westlake stations.

No fares would be collected at either CID or Westlake. Inbound fares would include the cost of the return commute to deal with the ambiguity to the return destination. Commuters going beyond CID or Westlake to SeaTac, east side, or UW would pay the fares covering those costs on their return.

It shouldn't be that difficult.

*Stephen Fesler*

It's pretty disappointing that agency staff are recommending flat fares when they are inequitable, not financially responsible, and bad for ridership. You should strongly oppose flat fares and direct staff to re-evaluate the fare structure to consider zone-based fares, or stick with the existing paradigm that will hurt existing riders less. The public deserved a better process than has transpired and staff just aren't listening to what riders are telling them.

Kind regards,  
Stephen A. Fesler

*Betty Lau*

Hi, Kathleen Barry Johnson will read my statement for me. Transcript below. Thanks,

Betty

Greetings Board Members,

This month's System Expansion Committee meeting was impressive. I heard about how thorough planning for South Lake Union is, how important it is to follow community input by adding yet another alternative and even putting money and staff into a new feasibility study to "be as fully informed as possible" prior to making a decision on a yet another alternative!

Contrast these careful, deliberative actions for SLU with the rush to judgement on the N&S of CID stations, which were voted to become preferred alternatives without a shred of information!

Board member Keel asked staff if the feasibility study causes a time delay. The verbal gymnastics to avoid saying, "No" was a master class in obfuscation.

The answer is there's no delay for the new SLU option feasibility study because it's less than the two-year delay for the new N&S of CID DEIS! So any number of new options and new studies will not result in a time delay because it's already delayed two years! The costs are a different story.

Is the different treatment accorded SLU due to wealthy, corporate interests compared to the low income, limited English CID?

A developer wrote us, "If community is interested in South of CID station, we will use our political connections to make it happen."

Walk your talk! Move Forward on 4<sup>th</sup> with Space Needle thinking!

Thank you!

*Nic Flesher*

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

Dear Sound Transit Board Members, Seattle City Council, and Sound Transit CEO Tim, Seattle's First Hill neighborhood is the most densely populated neighborhood in the state, as well as being home to many of Seattle's hospitals. Tens of thousands of people need to get up First Hill every day, to get home, to get to work, or to receive care. Any world-class transit system would make sure to serve First Hill, and voters have been promised that service twice – first in 1996 with Sound Move and again in 2016 with ST3. Voters want Sound Transit to serve First Hill, they approved service to First Hill twice.

First Hill Station was skipped in the first go around due to technical concerns. It was unfortunate but Sound Transit felt it was the only way to finish the first Link line. Now, First Hill is at risk of being skipped again but not because it is risky, but just to satisfy the ambitions of a few people. Two politicians and an old-money Seattle landowner and developer are putting their interests ahead of transit riders and the region's voters.

They intend to get what they want, and don't seem to care that it breaks promises to voters and makes the transit system that voters are paying for much, much worse. They have convinced the Board that this backroom deal will save money, despite having no real idea of how much it will cost. There aren't any official numbers, just handshake deals between the rich and powerful assuring each other that everything will work out great – for them.

It's not working out great for transit riders or the voters. These backroom deals are causing massive delays and are an unacceptable way to design a transit system. The Midtown Station is already studied, and ready for the next steps. The money voters approved for Sound Transit 3 must not be used to line the pockets of the rich and connected, it must be used to build a world class transit system. The new Midtown Station serving First Hill is projected to have the highest ridership (15,000 daily riders!) of any new station in the \$50B+ ST3 plan. Don't skip it, instead help the residents, healthcare providers, and patients get where they are going.

The voters approved Sound Transit service for First Hill twice because they need to get to First Hill. Don't break your promises! Stop the Skip!

Very Respectfully,

Nic Flesher  
Nicolas Flesher

## *John Considine*

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## *Travis DePrato*

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

Howdy, ST friends! I live in Capitol Hill but I visit First Hill often. I'm writing to express my strong, strong support for connecting First Hill to the Link Light Rail. The neighborhood deserves it.

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Dear Sound Transit Board Members, Seattle City Council, and Sound Transit CEO Tim, Seattle's First Hill neighborhood is the most densely populated neighborhood in the state, as well as being home to many of Seattle's hospitals. Tens of thousands of people need to get up First Hill every day, to get home, to get to work, or to receive care. Any world-class transit system would make sure to serve First Hill, and voters have been promised that service twice – first in 1996 with Sound Move and again in 2016 with ST3. Voters want Sound Transit to serve First Hill, they approved service to First Hill twice.

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Alex Anzivino

### *Jensen Royer*

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

Sound Transit must build Ballard Link Extension stations under 4th Ave in CID, at Madison Street in Midtown, and at 7th and Harrison in SLU. We are writing to you today to urge you to put an end to the plan to start over on the Ballard to Downtown Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that requires over \$100 million extra in direct costs, adds two years of delay in planning work, and increases the likelihood of future delays in opening the project.

The voters approved major expansion in 2016, and expect you to deliver it. Since then, we have participated in years of process and community engagement which produced the options already available to the board. Do we really have to wait even longer to finally ride a system we are paying for? It's time for the Sound Transit Board to choose from the existing Ballard Link Extension options. Stopping the new EIS means stopping the deletion of three of the highest ridership stations in the system: Chinatown International District, Midtown, and South Lake Union Stations. Stopping the new EIS means maintaining the high ridership system this entire region voted for in 2016.

A new EIS will take years to complete and is likely to waste of hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect costs, when all is said and done. All in the interest of putting forth worse options that fewer people will use. More self-inflicted delays are unacceptable on their own, but these are costly self-inflicted delays with an end goal of justifying bad decisions.

Do not permanently destroy our transit system out of short sighted priorities. Stop wasting time and money on endless process, choose existing options, and stop the new EIS before it starts.

Sincerely,

Jensen Royer

### *Jonathan M. Sánchez*

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

I am new to the Seattle area, having just relocated here with my fiancé within the last 6 months from the Southwestern U.S. In deciding where we wanted to relocate, we prioritized transit-oriented cities and were drawn here due to the extensive, voter-approved lightrail, commuter train, and bus rapid transit expansion. Having come from Albuquerque, where car dependency is the norm, we had grown tired of relying on driving as our principal form of transportation - as it is expensive, stressful, and environmentally irresponsible.

We intentionally moved near the Northgate station, so that we could travel to the city for work and other outings. We love not needing to get in the car, wherever and whenever possible. In educating myself on future transit growth in the region, I was dismayed to learn that a system that has the potential to be the envy of the entire Western U.S. may undergo possible changes that would hinder its longterm feasibility, leading to declines in ridership and, ergo, a slow decay of the entire system. Being that Seattle is a place where I would like to grow old with my partner, I am particularly concerned with shortsighted decisions made now that could negatively affect the next 100 years of transit-related growth in the region.

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It is my understanding that the voters approved major expansion in 2016. Had I lived here then, I would have also voted in support of said expansion. Since then, years of process and community engagement have produced the options already available to the board today. Do we really have to wait even longer to finally ride a system we are paying for? It's time for the Sound Transit Board to choose from the existing Ballard Link Extension options.

Stopping the new EIS means stopping the deletion of three of the highest ridership stations in the system: Chinatown International District, Midtown, and South Lake Union Stations. Stopping the new EIS means maintaining the high ridership system this entire region voted for in 2016.

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Do not permanently destroy our transit system out of short sighted priorities. Stop wasting time and money on endless process, choose existing options, and stop the new EIS before it starts.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan M. Sánchez

### *Comments submitted after the meeting deadline*

### *Brien Chow – Transcript from Verbal Comment*

**Public Comment by Brien Chow at Sound Transit Board Meeting, Thursday, November 16, 2023, 1:30 p.m., Union Station**

Hello Sound Transit Board Members,  
I'm Brien Chow, co-founder of Transit Equity for All.

What is the cost of N&S of CID stations?... Consider:

1. 2-year delay for N&S of CID DEIS writing, at a cost of \$300-\$600 million per year... *I'll use the higher figure for inflation and COLAs.*
  - **Two years = \$1,200 million...**
  - **already way more than the \$800,00 projected for 4<sup>th</sup>.**
  
2. South Lake Union Cost of:
  - Feasibility study... **not given**
  - Cost of for delay... **not given**
  - Cost of staff time?... I saw **\$4 million for staff...**  
**but no breakdown**
  - Cost of engineering studies for N&S of CID... **not given**
  
3. **Cost of anything for promised studies on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue... Unknown.**
  
4. And the cost of Everett Link Extension... **\$2 billion...**
  - **slightly less if a Latino community is wiped out on the way back to I-5.**
  
- 5.

**Seems like there's plenty of money...**

- **for South Lake Union...**
- **for Everett Link...**
- **for N&S of CID...**
- **and "none" for the July promise of Moving Forward with 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**Where's the transparency and accountability?...**

**One of you says it's important to keep promises...  
and that's why unneeded parking garages are built.**

**Don't be on the wrong side of history...**

**The "SUPERMAJORITY" is expecting you to Move Forward on 4<sup>th</sup>!  
Thank you.**