

1/25/2024 Board of Directors Meeting
Written Public Comment Submissions

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John Ho

Dear Sound Transit and King County Executive Dow Constantine,

Across three proposals throughout December of 2023, I had advocated for a Midtown—South (of CID) route with the South of CID station connected to Union Station with an underground people mover, elevated gondola system, ground level streetcar line or shuttle bus line as a compromise between the 4th Ave—Midtown route and North (of CID)—South (of CID) route. In early January of 2024, I had pivoted to advocating for a Midtown—NORTH (of CID) route.

Now, I have realized a HUGE potential missed opportunity regarding the North of CID station, and it involves the so-called “BNSF tunnel” (or “Great Northern Tunnel” as Wikipedia calls it). The current design for the North of CID station treats the Great Northern Tunnel as a mere obstacle to circumvent, which is where the missed opportunity lies. According to Wikipedia, the Great Northern Tunnel serves “Amtrak service to Chicago (the *Empire Builder*) and Vancouver, B.C. (*Cascades*), and Sound Transit's Seattle–Everett Sounder commuter rail service.”

Instead of just building the North of CID station around the Great Northern Tunnel, why not also build new Amtrak/Sounder platforms directly on the portion of the Great Northern Tunnel itself between the Pioneer Square station and North of CID station? This new Amtrak/Sounder station and the Pioneer Square and North of CID station would together form a sort of Pioneer Square Superstation serving the 1 Line, 3 Line, Amtrak AND Sounder!

A criticism I've heard regarding the North of CID station is that its location makes it difficult for Sounder commuters to make transfers. If Sounder service were located at the Pioneer Square Superstation, Sounder commuters could just transfer to Link Light Rail directly at Pioneer Square.

With Sound Transit looking to expand Sounder service, a second Amtrak/Sounder station at Pioneer Square could relieve potential future congestion or overcrowding at King Street Station. And a Pioneer Square Superstation could some day serve as hub for high-speed rail service.

I know adding a new Amtrak/Sounder station to the Pioneer Square/North of CID site is going to add many millions of dollars to the cost of constructing the North of CID station, but it will be cheaper and less disruptive to build this Amtrak/Sounder station simultaneously with the North of CID station than it would be to try to shove in an Amtrak/Sounder station many years later. Also, there will be more room for an Amtrak/Sounder train hall at the North of CID site if we build this train hall BEFORE redevelopment is completed than if we build it after redevelopment is completed.

Adding Amtrak/Sounder platforms to the Great Northern Tunnel will require BNSF's approval, but the revenue from increased Sounder service and the prospect of high-speed rail service might actually make this an attractive proposition to BNSF. And these new Amtrak/Sounder platforms might need state and federal funding as well, but expanded Amtrak/Sounder service and the prospect of high-speed rail service are probably appealing propositions to the state and federal governments as well.

In conclusion, the possibility of a Pioneer Square Superstation serving the 1 Line, 3 Line, Amtrak service, Sounder service and high-speed rail is a possibility that's just too good to not at least consider. Thank you for your time.

—John

Bill Hirt

For Sound Transit Board

The January 20th Seattle Times Traffic Lab article headlined “Cost estimates soar for potential new downtown Seattle streetcar” seems to reflect a newfound interest in transit system costs. The article included concern the \$410 million cost for the connection between First Hill and South Lake Union streetcars was apparently making it “more challenging”. However, “the street cars future was already dim before the most recent evaluation”. Yet the connection between the two routes provides an opportunity to replace the more than \$13 billion Sound Transit is planning to spend boring a second tunnel and implementing 5 new stations for access. Routing the South Lake Union streetcars through Seattle would allow those within walking distance of 10 stops with transit access to downtown. It would allow routing the Ballard Link to the existing Westlake station avoiding the cost and disruption from implementing the one or two light rail stations in the area and the new Westlake Station. Not having to wait for the second tunnel would allow Ballard and South Lake transit service into downtown Seattle ten years earlier at a fraction of the second tunnel cost.

Commuters from Capitol Hill would benefit from not being “crowded out” by riders added by light rail extensions beyond UW. Those riders as well as those along the entire 10-stop First Hill route would benefit by having streetcar access through downtown. All those riding both streetcar routes into downtown would avoid the hassle of needing to use the DSTT stations for the return routes. Thus, the streetcar connection is a far better option than the second tunnel for commuters from Ballard, South Lake Union, and along First Hill route.

Meanwhile current commutes from SeaTac and beyond would benefit if both the East Link and West Seattle links were terminated at existing CID. Those needing to go beyond CID could use existing DSTT. Terminating East Link at CID avoids current commuters losing access to half the DSTT trains. Terminating West Seattle at CID avoids forcing those commuters to share the remaining capacity with West Seattle commuters until the second tunnel is complete.

Using the existing CID station for east side and West Seattle commuters would provide the “near CID station” residents in the area have spent a year requesting. Even board members Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrel and System Expansion Committee chair, Claudia Balducci, called it “a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a space for people to transfer from light rail to light rail, to Sounder and Amtrak”.

The bottom line is the benefits from the streetcar connection dwarf those of the second tunnel. That they do so at a fraction of the cost in far shorter time with far less disruption to Seattle. There would have been no second tunnel if 70% of Seattle voters had not approved ST3 in 2016.

Mayor Harrel has included the streetcar connection in his Downtown Activation Plan. He can use his position on Sound Transit Board to advocate for using some of the nearly \$8 billion Sound Transit will spend on its 2024-2029 Transit Improvement Plan to help fund the streetcar connection. He owes his constituents and the Seattle Times Traffic Lab, its readers, to advocate for the streetcar connection.

Janet Hunter-Shaw

Hello esteemed board members,

My name is Janet Hunter-Shaw.

I am a Sound Transit rider. I use the 545 route to get to work. I also use the 545 to visit downtown Seattle for entertainment, shopping, and dining. I understand the 545 route is set to be canceled. The 545 is the only bus that goes from Redmond to downtown Seattle. If the 545 is cancelled without any replacement, I will no longer be able to get to work.

I would lose my job without a bus route that goes from Redmond to downtown Seattle.

Checking ridership statistics from Soundtransit.org there were 760,101 boardings from 01-01-2023 to 08-31-2023, the last date the statics were published. That is an average of 95,013 boardings per month. There has been an upward trend in ridership. January 2023 had a total of 73,093 boardings, August 2023 had a total of 124,674 boardings.

Many of these boardings are during the weekdays. That would mean thousands of people would have no way to get to work.

The 545 is the only bus that goes from Redmond to Downtown besides the 550 which goes from south Bellevue and the 257 which goes from north Kirkland to downtown Seattle. That is 22 miles between both routes. Neither are accessible for people who live in Redmond without vehicles.

Please, please save the 545 bus route.

This is a bus route that has high ridership boardings. Do not leave thousands of people without the ability to get to our jobs.

Thank you for your time,

Janet Hunter-Shaw

Comments Received after the meeting's deadline

Betty Lau – transcript of verbal comments

**Transcript of Sound Transit Board Meeting Public Comment by
Betty Lau, read by Ashley Nicole Holland, Jan. 25, 2024, 1:30 p.m.,
Union Station**

Greetings Sound Transit Board, and congratulations to those of you who are recently appointed to this august Board!

I am Betty Lau, co-founder of Transit Equity for All.

There's a huge learning curve for you newer members of the board, and my community colleagues and I are happy to help you get caught up on the views of the super-majority of community members about the new light rail plans to bypass Seattle's largest communities of color, Chinatown, Japantown, and Little Saigon, known collectively as Chinatown International District.

The new Year of the Dragon is approaching. May it finally be the year of Race, Social and Economic Justice, Equity and Inclusion. Please be the Board that fulfills the Sound Transit promise of community connection, partnership, and collaboration.

Thank you.

[Brien Chow – transcript of verbal comments](#)

A supplementary document was provided to Boardmembers during the meeting and is attached at the end of this summary.

Sound Transit Board Meeting Public Comment by Brien Chow, Thursday, January 25, 2024

A very warm welcome and Happy New Year to returning and new Sound Transit Board members!

I'm Brien Chow, co-founder of Transit Equity for All.

Remember this board is responsible to provide a world class/regional streamline design light rail system for the citizens of Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties.

Your decision will affect the region for the next 100 years.

On Oct. 19, 2023, the 37th Legislative District... proposed and adopted a Resolution supporting the 4th Avenue South Union Station Transit Hub...

The 37th includes Mt. Baker, Seward Park, Columbia City, Beacon Hill, Skyway, New Holly, Rainier Beach, Bryn Mawr, and Othello.

The 36th Legislative District followed... adopting a similar Resolution supporting the 4th Avenue South Union Station Transit Hub on January 17, 2024... because it makes the most sense.

The 36th includes Ballard, Sunset Hills, Greenwood, Phinney Ridge, Queen Anne Hill, Loyal Heights, Crown Hill, Whittier Heights, Magnolia and Interbay.

I have provided copies of each Resolution... so you all can read them and know why the 4th Avenue S. Transit Hub station is the best location...

And will be emailing you the 4th Avenue Sound Transit Light Rail Station Comparisons and Comments for 2022 to 2023 for your files...to remind you all... what the community has brought to your attention for the last two years.

Thank you.
Brien Chow, Co-Founder
Transit Equity for All, TEA

***Resolution Endorsing the 4th Avenue Union Station Location,
passed Oct. 9, 2023***

Background: Due to wide-spread community opposition, the Sound Transit Board informally paused plans to move forward on a new Chinatown International District (CID) light rail station on 5th Avenue. Despite super-majority community and regional consensus on the 2nd choice 4th Avenue Union Station alternative, the Sound Transit Board voted on March 23, 2023 to adopt two new alternatives called North of CID and South of CID stations as its preferred alternatives. These two, new alternatives require a new DEIS and are full of flaws, chief among them lack of accessibility and connectivity, with disproportionate negative impacts to people of color from the Southend and Eastside.

Whereas the Seattle Chinatown International District is on the nation's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places List;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District deny transit access and connectivity to CID residents and businesses;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District deprive 1200+ senior citizens of color access to light rail, violating ADA regulations;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District will cause negative construction impacts without mitigation benefits;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District will bypass CID, isolating CID businesses from the economic benefits of light rail;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District will add extra transfers, longer walks, and unnecessarily lengthen commute times;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District lack easy access and connectivity to other transit modes (Sounder, Amtrak, busses, streetcar, ferries, airport);

Be it resolved the 37th LD Democrats fully endorse the Chinatown International District 4th Avenue station location at Union Station, which provides the greatest connectivity for the region, as well as social and racial justice for the CID, an historically marginalized district of color that includes the last surviving Chinatown in the State of Washington; and

Be it resolved the 37th LD Democrats call upon the Sound Transit Board to keep its voter approved promise to locate new stations at 4th Avenue at Union Station and Midtown.

Proposed Resolution Endorsing the 4th Avenue South Union Station Location

Passed by 36th District Democrats January 17, 2024

Background: Due to wide-spread community opposition, the Sound Transit Board informally paused plans to move forward on a new Chinatown International District (CID) light rail station on 5th Avenue. Despite super-majority community and regional consensus on the 2nd choice 4th Avenue South Union Station alternative, the Sound Transit Board voted on March 23, 2023 to adopt two new alternatives called North of CID and South of CID stations as its preferred alternatives. These two, new alternatives require a new DEIS and are full of flaws, chief among them lack of accessibility and connectivity, with disproportionate negative impacts to people of color from the Southend and Eastside.

Whereas the Seattle Chinatown International District is on the nation's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places List;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District deny transit access and connectivity to CID residents and businesses;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District deprive 1200+ senior citizens of color access to light rail, violating ADA regulations;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District will cause negative construction impacts without mitigation benefits;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District will bypass CID, isolating CID businesses from the economic benefits of light rail;

Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District will add extra transfers, longer transfers, longer walks, and unnecessarily lengthen commute times;

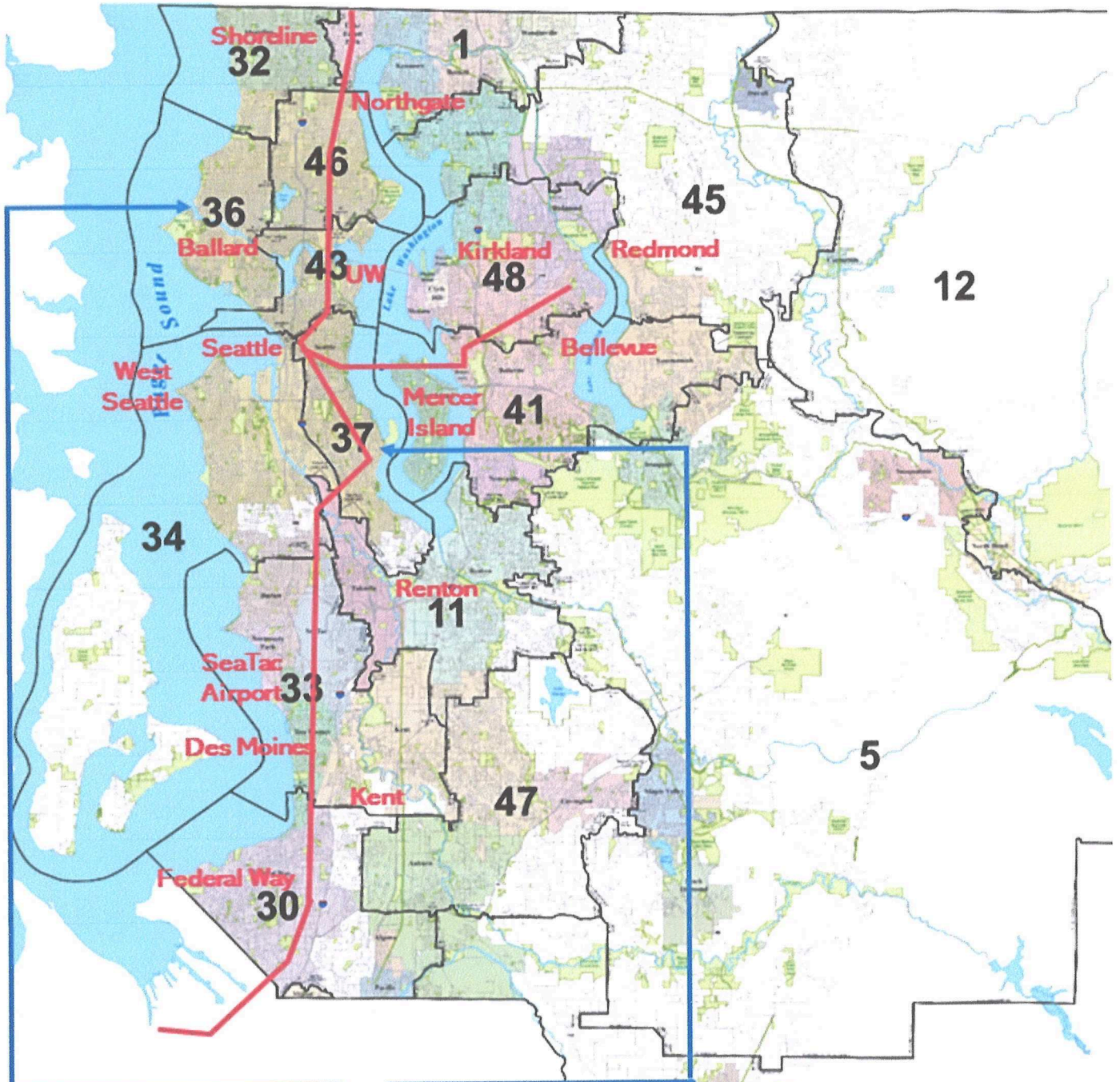
Whereas the Sound Transit preferred alternatives of North & South of Chinatown International District lack easy access and connectivity for all riders to other transit modes (Sounder, Amtrak, busses, streetcar, ferries, airport);

Be it resolved the 36th LD Democrats fully endorse the Chinatown International District 4th Avenue S station location at Union Station, which provides the greatest connectivity for the region, as well as social and racial justice for the CID, an historically marginalized district of color that includes the last surviving Chinatown in the State of Washington; and

Be it further resolved the 36th LD Democrats call upon the Sound Transit Board to keep its voter approved promise to locate new stations at 4th Avenue S at Union Station and Midtown.

Resolution by Betty Lau, originally presented and passed at 37th District Democrats on October 9, 2023. Sponsored at 36th District Democrats by Jeremy Swirsley, PCO SEA 36-2116.
Passed by 36th District Democrats January 17, 2024

2022 Legislative Districts



36th Legislative District

Ballard	Loyal Heights
Sunset Hill	Crown Hill
Greenwood	Whitter Heights
Phinney Ridge	Magnolia
N Queen Anne	Interbay
Queen Anne	

37th Legislative District

Columbia City	Beacon Hill
Seward Park	Mt Baker
New Holly	Rainier Valley
Lakeridge	Bryn Mawr
Skyway	Othello