

09/19/2024 Executive Committee Meeting  
Written Public Comment Submissions

Submissions

**Jan Roberts** ..... 2

**Marilyn Kennell** ..... 2

**Martin Westerman** ..... 3

**Donna Popich**..... 3

**Johannes Heine**..... 5

**Unnamed Commenters** ..... 5

**Comments received after the public comment deadline** ..... 6

**Unnamed Commenter** ..... 6

**Beth Boomgard**..... 6

**John Niles**..... 7

## *Jan Roberts*

Light rail fails to serve “transit deserts” in our community where transit-dependent populations live and are underserved by mass transit. The current cost estimate for the West Seattle light rail link is over \$6 billion and rising for 4 miles of track from the Alaska Junction and only takes us SODO. The cost is obscene. The light rail extension will serve the parts of West Seattle that already have substantial access to mass transit. Alternatively, some of those funds be used to improve existing transit services on the West Seattle peninsula and serve areas in our community where transit-dependent populations live and are underserved by mass transit. It’s a win-win situation for everyone, and it can be achieved with little environmental impact and without people losing their businesses, homes, or jobs. However, these won’t be considered until the Sound Transit Board becomes directly elected. It’s past time for the overburdened taxpayers in the Regional Transit Authority’s taxing district to insist on better accountability from Sound Transit’s Board and bureaucracy. Perhaps it’s time for our State government to step in and fix this mess.

## *Marilyn Kennell*

According to Sound Transit 3 – Section 2: plans can be changed if an element is **unaffordable**, **infeasible** and/or **unbuildable**. The **WSLE light rail is all three.**

(1) **Sound Transit’s WSLE Final EIS shows that the new WS light rail construction costs are 28-40% over budget.**

(2) and (3) **No passenger railroad bridge has ever been built at the length and height ST proposes for its Duwamish River**

**crossing**. Sound Transit’s other “never-been-done-before (light rail tracks over a floating bridge) I-90 project is a cautionary tale).

A new public vote is **NOT** required.

Marilyn Kennell

West Seattle

mkennell@gmail.com

## *Martin Westerman*

**A document supplementing this comment is included at the end of this summary.**

Greetings Board Members,

The WSLE FEIS shows it will only carry 27,000 riders per day in 2032 — the same number West Seattle Metro buses carry today. In 2014, your Metro Transit representative Chris Arkills told the West Seattle Transportation Coalition that it will cancel a bus route if it costs more than \$7 per rider (that's about \$10 in 2024 dollars). So at \$6 billion for WSLE, Sound Transit will be spending \$222,200 per rider to get a four-mile light rail spur into West Seattle. According to ST's first year ridership estimates — about 4 million, that price should drop to about \$1500 per rider. Do you really think that is a reasonable cost to pay for public transit?

If so, you're telling your constituents in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties that you're OK with a \$10 per rider Metro bus dropping passengers at a \$1500 per rider West Seattle rail station, so they can take a four mile trip to downtown Seattle, and a \$10 per rider bus can pick them up at the other end. That doesn't look like competent management or prudent use of taxpayer dollars. It is time to stop and reconsider the WSLE plan.

Detailed comments attached.

All the best,  
Martin Westerman, West Seattle / 206-427-9039

## *Donna Popich*

Dear Sound Transit Executive Committee Members,

I am a long-time West Seattle resident who voted for ST3. I am all for sensible transit.

What Does Not Make Transit Sense:

1. WSLE destroying a very densely populated, established community, including but limited to 70 businesses, over 500 housing units and acres of green space.
2. Cost overruns that are now costing taxpayers over 1.5 billion dollars per mile for an only 4+ mile route that doesn't go downtown.
3. Three (3) light rail stations built within a mile and a half of each other that offer NO PARKING.
4. Sensitive, protected and essential ecosystems destroyed and not fully mitigated, including Blue Heron rookeries, Peregrine Falcon nesting grounds, and salmon and beaver

habitats. West Seattle cleans Seattle's air with over 1/3 of the city's tree canopy - 2 to 3 acres of these trees will be eliminated.

5. Sound Transit (ST) seems to be operating with outdated data. (The evolved needs of the West Seattle community must be taken into consideration),
6. ST3 is being built in a mainly affluent area of our community that already has transit options, while there is a transit desert down Delridge into White Center. This is an accessibility and an equity issue!
7. ST continuously maintains that the voters mandated building (exclusively) light rail. The voters want improved transit. There are more suitable options.
8. For up to a six-block radius of the construction zones, access to surrounding homes and businesses will be obstructed for years.
9. Carbon emission from building ST3 will take at best, 35 years to mitigate; and, at worst, over a century to mitigate.
10. The city is eliminating its own valuable taxpayer base by destroying an inordinate amount of businesses and homes that are tax revenue sources and then by obstructing access to existing businesses and homes.
11. ST insists that the West Seattle Bridge will not be closed during this project for up to 6 – 8 years; but, on the other hand, admits to the fact that the 35<sup>th</sup> Ave SW entrance to the bridge will be closed intermittently.
12. From my home in the Genesee Neighborhood, it takes 10 minutes to get downtown on the C Line. It will take 3 times that long (with at least one transfer) to get downtown using light rail.
13. To ST's own admission, only 3% of the population will use the WSLE.
14. There's a likelihood that our grandkids' grandkids will be paying for this project.
15. Why insist on proceeding with such a troubled, over budget (and counting) project when our taxpayer transit dollars can be better spent on suitable alternatives that better meet the needs of the West Seattle Community?

**What DOES Make Transit Sense:**

- 1. Put our taxpayer dollars to work pursuing more feasible, sensible, and affordable transit, including but not limited to enhanced (electric) bus service and BRT, roadway improvements, bridge and infrastructure maintenance.**
- 2. Have a *real* dialog between ST and the community.**
- 3. PUT ST3 ON HOLD INDEFINITELY!**

**Thank you for your attention!**

donna popich

## *Johannes Heine*

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

I am writing to express my support for the “No Avalon Station” option in the West Seattle Link Extension (WSLE) project. While expanding light rail is critical, I believe the “No Avalon Station” option provides the most balanced and efficient solution for several key reasons:

### 1. Minimized Displacements and Environmental Impact

This option reduces residential and business displacements compared to alternatives, avoiding the disruption of up to 606 residential units and 35 businesses, and protecting parkland . It minimizes social and environmental upheaval in our community.

### 2. Cost Efficiency

The project cost has already escalated to \$6.7-\$7.1 billion, and removing Avalon Station is a more cost-effective alternative. Fewer stations reduce complexity and help manage the project’s overall costs .

### 3. Sufficient Transit Coverage

The proximity of Delridge and Alaska Junction Stations will still provide excellent access to the Avalon neighborhood without the need for another stop. Improved bus-rail integration will support connectivity .

### 4. Less Construction Disruption

Removing Avalon Station reduces construction impacts, particularly along Fauntleroy Way and 35th Ave SW, minimizing disruptions to businesses and traffic .

Overall, the “No Avalon Station” option strikes the right balance between providing effective transit service, controlling costs, and minimizing impacts. I urge you to support this alternative.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Johannes Heine  
West Seattle Resident

## *Unnamed Commenters*

Please listen to the legitimate concerns from all those affected from the upheaval of traffic access, , to all displaced persons, and wrecking of homes and businesses. This is a mess. All in the name of something voted on in 2016. The no build option works. You must not be swayed by those few who may or not use the light rail. Consider the problem of getting to a station and the long time involved in trying to get to work. Just to name a dew problems. Metro busses work so much better and help those without a car. The moneys going to this project are outrageous.

Sent from my iPad

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

I strongly support the “No Avalon Station” option for the West Seattle Link Extension. This option reduces residential and business displacements, minimizing community disruption while preserving parkland. It also offers significant cost savings, especially as project costs have escalated to \$6.7-\$7.1 billion. By eliminating Avalon Station, we can maintain a more streamlined and cost-effective project. Additionally, Delridge and Alaska Junction stations, along with bus integration, will provide sufficient transit access for the Avalon area, making the additional station unnecessary. I urge you to select this option for the benefit of our community.

## *Comments received after the public comment deadline*

### *Unnamed Commenter*

Question for meeting:

When will information on properties affected by access easements which weren't reported in the final EIS be available?

### *Beth Boomgard*

Public comment delivered in person at ST board meeting by Beth Boomgard-Zagrodnik.

The EIS does not sufficiently support moving forward with DEL-6b as the Delridge segment preferred alternative. We strongly urge the Board to reconsider and instead proceed with DEL-6a.

Compared to DEL-6a, the current preferred alternative results in :

- more commercial property acquisitions (19 v. 16 (-3))
- more job losses (130 v. 110, -20)
- and significantly higher noise impacts (160 vs. 68)
- and a price tag of an additional \$100-200 million

Additionally, DEL-6b ignores the impacts of the project on 12 single-family homes at 32nd Ave SW and Andover, including two I own. These homes are excluded from residential displacement counts but will be severely impacted, with:

- the train built mere feet away - closer than any other track to the front of a SFH in the system
- and destruction of the whole – not just the character – of the neighborhood during construction and operations with Visual, Aesthetic, Noise, Vibration, and Traffic impacts for all properties

Including these homes further neutralizes the difference between the alternatives (46 vs. 48 acquisitions).

Should the board make the arbitrary and capricious decision of continuing with the current preferred alternative, we would ask that Sound Transit consider acquiring some or all of the 12 homes, which I project would cost the agency less than \$10M in real property acquisition costs.

Why do this?

The parcels equate to ~85k square feet of land that is within a 5min walkshed of the Avalon station with amazing views of the Cascades to the West and the skyline of Seattle to the North.

Should Sound Transit acquire the parcels this land could be used for construction staging or immediately - instead of almost 20 years after the fact as was the case in the Rainier Valley - be transferred to transit-oriented affordable housing developers to redevelop the parcels increasing the availability of affordable housing in the immediate walk shed of the Avalon Station in line with the construction timelines. This means Sound Transit would directly help increase the number of affordable housing units in the project vicinity.

Moreover, should Mayor Harrell be bolder in the One Seattle Plan regarding zoning in the neighborhood, there is opportunity for tremendous transit-oriented, affordable density on this combined parcel.

There is no reason that single family homes should be in the 5 min walk shed of a transit station and the only reason preventing this creative, mutually beneficial outcome is \$10M and the perception that Sound Transit is a train agency that should only focus on the design and development of high-capacity transit. You can and should do better.

I would happily welcome you to our home to show you what 6b means for us as parents and neighbors and small-business owners. More importantly, it would give you the opportunity to see with your own eyes how the parcels could be transformed to meet the true goal of the agency – a better future for all of us living in the Puget Sound.

*John Niles*

**The substance of the comment below is included at the end of this summary.**

Sound Transit:

Full written version of my oral comments to the Sound Transit Executive Board and top management yesterday that I cut short to stay within two minutes. Please enter into the meeting record of yesterday.

Also, enter this document as a comment for the environmental record for the West Seattle light rail extension project.

--

John S. Niles  
Co-founder, Smarter Transit

--

John S. Niles

President, Global Telematics | [globaltelematics.com](http://globaltelematics.com) | [linkedin.com/in/globaltelematics/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/globaltelematics/)

Executive Research Director, CATES -- Center for Advanced Transportation and Energy Solutions

Research Associate, Mineta Transportation Institute, San José State University

Board Member, Ridesharing Institute

Regional Associate, Urban Robotics Foundation

Seattle, WA USA | +1-206-781-4475 | [jniles@alum.mit.edu](mailto:jniles@alum.mit.edu) & all previous addresses still valid | Twitter:

@EndOfDriving and @JN\_Seattle

Order *The End of Driving: Transportation Systems and Public Policy Planning for Autonomous Vehicles*

textbook (Elsevier 2018) by Bern Grush and me

from the publisher at best price with free delivery at [https://shop.elsevier.com/books/the-end-of-](https://shop.elsevier.com/books/the-end-of-driving/grush/978-0-12-815451-9)

[driving/grush/978-0-12-815451-9](https://shop.elsevier.com/books/the-end-of-driving/grush/978-0-12-815451-9)

Preview of book at <http://endofdriving.org>



9/19/24 Martin Westerman Public Comment

I'm looking for a minimum level of competence on this board that is supposed to manage America's biggest light rail development.

In 2014, your Metro Transit representative Chris Arkills told the West Seattle Transportation Coalition that it will cancel a bus route if it costs more than \$7 per rider (that's about \$10 in 2024 dollars). That looked like Metro was being prudent with taxpayer money.

But the West Seattle light rail FEIS says light rail will only carry 27,000 riders per day in 2032. That's the same number West Seattle buses carry today. So the \$6 billion for WSLE means that Sound Transit will be spending \$222,200 per rider to get a four-mile light rail spur into West Seattle. According to ST's first year ridership estimates – about 4 million, that price should drop to about \$1500 per rider. Do you really think that is a reasonable cost for public transit?

If so, you're telling your constituents in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties that you're OK with a \$10 per rider Metro bus dropping passengers at a \$1500 per rider West Seattle rail station for a four mile trip downtown, so a \$10 per rider bus can pick them up at the other end.

That doesn't look like competent management, or a prudent use of taxpayer money. In November of 2017, your representative Cahill Ridge told the West Seattle Transportation Coalition that Sound Transit has no Plan B on this rail project. He was wrong. You board members have several Plans B, all less expensive, all less destructive and all lower carbon than light rail. Under Section Two of the ST3 package, you are obliged to reconsider any project that is unaffordable, unbuildable and/or infeasible. The WSLE light rail project is all three.

It doesn't matter how many years down the road you take a bad plan. It is still a bad plan that shouldn't proceed any further. So please, show your competence, reconsider this plan, and select a No Build option for it.

John Niles testimony to Sound Transit Executive Committee, September 19<sup>th</sup>.

I'm John Niles, Seattle resident, Sound Transit customer, and co-founder of Smarter Transit, an all volunteer, pro transit, non-partisan and non-profit organization. Congratulations for opening the Lynnwood extension. We hope it continues to see good ridership numbers.

Unfortunately, the current plans for ST3, extending light rail to West Seattle, Ballard, Issaquah, Tacoma and Everett is the most expensive way to attract the smallest number of new riders.

Thanks to the mandatory environmental process applied to the first of the planned ST3 segments, we are just now seeing the sustainability prospects for the West Seattle extension. And it's really bad news.

West Seattle performance forecasts so far revealed are screaming out non-sustainable metrics across all the three E's of sustainability: environment, economics, and equity.

For environment, the greenhouse gas emission measured in metric tons of carbon **exceed** the expected carbon reduction from new transit ridership and less driving in the vicinity of new light rail stations. I've looked up the formulas and done the math. Razing existing houses and businesses, cutting down trees, building trackway, bridges, tunnels, and stations with concrete generates carbon in massive amounts that will not be recovered for decades. If electric motors prevail in trucks, buses and cars in the 2040s, the carbon recovery won't ever pencil out.

On economics, the original ST3 design did not generate a benefit to cost ratio above one, and with the jump in the projected cost of the West Seattle line rising from under \$2 billion for the 2016 approval vote up to \$7 billion, plus with ridership projections not much above the RapidRide buses already serving the corridor, the ridership to cost ratio is abysmal. Instead, Sound Transit could contract with KC Metro for an electric bus service from Seattle CBD to all neighborhoods of the West Seattle peninsula down to Burien.

On equity, the same point of money and geographic coverage applies. Spend far fewer ST billions to serve all the neighborhoods with all disadvantaged demographic categories of folks living in the West Seattle peninsula, and avoid construction disruption and destruction affecting thousands of people living there now.

In conclusion, thank you for the environmental reviews to date, which are clearly screaming Do Not Build a multi-billion-dollar megaproject light rail short line into West Seattle, and spend just a portion of the money under existing Sound Transit authority for a solution that carries more riders for way less money.

Further, the incomplete EIS for the Ballard line is going in the same negative direction on sustainability. Can digging another tunnel under downtown Seattle possibly be good for the global climate?