

09/11/2025 Finance and Audit Committee  
Meeting Written Public Comment  
Submissions

Submissions

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## *Comments received after the meeting's comment deadline*

### *Martin Westerman*

Greetings Finance & Audit Committee Members,

It is our understanding that ST sub-area projects must be financed by funds raised in the sub-area. However, budgets for two proposed central sub-area projects, West Seattle-Downtown (WSLE) and Ballard-SLU (BLE) light rail, have exploded beyond the sub-area's funding capacity. Where 2016 voters approved \$1.6 billion for WSLE and \$3 billion for BLE, budget estimates now are \$9 billion for WSLE and \$12 billion for BLE. These two projects are contributing to Sound Transit's recently announced \$30-\$35 billion budget shortfall.

This brings into question both Sound Transit's ability to manage its budgets and projects, and your ability to exercise oversight on this agency. The BLE and WSLE projects are now creating significant burdens against funding other sub area projects, and jeopardizing the agency's ability to deliver on its ST1 and ST2 promises to complete a light rail spine from Everett to Tacoma.

We therefore support any resolution that reduces overhead and capital outlays, in this case R2025-23. And we oppose any resolution that increases overhead and capital outlays, such as R2025-24, and any resolution that "robs Peter to pay Paul," such as R2025-25.

The Puget Sound Regional Council predicts that by 2050, light rail will only carry about 3% of regional trips in the four-county area despite 20% more build-out, and buses about 5%. Combined, they may carry only 15% of Seattle area trips. PSRC expects the other 85%-92% of trips to be carried in personal or shared vehicles.

We strongly encourage you to aim your efforts toward funding projects that will deliver on original Sound Transit commitments, that boost ridership and service efficacy, such as completing the originally planned spine. We likewise encourage you to delay or find alternatives to rail for projects that do not improve transit ridership and efficacy, such as WSLE, Issaquah, and similarly high cost per rider, high cost per mile, low ridership, high carbon proposals.

All the best,

Martin Westerman and Rethink The Link transit colleagues

On Apr 13, 2025, at 6:46 AM, MartinWesterman <artartart@seanet.com> wrote:

Greetings Board Members,

There is a cheaper, lower carbon, faster-build, high-capacity transit (HCT) system that cities worldwide have integrated into their bus, BRT and light rail transit systems. It can be designed to carry more passengers per day, safely & dependably than WSLE (e.g., 24,000-Ankara vs. 5400-WS-SODO).

Contrary to what USDOT light rail opponent turned ST CEO light rail booster Peter Rogoff (and your former chair and now CEO Dow Constantine) told you and the ST region's citizens, a HCT gondola system CAN be integrated into Sound Transit's bus and light rail system. As you know, Sound Transit, and WA state and federal statutes all define gondolas as an HCT mode, suitable as connectors to light rail main lines.

The data proves our point. Gondola systems are competitive vs. light rail and BRT on bases of price, build time, minimal disruption, destruction and carbon footprint during construction, passenger throughput, safety, dependability and O&M cost. Here are examples and a video:

- LaPaz: 36 stations, 19 mile distance, up to 90,000 passengers /day
- Mexico City: 13 stations, 12.3 miles, 45,000 passengers /day

- Medellin: 19 stations, 9 miles, apx. 45,000 passengers /day.
- Ankara: 4 stations, 2 mile distance, apx. 24,000 passengers /day
- Haifa: 6 stations, 2.5 mile distance, 20,000 passengers /day,

Your constituents in 2016 voted to fund better transit through the ST3 package — including \$1.7 billion for a West Seattle-downtown light rail line. Your DEIS and FEIS show light rail will not increase ridership, improve rider experience, or reduce congestion vs. today's Metro bus services. It is your responsibility to inform the public that there are better options available that can deliver what they voted for, years sooner, for 75% less cost.

All the best,

Martin Westerman and Transit Colleagues

[The Surprising Success of Gondola Transit Systems](#)  
[youtu.be](#)