

10/08/2026 System Expansion Committee
Meeting Written Public Comment
Submissions

Submissions

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Betty Lau

Written Public Comment by Betty Lau, Sound Transit System Expansion Committee Meeting, Thursday, October 8, 2026, 1:30 p.m., Union Station

Hello, I'm Betty Lau, co-founder of Transit Equity for All and board member of the Chong Wa Benevolent Association.

For several years now, I have given public comment on Sound Transit's failure to use the Seattle Racial Equity Toolkit and even its own Racial Equity Tool to conduct socio-economic and CID community demographic studies on residents and businesses and community institutions under NEPA and SEPA.

We've all heard one of you in a prior board meeting ask staff if the Racial Equity Toolkit was used, and he said, "No, we did not, but...."

That is a dangerous pattern I ask you to remedy. Of the 5,100 public comments turned in about the 2022 DEIS, the overwhelming majority chose 4th Avenue over 5th Avenue. Only one letter writer chose 5th Avenue. 1,500 comments were from Seattle city departments.

Shortly after the 5,100 comments were made public (I read them all), Seattle City departments gave the then Sound Transit board a power point presentation summarizing city findings. The city's conclusion? Although the city expressed appreciation for all the hard work put in by Sound Transit staff and very much supported light rail as a partner, it just didn't have enough information to properly evaluate the 2022 DEIS.

I recently found part of the Seattle analysis with comments that I am sharing here:

"The City finds that the DEIS and the EJ [Environmental Justice] Analysis is missing critical analysis and mitigation proposals to support the conclusion that with offsetting benefits the project would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations. The City offers many comments on how to strengthen the EJ Analysis and better integrate the EJ Analysis and the RET in advance of the FEIS" (City of Seattle Comments on the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, p. 3).

Sound Transit staff have still not addressed the Environmental Justice piece nor the required mitigations. As for "integrate the EJ Analysis and the RET," it's a great insight! Do it!

According to the City of Seattle: "This multi-year effort incorporates community engagement and technical analysis to help further the following RET outcomes throughout the project...."

Among city recommendations are:

- "Advance environmental and economic justice to improve economic and health outcomes for communities of color." [Three years and counting; it hasn't happened.]

- “Enhance mobility and access for communities of color and low-income populations.” [Can’t enhance mobility or have access with split stations N&S of CID that bypass CID businesses and residents.]
- “Create opportunities for equitable development that include expanding housing and community assets for communities of color.” [Could do this now by expanding housing into current CID buildings that have empty upper floors—HSD analysis reveals 200,000 sq. ft. of space available, not including empty lots, that could be rehabbed for housing.]
- “Avoid disproportionate impacts on communities of color and low-income populations.” [Accomplish this by applying the Racial Equity Toolkit and doing the NEPA socio-economic studies, which will include the 1,300 low-income, non-English speaking seniors—they are nowhere to be found in the 2022 DEIS.]
- Create a sense of belonging for communities of color at all stations, making spaces where everyone sees themselves as belonging, feeling safe, and welcome. [Difficult to feel safe, respected, and welcome when Sound Transit persists in not correcting the backwards name on the IDC station—we’re told to wait but so far, it’s been 22 years of waiting....]
- Meaningfully involve communities of color and low-income populations in the project. [Hard to feel “meaningfully involved” when there’s an announcement that no information on the split stations of N&S of CID will be revealed until the new DEIS is published, unlike the 2022 DEIS where we were invited to many workshops and meetings to understand the thousands of pages in the DEIS.]

We in the CID wholeheartedly endorse the City of Seattle analysis and call upon the Sound Transit board to direct the CEO and staff to implement all of the above!

Thank you.

Marilyn Kennell

We urge you to halt the current acquisition process, which notifies property owners that their homes and businesses are condemned **before** providing a fair timetable or meaningful opportunities for community input. The West Seattle October 6th drop-in session did not demonstrate genuine concern for those directly affected. With your CEO openly acknowledging that early acquisitions serve the agency's interests, this approach risks disregarding the profound impact on individuals and the community—amounting to a land grab. We ask you to reconsider casting a unanimous 'yes' vote that lacks fairness and empathy. Sound Transit must adopt a process that is genuinely inclusive, equitable, compassionate, and transparent. Until such improvements are made, we urge you to vote as if your own property were at stake. **Vote NO on R2026-23.**

Marilyn Kennell
West Seattle

Dear Neighbors,

Resolution No. R2026-23 is on the Systems Expansion Committee agenda for a vote tomorrow, October 8, 2026. If you can comment, please do so today. Public comment, whether written or oral, goes on the record, but there is no discussion with commenters, and committee members have usually made up their minds before the meeting. Send your comments

to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org. I also send mine to each member's office and will happily provide you with that list. Below is an email my colleague, Paula Goode, sent to Sound Transit a few weeks ago about acquisitions. She welcomes your questions. Marilyn

Resolution No. R2026-23: Authorizing the chief executive officer to acquire certain real property interests, including acquisition by condemnation to the extent authorized by law, and to reimburse eligible relocation and reestablishment expenses incurred by affected owners and tenants as necessary for the West Seattle Link Extension project.

Dear Sound Transit Board Members and Acquisition Counsel:

As the Board considers Resolution R2026-18 and acquisition authority affecting approximately 55 West Seattle properties, I ask that you consider a basic property-owner protection:

What does Sound Transit mean by "*good-faith negotiation*," and what must actually occur before a property is moved into condemnation?

I ask this from personal experience.

In my own Sound Transit acquisition, I provided substantial contrary valuation information supported by an independent professional appraisal review. The response was essentially that we had a "**difference of opinion**." There was **no** meaningful back-and-forth negotiation over those differences before the matter was moved into condemnation. From condemnation notification you only have 3 options, 1. Accept the offer as presented, 2. Mediation 3. Go to Court.

Meaningful negotiation finally occurred during mediation, after I had retained condemnation counsel. That process cost me approximately \$44,000. What struck me afterward was that much of the substantive back-and-forth that occurred during a single day of mediation could have occurred across a table **before** condemnation. A property owner **should not have to spend tens of thousands of dollars to get to that table**.

My experience caused me to look more closely at the broader acquisition process. Sound Transit acquisition data I have reviewed appears to show that a substantial number of properties **proceed into condemnation** rather than being resolved through voluntary acquisition. I am seeking additional records to better understand those numbers. I have also spoken with three attorneys familiar with Sound Transit acquisitions whose experiences raise the same concern: **meaningful negotiation** frequently appears to occur **after** condemnation begins rather than before it.

That **deserves the Board's attention**, particularly now.

Sound Transit's **own procedures** and **state and federal acquisition requirements** describe more than presenting an offer and asking an owner to accept or reject it. They contemplate discussing the offer and its basis, allowing an owner to present relevant valuation information or proposed changes, considering that information, and revisiting the appraisal when new information warrants it.

Yet Sound Transit's newly updated **June 2026 Property Acquisition and Residential Relocation Handbook** describes the process to owners much more simply: an offer and appraisal are presented, and the owner is given a reasonable opportunity to “consider and respond.” The handbook also tells owners they may obtain their own certified appraisal or professional review, **but it does not clearly explain what constitutes negotiation**, what **Sound Transit will do with contrary valuation evidence**, or **what steps must occur before condemnation**.

This gap is particularly important because eminent domain begins with an **unavoidable imbalance of power**. Sound Transit controls the acquisition process and timetable, retains the appraiser and review appraiser, has experienced acquisition staff and legal counsel, and ultimately holds the power of condemnation. The individual property owner has none of those advantages and did not choose to enter the transaction. If an owner disagrees with Sound Transit's valuation, **the burden quickly shifts to that owner to obtain professional advice**, hire an appraiser and potentially retain condemnation counsel. Some imbalance is inherent in eminent domain. The acquisition process should not **add** to it.

Before this next group of property owners enters the acquisition process, I ask the Board to establish a **formal, written pre-condemnation negotiation process**, based on Sound Transit's own procedures and applicable state and federal requirements. At minimum, it should:

1. Explain the offer and its valuation basis;
2. Give the owner a reasonable opportunity to obtain professional advice and respond;

3. Allow submission of a counteroffer, appraisal, appraisal review, remainder-damage information, or proposed changes to the acquisition;
4. Require documented consideration and response to material information submitted by the owner;
5. Require updated appraisal information and a revised offer when new information warrants a change;
6. Require documented consideration of an administrative settlement before condemnation;
7. Provide a low-cost or agency-funded neutral settlement conference or mediation when a genuine valuation dispute remains; and
8. Before referral for condemnation, require the acquisition file to document that these steps occurred, or explain why a step was not applicable.

I also ask that Sound Transit's residential and non-residential acquisition handbooks be **revised to define “negotiation” in plain language and explain the process to property owners**, including what happens when an owner submits an independent appraisal, appraisal review, or counteroffer.

None of this prevents Sound Transit from exercising eminent domain, when necessary, nor does it require the agency to accept an owner's valuation. It simply **creates a fair and transparent process** for trying to resolve legitimate differences before the property owner must enter litigation.

Condemnation should be the result of an **unsuccessful** negotiation—not the place where negotiation finally **begins**.

With a significant number of West Seattle property owners about to enter this process, I believe this is the right time for the Board to define “**negotiation**,” establish a formal pre-condemnation process, and make those protections clear to property owners.

I respectfully request a written response from Sound Transit addressing whether it currently has a formal definition or required process for good-faith negotiation before condemnation; if so, what that process requires; and whether the Board and staff will consider the safeguards outlined above before these West Seattle acquisitions proceed.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Paula Goode

Bill Huenefeld

Please do not vote to condemn property for the West Seattle line. There is no rational reason to continue with planning on a West Seattle line. Buses and autos currently handle the commuters. A rail line would primarily just take people out of buses. I understand that all of you who are on the Board want more public transportation, but please make the public transportation make economic sense. Buses and van pools make much more sense for West Seattle than a railroad.

Sincerely,

Bill Huenefeld
4433 54th Ave, SW 98116
206-909-1371

Gordon Bluechel

Note: The attachment corresponding to this comment can be found at the end of this document.

Executive Summary – Access Laser Input on the Everett Link Draft EIS

Access Laser strongly prefers the SWI-B station alternative, which we believe better serves the purpose of providing transit access to the Southwest Industrial area while minimizing impacts to existing businesses.

If Sound Transit selects SWI-A, we strongly request that it return to the smaller 2023 SWI-A station concept rather than the larger 2024 footprint. The 2023 concept does not require acquisition or relocation of Access Laser, while the current 2024 concept would require acquisition of both Access Laser and ABC Supply Co. The smaller footprint would therefore reduce acquisition and relocation costs for Sound Transit while substantially reducing disruption and risk to two established businesses. In addition, the construction cost would be reduced.

Relocating Access Laser is particularly challenging because our semiconductor-laser manufacturing operation cannot simply be shut down and restarted at a new location. We would need to build and qualify a new production facility while continuing to operate at our existing facility. Our lasers are components of semiconductor manufacturing systems valued at approximately €200–400 million, where downtime can cost approximately \$1 million per hour. A forced relocation therefore creates significant operational and customer risk.

Access Laser has been located at 2211 W. Casino Road since 2018, employs 74 people, and is a high-wage employer with an average wage of approximately \$111,000. Importantly, the employees who would benefit most from the proposed SWI station are also the employees Access Laser employs: 33% of our workforce lives within five miles of our facility, 7% within one mile, and 6% in the Casino Road neighborhood.

We therefore believe the 2023 SWI-A concept provides a practical way to achieve the transit objectives while avoiding unnecessary business displacement, reducing project cost, and preserving an important local employer. If SWI-A is ultimately selected, we strongly encourage Sound Transit to adopt that smaller footprint.

Best regards,

Gordon Bluechel
CEO & Managing Director
ACCESS LASER
Member of the TRUMPF Group
+1-425-382-2242 Direct

Martin Westerman

Greetings Board Members et al.,

Now that you've gifted more money than two million Washington workers earn in a year to a man who doesn't need it — your CEO whose makes more than \$474,000 — how else will you waste taxpayer money at this meeting?

The Resolution R2026-23 before you is about property acquisition in West Seattle. This is for a light rail line that you cannot build without billions of dollars in extra financing that you'll have to get approved by the state legislature next session.

Your light rail line will cause irreparable environmental damage, cost more than any light rail project on Earth, carry no more passengers than buses do, not reduce traffic congestion, and create a carbon footprint that Sound Transit will never mitigate. Your DEIS and FEIS studies say so. Have you read those studies?

We have also made clear to you in meetings with individual board members, in research and studies, and in testimony here that you can choose less expensive, less destructive, lower carbon transit options that can be deployed years earlier than light rail. You are also aware of the Australia study, which found that people prefer light rail because it looks better to them than buses and BRT. Not because it is better. But because it looks better. And many of those surveyed did not even ride public transit.

If that were all that was wrong with the West Seattle light rail project, that should be enough. But it also does not satisfy criteria used worldwide to judge the merits of transit projects — as we have repeatedly reminded you.

But you want to authorize Sound Transit to buy property for this project anyway. Sound Transit held a West Seattle session this week to discuss property acquisition with neighborhoods. Your representatives made clear they would not pay fair market value for the properties, and if the properties did not get used, Sound Transit would not sell the properties back to the original owners at the original prices.

If you approve Resolution R2026-23, you will basically authorizes your agency to waste more taxpayer money on a project that is the worst public transit choice you can make. Please do not make this the answer my question about how you'll waste more taxpayer money at this meeting.

Please instead show us all that you board members are good stewards of public money. Not bad ones.

All the best,
Martin Westerman & Transit Colleagues



Access Laser Input on Everett Link Draft EIS

October 8, 2026 Sound Transit System Expansion Committee

2023 SWI-A Concept Does Not Require Access Laser to Move

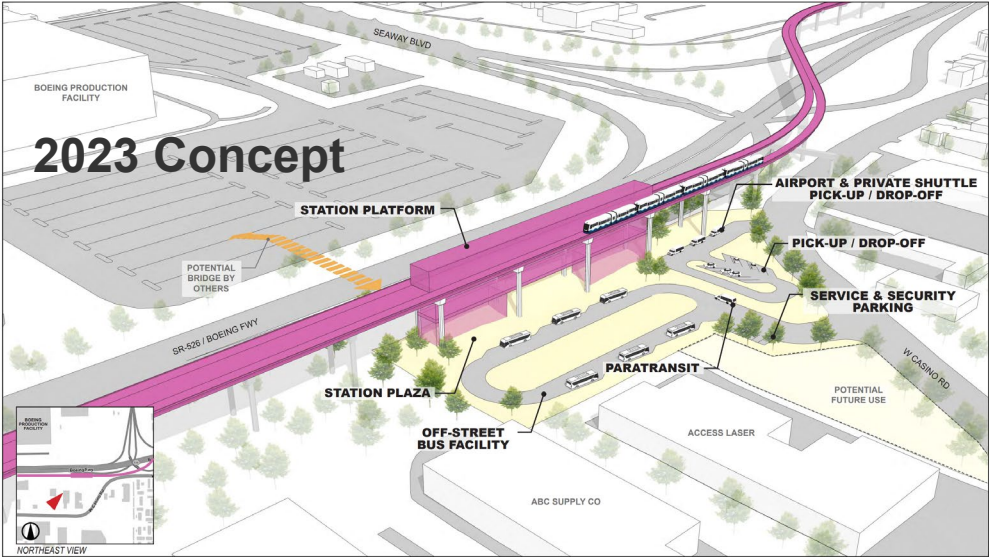
5.5.1 SWI-A

2023 Concept



Note: Minor inconsistency between bay requirements in Table 4-2 and concept will be addressed with further refinement of bus network assumptions if the alternative is advanced to Phase 2.

Figure 5-21 SWI-A Station Access Facility Concept Map



This visualization is based on limited conceptual design and intended to inform comparison among alternatives. The station concept is subject to change as the design process advances.

2024 Concept

SWI-A

SWI-A station would be elevated about 25-65 feet above street level (depending on platform design) and located just south of SR 526. The station could connect to a pedestrian bridge across SR 526 to the Boeing facility to the north for Boeing employees; however, the bridge is not currently part of this project because it has not been approved or funded. This station was identified as the preferred alternative by the Sound Transit Board.



Early station layout for station alternative SWI-A, an elevated station located just south of SR 526 across the highway from Boeing. | Click on image to enlarge

2023 Concept should be significantly less expensive for Sound Transit

Access Laser favors SWI-B as a better location for access to transit

But if SWI-A is selected, we request that Sound Transit return to the 2023 concept and footprint

2023 SWI-A concept envisions only taking Access Laser's back parking lot

- Access Laser would not have to move
- We would just have to deal with parking during construction
- Post opening, transit should reduce need for parking

2024 SWI-A concept requires acquisition of Access Laser and ABC Supply Co.

- More expensive for Sound Transit, both for acquisition and for relocation assistance
 - Access Laser must operate a new facility and old facility until qualified by our customers
- Increases Access Laser's production risk
- The operational risk and cost associated with a forced relocation would increase the risk that our parent company would reconsider the long-term location of this production

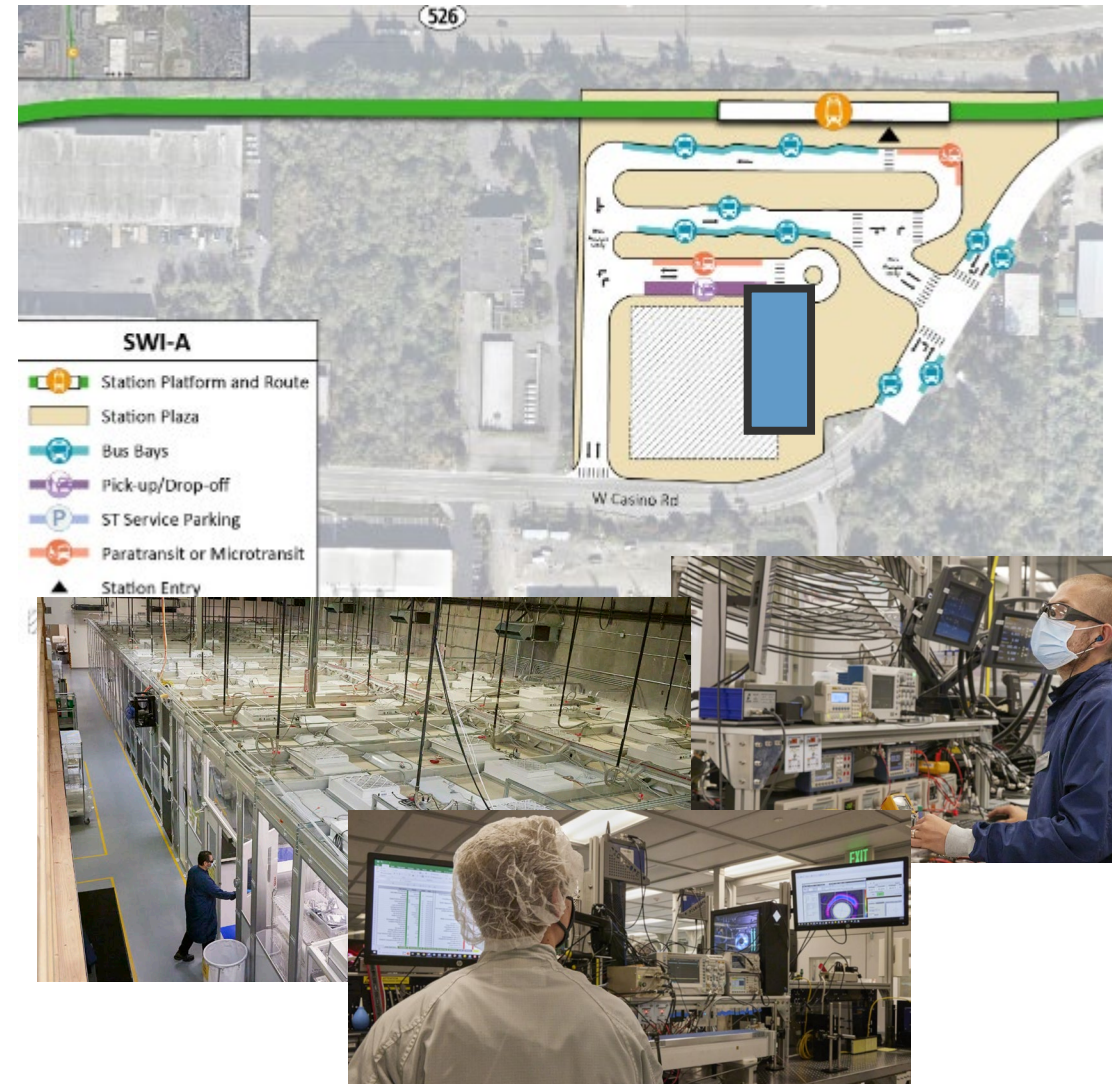
Access Laser – 2211 West Casino Road, Everett WA 98204

Established in 1999 in Arlington

- 2001-2008: In Marysville
- 2008 to 2018: In North Lynnwood/South Everett Unincorporated Snohomish County
- 2018 to Present: In SW Everett Industrial Center Casino Road

Acquired by TRUMPF Group in 2017

- Stuttgart Germany based €5B laser & machine tools group of companies
- Access Laser is part of the EUV Business Division which supplies subsystems required for cutting-edge, high-density semiconductor devices made with process nodes at 7 nm and below



Access Laser – 2211 West Casino Road, Everett WA 98204

Ten Year Lease Starting 2017

- Renewable for 5 years twice with small increases in 2027 and 2032

2017-2018 Move Took 1.5 Years

- Buildout and equipment cost of approximately \$5M (we expect 2030 to be significantly more)
- We cannot shut down our existing production line until the new line is operational and lasers produced there have been successfully qualified against our existing production. This qualification process takes months
- Our lasers for semiconductor foundries go into a system that costs approximately €200-400 Million each. Downtime costs are \$1M/hour in lost revenue.
 - We cannot be the cause of issues with these systems
 - Our business is therefore highly risk-adverse and having to move creates significant risk



Access Laser is a highly desirable employer in SW Everett

Access Laser is a high wage employer for both exempt and non-exempt employees. We hire many employees early in their career and help them grow. Voluntary turnover is 7.1%.

74 Employees – 6 Open Positions (5 new)
45% in Prod, 27% in R&D, and 28% in Admin

Salaries

- Average wage is \$111,300
- Median wage is \$101,214
- Average hourly wage is \$36.43
- Lowest wage is \$27
- Ratio between highest and lowest: Less than 5
- Not including profit sharing (~11% of base at full payout and is the same for all employees)

Access Laser Employees Home Locations

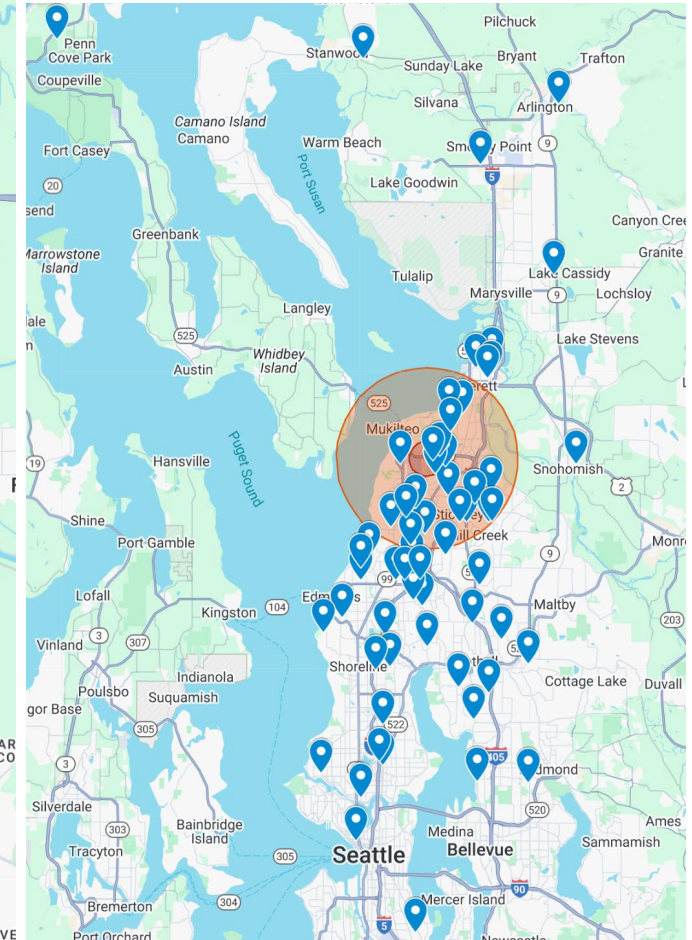
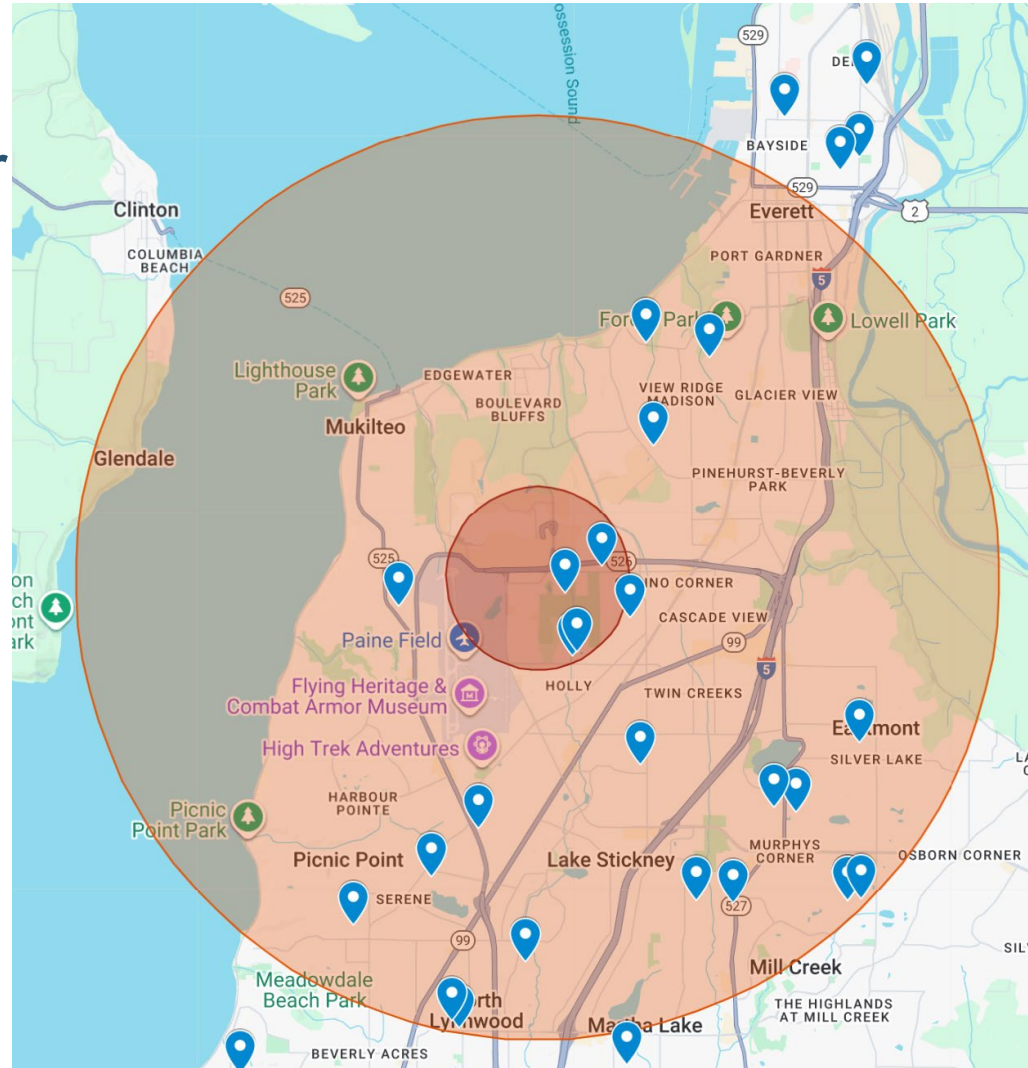
SWI Station is intended to serve an underserved community – Access Laser employs this community

- 33% live within 5 miles
- 7% live within 1 mile
- 6% live in the Casino Road neighborhood

Significant number live along the corridor to be served by the Everett Link to Casino Road

- These employees are among the workers the station is intended to serve

Access Laser Feedback on Everett Link Draft EIS



October 8, 2026

Summary

Access Laser strongly prefers Station Alternative SWI-B to minimize impact on Access Laser.

In the event that SWI-A is selected, Access Laser strongly requests and encourages Sound Transit to return to the 2023 Station Design concept.

This minimizes impact to Access Laser. To move, we must:

- Find a building that is close enough to cause minimal disruption to employee commutes.
- Build out the physical building to match our requirements.
- Much of our production equipment is specific to Access Laser and must be built by us.
- We must continue producing at 2211 Casino Road which requires us to duplicate our production facilities.
- Once we can manufacture at the new facility, we must build lasers there and then take them to 2211 Casino to qualify them to demonstrate that there is no difference in the lasers built at the new location.
- Significant infrastructure from 2211 Casino would then be surplus and need to be scrapped.

The smaller footprint SWI-A is a less expensive option for Sound Transit when it is facing continued issues with budget for the Everett Link

- Lower acquisition cost
- Lower relocation cost
- Lower station build cost