



# Ballard Link Extension



## Project Purpose and Need

In an environmental process, the Purpose and Need statement establishes the basis for developing and evaluating a range of reasonable alternatives for environmental review and assists with the identification of a Preferred Alternative.

The purpose of the project is to expand the Sound Transit Link light rail system from SODO to Ballard, to make appropriate community investments to improve mobility, and to increase capacity and connectivity for regional connections to achieve the following:

- Provide high-quality rapid, reliable, and efficient light rail transit service to communities in the project corridor as defined through the local planning process and reflected in the Sound Transit 3 Plan (Sound Transit 2016).
- Improve regional mobility by increasing connectivity and capacity through Downtown Seattle to meet the projected transit demand.
- Connect regional centers as described in adopted regional and local land use, transportation, and economic development plans and Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan (Sound Transit 2014a).
- Implement a system that is technically and financially feasible to build, operate, and maintain.
- Expand mobility for the corridor and the region's residents, which include transit-dependent residents, low-income people, and communities of color.
- Encourage equitable and sustainable urban growth in station areas through support of transit-oriented development and multi-modal integration in a manner that is consistent with local land use plans and policies, including Sound Transit's Equitable Transit Oriented Development Policy (Sound Transit 2018) and Sustainability Plan (Sound Transit 2019).
- Encourage convenient and safe non-motorized access to stations, such as bicycle and pedestrian connections, consistent with Sound Transit's System Access Policy (Sound Transit 2013).
- Preserve and promote a healthy environment and economy by minimizing adverse impacts on the natural, built, and social environments through sustainable practices.

## The project is needed because:

- When measured using national standards, existing transit routes between SODO and Ballard currently operate with poor reliability. Roadway congestion in the project corridor will continue to degrade transit performance and reliability as the city is expected to add about 287,000 people and about 214,000 jobs between 2018 and 2050 (Puget Sound Regional Council 2023).
- Increased ridership from regional population and employment growth will increase operational frequency in the existing Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, requiring additional tunnel capacity.
- Puget Sound Regional Council (the regional metropolitan planning organization) and local plans call for high-capacity transit in the corridor consistent with VISION 2050 (Puget Sound Regional Council 2020) and the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan (Sound Transit 2014a).
- The region's residents and communities, including transit-dependent people, low-income people, and communities of color, need long-term regional mobility and multi-modal connectivity as called for in the Washington State Growth Management Act (Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.108).
- Regional and local plans call for increased residential and/or employment density at and around high-capacity transit stations and increased options for multi-modal access. VISION 2050 has a goal for 65 percent of the region's population and 75 percent of the region's employment to occur in regional growth centers and within walking distance of transit.
- Environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region, as established in Washington state law and embodied in Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2050 (2020) and 2022-2050 Regional Transportation Plan (2022), include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by prioritizing transportation investments that decrease vehicle miles traveled.

Visit our online open house to learn more about the BLE project, anticipated timeline, and the route and station options (also known as alternatives) developed based on public and agency feedback since 2017. Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, and Spanish versions of the project Purpose and Need statement can be found on the project online open house as well.



## Questions?

Contact the Community Engagement team:  
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