

4/7/2022 Executive Committee Meeting
Written Public Comment Submissions

Submissions

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Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

April 7th, 2022

Sound Transit Board of Directors

Fare Enforcement policy testimony

Thank you for considering changes to Sound Transit's approach to fare non-payment. The proposed program would be a significant improvement over the old program. **In particular, we support the ongoing implementation that focuses on connecting people to resources rather than applying punitive measures, the elimination of suspensions, ending removal from the train for nonpayment, increased number of warnings, and non-financial ways to resolve a citation.**

However, we are very concerned that fines for repeated citations still rise to high levels, fare non-payment may still lead to a civil infraction issued through the court system, and fines may go to debt collection agencies if unpaid. Penalties like these can ruin people's lives, for example by preventing them from finding rental housing, and there's no evidence that they're an effective deterrent. The people most harmed are likely to be riders of color, especially Black riders; low-income riders; riders with disabilities and riders experiencing homelessness, housing security or mental illness. I urge you to wholly divorce fare enforcement from collections and the criminal legal system.

We also urge you to cap fines at no more than \$50, to permanently adopt the subsidized annual pass program, and to work with other agencies in the region to expand this and other reduced or zero-fare programs so that more low-income riders have access to our region's light rail system."

Our goal remains the same: truly increase transit access for all potential riders and end harmful and disproportionate punitive impacts to communities of color and riders experiencing homelessness. It means that we may need to not ask "how do we punish people who cannot pay?" but instead, "how can we ensure everyone has access to an affordable fare?"

Sound Transit should and can seize every opportunity to lead on equity and social justice in transit. Good public policy solves problems and broadens access; punishing people who can't pay the fare is not smart or good public policy.

Thank you for your work to make sure that all riders have equitable access to affordable transportation.

Sincerely,

Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

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Joyce Hengesbach

At the March 24 board meeting, CEO Rogoff announced that Sound Transit was preparing a study of the SkyLink gondola at the request of board member Constantine in January. Mr. Rogoff said he would report on the study findings today, and they would be posted on the Sound Transit website; however, we do not see an agenda item related to the study. Has it been postponed so Sound Transit can take a more in-depth look that covers alignment options, tower locations, capacity, cost estimates and other key elements?

CEO Rogoff's March 24 announcement surprised us. No one from Sound Transit has contacted SkyLink about this study. **Sound Transit's only discussion with SkyLink occurred in early January of 2021, more than a year ago,** and shortly before the \$11.5 billion deficit was announced and realignment was triggered. Since then, the SkyLink team has spent a great deal of time learning more about local and regional transit needs, light rail options, and gondola technologies and applications. So, we wonder what exactly is Sound Transit studying?

The DEIS has given West Seattle residents and businesses a better picture of the impact that light rail will have on its communities. Concerns are rapidly mounting about how disruptive, destructive, inequitable, environmentally damaging, and costly it will be. We are attaching some photos and renderings from the DEIS to illustrate why residents and businesses are upset, and how a gondola alternative might look.

At your March 30th public input hearing for the West Seattle DEIS, more than half of the commentors asked Sound Transit to consider a gondola as an option for connecting West Seattle to light rail stations in SODO and the International District. To date, more than 1,350 West Seattle residents have signed a petition asking Sound Transit to fund an independent study by aerial transit experts – as the cities of Kirkland, Vancouver BC, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles have done.

We urge you to study this alternative before more than a thousand people may have to find new homes, businesses are adversely affected, acres of green space are wiped out, and lengthy construction causes traffic congestion and pollution.

Do you recognize the current view looking west on Genesee between Delridge and Avalon?



Here is a rendering of what the same area would look like with light rail (figure 2.7c in Sound Transit's WSBLE DEIS)



Looking at Genesee going east from Avalon:

Would you rather have SkyLink? (rendering by framewiz)



Or light rail: (from Sound Transit DEIS)



Note: the areas depicted as green fields/landscaping in Sound Transit's renderings are spaces where buildings and flora have been removed to construct the viaduct.

Marilyn Kennell

This Comment was received after the meeting had and was not recorded during the meeting. It was intended for verbal public comment and relates to the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Section 4.2.17 DEL-1b. DEL-2b states there will be minor PERMANENT effects to Longfellow Creek Natural Area and Trail as well as minor temporary construction impacts. And possible major PERMANENT effects on up to 600 "units" which contains human beings. Gondola study needed!