

8/10/2023 System Expansion Committee
Meeting Written Public Comment
Submissions

Submissions

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Bill Hirt

An earlier post had detailed the “benefits” of Sound Transit’s decision to implement an East Link Starter Line between Redmond T/C and South Bellevue P&R. That Starter Line operation with 2-car trains would demonstrate the lack of access limited ridership to where Sound Transit will never be able to justify the costs of routing 4-car trains the 14-mile round trip from South Bellevue to Redmond T/C every 10 minutes for 14-16 hours a day.

Sound Transit will “benefit” because the 2024 result will provide the time needed to facilitate terminating 2-car East Link trains at CID.

The recent July 27th Sound Transit Board meeting agenda identified a second “Benefit” of the 2024 Starter Line regarding 2-car trains. Whether East Link operation will be limited to avoid exceeding Bellevue environmental noise limits. The below resolution was in the agenda as Business Item A. While I didn't see it discussed in the video, I'm presuming it reflects their approach.

Resolution No. R2023-15: Adopting a Noise and Vibration policy and superseding Motion. No. M2004-08.

The resolution included the following “Key Features” summary:

Revising the existing Link Noise Mitigation Policy (Motion No. M2004-08) is appropriate because it is out of date, applies only to Link light rail noise and can be improved to reflect lessons learned from implementing Sound Move and ST2 projects.

While Sound Transit “learned from implementing Sound Move and ST2 they also “learned” East Link noise levels from preliminary light rail tests in the Bel-Red area. It was presumably those results that led to resolution including the following revisions:

The chief executive officer (CEO) has discretion to assess and mitigate impacts to new development that are built after this date.

And

Eliminates detailed procedures on how to implement the policy.

The resolution background included the following:

The intention behind this policy point is to avoid or minimize revisiting the design of noise and vibration mitigation late in the design or construction phase of projects. To ensure Sound Transit has flexibility in applying this proposed policy, the chief executive officer (CEO) is granted discretion to address new developments that occur after this date, considering project scope, schedule, budget, community concerns, and other factors as appropriate.

And

Key policy points in the existing policy have been retained, such as the need for mitigation to be reasonable and feasible. Procedures and details deleted from the existing policy will now be documented in agency

However, contrary to Sound Transit claims, Motion No. M2004-08 did not include any mention of “the need for mitigation to be reasonable and feasible”. What was included, the rationale for the motion the Board voted to replace, was detailed in the History of Project including the following”

Potential noise impacts from operation of the Initial Segment occur primarily along MLK Jr. Way S. and in Tukwila. Within Rainier Valley, there are projected to be 123 noise impacts. All of these include traffic noise impacts from widening MLK Jr. Way S. and 70 of them also include noise from the light rail vehicle. Of the 29 noise impacts in Tukwila, 24 are light rail generated and 5 are from buses at the station park-and-ride. Pursuant to the amended ROD for the Initial Segment, mitigation for these impacts shall consist of designing and operating the light rail vehicles and tracks to minimize noise, noise barrier installation and the implementation of a residential sound insulation program (RSIP).

And

Many of these issues also apply to noise mitigation for the Link Light Rail project in general. This staff-recommended Link Noise Mitigation Policy on noise mitigation responds to these issues and the staff desire for guidance on noise mitigation implementation.

Thus M2004-8 committed to minimizing train noise, noise barriers, and sound insulation to mitigate noise levels, presumably in response to Bellevue Municipal Code. Section 9.18.030 of the Noise Code details the maximum permissible environmental noise levels for the environmental designation for noise abatement (EDNA). The area within which maximum permissible noise levels are established by the Washington State Department of Ecology and this code.

No person shall cause or permit sound to intrude onto the real property of another person which exceeds the maximum permissible sound levels established by this chapter. The point of measurement shall be at the property boundary of the receiving property or anywhere within.

Class A property, residential, was limited to 55 dBA and Class B property, commercial, limited to 60 dBA. Between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00a.m. the

maximum permissible levels were reduced by 10 dBA for Class A property.

Sound Transit concern with meeting those noise levels on the route into Bellevue presumably led to the “Shoreline Substantial Development Permit Application”. It included details about the extensive mitigation efforts for ~200 properties some distance from the tracks along the west side of the route into the city. (Though nothing to prevent train noise from ending the Mercer Slough’s “quiet solitude” on east side of the tracks). Yet, Sound Transit has made no attempt to mitigate noise level along Bel-Red to Redmond. Their approval of Resolution R2023-15 indicates their response to the lessons learned from implementing Sound Move and ST2 projects was to newly empower their own CEO to decide what is “reasonable and feasible”, ignoring the Bellevue Municipal Noise limits. The result of R2023-15 is Sound Transit’s efforts to mitigate light rail noise have devolved from spending millions to insulate property along route in Seattle and to shield those living along the route into Bellevue, to empowering their CEO to decide what is “reasonable and feasible” for those living along light rail on the route between Bellevue and Redmond. Again, the measurements from preliminary light rail testing along Bel-Red “likely” necessitated replacing M2004-8. (yet still claiming it also included the “need for mitigation to be reasonable and feasible”) What makes R2023-15 so consequential is it demonstrates Sound Transit apparent belief that whatever the noise levels, all that’s required are “reasonable and feasible” attempts to mitigate the noise. Yet the only way to significantly reduce noise is slow down the train or reduce the number of cars. The Starter Line test will provide environmental noise levels from half the noise source of 4 car trains. If it exceeds Bellevue code limits, 4-car trains will exacerbate the problem. The Starter Line train operation will presumably reflect what Sound Transit considers as “reasonable and feasible” to limit the noise. Thus R2023-15 suggests they may not even measure Starter Line 2-car-train environmental noise.

Thus, it will be up to “others” to determine whether Bellevue environmental noise limits are violated and force Sound Transit to limit East Link to 2-car trains. The problem is the Bellevue City Council has spent more than a decade of acceding to Sound Transit desires. This blog began because the council ignored multiple appearances at meetings as well as emails attempting to convince them they should disallow permits Sound Transit needed for East Link construction. That not only would it not reduce I-90 congestion, it precluded 2-way BRT I-90

routes on I-90 Bridge center roadway with 10 times the capacity, ten years sooner at 1/10th cost. would do nothing to reduce I-90 congestion. The East Link Starter Line noise levels will provide another test of the council. Will they require Sound Transit to provide environmental noise measurements or have the city fund their own measurements. If the measured levels for 2-car trains indicate 4-car trains will exceed the limits will they require Sound Transit limit East Link to 2-car trains.

The 2024 Starter Line benefit is it provides another reason for Sound Transit to modify CID station to terminate East Link and facilitate operation with 2-car trains.

Doug McArthur

I'm a resident of Seattle, I enjoy getting around by bike and transit and I can't wait to have more options to get to places that I love. We need more high quality transit ASAP and cannot afford any more delays. Please vote NO on M2023-69 and consider the effects of daily transit riders all over our region.

Thank you for your time,

Doug McArthur

Chirag Khatri

Dear Committee Members,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to express my strong concerns regarding the upcoming vote on M2023-69 during today's System Expansion Committee meeting. As a concerned stakeholder, I urge you to vote "No" on this proposal, which, if approved, would add a staggering \$122 million in costs and an additional two years of delay to the already protracted planning process.

The goals and objectives of ST have always aimed to provide efficient, accessible, and sustainable transportation solutions to our community. However, the implications of M2023-69 seem counterproductive to these aims, potentially burdening our transit system with unnecessary expenses and extended timelines. Not to mention potentially proceeding on a worse implementation of what can be a great new expansion. The CID N/S plan of which you're voting on researching today is bad and should not be done, it's a waste of a large amount of time and money and effort. Please just go with the original plan which keeps CID + Midtown stations. It's crucial to consider the long-term impacts of such a decision. The financial burden of an additional \$122 million could divert resources from other essential projects and services that our community relies upon. Moreover, the two-year delay proposed in this measure could hinder our

progress toward meeting the transportation needs of our growing population. We could be using this time, money, and energy for other things since we already have an amazing plan w/ CID + Midtown stations.

In light of these concerns, I kindly ask you to vote "No" on M2023-69 during the System Expansion Committee meeting today. By doing so, you will demonstrate your commitment to responsible resource management, efficient project execution, and the well-being of our community.

Sincerely,
CK

Seattle Subway

MEETING COMMENT - Seattle Subway's August 10th, 2023 System Expansion Committee Written Comment

Dear Sound Transit Board System Expansion Committee Chair & Members,

Seattle Subway is writing today to request that this committee **decline to recommend** moving forward with **M2023-69** which would spend an additional \$122 MILLION on an UNNECESSARY, new, Draft EIS for Ballard to Downtown Link Expansion. Instead, please **save \$100 million in direct costs and avoid two years of indirect delay costs**, today. We have studied this enough. Please construct the Ballard Link Extension stations at 4th Ave in CID, at Madison Street in Midtown, and at 7th and Harrison in SLU.

Seattle Subway believes in this agency's stated mission of supporting people, planet and prosperity by providing affordable, environmentally-friendly public transit, and we are here to comment on behalf of transit riders, and to elevate the goal of equity for transit riders who will actually have to use this system. Equity for transit riders means **reducing travel times for transit riders** and making sure that the **system is designed with the people who will use it in mind**.

You must not allow critical stations with critical transit connections to be deleted or relocated creating a lack of access and additional delays for riders. This applies in south lake union and connections to Rapid Ride E just as much as it applies to 4th Avenue in CID and Madison Street in Midtown stations. The fourth avenue station in CID must be built as the crown jewel of our transit system, connecting our entire regional rail system including Sounder, Eastside to southbound link transfers, and Amtrak. The Midtown station is the best performing new station in ST3 and must be built for its just-barely-acceptable connection to the Madison Corridor and Madison Street BRT.

Millions of future transit rides depend on the decisions this board makes, please make the **equity for transit riders** your top priority.

Sincerely,
Seattle Subway
CC: Seattle City Council

Alex Kaehler

As a lifelong resident of King County and frequent user of light rail, the N/S CID proposal is wasteful, foolish, deeply unserious, and directly contradicts the plan voters approved. Don't screw up a hundred-year investment for a silly little redevelopment plan, like some kind of Scooby Doo villain. Adding five, ten, or fifteen minute delays to EVERY transfer for TENS OF THOUSANDS of riders for the next CENTURY is completely unacceptable and should not even be on the discussion table. Drop the nonsense and build the transit system voters told you to build.

Regards,
Alex Kaehler, Tukwila resident

Joe Kunzler

Joe Kunzler here. I ask the Sound Transit Board to **please pass** R2023-24 and R2023-25.

We all owe Claudia Badassuchi - and now I would argue Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson, too - one.

The bill is due at Claudia's. We're not going to have our card declined and thrown onto the rocky beaches of Lake Washington.

We're going flying very soon downrange in Olympia fighting to save our inclusive, representative democracy at the PDC and the state legislature from a Trumper arsonist so please enforce the Board Rules around public comment. Yes, Alex Tsimerman: When you come for democracy, democracy comes for you. Put that Joyceln Benson tweet on a bumper sticker, please. See we have to be able to TRUST one another. That's impossible with any self-important jackazz putting their wants over the team. Now that We the North's merger and the end of my time in TransitWorld has a cold December 2025 date...

If anybody wants to tell Claudia Badassuchi NO, you better tell me NO too. Same me running to Bellevue City Council to fight the flames of Tsimerman-ism. Same me prosecuting Tsimerman at the PDC. Same me who wants to SAVE Everett Transit and go out that way.

Do better Sound Transit - and you can please start by PASSING R2023-24 and R2023-25. UNANIMOUSLY with a friendly amendment that East Main Station is to become Badassuchi Station. Please.

THANK YOU;
JOE SENDS

Zack McKinney

I'm agnostic on the CID/Midtown station moves, and I understand the financial and community issues with a CID station on 4th Avenue. The SLU station proposals are, I think, much starker in terms of their quality. Deleting a station in such a fast growing, vibrant area just doesn't make any sense. SLU needs two Link stations, and any plan which removes one does a massive disservice to the 10,000 daily riders that would use it.

People, including myself, voted for two Link stations in SLU. Please follow through with what was promised to the voters.

Zach McKinney

Parker

Please do not approve M2023-69, we do not need further delays and ST continues to stray from the voter approved plans for short-sighted, expensive alternatives. My confidence in ST leadership is at an all time low. Please take a step back and reconsider.

Over 2400 individuals

The following is a representative message of a form email.

We are writing to you today to urge you to put an end to the plan to start over on the Ballard to Downtown Environmental Impact Statement (EIS.)

The voters approved major expansion in 2016, and expect you to deliver it. Since then, we have participated in years of process and community engagement which produced the options already available to the board. Do we really have to wait even longer to finally ride a system we are paying for? It's time for the Sound Transit Board to choose from the existing Ballard Link Extension options.

Stopping the new EIS means stopping the deletion of three of the highest ridership stations in the system: Chinatown International District, Midtown, and South Lake Union Stations. Stopping the new EIS means maintaining the high ridership system this entire region voted for in 2016.

A new EIS will take years to complete and is likely to waste of hundreds of millions of dollars. All in the interest of putting forth worse options that fewer people will use. More self-inflicted delays are

unacceptable on their own, but these are costly self-inflicted delays with an end goal of justifying bad decisions.

Do not permanently destroy our transit system out of short sighted priorities. Stop wasting time and money on endless process, choose existing options, and stop the new EIS before it starts.

Comments submitted after the deadline

Charles Cooper

I'm writing today to urge the board (and its subcommittees) to vote **NO** on Motion **M2023-69** and anything that would add further delay to building what the voters approved in **2016**.

Charles Cooper

Ben Reilly

I can't make the full meeting today, but I'm begging you to just put a shovel in the ground already, not start another design.

No one is going to remember some minor cost savings or how some drivers were temporarily inconvenienced - particularly because a lot of those drivers will shift to transit (if it is useful and convenient!)

People will remember having to wait another decade. They will remember if they have to walk miles to transfer to new stations in odd locations.

I expect this isn't an easy job and I appreciate the effort. Please, let's just build this thing.

Kevin Weddell

This is a ridiculous way to waste money while allowing non-transit riders to negatively impact the future of the system.

Your constituents approved a plan. Follow it.

Do not approve M2023-69. Do not waste \$120+ million dollars studying a station that worsens the system. Do not spend 2 years listening to politicians and their donors who do not and will not utilize the system.

Kevin Weddell

Beacon Hill, Seattle, WA

Alex Fritz

Do not add 122 million dollars and 2 years of delay in order to degrade the quality of our light rail system. Follow the wishes of the electorate and keep the CID and Midtown stations. I do not drive, like many other people in this city; we will all be negatively impacted by these useless changes. Vote no.

-Alex

Unnamed Commenter

Just want to share public comment that I'm opposed to the constant changes in decisions. I don't want any prospective stations removed from the plan. I would love for sound transit to simply move forward with safe, quality decisions and engineering to ensure that we get rail transit SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. We've seriously been waiting way too long for this.

Thank you!

Andrew Roberts

I'm writing to object to \$122M of additional spend and delays on light rail planning... Voters already approved this build - Sound Transit needs to stop delaying and build it!

--

Andrew Roberts

Colin Campbell

Please do not water down a plan that will inform transit for an entire generation to limit short term impacts. Seattle will be left with the decision you make here for the next 50-100 years at least and we need to make sure the system is as strong as possible to serve as many people as possible. Short term impacts will be gone in a decade. A poorly placed transit system will be unusable for a century and be a continued waste of our public investment while leaving us with the existing segmented broken transportation options. If older generations of Puget Sounders wanted to avoid major disruptions from building public transit in one of the fastest growing cities in the country they should've done this 50 years ago. Don't continue to make the same mistakes. Make bold choices that prepare our city for continued growth and success which means planned neighborhoods and strong public transit opportunities.

Best,

Colin Campbell

Lifelong Seattle area resident and transit user

Lutz

Please vote no. We want real transit, stops that last for generations. We don't care about traffic disruptions. I work at amazon FWIW.

-lutz.

Alex Tsimerman

