

10/12/2023 System Expansion Committee
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Stephen Fesler (two separate comments)

Dear boardmembers:

This board needs to stop doubling down on bad investments that serve non-transit service purposes. M2023-87 and M2023-89 direct scarce transit dollars away from potential investments to buy more Sounder and local transit service and put it into static parking uses that are money pits and don't generate consequential ridership increases. These motions are a backwards thinking to what transit is and this board should put an immediate stop to it by rejecting M2023-87 and M2023-89. Earlier this year, I detailed the [unconscionable tradeoff this board is making when it invests in non-transit projects like parking instead of projects that support more transit service](#). Here, the agency is poised to spend a wild sum of \$180,000 per parking stall...stalls that will be empty over 80% of the time. Amortizing the cost of these stalls over 30 years, that's an annual subsidy of \$6,000 per year per driver. That's insane. At that rate, just buy these people Ubers.

Do the public right and reject these motions, reinvest the money in more Sounder service and local transit connections whether fixed-route bus service or Metro Flex.

Kind regards,
Stephen A. Fesler

Dear committee members:

Last month, this agency opened the very delayed, over-budget, and mangled Tacoma Link Extension. So much has gone wrong with the project but the one thing that should have gone right was service levels. Yet, this agency is delivering 20% less service than planned.

Today you're going to hear more from Sound Transit planning staff about this agency's inability to deliver service on Link. It's not pretty and what will be presented is not the whole story of how the agency is failing to provide that planned service. Staff will refer to planned 8-minute frequencies per line when the agency had been planning 6-minute frequencies per line. That's a big difference when this agency will actually be delivering 10-minute frequencies per line, 40% less service than promised.

Just three years ago, the 1 Line was operating with 6-minute frequencies.

How did things go so terribly wrong?

This committee, this board needs to ask hard questions and make hard decisions. If this agency is to keep failing on the operations side and is intent on running a multi-billion-dollar train system like glorified buses, then I'm afraid to say it has no business delivering any further system expansions. Vaguely maybe fixing what are now problems in 10 or 20 years is just unacceptable and unjustifiable.

We need to get the basics right and at the moment this agency is not.

Kind regards,
Stephen A. Fesler

Anthony Rose

Please stop wasting my money on parking garages, and endless studies, and just build the train we voted for.

Anthony Rose

Kyle Jacobson

As the East Link extension faces delays, as we spend more public money evaluating *more* alternatives for station locations, as Link train frequency has dropped significantly, and as Link faces expected overcrowding, Sound Transit has to use money judiciously to provide fast, efficient, and convenient transit. Transit, not parking. Like many Sound Transit users, I don't own a car. If Link can't operate effectively, I can't get where I'm going. Not so for those with cars who live far from stations.

We have station parking, we don't need more, and in particular we don't need to be spending \$180,000 per parking stall to build more. This is not a responsible use of Sound Transit's limited funds in a time of near-crisis for the agency.

Thank you,
Kyle Jacobson

Jared Johnson – Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority

Hello ST System Expansion Committee Members:

In Spring 2023, the SCIDpda Board of Directors aligned with a broad coalition of CID stakeholders urging Sound Transit to select 4th Avenue shallow as the preferred alternative for the CID segment. SCIDpda and its Board of Directors continues to believe the connectivity and benefits provided by the 4th Avenue shallow station and alignment is the best choice for the future of the CID, and for the future of transit riders in the region.

In our view, the alternative selected for the CID segment has not been sufficiently tested or studied. We ask Sound Transit engage in a more robust scoping process for the new draft EIS, to bring forward new alternatives that do more to minimize harm, while also providing the connectivity the voters were promised when we passed ST3. We urge the Board to commit to funding and providing technical support for mitigation measures that truly counteract construction impacts.

Jared Jonson

Co-Executive Director
Seattle Chinatown International District
Preservation and Development Authority
(SCIDpda) | www.scidpda.org
409 Maynard Ave S, Suite P2 | Seattle, WA 98104
Phone (206) 550-6460 | Fax (206) 467-6376

Bill Hirt

Dear System Expansion Committee

The below post from my blog <http://stopeastlinknow.blogspot.com> details Sound Transit plan to spend \$46M funding a Starter Line debut that will cost over \$80,000 a day to attract riders along route from RTC to South Bellevue P&R. There they'll transfer to and from ST550, joining Bellevue residents currently riding ST550, who won't need to transfer for the commute into and out of Seattle.

Bill Hirt

Starter Line Agency Progress Report

Sound Transit uses monthly Agency Progress Reports to summarize projects and major contracts status, risk, and performance of capital projects. The front page of the Oct 4th release of the August report heralded "The Sound Transit Board approves Spring 2024 opening of the East Link Starter Line". The report's Executive Summary included the following:

Sound Transit Board approves Spring 2024 opening for eight 2 Line Stations

At its August meeting, the Sound Transit Board approved opening the Link 2 Line with passenger service on an initial eight-station segment between South Bellevue and Redmond Technology stations in the Spring of 2024.

As proposed, and opening prior to the full 10-Station 2 Line which connects Seattle and the Eastside with track running on the I-90 floating bridge, the East Link Starter Line will run with two-car trains every 10 minutes, 16 hours a day. The final service level will be approved by the Sound Transit Board as part of the 2024 Service Plan. This action is expected in October.

The Board's action included provisions to meet ridership demand on the 1 Line, including maximizing peak-hour service, adding bus service in Snohomish County and support for Lynnwood passengers until the opening of the full East Link Extension.

Existing ST Express and King County Metro routes including Route 550, B Line, and other local routes are anticipated to continue operating on their current routes until the full 2 Line opens in 2025.

The Sound Transit Board authorized up to \$43 million from the existing East Link Extension \$3.68 billion budget to fund the activities necessary to open the East Link Starter Line in Spring 2024.

The East Link Starter Line began with an August 30th, 2022, Seattle Times

Opinion by Claudia Balducci, Sound Transit System Expansion Committee chair, "Don't delay opening of the Bellevue-to-Redmond light rail starter line". Sound Transit CEO Julie Timm's December 8th post, "East Link opening timeframe update" provided details and schedule.

The August report raises several concerns. For example, the decision to attract ridership with a schedule of 2-car trains every 10 minutes for 16 hours a day will add a substantial cost. Sound Transit budgets light rail car operating costs as ~\$30 per mile. Each 2-car-train round trip on the 7-mile extension will cost \$840. The operating schedule requires 96 round trips or \$80,640 a day.

Another concern is, except for parking at Redmond T/C and Bel-Red/130th station, access to the Starter Line is limited to those within walking distance of the "eight-station segment". A deterrent for many potential transit riders. Especially since the report confirms CEO Timm's blog statement "Existing bus routes will continue" operating on their current routes until the full 2-Line opens in 2025.

Those riders will still have access to multiple stops within walking distance of where they live along the entire 7-mile link. All providing access at a tiny fraction of the cost of a single light rail station. They also benefit from not having to transfer to and from route 550 at South Bellevue for the commute into and out of Seattle.

However, the Executive Summary report indicates that access will end when the “full 2 Line opens in 2025”. It’s unclear when in 2025 since the Progress Report’s “Link Light Rail Program Overview” for the East Link Extension includes a Recovery Plan Float to RSD that extends to the end of the year. A Risk Management issue that may impact schedule is “significant contractor claims on E130 and E750” dealing with replacing track attachments and installing power lines for trains. Whatever the date, the lack of access will dissuade many commuters.

The Progress Report announcement, “The Sound Transit Board has authorized \$43 million to fund the activities necessary to open the East Link Starter Line” reflects a “substantial” increase from an earlier \$6 million cost estimate. Those “opening activities” must really be something.

The bottom line is Sound Transit’s August Agency Progress Report is a recipe for Starter Line “opening festivities” whose cost and subsequent daily operating costs will dwarf the farebox revenue from ridership limited by the option commuters have to use existing buses. It’s when they lose that option, they and all the other I-90 corridor commuters will experience the folly of allowing Sound Transit to confiscate I-90 Bridge center roadway for East Link and use it to replace bus routes into Seattle.

Comment Received after the meeting’s deadline

Vincent Riviera

Dear Boardmembers,

I’m Vincent Rivera, a resident of Sammamish and student at Bellevue College. I am very excited to see ST3 taking shape and look forward to more lines opening up in the years to come. However, no mass transit system is complete without a core transit hub. I believe your intentions of moving forward with your preferred alternative of skipping the Chinatown station for the Ballard link is a mistake. The voters approved of the 4th Avenue Hub at Union Station, so that should be the option you decide on, not these late additions that are receiving extensive criticism.

Currently, the preferred alternative of stations north and south of CID will hurt ridership and bypasses a community that you should be communicating with and supporting.

Vincent Rivera

Betty Lau – Transcript of verbal comment

Hi System Expansion Committee,

I'm Betty Lau, co-founder of Transit Equity for All.

CEO Timm, I am deeply moved by your call to "justice for all" and hope your staff extends it to its own backyard, the CID.

A lot has happened since your last meeting, and a lot has not happened. Here's what has not happened:

1. The promise of studies on 4th Avenue as per Sound Transit Board vote of March that 3 alternatives will move forward
2. No information in any language on how Sound Transit will provide transit access, connectivity, and economic benefits to the CID by skipping the 4th Avenue Hub
3. No planning information for 1200+ seniors of color to have ADA access to get to N&S of CID platforms and once they get there, no plans to get them down, across and up again in walkers, wheelchairs, and canes.

Remember that federal funds used for major infrastructure projects must provide services and other benefits to impacted communities of color.

The Technical Advisory Group recommends No delays!

Stop the delay of two years of studies for N&S of CID! Move Forward on 4th!

Thank you