



Aug. 17, 2023

Ms. Cassie Franklin, Mayor of Everett

Ms. Christine Frizzell, Mayor of Lynnwood

Mr. Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive

**Subject: Information Responding to July 31, 2023, Letter Regarding Lynnwood Link Opening**

Dear Sound Transit Board members Somers, Franklin, and Frizzell:

Thank you for your July 31 letter regarding the opening of the Lynnwood Link Extension planned for Fall of 2024. Staff provide the following responses to your questions based on our meeting on Monday afternoon, and we would be happy to discuss these questions further with you at your convenience. This letter documents what we discussed to support clarity and allow for follow-up conversations.

First and foremost, the agency is fully committed to ensuring that the Lynnwood Link Extension (LLE) is well-positioned to open for passenger service in 2024. Given current construction progress and the planned Community Transit system restructuring for Fall 2024, we expect to be ready to open the LLE to passengers along with the Community Transit bus system integration into the Lynnwood Station Transfer Center in the Fall of 2024.

We also share your desire and commitment for passengers to have the best possible experience on our service. With construction challenges and repairs delaying the I-90 portion of the East Link Extension (ELE) by two years and given LLE's on-time construction to date, ST (Sound Transit) staff recommend opening LLE on time in Q3 2024 as a 1 Line extension only, even though LLE was never envisioned as a single-line service.

Operating plans for LLE originally assumed both the 1 and 2 Lines being fully operational at the Lynnwood Link opening. Line 2, when open, will operate over the East Link Extension and requires access to the Operations & Maintenance Facility East (OMFE). Line 1 access to OMFE is also needed to provide sufficient vehicle storage and maintenance to operate the shared-line International District/Chinatown to Lynnwood segment of the system with the planned, combined service frequencies estimated at around every five minutes. Until OMFE's storage and maintenance capacity are fully connected to the current service, these higher frequencies are not possible. Lynnwood Link will only be able to operate at constrained frequencies on the 1 Line based on vehicle availability at OMF-Central. Therefore, LLE opening service frequency is expected to operate at 10+ minute headways based on current operational analyses. This is the current reality regardless of whether the Board

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**Julie E. Timm**

decides to move forward with the East Link Starter Line (ELSL) in Spring 2024. The only way to launch LLE with the greater frequencies planned based on access to OMFE would be to defer its launch – likely by as much as a full year or more – until with or after the full opening of the ELE. Opening the Lynnwood Link Extension until after the full East Link opening as originally planned would represent an unacceptable and unnecessary delay.

At the Aug. 24 meeting, staff expects that the Board will approve the proposed opening of the ELSL for Spring 2024, which would open six miles and eight stations of the 2 Line on the East Link Extension between South Bellevue and Redmond Technology stations. This segment is not affected by the construction challenges on the I-90 segment of the ELE. Sound Transit needs approximately 23 vehicles and approximately 180 King County Metro (KCM) positions for operations and maintenance to run the proposed ELSL initial service level of two-car trains every 10 minutes. The vehicles necessary to operate ELSL are already onsite at OMFE, isolated from the 1 Line and sitting unused except for testing, commissioning, and retrofitting. Launching ELSL will have no effect, positive or negative, on 1 Line vehicle capacity constraints. KCM has already filled approximately 82% of the necessary positions to safely operate daily service on ELSL for a Spring 2024 opening, and KCM continues to hire as quickly as possible for both ELSL and LLE (with a planned Fall 2024 opening). As of last month, KCM has already filled approximately 70% of positions for LLE. We are confident that KCM will be able to hire the required operators and maintenance staff to safely open both ELSL in Spring 2024 and LLE in Fall 2024. Sound Transit will continue to work with KCM on hiring strategies to meet operational needs in time for pre-revenue and opening day milestones.

In response to your four critical priorities:

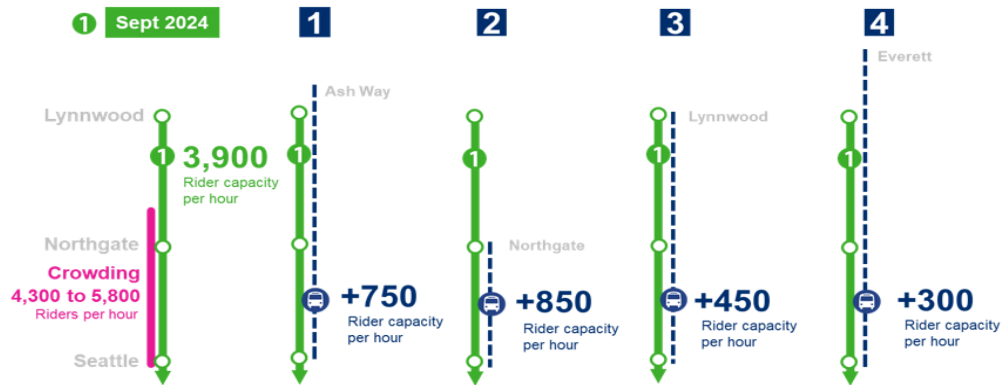
### **1. Do not compromise the opening of the Lynnwood Link Extension in Q3 2024**

As mentioned previously, we are steadfast in our commitment to ensure delivery of the Lynnwood Link Extension in the Fall of 2024 (specifically in Q3). We will also continue to monitor the risks for LLE and ELSL separately, as well as the programmatic or shared risks that may affect both (such as shared resources). Again, we remain laser focused on ensuring the safe and reliable opening of both extensions in 2024, including LLE in Q3 2024. Further, you have my commitment as CEO to manage the system in such a way that the operational integrity and service levels on the 1 Line – including the Lynnwood Link Extension – remain the priority for our system until we can balance the needs of the entire system with the full opening of the East Link Extension. I have also made this commitment to the Federal Transit Administration Region X Administrator, and I heard the same commitment made by several Sound Transit Board members independently. We will not compromise the opening of the LLE in Q3 2024, and we will continue to look for pathways to increase service and vehicle availability for the 1 Line as we wait for the full ELE opening.

### **2. Implement a Sound Transit temporary bus shuttle until East Link connects across I-90**

Using the latest ridership projections and achievable service levels, staff will continue to forecast and validate expected passenger loads on the 1 Line when it extends to Lynnwood. Staff expect to provide that information to the Board in September along with feasible options to mitigate unacceptable crowding. As you note, this ridership information is important not only for our Snohomish County passengers, but for all passengers traveling through the busiest segment between Northgate and International District/Chinatown stations.

Specifically, staff continues to examine different options for supplementing capacity on the 1 Line after it opens to Lynnwood City Center and before the 2 Line can be extended including continuation of some ST Express bus service between Seattle and Snohomish County. Staff identified four ST Express route options (illustrated below) including a direct shuttle between Lynnwood and downtown Seattle.



These options are being coordinated with Community Transit (CT) to assess and determine what level of reliable operating support CT can provide under our interlocal agreement for ST Express operation. Recruiting and retaining bus drivers and maintenance staff remains challenging for all transit operators in the region, and staff continues to work with Community Transit and their subcontractors to maximize staffing for continued ST Express service in the I-5 corridor.

Staff is also proposing to restore the remaining two Sounder N Line round trips to provide further capacity in the corridor and additional travel options for Snohomish County riders – especially to support when WSDOT (Washington State Department of Transportation) starts work on their Revive I-5 program. Restoring the Sounder N trips will increase that service to four daily round trips serving Everett, Mukilteo, and Edmonds.

### 3. Prioritize added 1 Line rail capacity by January 2025

In addition to our commitment to opening LLE in Q3 2024 and maximizing service support through all modes available to us, staff is also fully committed to continuing to accelerate construction on the I-90 portion of the ELE. I understand that we are in a race against time to open ELE as soon as possible to support regional mobility needs especially in consideration of WSDOT's pending Revive I-5 work in the coming years. Sound Transit Board and staff all share an intense sense of urgency to provide as much 1 Line capacity as possible ahead of WSDOT's start to the Revive I-5 construction, and staff continues to work with our WSDOT partners to ensure good coordination leading up to the launch of this work and as it progresses over the following several years.

As part of this commitment and urgency, staff will continue to analyze opportunities to add 1 Line capacity once non-revenue movement of light rail vehicles across the I-90 portion of the ELE is possible. In other words, if we can connect the 1 Line to OMFE during ELE track testing or simulated service testing, but before the full start of revenue service on I-90, we will work towards that goal. However, this potential solution is incredibly complex and will require further study prior to a commitment to act. Staff must consider how we may bring trains from the Eastside onto the 1 Line without impacting existing 1 Line service and general fleet availability. While conceptually it may be

possible for 1 Line capacity to increase in this way ahead of the ELE I-90 segment opening for revenue service, there are very likely other significant risks - including the safety of ongoing construction workers and rail operators along a line that may not have completed full safety certifications by this window - that we must fully identify and evaluate.

Staff will continue to monitor the ongoing construction repair of the concrete plinths on the ELE I-90 segment, as well as any repairs that might be identified during pre-revenue and simulated service periods. Staff will continue studying all these options and risks/mitigations and will keep the Board fully updated.

#### **4. Re-visit vehicle availability and storage capacity with a goal of increasing peak hour service**

To maximize available vehicles for 1 Line service, staff is planning to temporarily store an additional 20 light rail vehicles outside of our central Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMFC) at the Northgate and Angle Lake stations until we can access more vehicles at OMFC when the 2 Line is connected across Lake Washington. The breakdown of this additional capacity is as follows:

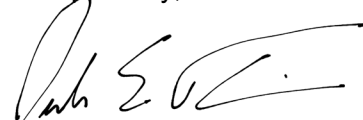
Northgate Station: This location has a parking garage and facilities for staff, and it is 10 miles away from OMFC. The station platform, pocket track, and track adjacent to the pocket track with walkways allows for reliably storing 12 Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) in the combination of three 4-car train sets.

Angle Lake Station: This location has a parking garage and facilities for staff, and it is 12 miles away from OMFC. The station platform can provide safe and efficient access to the LRVs. This location can accommodate eight LRVs in two 4-car train sets.

This added temporary storage of LRVs will support opening the Lynnwood Link extension with services projected for every 8-9 minutes during peak and every 10 minutes off-peak along the entire 1 Line from Angle Lake to Lynnwood. This mainline vehicle storage will require modifying usual operations, cleaning, and maintenance practices to accommodate storage outside of OMFC. These include cleaning vehicles at the Northgate and Angle Lake stations, transporting train operators from OMFC to those stations to access the trains parked there, and changing mainline inspection practices during non-revenue hours. Attempting to store even more vehicles along the 1 Line alignment would unacceptably reduce operational flexibility and service reliability.

I am grateful for the partnership from your three jurisdictions and particularly from Community Transit and Everett Transit. Please let me know if you would like to discuss this response, the [memo](#) provided to the Board in July, or anything else.

Respectfully,



Julie E. Timm  
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Moises Gutierrez, Chief System Quality Officer, Sound Transit  
Brooke Belman, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Expansion Delivery Officer, Sound Transit  
Russ Arnold, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Service Delivery Officer, Sound Transit  
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