

7/18/2024 Rider Experience and Operations
Committee Meeting Written Public
Comment Submissions

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Shannon Ren

Hello,

Please focus on studying and making safety improvements for the light rail stations along MLK Way South. The south end of Seattle is unfairly disadvantaged from years of red lining and discrimination. The deaths and crashes because of the street level rail add to this. More needs to be done to prevent collisions between trains and pedestrians, bikes, and cars. It is unacceptable for people to die while simply existing in their neighborhoods.

Best,
Shannon Ren (she/her)

Nancy Anderson

I am writing to support this motion that puts forward study and consideration of methods to increase the safety of the light rail grade crossings on MLK. I live in Bryn Mawr-Skyway and I take the light rail regularly from the Rainier Beach Station. The graded crossing is just not safe. It's too easy to cross into the tracks for pedestrians and for cars as well. I note that most of the light rail fatal accidents take place along these crossings. Please figure out how to make these crossings safer!

Thank you !
Nancy Anderson

John Niles

July 17, 2024

For the Sound Transit July 18 Meeting of the Rider Experience and Operations Committee

Public comment from John Niles, Seattle resident

As an [independent transportation operations analyst living in Seattle](#) over several decades with a long-term civic focus on Sound Transit operational safety, **I urge the Committee to recommend passage by the full Board of either proposed Motion M2024-45 or M2024-46, with my preference for the latter** because of its more limited scope to fit within the tight

study time frame stated, and the higher urgency of improving safety of the MLK Jr Link track way compared to other Sound Transit track ways.

I have earlier interacted with the Sound Transit Board on multiple occasions about the collision issue presented by the design of the Link surface track way in SE Seattle. See the history of my concerns on [web pages here](#).

Now here is a new safety statistic I just computed that should be of great concern to every Board Member and every citizen of Seattle: the **historic fatality rate experienced so far by Sound Transit light rail collisions with people and vehicles on MLK Jr. Way is about ten times the national car crash rate of deaths for car occupants and cyclist/pedestrians**. I find this shocking ... worse than I expected before I looked up the numbers today.

The calculation is easy to show:

2023 U.S.A. car crash fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles is 1.26 See <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2022-traffic-deaths-2023-early-estimates>

Motion M2024-46 states that there were 8 (eight) fatalities in the lifetime of Link Light Rail. I assume this is accurate, and does not include known suicides, but actually, the news is bad for ST and the community even if a few suicides are included.

Sound Transit has reported to FTA that Link light rail in its lifetime from July 2009 to April 2024 has delivered 65,670,908 [65.67 million approximately] vehicle miles in revenue service according to the [National Transit Database](#)

[of USDOT](#), by adding up the monthly reports of vehicle revenue miles. Eight fatalities in this many vehicle miles yields a rate of 12.2 fatalities per 100 million miles, simple arithmetic. [8 times 100 divided by 65.67 equals 12.2]

So, summarizing, comparing the rate of 12.2 deaths per 100 million Link light rail vehicle revenue miles to 1.26 car crash fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles, the **fatality rate per vehicle mile delivered by light rail on MLK Jr. Way is about ten times the national car crash rate of deaths.**

Light rail advocates emphasize that riding aboard a light rail train is safer than riding in an automobile, which is true, assuming personal assaults on train passengers are constrained. It's also true that more peds and cyclists die in Seattle every year from being hit by cars and trucks than the eight deaths occurring from being hit by light rail over the years since 2009. It's also true that most people killed or hurt by light rail trains were incautious and not engaging in safe behavior around trains.

Given these facts, a reason for supporting the proposed study described in the proposed Board motions is to examine whether there are other safety considerations that need to be considered, such as whether the alleged traffic calming brought about by the building and operation of light rail on MLK, Jr Way has made it a safer transportation corridor overall since 2009. This was a claimed forecast when I intervened earlier and was rebuffed.

Another consideration in the work coming from the proposed Board Motions covered in this message would be to examine and verify or refute the claim seen in some government

documents: If and when the expected number of fatalities per one million operating hours of an installed government facility used by human beings exceeds more than one death per million operating hours it is then above the "1C index level" meaning a "catastrophic" "occasional" hazard. At that level of harm, the facility is in some documents I've seen rated "unacceptable" to be built and operated. This is worth looking into.

Best regards,

--

John S. Niles

Brenton Clark

I support CM Zahilay's motion No. 2024-46. Rainier Valley has been disproportionately affected by traffic collisions around at grade light rail stations. Sound Transit must prioritize safety upgrades at Rainier Beach, Othello, and Columbia City stations.

Thank you.

Brenton Clark, MPA

Martin Pagel

Dear Board,

I would like to voice my support for the Rainier Valley Safety Master Plan. While short term improvements could improve safety, I believe grade separation will ultimately be necessary. I understand that Sound Transit had a preliminary study been done to elevate the line or trench it. Both would be extremely disruptive for the current rail operation. I suggest that instead it should be studied how to add underpasses for all the major east/west roads to go under MLK and the existing tracks. That underpass could also include a shallow pedestrian path which could provide a ramp for pedestrians and cyclists to access the station platforms. There are many such examples around the world.

Best

Martin Pagel

Columbia City



Or bigger as outside of Amsterdam: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HACaRm2KP6Q&t=644s>

Carla Kotila

Attn: Sound Transit Board

I support motion No. 2024-46, Council Member Zahilay's motion.

As a resident of South Rainier who rides the light rail, walks and drives these intersections, it is clear that light rail safety for Rainier Beach, Othello, and Columbia must be urgently addressed.

The opportunity to endanger oneself due to inattention, impatience, or distraction can occur currently by anyone.

Crossing to a station on foot requires full attention. Waiting as a driver at signals delayed by trains requires patience.

These access points were designed without total safety in mind. As a result, people have been injured or died unnecessarily.

Please pass CM Zahilay's motion!

Best,
Carla Kotila

Kyle Jacobson

I am writing to indicate my support for motion No. 2024-46 regarding safety on MLK Way South. Sound Transit needs to do right by the residents of the South End by delivering fast, reliable, and SAFE train

service. Residents of (and visitors to) the South End have been paying with their lives and health for the original sin of at-grade light rail crossings, and CM Zahilay's motion can help begin to make things right.

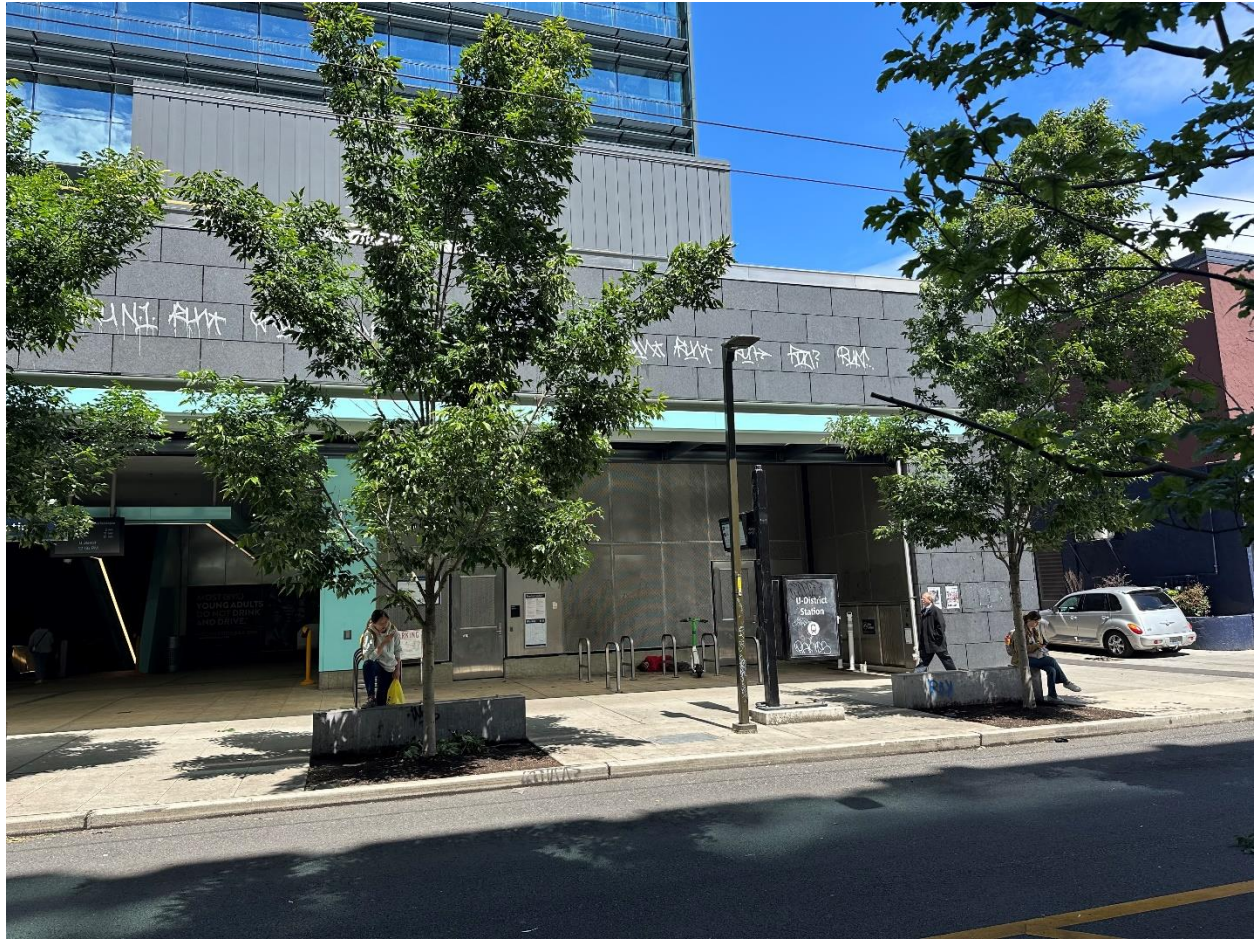
Thank you,
Kyle Jacobson

Stephen Fesler

This is emblematic of how poor Sound Transit maintains its assets and how little oversight relevant committees provide. Have some pride in your transit system that exists today. You all own this.









Comments received after the meeting's deadline

Kathryn Keller

I would like to express support for CM Zahilay's motion 2024-46 to prioritize safety improvements and safer solutions for light rail line in SE Seattle. At this point it divides community into a very dangerous place even while we expect and want more neighbors and neighborhood and commercial centers.

Thank you,
Kathryn Keller

Gregory Davis

My name is Gregory Davis, resident of Beacon Hill in the Rainier Valley of Seattle, District 2.

I have been organizing through the Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan and in Rainier Valley since 1999. The organization I lead, Rainier Beach Action Coalition, along with Puget Sound Sage was a part of organizing young people in 2010 to analyze transportation policy. That effort resulted in 2024 with anyone under 18 years of age in the state of Washington being able to ride public transit for free.

I witnessed the unsuccessful effort of Rainier Valley residents to have light rail in Rainier Valley built below grade. To read a report that stated since service began in 2009, light rail train vehicles have collided with a vehicle, person, or object at least 136 times in the Rainier Valley is a nightmare come true for those who foresaw the possibility of an at grade facility. And then I learned in 2023, Sound Transit reported 26 collisions with light rail vehicles for the year of which 20 occurred at grade crossings and 18 occurred along the MLK Jr. Way S corridor. I urge you to support Motion M2024-46. The organization I lead, the Rainier Beach Action Coalition, owns property across from the Rainier Beach Lightrail station and the 8 individuals who have tragically lost their lives in the Rainier Valley hits too close to home. We operate a Food Hub and Farm Stand from this location serving elders and young people. I would love to be able to say to them particular efforts are being made to address the safety issues in Rainier Valley over a system wide review. Rainier Valley deserves a priority focus. It would be most unfortunate that the community where the regional Light Rail system began could not be the beneficiary of Sound Transits best thinking and become its safest. Support Motion M2024-46 because Rainier Valley deserves to be focused on.