

09/12/2024 System Expansion Committee  
Meeting Written Public Comment  
Submissions

Submissions

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## *Matt Hahnfeld*

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

As a resident of the C-ID, I'm writing to you today to ask that your decisions keep promises that Sound Transit 3 made to the region's voters in 2016. Sound Transit 3 was approved by nearly 70% of Seattle voters and 58% of King County voters, promised to expand the existing multimodal transit hub in the Chinatown/International District (CID) with a second Link station, and promised to add a new Midtown station, serving First Hill. It is vital that the Sound Transit Board follow through on the voter-approved plan. A late-breaking alternative proposal intends to squander the potential of a world-class transit hub near Union Station and — once again — skip First Hill entirely. Do not let it succeed.

So much transit connectivity is contingent on having the Ballard-to-Tacoma line connect directly with the existing CID Station along with the Sounder, Amtrak station, regional buses, and the streetcar line next door. With the 4th Avenue in CID alternative being built, CID is the most important hub in the Sound Transit 3 network, which is projected to carry 600,000 daily riders by the 2040s.

Sound Transit is building a second downtown Seattle light rail tunnel because the existing tunnel can't handle all the traffic that three light rail lines would entail. Adding the second tunnel also allows the agency to add a station at Midtown, on the edge of First Hill with a high quality connection via the RapidRide G Line set to open bus rapid transit service in 2024. This Midtown Station is projected to attract more than 15,000 daily riders which would be the most of any non-hub station in Sound Transit 3.

A coalition has emerged behind a "North of CID and South of CID" option that pairs a Pioneer Square / Jail Station with another station that is a five-minute walk south of Uwajimaya Asian Market. These stations are not in CID. The "South of CID" station might be better described as "Freeway Interchange Station" being hemmed in by I-90 to the south, I-5 to the east, and a highway-like section of 4th Avenue and a BNSF rail yard to the west. The opposition to 4th Avenue in CID argues that the Freeway Interchange Station and the Pioneer Square Jail Station would provide comparable transit service. But for future light rail riders, that is patently false. Here's why transit would be worse under the "North of CID and South of CID" alternative:

1. Breaking the CID's direct light rail connection to the South End is a big deal. People in the South End would have a worse connection to the CID than they have now because their trains would no longer go to Chinatown Station, but instead to Jail Station or Freeway Interchange Station. Because

Asian communities are increasingly spread out across the region, that connection is vital for the CID to play the role of the cultural hub of the community in a future that will be more transit-dependent and less auto-dependent. Likewise for people living in the CID a hub station provides a link to relatives and friends living elsewhere and to the airport. The lack of a high quality transfer at CID Station would mean significant delays in the 10-minute range for many trips (e.g. Rainier Beach to CID). Transportation departments would never tolerate such delays if planning car infrastructure.

2. A good anti-displacement strategy is key and will allow additional light rail to be additive rather than destructive to Chinatown and the CID community. The opposition to the transit hub in CID makes counterfactual assertions that “displacement” would be a non-issue having two lines in a neighborhood, plus another next door, yet three lines in a neighborhood equates to total neighborhood displacement. Most of the low-income residents in the CID already live in affordable housing that is rent-restricted and the neighborhood has special affordable housing development providers, and a special development review board that has the ability to greatly limit real estate speculation within the CID. Lots of housing is going in as is, but a large chunk of it is affordable.

3. Stopping cultural displacement in the CID is going to take multiple strategies and blocking a light rail station could backfire. Commercial rent control, affordable housing investments, residential rent stabilization, and support for culturally-relevant small businesses and entrepreneurs seems key to an anti-gentrification strategy rather than hampering transit access. Good transit access and a bustling transit hub at the heart of the neighborhood is only going to help CID small businesses thrive. We urge the board to support a robust mitigation strategy and ensure small businesses and residents weather the disruption of station construction.

4. The duration of construction and engineering risk with 4th Avenue S is a tradeoff, but also provides an opportunity to upgrade all of the aging and deteriorating bridges and viaducts in the area in one fell swoop. For instance, the 2nd Avenue S Extension bridge is rated poor and is going to need to be replaced soon, which will impact the 4th Avenue S and S Jackson Street intersection since it's structurally integrated into it. Avoiding a station at 4th Avenue S does not avoid interruptions caused by such needed bridge rebuilds. Bundling these projects together minimizes overall construction impacts and also provides an opportunity to redesign the unsafe mini-surface highway that is 4th Avenue S.

5. Equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD) opportunities exist with the County Campus and County-leased Salvation Army site whether or not light rail is placed directly on them. The County campus is already next door to Pioneer Square Station. The County should use its campus to add mixed-income housing despite it being bad for light rail. The “South of CID” site is bad for housing

since it's sandwiched against the enormous I-90/I-5 interchange with no walkshed to the west, south, or east. Buying this property at great cost would be great for the wealthy, well-connected developer who currently owns it, but is a bad move for the County and Sound Transit. It appears these two sites are proposed because they are convenient for the County to offload, not because they make sense for transit or provide new TOD opportunities that wouldn't already exist.

Over 4,000 individuals and organizations have already called for Sound Transit Board action to: build the 4th Avenue CID station, fulfilling its potential as the site of a truly world-class multi-modal transit hub; and build Midtown station (see: [change.org/moveforwardon4th](http://change.org/moveforwardon4th)). To our elected representatives on the Sound Transit Board, please build the 4th Avenue station in the CID that will best serve decades of transit riders from across the Puget Sound region, and please build the Midtown Station that will best connect First Hill and serve 15,000 daily riders.

Matt Hahnfeld  
[matth@everysoft.com](mailto:matth@everysoft.com)

Seattle, Washington 98104

*Jeffrey Baldwin*

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

Sound Transit must build Ballard Link Extension stations under 4th Ave in CID, at Madison Street in Midtown, and at 7th and Harrison in SLU. 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) that requires over \$100 million extra in direct costs, adds two years of delay in planning work, and increases the likelihood of future delays in opening the project.

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 in direct and indirect costs, when all is said and done. 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.

Sincerely,  
Jeffrey Baldwin

Jeffrey Baldwin  
[jeffrey.baldwin411@gmail.com](mailto:jeffrey.baldwin411@gmail.com)  
15264 127th PI NE  
Woodinville, Washington 98072

*Kody Zalewski*

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Sincerely,  
Kody Zalewski

Kody Zalewski  
[renewal010@gmail.com](mailto:renewal010@gmail.com)

Seattle, Washington 98115

*Arielle Benyo*

For the 9/12/24 System Expansion meeting:

Thank you for your continued service on the ST board and your attention to this matter. Is there an update on the negotiations with BNSF about possible new trips on the Sounder South line?

Weekend trips or more regular trips spread throughout the day to and from downtown Seattle and Downtown Tacoma would be very appreciated, and open up a lot more use for the train. My husband and I are semi-regular riders, but we are hindered in riding more often because if we rode the train into town from Auburn, as the schedules are, we either get stranded in town for extremely long periods of time, or are left with no return options, especially in the evenings. This makes ditching our car difficult, despite how easy the Sounder itself is to use.

We encourage the ST board to continue working on making the Sounder more consistently accessible throughout the day or into the weekend and truly leverage this excellent piece of infrastructure.

Thanks,

The Benyo Family in Auburn

*Betty Lau*

The substance of this comment is included in a document attached to the end of this summary.

*Bill Hirt*

Attention Sound Transit System Expansion Committee.

The following post from my blog <http://stopeastlinknow.blogspot.com> details my concerns about the ability of Line 1 to accommodate the number of riders and lack of fare revenue to cover the added fare revenue needed to cover operating costs.

Bill Hirt

Sound Transit recently began implementing the \$3.00 fare for all riders from 19 to 64 presumably hoping to increase the farebox recovery of operating costs. The higher light rail train operating costs led to the initial goal for fares to provide 40% of operating costs. They later reduced the goal to a minimum of 17% with a 22% target and set adult fares ranging from \$2.25 to \$3.50 based on distance traveled.

A December 15, 2023, Sound Transit News release reported, “46% of Link passengers pay adult fares with the remainder using employer-funded passes or reduced fare products. Youth 18 and under ride free”. Yet the latest available Quarterly Financial Report for Q1/2024 details that 6,036 thousand riders paid \$6,993 thousand in fares, or \$1.109 in fares per rider.

The report included an average \$11.37 cost per rider for a 9.75% farebox recovery, slightly more than half the minimum 17% recovery. Presumably the employer-funded fares provided the required fares for the trip. Thus, most of the 46% adults riding apparently didn't pay fares. The idea that the July average 6767 Capitol Hill daily boarders who rode to Westlake or all those along the route from Sodo to CID who didn't pay the \$2.25 would somehow pay the new \$3.00 fares seems “dubious” at best.

The 8,5-mile Lynnwood Link extension exacerbates the cost part of the farebox-recovery problem, Sound Transit budgets light rail car operating costs

at ~\$30.00 per revenue vehicle mile. Thus, the 8.5-mile extension adds \$2040 for each 4-car train's round trip from UW stadium. Sound Transit's current Line 1 schedule shows trains every 10 minutes from 5:07 am to 8:47 pm, 12-minute intervals to 10:23, 15 until 12:08 and a final train at 12:50 am. The resulting 107 trips add \$218,280 to Line 1 daily operating costs.

Providing 22% of the \$218,280 cost with \$3.00 tolls will require 16,000 daily boardings, about half Sound Transit's 25,300 to 34,200 predicted riders. The July Northgate ridership averaged 14,721, a third of Sound Transit's pre-debut 41,000 to 49,000 predictions.

Presumably the 16,000 Lynnwood and 14,721 Northgate Link riders are all into Seattle, so 30,721 will reach the UW Stadium. If 75% do so during the 3-hour peak morning commute, 7680 riders will do so each hour,

Sound Transit assumes each 74 seat car can accommodate 150 riders or 600 riders on each 4-car light rail train. With 10 minute intervals between trains, capacity is limited to 3600 riders per hour, less than half the 7680 rider needed if the number of Lynnwood boarders paying \$3.00 fares were sufficient to provide 22% of the Link's operating costs. The University of Washington Stadium's daily July 4030 riders just adds to the problem at Capitol Hill, particularly gauling for those now forced to pay \$3.00 fares.

Community Transit attempts to reduce "crowding" by adding an ST515 route from Lynnwood into Seattle with stops at Montlake Terrace, presumably keeping the fares. A high capacity bus can accommodate 115 riders, so an ST515 route every 10 minutes could accommodate 690 riders, far from what's needed to end "crowding" at UW station.

The bottom line is the Sound Transit's projections for 25,300 to 35,200 additional Lynnwood Link riders dwarfs Line 1 peak hour capacity into Seattle. Thus, unless actual riders added during peak commute are limited to a fraction of projections, UW Station and Capitol Hill riders will lose access to Line 1 trains.

It's not clear how Sound Transit will limit Lynnwood Link peak-hour access, but the costs of providing 107 daily light rail trains to and from Northgate will dwarf any fares they pay.

*Bailey Burghed*

Dear Committee,



I am writing on behalf of my pigeon point neighbors. The displacement of people, both homes and businesses, seems to be greater than originally expected. The city needs to put forth more effort for relocating our beloved businesses. Have you considered building commercial space directly into the new construction? I think it would be incredible to have a venue, like the Skylark Cafe in a station! It would also solve their relocation struggles, because the city would sponsor the move.

Let's keep providing support to small businesses, Bailey Burghed West Seattle Community Member

**Emailed Public Comment by Betty Lau to System Expansion  
Committee Meeting, Thursday, Sept. 12, 2024, 1:30 p.m., Union  
Station**

**I'm Betty Lau, representing the Chong Wa Benevolent Association and co-founder of Transit Equity for All.**

**Here are a few quotes from the many I've been receiving during the Sound Transit 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Transit Hub information embargo the past 21 months:**

**From Cole Daigneult:**

**CID deserves good transit. That means fast, easy transfers, not long walks. This can be done while minimizing disruption to the neighborhood. Reject North/South of CID alternatives and the 5th Ave alternative, and move forward with the 4th Ave. option.**

**From Mary Miller:**

**I believe in transit equity for all members of our community!**

**From Thomas White:**

**Effective rail transportation is an essential climate emergency solution. Unnecessary neighborhood destruction for transit is not effective rail transportation. A rail transit line that has no direct connection with other modes and routes is not effective. The 4th Ave station is essential to making the light rail line effective transit.**

**From John Space:**

**Seattle needs to invest in a world class transit hub in a world class neighborhood. A shallow fourth station is instrumental in achieving this.**

**From Jennifer Yao:**

**WTF, Sound Transit. These terrible station proposals are not what voters agreed to. Keep your promises!**

**From Paul Chapman:**

**We need transit that works for people, not politicians.**

**And finally, from Mark Langley:**

**It is indefensible to put forth a plan that bypasses the same communities that have been historically marginalized and underserved. It reduces the potential for benefiting from residential development and tourism, and further sidelines those who most need transportation access. It is a racist, classist plan; it is modern-day redlining.**