

10/10/2024 System Expansion Committee
Meeting Written Public Comment
Submissions

Submissions

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[Gary Reifel](#)

Hi ST3 Board,

I attended the person meeting and was pleased to see/hear the WSEA line is progressing to final design. **There's a clear winner: WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative"** listed on page 26 of the Sept-24 Executive Summary.

Here's why this design is a considerable improvement over WSJ-5b the "preferred medium tunnel alternative." My editorial comment underlined.

- WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station Tunnel" **costs less** \$1.4-1.50 billion vs. the 'preferred alternative' \$1.75 - 1.9 billion. This design is less likely to experience cost overruns due to litigation and construction delays.
- Zero intersection or roadway impacts vs. 4+ years of construction roadway intersection of 35th, Fautleroy and the WSEA Bridge. Tunnel under Avalon Blvd on the East side of Yancy reduces SFH & Roadway impacts.
- Daily Ridership projection is about equal 7,500 vs 7,600 with the preferred alternative. The BofA Space should be turned into a transit hub for bus train transfers, the property is under utilized currently.
- Two station design complicates the bus/train transition. Better to create a centralized bus/train transfer at the Junction station.
- Improved Trip times to SoDO and downtown. Quickened trip times will drive ridership, the Avalon Station .25/miles from the Junction station.
- 10 Residential displacements and the cost of property acquisition on 32nd Ave are eliminated.
- ST3's assessment shows 38 fewer business displacements which includes Transitional Housing facilities at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and Yancy.

In closing, WSJ-6 which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for WSEA. If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of roadway impacts and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and quickly.

Thank you,

Gary Reifel - a 20+ year resident of West Seattle

206-601-1051

On Feb 9, 2023, at 10:03 AM, Meeting Comments <MeetingComments@soundtransit.org> wrote:
Good morning Gary,

On Behalf of the Sound Transit Board of Directors, thank you for submitting your public comment regarding the proposed Avalon Station alternative. Your comment will be provided to the Board of Directors for consideration prior to its System Expansion Committee meeting today.

Please note that this submission is now a public record and the body of your comment will be posted to the Sound Transit website following the meeting for review by the public.

Adam Montee

Program Manager – Board Administration

Pronouns: He/Him/His

Executive Department

Sound Transit

[<image001.png>](#)

Connect with us!

[<image002.png><image003.png>](#) [<image004.png>](#) [<image005.png>](#)

From: Gary Reifel

Sent: Wednesday, February 8, 2023 9:53 PM

To: Meeting Comments <MeetingComments@soundtransit.org>

Subject: West Seattle Link Comment - this design is Great!

Hi ST3 Committee,

Writing in support of the design pictured here which eliminates the Avalon Station is the best design yet. Clearly the ST3 design team has listened to residents.

Merging the Avalon station and the Alaska Junction station with the tunnel design at Andover and 32nd makes great sense and saves an estimated \$80M in transit dollars.

Other benefits include:

Minimizes impact to surface streets and drivers during and after construction.

No negative impact to sight lines on road ways that accompany an elevated design.

Separates trains from cars and pedestrians which will reduce accidents.

The approach up Andover Street aligns well with the Delridge station and leaves the entry into West Seattle visually the same.

Thanks for your work.

Gary Reifel

[Marcia Kato](#)

Dear ST Board Members,

I write to advocate for the West Seattle rail design that's best for West Seattle. Of the designs proposed there's a clear winner: **WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative"**

This design is a considerable improvement over WSJ-5b the "preferred medium tunnel alternative" for many reasons, all outlined on pg. 26 of the West SEA Executive Summary published in September.

- **WSJ-6 design costs less:** \$1.4-1.50 billion vs. the 'preferred alternative' \$1.75 - 1.9 billion. *This design is also less likely to experience cost overruns due to litigation and construction delays. Keep it simple and do what's right for Seattle's Taxpayers at large, this design does that.*
- **Zero intersection or roadway impacts vs. 2+ years of construction/roadway Bridge disruption.** *Tunneling under Avalon Blvd on the East side of Yancy will dramatically reduce SFH & roadway impacts.*

- **Projected ridership is roughly equal 7,500 vs 7,600.** The BofA building and parking lot should be turned into a transit hub for bus train transfers, this will increase ridership. Again keep bus/train transfers simple at one station.
- **The two station design complicates the bus/train transitions.** A centralized bus/train transfer at the Junction station is best; consider the BofA property and parking lot for a transit center central to shopping.
- **Single station design quickens trips to SoDO and downtown by 5 minutes or more.** Quicker trips will drive ridership. Note the Avalon and Junction stations are separated by a quarter mile, building both makes no sense.
- **10 Residential displacements will be eliminated.** Reduces build cost and property acquisitions, the Avalon station will be a costly misstep if kept.
- **38 fewer business displacements** one of which includes portions of Transitional Housing's facilities at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and SW Yancy St.

In closing, the WSJ-6 design which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design. West Seattle residents will suffer years of roadway impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and swiftly without the Avalon Station.

Thank you,
Marcia Kato
WS resident

Paul Haury

Hello, Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's good for West Seattle. **There's a clear winning route:**

- **The WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative"** listed on Figure Table ES-4 of the Sept-24 Executive Summary,
- With the **Tunnel Entrance** (noted on in the "**Lower Height No Avalon Station Tunnel Connection Alternative DEL-7,**" listed on Figure ES-23,) **moved 500 to 700 feet East for an entrance on the east side of SW Avalon Way/Northside of SW Yancey St.**

Here's why this design is a considerable improvement over WSJ-5b the "preferred medium tunnel alternative."

My editorial comments found in the sub bullets.

- WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station Tunnel" **costs less** \$1.4-1.5 billion vs. the 'preferred alternative' \$1.75 - 1.9 billion.
 - This design is less likely to experience cost overruns due to litigation and construction delays.
 - Preserves the West Seattle neighborhood between SW. Avalon Way to the Bank of America parking lot.
 - Avoids creating a pedestrian risk of a geographically redundant station located at the entrance to the West Seattle Bridge.

- Zero intersection or roadway impacts vs. 4+ years of construction roadway intersection of 35th, Fauntleroy and the WSEA Bridge.
- Removes 22 residential acquisitions and displacements and the cost of property acquisition for South section of 32nd Ave SW.
- DEL-7 to WSJ-6 connection, *with tunnel entrance moved to the east side of SW Avalon Way & SW Yancey St.*
 - **2 less intersections impacted**, 1, SW Andover St. and 32nd Ave. SW, and 2, SW. Avalon Way and SW Andover St./SW Yancey Street
 - Adds approximately 80 feet of depth of ground buffer for reducing the vibration disturbance impacting the W. Seattle Bridge Freeway
 - And vibration and sound for the residents of SW. Avalon Way, 32nd Ave. SW., Fauntleroy Way SW, 33rd and 34th Ave. SW.
 - Offers a lower height for elevated track leaving the Delridge station (**reduced elevated construction engineering and material costs**).
 - Avoids closing primary egress/ingress and economic impacts cutting hardships on businesses and neighborhoods during construction, SW. Avalon Way.
 - Removes 10 Residential displacements + 1 Condominium Building and the cost of property acquisition for North section of 32nd Ave SW.
- Daily Ridership projection is about equal 7,500 vs 7,600 with the preferred alternative.
 - The B of A space should be turned into a transit hub for bus train transfers, the property is underutilized currently.
 - Better to create a centralized bus/train transfer at the Junction station instead of increasing a pedestrian injury and traffic accident risk by locating a transit station near the West Seattle Bridge entrance.
 - Quickened trip times (less the Avalon Station .39 miles from the Junction station) times to SoDo & Downtown will help drive ridership.
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In closing, DEL-7 w/ Tunnel Moved East of SW Avalon Way + WSJ-6 which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for West Seattle.

If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

Thank you,

Paul Haury, 22 year resident of West Seattle
Seattle, Washington

Robert McCall and family

Hello Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

As one of the many businesses and/or households greatly affected by this behemoth of a project, I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's better for West Seattle and the integrity of our great neighborhood. I live at 4105 32nd Ave SW where we built our home 18 years ago as our "forever" family home so we will, as will many, many others, be affected in no small way both physically and emotionally with this massively impactful project. While I'm no advocate of light rail to West Seattle, in light of the likely inevitability of it, I share with thousands of other folx that **there's a clear winning route:**

- **The WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative”** listed on Figure Table ES-4 of the Sept-24 Executive Summary,
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- And vibration and sound for the residents of SW. Avalon Way, 32nd Ave. SW., Fauntleroy Way SW, 33rd and 34th Ave. SW.
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 - Quickened trip times (less the Avalon Station .39 miles from the Junction station) times to SoDo & Downtown will help drive ridership.
 - ST3's assessment shows 38 fewer business displacements which includes Transitional Housing facilities at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and Yancy.

In closing, DEL-7 w/ Tunnel Moved East of SW Avalon Way + WSJ-6 which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for West Seattle.

If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

And very importantly the prospects of negatively impactful noise pollution, increased crime, unsightly impacts to the area, and other inevitable unintended nuisances should no question be considered and will no doubt be a lasting legacy of such a project.

Thank you,

Robert McCall
 Chantelle McCall
 Jacob McCall (16yrs old)
 Olivia McCall (12yrs old)

20 year residents of West Seattle

Mary Heinze

Hello, Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's good for West Seattle. **There's a clear winning route:**

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Thank you,

Mary Heinze, 40 year resident in current home, 73 resident of West Seattle

Matt

Hello,

I'm writing to vote for the WSJ-6 No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative as opposed to the currently preferred WSJ-5b option. WSJ-6 is cheaper and causes far less disruption and displacements, while only lowering projected ridership by 100. A 1 station vs 2 station design has other benefits too - quicker trips to downtown from Junction, and lower maintenance costs.

Thanks,

Matt

Mary Ellen Cunningham

Hello, Dow Constantine.

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Thank you,

Mary Ellen Cunningham, 25 year resident of West Seattle

Leah Hammack

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Thank you,

Leah Hammack, 20 year resident of West Seattle

Seattle, Washington

Joyce Aoyama

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Thank you,
Joyce Aoyama

Steven Zsitvay

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Thank you for your attention,

Steven Zsitvay

30 year resident of West Seattle

Bill Hirt

Attention: System Expansion Committee

The below post from my blog details Sound Transit should terminate Line 2 at CID and why you should continue to operate ST550

Bill Hirt

The previous post detailed Sound Transit should mitigate the costs of Starter Line's limited ridership by terminating Line 2 at CID. Ending the need for 4-car trains and schedules set by need to provide half the light rail capacity to Lynnwood and beyond. This post details why Sound Transit should use the money saved to continue ST Express 550 into and out of Seattle rather than end it when Line 2 service begins. Sound Transit currently routes ST550 from 4:57 am to 12:20 am from Bellevue T/C along Bellevue Way, South Bellevue and Mercer Way stations to 4th Ave and Pike St to Convention Place in Seattle. Intervals between trains increase from 10-minute peak, 15-minute off peak, to 30-minute early morning and late evening. The schedule shows during peak commute the 8:08 am ST550 bus takes 30 minutes to reach 4th Ave & Cherry.

Sound Transit's August Ridership-Ridership website reports ST550 had 4362 boardings and presumably 2181 riders, 25% more than the Starter Line. The "likely" reason, commuters had access to ST550 at 6 stops between Bellevue T/C and South Bellevue Station and 7 stops in Seattle. Starter Line access on east side was limited to East Main in Bellevue and DSTT stations in Seattle

At \$15 per mile, the ST550, 22.5-mile trip from Bellevue to and from Convention Place costs \$337.50 or \$33,750 for the 100 daily round trips. However, as the previous post details, terminating Line 2 would reduce Starter Line operating costs from \$190,000 to \$76,000.

Sound Transit could save an additional \$29,000 by using ST550 to replace Starter Line to South Bellevue. Use the Bellevue T/C as the interface between ST550 and Starter Line.

The bottom line is Sound Transit's plan to stop ST550 (and terminate all I-90 corridor buses on Mercer Island) is an attempt to boost Line 2 ridership. However, the Starter Line's "ominous" results reflect the lack of access available with Rapid Ride B between Redmond and Bellevue. ST Express 550 provides

similar access between downtown Bellevue and South Bellevue T/C. (and better access in Seattle) King County Metro will presumably continue with Rapid Ride B. Sound Transit should do the same with ST550.

Those living along the route into Bellevue have already endured years of disruption from light rail construction. Sound Transit should not be allowed to use light rail trains to replace ST550 and end their access to transit.

Miriam Chilton and Darcell Slovek-Walker of Transitional Resources

October 9, 2024

Dear Members of the System Expansion Committee,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Transitional Resources, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to you and your team for your ongoing efforts to preserve our organization throughout Sound Transit's WSLE project. Your team's diligence and attention during this process means so much to our community as we work to provide the most essential services of permanent housing and behavioral health treatment to those in need. We understand the complexity and challenges associated with large-scale transit projects, and we deeply appreciate your willingness to consider the impact on our facilities and services. We have reviewed the most recent preferred alternative route, DEL-6b, and feel it is a viable option that preserves Transitional Resources' housing and services. This is critical to our organization and the people we serve.

At the same time, we hope you will also consider preserving our surrounding community as well. Our neighbors embrace Transitional Resources' mission and are an integral part of our clients recovery. WSJ-6 No Avalon Station with DEL-7 Tunnel Entrance at SW Yancy North Side & East of SW Avalon Way not only keeps our neighborhood whole, but we feel it is best for all of West Seattle. It is less expensive, reduces the amount of track and the height of the track that is above ground, displaces fewer businesses and residences, and should be less disruptive in the construction process.

We urge you to consider the option that not only saves Transitional Resources, but our nearby community as well. This will satisfy the community's needs and create a more equitable and accessible region for all. Thank you again for your consideration and dedication to the needs of our clients, our client's families, our staff, and the needs of our community. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Miriam Chilton

Darcell Slovek-Walker Acting President and Treasurer

Chief Executive Officer Transitional Resources' Board of Directors

Darcell Slovek-Walker, MA, LMHC
Chief Executive Officer
Transitional Resources
(206) 883-2026

Wilson Bailey

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

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 second tunnel would also allow (and should be designed for) link to be rerouted down one tunnel or the other based on which tunnel is undergoing maintenance. 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.

5. The actual construction site is on the edge of CID, so any argument that the construction will negatively impact most of the district can be rebutted by this fact. Considering how equitable having a mass transit hub at the edge of CID, it would benefit residents there tremendously, reducing air pollution and allowing residents to seek more job opportunities in and around Seattle. 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). 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.

Wilson Bailey
astronomy4264@gmail.com
Seattle, Washington 98117

Lucy Barefoot

Hello, board members in particular Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

I am a 13 yr resident of the Unceded Lands of the Duwamish People here in West Seattle. I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's best for West Seattle. **There's a clear winning route:**

-

The WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative” listed on Figure Table ES-4 of the Sept-24 Executive Summary,

-

With the

Tunnel Entrance

(noted on in the “**Lower Height No Avalon Station Tunnel Connection Alternative DEL-7,**” listed on Figure ES-23,)

moved 500 to 700 feet East for an entrance on the east side of SW Avalon Way/Northside of SW Yancey St.

Here's why this design is a considerable improvement over WSJ-5b the “preferred medium tunnel alternative.”

-

WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station Tunnel” **costs**

less \$1.4-1.5 billion vs. the ‘preferred alternative’ \$1.75 - 1.9 billion.

-

This design is less likely to experience cost overruns due to litigation and construction delays.

-

Preserves the West Seattle neighborhood between SW. Avalon Way to the Bank of America parking lot.

-

Avoids creating a pedestrian risk of a geographically redundant station located at the entrance to the West Seattle Bridge.

-

Zero intersection or roadway impacts vs. 4+ years of construction roadway intersection of 35th, Fautleroy and the WSEA Bridge.

-

Removes 22 residential acquisitions and displacements and the cost of property

- acquisition for South section of 32nd Ave SW.

- DEL-7 to WSJ-6 connection, with tunnel entrance moved to the east side of SW Avalon Way & SW Yancey St.

-

- **2 less intersections impacted,**

- 1, SW Andover St. and 32nd Ave. SW, and 2, SW. Avalon Way and SW Andover St./SW Yancey Street

-

- Adds approximately 80 feet of depth of ground buffer for reducing the vibration disturbance impacting the W. Seattle Bridge Freeway

-

- And vibration and sound for the residents of SW. Avalon Way, 32nd Ave. SW., Fauntleroy Way SW, 33rd and 34th Ave. SW.

-

- Offers a lower height for elevated track leaving the Delridge station (**reduced elevated construction engineering and material costs**).

-

- Avoids closing primary egress/ingress and economic impacts cutting hardships on businesses and neighborhoods during construction, SW. Avalon Way.

-

- Removes 10 Residential displacements + 1 Condominium Building and the cost of property acquisition for North section of 32nd Ave SW.

-

- Daily Ridership projection is about equal 7,500 vs 7,600 with the preferred alternative.

-

- The Bank of America space should be turned into a transit hub for bus train transfers, the property is underutilized currently.

-

- Better to create a centralized bus/train transfer at the Junction station instead of increasing a pedestrian injury and traffic accident risk by locating a transit station near the West Seattle Bridge entrance.

○

Quickened trip times (less the Avalon Station .39 miles from the Junction station) times to SoDo

& Downtown will help drive ridership.

•

ST3's assessment shows 38 fewer business displacements which includes Transitional Housing facilities

at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and Yancy.

In closing, DEL-7 w/ Tunnel Moved East of SW Avalon Way + WSJ-6 which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for West Seattle.

If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

Thank you,

Lucy Barefoot, 13 year resident of unceded lands of the Duwamish People in West Seattle
Seattle, Washington

Maggie Fimia and John Niles

The substance of this comment is included at the end of this document.

See attached and below for an on-record comment on WSLE.

Thank you,

Maggie Fimia

A Citizen's Toolkit, For Repairing or Building a Democracy

<https://maggiefimia.com>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/margaret-maggie-fimia-094444/>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100084914897899>

Smarter Transit

<https://smartertransit.org>

4665 240th St. SW

Mountlake Terrace WA 98043

mfimia@zipcon.com

206 380 9662 cell

Gavin Yehle

Dear Members of the System Expansion Committee,

In light of the recent publication of the FEIS and the release of the cost estimate for the WSLE project, we are all surprised by the increase in costs, but I think it is still of the utmost importance to continue ahead with the FULL project to protect and ensure the future of our city.

Seattle has a history of delaying or denying transit projects in the past with the voting down of federal funding in 1970, and then again with the monorail project in 2005. Now, we are left to spend more and take more time with rising property costs and inflation. These costs will only get higher if we delay or reduce projects, repeating the mistakes of the past.

Build the FULL line all the way to the Junction without delay.

All the best,
Gavin Yehle
West Seattle Resident

Marilyn Kennell

Resolution No. R2024-22: Selecting the route, profile, and stations to be built for the West Seattle Link Extension project.

Sound Transit's Final EIS disclosed that the 4-mile West Seattle light rail cost estimate is now over \$7 billion. Under Section 2 of the ST3 package, the board **must** reconsider projects that are infeasible, unaffordable and/or unbuildable. At \$1.5 billion dollars per mile - this project is "**unaffordable**". Therefore, we ask the board to recommend a NO BUILD solution to the ST 3 WSLE light rail project. The Final EIS acknowledges that light rail construction will do irreparable damage to West Seattle's (1) environment and (2) community. The NO BUILD option would preclude this devastation.

(1) Sound Transit's present plans will claim 2 to 3 acres of our **urban canopy**. Chopping down thousands of trees in Delridge will increase that community's existing "heat island". Delridge suffers more than our leafy neighborhoods when the weather gets hot. Choosing the NO BUILD option will keep our poorer neighborhoods from becoming even hotter during coming heat waves. Sound Transit acknowledges that cleaving off Pigeon Point and disrupting the Longfellow Creek eco-system will do **"irreparable" and "permanent" damage. Mitigation plans for heron, salmon, and beaver habitats** are vague or non-existent in the DEIS. To save West Seattle's irreplaceable eco-systems, we urge you to adopt the NO BUILD option.

(2) 70 some West Seattle businesses will be forced to close. 500 to 1000 people will lose their jobs. West Seattle will lose **13** grocery stores, restaurants, delis, and coffee shops creating a "food desert" from Delridge to the Alaska Junction. The more affluent among us will be able to drive (causing more car trips to alternate food sources) - but those without cars will, again, suffer disproportionately.

West Seattle children will lose two music schools; so 1000 kids will no longer have lessons and camps within walking distance. ST is planning to put a pillar through the West Seattle Health Club swimming pool where 1300 children take lessons. 6200 members of all ages will be bereft of a main source of health enhancing physical and social activities.

WEST SEATTLE IS CLOSE TO BEING A 15-MINUTE CITY - ALMOST EVERYTHING WE NEED IS WITHIN A 15 MINUTE WALK, BIKE OR BUS RIDE, OR A SHORT TRIP BY CAR. DESTROYING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUSINESSES, HOMES, JOBS AND DISRUPTING TRAFFIC FOR 6-8 YEARS (FOR 4 MILES OF LIGHT RAIL THAT WILL TAKE US ONLY TO SODO) - DOES NOT MAKE SENSE. WE ASK THE BOARD TO CALL FOR THE NO BUILD OPTION.

WE ARE FOR MASS-TRANSIT **AND** WE ARE AGAINST GOING AHEAD WITH WEST SEATTLE LIGHT RAIL. **NO BUILD** DOES NOT MEAN BUILD NOTHING - IT MEANS DO NOT BUILD A PROJECT THAT HAS MORE NEGATIVE IMPACTS THAN BENEFITS.

FOR \$7 BILLION DOLLARS, WE COULD BUY 3000 BRAND NEW ELECTRIC BUSES FOR WEST SEATTLE (THEY COST \$1 MILLION DOLLARS EACH) AND YOU WOULD STILL HAVE \$4 BILLION DOLLARS LEFT OVER FOR THE REST OF THE REGION'S TRANSIT NEEDS. **THE NO BUILD OPTION IS A WIN-WIN!**

**MARILYN KENNELL
WEST SEATTLE**

[Maren Costa](#)

The West Seattle light rail link is making less and less sense as we get closer and closer:

- It was already a very expensive project, traversing very difficult and sensitive terrain and ecosystems.
- The projected usage numbers, capacity, and trip times are unsatisfactory. In fact, it actually makes most people's commute *longer* and *more complicated* than the existing bus solutions.
- It does nothing to solve transit deserts.
- By the time it is slated to come online, it will already be outdated. I'm currently visiting San Francisco and there are self-driving cars everywhere. Imagine what transportation will be like 10 or 15 years from now when this project is finally finished.
- And it will be many more years before it is connected to anything north or south on this side of the bridge.
- The carbon impact to build it negates any carbon savings for hundreds of years.
- It is of course very disruptive to many businesses and residences.
- And now, the cost has ballooned beyond what was already a ridiculous price tag.

YES, we *absolutely* need public transit—public transit that is irresistibly convenient, safe, scalable and informed by current thinking and future possibilities. The West Seattle link will not deliver enough benefits—in fact, it will deliver quite a bit of harm—for a very steep price tag. We should not proceed with an expensive, ineffective project just because voters unwittingly voted for something years ago that they will not be happy with now. I think if voters had adequate time to understand what they are getting for what they are paying, this would not pass.

Thank you for considering our communities comments.

Maren Costa

U.S. Advisor

[Work For Climate](#)

[Book time with me](#)

206.817.1031

Chad Hembrow

Hello, Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's good for West Seattle. **There's a clear winning route:**

- **The WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative”** listed on Figure Table ES-4 of the Sept-24 Executive Summary,
- With the ***Tunnel Entrance*** (noted on in the “**Lower Height No Avalon Station Tunnel Connection Alternative DEL-7,**” listed on Figure ES-23,) ***moved 500 to 700 feet East for an entrance on the east side of SW Avalon Way/Northside of SW Yancey St.***

Here's why this design is a considerable improvement over WSJ-5b the “preferred medium tunnel alternative.”

My editorial comments found in the sub bullets.

- WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station Tunnel” **costs less** \$1.4-1.5 billion vs. the ‘preferred alternative’ \$1.75 - 1.9 billion.
 - This design is less likely to experience cost overruns due to litigation and construction delays.
 - Preserves the West Seattle neighborhood between SW. Avalon Way to the Bank of America parking lot.
 - Avoids creating a pedestrian risk of a geographically redundant station located at the entrance to the West Seattle Bridge.
 - Zero intersection or roadway impacts vs. 4+ years of construction roadway intersection of 35th, Fauntleroy and the WSEA Bridge.
 - Removes 22 residential acquisitions and displacements and the cost of property acquisition for South section of 32nd Ave SW.
- DEL-7 to WSJ-6 connection, *with tunnel entrance moved to the east side of SW Avalon Way & SW Yancey St.*
 - **2 less intersections impacted**, 1, SW Andover St. and 32nd Ave. SW, and 2, SW. Avalon Way and SW Andover St./SW Yancey Street

- Adds approximately 80 feet of depth of ground buffer for reducing the vibration disturbance impacting the W. Seattle Bridge Freeway
 - And vibration and sound for the residents of SW. Avalon Way, 32nd Ave. SW., Fauntleroy Way SW, 33rd and 34th Ave. SW.
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 - The B of A space should be turned into a transit hub for bus train transfers, the property is underutilized currently.
 - Better to create a centralized bus/train transfer at the Junction station instead of increasing a pedestrian injury and traffic accident risk by locating a transit station near the West Seattle Bridge entrance.
 - Quickened trip times (less the Avalon Station .39 miles from the Junction station) times to SoDo & Downtown will help drive ridership.
 - ST3's assessment shows 38 fewer business displacements which includes Transitional Housing facilities at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and Yancy.

In closing, DEL-7 w/ Tunnel Moved East of SW Avalon Way + WSJ-6 which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for West Seattle.

If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

Thank you,

Chad Hembrow, 15 year resident of West Seattle

Seattle, Washington

Johannes Heine

Dear Sound Transit System Expansion Committee Members,

I strongly urge you to change the preferred alternative to DEL-7, the "No Avalon Station" option for the West Seattle Link Extension.

This option reduces residential and business displacements, minimizing community disruption while saving money, reducing transit time to downtown and with little to no effect on ridership estimates. By eliminating Avalon Station, we can maintain a more streamlined and cost-effective project.

I urge you to select this option for the benefit of our community.

Sincerely,

Johannes Heine

West Seattle Resident

Myra and Vince Ferriols

Hello, Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's good for West Seattle. **There's a clear winning route:**

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If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

Thank you,
Myra (daughter) and Vince (Father) Ferriols, 76 year resident of West Seattle
Seattle, Washington (on our property)

Scott Smith

Hello,

I am writing to express my support for the staff recommendation for the West Seattle light rail link extension.

There has been a great deal of misinformation about this project – particularly regarding the West Seattle portion. I have had the privilege of living in several cities with excellent public transportation systems, including a mix of buses, light rail, and trolleys. I have witnessed first hand the positive impact that such a system can have on a city and its community — allowing us to enjoy the Seattle area to the fullest.

I strongly support the plan and believe it is crucial for the West Seattle community to have all three of the proposed stations. I look forward to the day when these new transportation options are available, making it easier for everyone to get where they need to go. It's never going to be cheaper and easier to implement than it is right now, any delay just adds needless cost and uncertainty.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Scott Smith

Paul Haury

Hello Sound Transit Committee,

I hope to build make it today for in person testimony. This submission serves as a written record, either in addition to, or in lieu of me not being able to arrive to testify in person.

I write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that's good for West Seattle. **There's a clear winning route:**

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 - ST3's assessment shows 38 fewer business displacements which includes Transitional Housing facilities at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and Yancy.

In closing, to available choice of DEL-7 w/ Tunnel Moved East of SW Avalon Way + WSJ-6 that eliminates the Avalon station, and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for West Seattle. It brings light rail in two W. Seattle with far less traffic and pedestrian safety impacts, and by Sound Transit projections looks like it's an easy \$500,000,000 less expensive.

If the Avalon station build proceeds West Seattle will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

Thank you,

Paul Haury, 22 year resident of West Seattle
Seattle, Washington

Tanya Hurst

Hi,

I'm emailing to avoid additional cost and impact to the Avalon area of West Seattle. I'm advocating for WSJ-6 No Avalon Station w/DEL-7 option. This has the least amount of impact to our community. This will cost less, should have less cost overruns, preserve the neighborhood between SW Avalon Way to the Bank of America parking lot, avoid pedestrian risk with a station so close to the bridge and zero intersection or roadway impacts vs 4+ years of construction! Please consider this or the NO BUILD option.

Tanya Hurst

Pamela Adams

Dear System Expansion Committee:

The ST3 transportation package that Sound Transit presented to voters in 2016 offered simple criteria for voters to consider:

- improve public transit,
- encourage economic development, equity community building and social justice,
- **protect the environment.**

From my reading the EIS there are concerns in gaps of knowledge and understanding of how the West Seattle Light Rail Extension Link will not protect the environment, but will impact Pigeon Point and the Great Blue Heron historic nesting area, and more critically Longfellow Creek at the first daylight section.

Since 2023 this is the only Seattle watershed documenting wild coho salmon spawning for the past three fall seasons. These are endangered wild coho salmon spawning, and more amazing there are juvenile fry, and parr living year-round in the section of creek between Andover and Yancey -where there is a beaver dam holding water for the fish even in our drought conditions. Natural processes are taking place in this 4 mile creek that is already 52% paved over. This critical habitat area is right where the building of the link pillars are a slated to go. **How will the construction of the pillars not impact this sensitive watershed and salmon habitat?**

Please consider the NO BUILD option, and look to improving the existing transportation infrastructure in West Seattle.

Thank you,
Pamela Adams
Alki Beach Resident

More Information about the salmon and beavers in Longfellow Creek can be found here:

[BeaverInsights](https://www.beaverinsights.com)
[beaverinsights.com](https://www.beaverinsights.com)

Unnamed Commenter

Sent from my iPad. Required reading for the no build option : decisions should be made without previous biases for building the link. The latest information regarding this is found in environmental impact statement (EIS-C) pdf Rethink the link^J 394KB this is a comprehensive analysis of the failings of the sound transit to address the real issues. Leaders must reconsider their prior conclusions and really look at the reality of this project for the good of the people. Prior conclusions by those making these decisions must be addressed with a positive thorough thought process to other options than building the link. The board was elected to serve the people! Please do it! Thank you

Comments submitted after deadline

Rachel Smith

The substance of this comment is included at the bottom of the document.

Dear Chair Balducci and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and our 2,500 members, please find attached a letter urging the committee to forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors to approve Resolution No. R2024-22, selecting the project to be built for the West Seattle Link Extension Project.

Thank you,

Rachel Smith

President and CEO

[Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce](https://www.seattlechamber.com)

rachels@seattlechamber.com | **d:** (206) 389-7222 | **c:** (918) 809-2449

Visit our [website](https://www.seattlechamber.com) for events, business news, advocacy information and jobs, plus - text SEATTLE to 52886 - and never miss an important update from the Chamber.

Heidi Shininger-Forrer

Hello, Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

I am writing today to advocate for the good of the environment, West Seattle, my neighborhood and neighbors, and to encourage you to consider an improved option for the final route for the West Seattle Link.

That option is: WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station w/Del-7 Tunnel Entrance at SW Yancy North Side & East of SW Avalon Way.

Dropping the Avalon Station, and moving the tunnel entrance East of (below) Avalon will preserve most of our neighborhood and lowers the number of neighboring businesses that would be displaced. There will be less environmental impact and disruption to daily life in our beloved West Seattle neighborhood. This option reduces the amount of track and height of the track above ground. Additionally, this option will lessen the disruption of the construction process. Though my first choice for many valid reasons is still the “No Build Option”, this option to drop the Avalon Station, still gets light rail to West Seattle, and helps preserve the character of the neighborhood. The elimination of the Avalon Station is less expensive than the preferred route. A major concern on a project that has ballooned to an astronomical cost, which could still grow.

Please consider the over all negative environmental impact, and future generations who will have to live with this decision, and shoulder the financial burden.

Additionally, please consider reading this article, and watching this video link on the case for a “NO Build Option” which is still on the table.

Washington Policy Center-

West Seattle Link Extension has gone off the Rails:

<https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/publications/detail/the-west-seattle-link-extension-has-gone-off-the-rails?>

10 Reasons to not build West Seattle Light Rail:

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Below are many valid, carefully and thoughtfully compiled points put together by my neighbors, who’s lives will be directly impacted by this decision.

We write to advocate for a final West Seattle Link design that’s good for West Seattle. **There’s a clear winning route:**

- **The WSJ-6 “No Avalon Station Tunnel Alternative”** listed on Figure Table ES-4 of the Sept-24 Executive Summary,
- With the ***Tunnel Entrance*** (noted on in the “**Lower Height No Avalon Station Tunnel Connection Alternative DEL-7,**” listed on Figure ES-23,) ***moved 500 to 700 feet East for an entrance on the east side of SW Avalon Way/Northside of SW Yancey St.***

Here's why this design is a considerable improvement over WSJ-5b the "preferred medium tunnel alternative."

My editorial comments found in the sub bullets.

- WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station Tunnel" **costs less** \$1.4-1.5 billion vs. the 'preferred alternative' \$1.75 - 1.9 billion.
 - This design is less likely to experience cost overruns due to litigation and construction delays.
 - Preserves the West Seattle neighborhood between SW. Avalon Way to the Bank of America parking lot.
 - Avoids creating a pedestrian risk of a geographically redundant station located at the entrance to the West Seattle Bridge.
 - Zero intersection or roadway impacts vs. 4+ years of construction roadway intersection of 35th, Fauntleroy and the WSEA Bridge.
 - Removes 22 residential acquisitions and displacements and the cost of property acquisition for South section of 32nd Ave SW.

- DEL-7 to WSJ-6 connection, *with tunnel entrance moved to the east side of SW Avalon Way & SW Yancey St.*
 - **2 less intersections impacted**, 1, SW Andover St. and 32nd Ave. SW, and 2, SW. Avalon Way and SW Andover St./SW Yancey Street
 - Adds approximately 80 feet of depth of ground buffer for reducing the vibration disturbance impacting the W. Seattle Bridge Freeway
 - And vibration and sound for the residents of SW. Avalon Way, 32nd Ave. SW., Fauntleroy Way SW, 33rd and 34th Ave. SW.
 - Offers a lower height for elevated track leaving the Delridge station (**reduced elevated construction engineering and material costs**).
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 - Removes 10 Residential displacements + 1 Condominium Building and the cost of property acquisition for North section of 32nd Ave SW.

- Daily Ridership projection is about equal 7,500 vs 7,600 with the preferred alternative.
 - The Bank of America space should be turned into a transit hub for bus train transfers, the property is underutilized currently.
 - Better to create a centralized bus/train transfer at the Junction station instead of increasing a pedestrian injury and traffic accident risk by locating a transit station near the West Seattle Bridge entrance.
 - Quickened trip times (less the Avalon Station .39 miles from the Junction station) times to SoDo & Downtown will help drive ridership.

- ST3's assessment shows 38 fewer business displacements which includes Transitional Housing facilities at the intersection of Avalon Blvd. and Yancy.

In closing, DEL-7 w/ Tunnel Moved East of SW Avalon Way + WSJ-6 which eliminates the Avalon station and tunnels to a single Junction station is the best design for West Seattle.

If the Avalon station build proceeds WSE will suffer years of negative roadway and economic impacts, and taxpayers will pay more for a system that could have been built more economically and better for the people of West Seattle.

Thank you,

Heidi Shininger-Forrer, 20 year resident of West Seattle

Seattle, Washington

[Mark Forrer](#)

Yo,

Dow Constantine, Carla Rogers, Lauren Swift, Rob Saka, and Bruce Harrell,

What the heck is wrong with you? You know this whole thing is a bad idea... Ridiculous cost for 4 miles??? So why are you pushing it through? It isn't going to help anybody in West Seattle. You are going to destroy a bunch of businesses and the Alaskan Junction. You are not going to improve anything in regards to West Seattle life or improve ridership. Save money, environment, homes and businesses and not do this.

I am writing today to advocate for the good of the environment, West Seattle, my neighborhood and neighbors, and to encourage you to consider an improved option for the final route for the West Seattle Link.

That option is: WSJ-6 "No Avalon Station w/Del-7 Tunnel Entrance at SW Yancy North Side & East of SW Avalon Way.

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Thank you,

Mark Forrer

Seattle, Washington

Lauren Frey

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Thank you,
 Lauren Frey, 20 year resident of West Seattle
 Seattle, Washington

Lauren Frey
Claims Consultant, Marine
 CA License No. 0D82224



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Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. Insurance Brokers of California, Inc.
CA License No. 0726293

**Comment to the Sound Transit Board of Directors
System Expansion Committee Meeting of 10.10.24
from [John Niles and Maggie Fimia, Co-Chairs](#) of SmarterTransit.org**

We invite your attention below to this October 8th analysis of the West Seattle Link Light Rail Extension by Charles Prestrud, WSDOT's former planning manager for King and Snohomish counties, and prior to joining WSDOT, system planning manager for Community Transit.

We've highlighted major points.

In summary, we strongly agree with Mr. Prestrud's concluding paragraph in this essay:

In 1996, 2008, and 2016 Sound Transit sold voters on the idea that building a light rail system was the solution to the region's growing transportation needs. Now the FEIS for West Seattle extension project shows that the agency's rigid adherence to light rail has become the obstacle to consideration of far more cost-effective alternatives.

We thus urge the Board to respond to the WSLE FEIS and draft Resolution 2024-22 by selecting the No Build alternative and ordering consideration of more cost-effective alternatives aligned with Sound Transit's authority, such as those mentioned in the essay by Mr. Prestrud.

Board members have the authority and the responsibility to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely.

Please do the right thing for our Region.

The West Seattle Link Extension has gone off the Rails



- [CHARLES PRESTRUD](#), Director, Washington Policy Center, Coles Center for Transportation

On September 20th Sound Transit published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed light rail extension to West Seattle. Ordinarily, publishing the FEIS is one of the final steps in the decision-making process with subsequent Board approval only a formality.

“The West Seattle Link Extension has gone off the rails” continued

However, in this instance information revealed in the FEIS is so unfavorable the Board may realize it is time to reconsider whether it makes sense to proceed as planned.

The news that got the Board’s attention was a cost increase from the 2023 estimate of \$4 billion to somewhere between \$5.1 and \$5.6 billion. The bad news didn’t end there. Sound Transit staff then offered an even higher “opinion of probable cost” of between \$6.7 and \$7.1 billion, which is “based on a different cost estimating methodology and considers potential savings due to value engineering and other agency changes.” This ought to raise the question of what a realistic “probable cost” would be without the “potential savings.”

The new estimate is about triple the cost estimate provided in 2016 when the ST3 plan was approved, which, at \$2.3 billion, was hardly a bargain. The revised cost is over \$1.5 billion per mile for a line that is only four miles long and adds just four stations. On a per-mile basis that would make it one of the costliest light rail lines in the world, but nowhere near the most productive.

The Sound Transit Board seemed surprised at the cost increase, but they had every reason to expect the West Seattle extension would be difficult and expensive. The proposed alignment runs through built-up areas, most of the line needs to be elevated or in tunnels, a tall bridge over the Duwamish River will be needed, and considerable right-of-way will need to be purchased from businesses and homeowners. Even if Sound Transit didn’t have a twenty-year history of large cost over-runs on rail projects, the West Seattle extension had obvious challenges and risks likely to drive up the cost.

In the past Sound Transit has been resourceful in handling cost overruns. A combination of strategies including pushing out completion dates, increasing debt, and securing additional federal funding has allowed projects to go forward, even if much more slowly than originally promised. Now, however, Sound Transit is approaching its debt limit. The agency’s financial plan already assumes issuance of \$24.7 billion in bonds through 2046, plus another \$4.2 billion in federal loans to be repaid. By 2038 Sound Transit expects to pay over a billion dollars per year in debt service. Therefore, piling on more debt would be problematic, and in any case wouldn’t improve performance of the project, only make the ultimate cost even higher.

Faced with this difficult situation, a financially prudent governing board would ask whether it makes sense to proceed with a project that has tripled in cost and busts the budget, but the Sound Transit Board has taken a different approach. In board motion M2024-59 Sound Transit directs staff to “...develop a workplan on the programmatic, financial, and project level measures and opportunities the agency will pursue to improve the agency’s financial situation and move WSLE through design to inform a financially sound project to be baselined...”. What the motion does not do is develop alternatives or ask whether the project still makes sense. And, in case you were wondering, “baselined” is a sort of euphemism for moving the goal posts.

The Board’s motion shows that Sound Transit is approaching the problem as though it is just about the agency budget, but that narrow view ignores the bigger question raised by the FEIS, which is that despite the extravagant cost the project accomplishes very little. The fine print of the FEIS reveals total transit ridership in the region under the No-Build alternative would produce 99.7% of the ridership of the light rail alternative. In other words, the light rail extension would produce less than a one percent increase in total transit ridership for an investment of

“The West Seattle Link Extension has gone off the rails” continued

over \$6 billion. That is an exceedingly poor return on such a massive investment. You might be hoping that even if the project doesn't do much to increase ridership it might reduce congestion or greenhouse gas emissions. Alas, the FEIS also informs us that vehicle hours of delay would change by less than one half of one percent, and total vehicle miles travelled changes even less, just two tenths of one percent. As result, the West Seattle extension will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve transportation system efficiency, or meaningfully improve the mobility of West Seattle residents.

Why does spending billions of dollars on a light rail line accomplish so little? Part of the reason is that King County Metro already provides RapidRide express bus service along the same route. The incremental improvement in service that light rail might provide is very small, in fact so small that it attracts very few new riders. The existing RapidRide service also has the advantage that it starts farther south and continues through downtown to the South Lake Union area. In contrast, the light rail line would serve only three stops in West Seattle, require transfers to reach other destinations, and be useless for most trips that West Seattle residents make.

The success of the RapidRide routes suggests a solution to Sound Transit's problem. It wouldn't be difficult to further enhance RapidRide service so it served more destinations and ran more frequently. The RapidRide C line already benefits from bus-only lanes on the West Seattle Bridge, HWY 99, and Westlake Ave. Additional transit priority improvements could be made to increase speed and reliability.

Transit planning should also recognize that many West Seattle residents travel to Renton, South Center, Auburn and Kent. None of those places are served by light rail but all could easily be served by expanded bus service. That would cost only a small fraction of what Sound Transit proposes to spend on the light rail extension, and the service could be added much sooner without having to condemn property, bulldoze homes, and cut down trees, all of which would happen if the preferred light rail project goes forward. Sound Transit, if they were forward thinking, could also begin to plan for ways to improve local circulation and connections to neighborhoods with automated vehicles. The rapid pace of autonomous vehicle development suggests such vehicles may be widely available years before the light rail line would be in service.

If the Sound Transit Board insists on viewing the situation as just a budget problem, they are likely to discover there is no good solution. If, however, they broaden their thinking to consider alternatives to light rail they will discover there are vastly superior ways of improving mobility. Rather than directing staff to find new revenue the Board should request an analysis of lower cost and lower risk alternatives. That should include a benefit/cost analysis that provides an objective basis for comparison of the possible alternatives.

In 1996, 2008, and 2016 Sound Transit sold voters on the idea that building a light rail system was the solution to the region's growing transportation needs. Now the FEIS for West Seattle extension project shows that the agency's rigid adherence to light rail has become the obstacle to consideration of far more cost-effective alternatives.



October 10, 2024

Claudia Balducci, Chair
System Expansion Committee
Sound Transit Board of Directors
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chair Balducci and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and our 2,500 members, I am writing to urge the committee to forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors to approve Resolution No. R2024-22, selecting the project to be built for the West Seattle Link Extension Project.

The Chamber and its members are enthusiastic supporters of the expansion of light rail throughout the Puget Sound region. Connecting light rail to West Seattle and communities in between will support a thriving, equitable, and inclusive regional economy that is predicated on people being able to safely and reliably get to work and school and back home to their families and enjoy the natural beauty and recreational and cultural opportunities that surround us.

Recently, the Board of Directors was briefed on increased cost estimates for the West Seattle link extension, a situation which other infrastructure projects in the Puget Sound region and across the country are also facing. Unprecedented rates of inflation, national supply chain disruptions, and large capital delivery programs across the country are creating challenges for public agencies charged with delivering infrastructure investments.

Selecting the West Seattle link extension project to be built creates the best opportunity for the agency to proactively address these challenges through engineering, construction methodology and delivery approach, and financial strategies. We appreciate the Board directing agency staff in Motion No. M2024-59 to prepare a work plan on the programmatic, financial, and project-level measures and opportunities the agency will pursue to inform a financially sound project. This work plan will provide transparency and accountability for the Board and public and help to ensure the project and the entire ST3 program are delivered as committed to the public.

We look forward to continuing to work with you, agency staff, and the City of Seattle to ensure this project results in a high-quality transit service that serves the people of Seattle and Sound Transit district for the next 100 years.

Sincerely,

Rachel Smith
President & CEO