

10/24/2024 Board of Directors Meeting Written Public Comment Submissions

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Thaisa Andruscavage

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 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). 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.

thaisa.andruscavage@gmail.com

,

Peter Hernandez

Hello My name is Peter Hernandez and I am Resident of the Delridge Area in West Seattle.

I strongly support the West Seattle link Project and believe it to be a project of dire need that should have been developed 10-20 years ago. I understand these projects are difficult, and complex so I understand the need to move forward carefully, yet deliberately. I support the preferred alternative route, and agree the project should continue to the design phase so that the project can continue to move forward, and true project costs and impacts can be better understood.

However, the estimated \$7B price tag is concerning, and I believe if measures aren't made to rein in these costs, the NIMBY(Not In My Backyard's) crowd's protests will grow louder ultimately dooming this project or resulting in half a project which doesn't meet the needs of West Seattle residents. Therefore, I believe it is important for further cost saving measures to be investigated during the design phase to ensure the best value project is delivered to the Citizens of West Seattle.

Some examples of some of the cost savings measures I would like to see considered during the design phase include.

- Alternative bridge designs for the Duwamish Waterway. - This being the most expensive and most visible part of the project it stands to reason, having a quality and durable structure, that is both visually appealing and adequate for the project need is important. However, the project should consider if there are alternative bridge designs or construction approaches (as opposed to the preferred cabled stayed bridge) which might be equally visually appealing but result in an overall cost savings. Ultimately, getting the project constructed is more important than aesthetics, particularly considering the condition of the West Seattle Bridge.

- Investigate updates to or changes to construction standards, which would make the project equally safe, efficient, and durable but simpler and overall cheaper to build. Considerations would include,

alternative materials or design concepts for the train stations, track construction, walkways and platforms and/or consideration of different building techniques.

- Ensure the end project maximizes walkability, and transit utilization for West Seattle residents. This is such an important goal, that it should be the primary goal which all other considerations are secondary.

Thank you for accepting this public comment, and I hope it helps move project forward.

Sincerely

Peter Hernandez

Sean Ford

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

Good afternoon

USPS would like to submit the attached comments to the Board of Directors for consideration prior to the October 24, 2024 vote.

Thanks

Sean M. Ford

Team Lead / Central and WestPac

Real Estate and Assets

United States Postal Service

475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Suite 6738

Washington Dc 20260-1862

Margaret Fredick

Dear board members of Sound Transit,

I am a west seattle resident who is concerned about the proposed light rail extension in our area.the WSLE will have several negative impacts on the region, as explored in Rethink The Link's EIS-C document. A few of particular concern to me are as follows:

To build the extension, 3 acres of Pigeon Point Forest and 1-3 acres of of the West Duwamish Greenbelt will be cleared, which will also disturb the FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED heron rookery nearby. Great Blue Herons are also recognized by the Washington Department of Fish and wildlife as a "Priority Species" due to their sensitivity to habitat alteration.

The light rail will be built over Longfellow Creek, which will disturb the recovering salmon and beavers populations that reside there.

It is estimated that the extension will displace approx. 133 businesses and 1,230 people. 165-173 residential homes would also be demolished.

The Cettolin House, which has been given historical landmark status, would also be in danger of demolition.

These are just a few of my concerns for a project that will take us only as far as SODO and will not increase rider numbers in general. The \$7 Billion+ in finances would be much better spent in strengthening the transit system we already have. So please consider moving forward with the No Build Option. It is a much more practical and sustainable option.

Thank you for your time,
Margaret Fredrick

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 delay projects 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 further delays.

All the best,
Gavin Yehle
West Seattle Resident

Geraldine Poor

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

We will provide public testimony at the Oct 24th Board of Directors meeting consistent with this letter from the Port of Seattle and the Northwest Seaport Alliance.

Thank you.

Geraldine Poor, AICP

Regional Transportation Senior Manager

Cell: 206-390-9047 | Poor.G@PortSeattle.org

Port of Seattle | PO Box 1209 | Seattle, WA 98111

Rachel Smith

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

Dear Chair Constantine and Board Members,

On behalf of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and our 2,500 members, please find attached a letter urging the Board to approve Resolution No. R2024-22, selecting the project to be built for the West Seattle Link Extension Project as recommended by the System Expansion Committee. We also ask you to approve the proposed amendment that directs additional work to reduce both the known and yet to be identified impacts of the proposed alignment, station location, and utility relocation on the community.

Thank you,

Rachel Smith

Rachel Smith

President and CEO

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

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

Daniel Poor

Honorable Board Members,

I write in support of the revised “preferred alternative” routing of the elevated transit line along Delridge and turn west and proceeding up Genesee. This leaves the vital and (as a practical matter in this real estate market) irreplaceable health infrastructure of the West Seattle Health Club building and pool undisturbed.

This health facility is the only usable, generally available, lap pool in West Seattle — used by hundreds of community members per day — children, families, elderly, athletes, and everyone in between.

Thank you.

Daniel Poor

Ralph Ibarra

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

To whom it may concern, attached is Public Comment to be provided to the SoundTransit Board members for consideration. Thank you for your consideration and a confirming email will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

--

Ralph B. Ibarra [he/him/his-él/él/su]

President - DiverseAmerica Network™

Diversity+Equity+Inclusion+Accessibility [DEIA]

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Maggie Fimia

10.23.24

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

We are reaching out to you on behalf of smartertransit.org and the Region. We are a pro transit, non-partisan, all volunteer organization. Many of us are transit/transportation professionals who have donated thousands of hours over the last 24 years to research and write about how to invest in the most cost-effective options for improving mobility and access to transit. Many of us voted for Sound Move in 1996 believing that our region would be well served by rail. But, as you can read in Richard Harkness Ph.D.'s report from 2005^[1], Sound Transit has consciously and consistently misrepresented the costs and benefits of light rail over bus rapid transit. Why? Because these projects are more about real estate development than actually making transit accessible and practical for more people.

The numbers below assume full build out of LR in 2050 and most come from PSRC.

- The average household is paying \$1800 in ST taxes – soon to go up if you pass R2024-24 property tax increase.^[2]
- Traffic congestion increases 54%^[3]
- Only 3% of the region's 24,000,000 trips **a day** by car, transit, ferry, walking, bike, will be on Sound Transit trains.^[4]
- Greenhouse gas emissions will decrease only 6% below 1990 levels, well below the region's goal of an 83% reduction.^[5]
- In 2016, the ST3 ballot measure was priced at \$54 billion. Today it is over \$150 billion and counting.^[6]

Meanwhile, great damage is done to communities, the environment and public trust in their government.

Please consider making the following Motions at the Board meeting tomorrow, Thursday, October 24th:

1. We Move to have Resolution NO. R2024-22 tabled at this time.
2. We Move that the current work plan, passed on September 26, 2024 be amended to:
 - A. Identify risks to timely completion of other projects in the ST3 plan and update ridership forecasts to reflect post-COVID trends in travel behavior and development patterns. And,
 - B. To further inform board decisions, the CEO is directed to present analysis of a Bus Rapid Transit service for West Seattle, similar to the existing Metro RapidRide “C” line, that could be implemented as a temporary or permanent alternative to the proposed light rail extension.

This analysis is to include estimates of capital costs, operating cost per rider, and a timeline for implementation. All data shall be documented.

Thank you in advance for considering our request,
John Niles and Maggie Fimia, Co-Chairs, smartertransit.org

Maggie Fimia
A Citizen’s Toolkit, For Repairing or Building a Democracy
<https://maggiefimia.com>
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John Niles
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Sources:

^[1] <https://bettertransport.info/pitf/harknessmessage.htm>

² <https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/dataresearch/pop/special/rta.pdf>;

<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/washington/average-household-size#map>

³ [PSRC’s 2050 Transportation plan](#), Appendix H, pg. 24

⁴ “Justification Information:”

<https://smartertransit.org/justification-for-smarter-transits-analysis-of-2050-rail-transit-mode-share-for-the-central-puget-sound-region/>

⁵ <https://www.psrc.org/media/5942> pg. 7, (see 3rd and 4th bar)

⁶ <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/sound-transit-ceo-julie-timm-is-leaving-her-post/>

(Paragraph # 7)

Below is the recent Post regarding West Seattle Link (highlights are ours):

The West Seattle Link Extension has gone off the Rails



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

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

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. 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 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.

^[1] <https://bettertransport.info/pitf/harknessmessage.htm>

^[2] <https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/dataresearch/pop/special/rta.pdf>;

<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/washington/average-household-size#map>

^[3] [PSRC's 2050 Transportation plan](#), Appendix H, pg. 24

^[4] "Justification Information:"
<https://smartertransit.org/justification-for-smarter-transits-analysis-of-2050-rail-transit-mode-share-for-the-central-puget-sound-region/>

^[5] <https://www.psrc.org/media/5942> pg. 7, (see 3rd and 4th bar)

^[6] <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/sound-transit-ceo-julie-timm-is-leaving-her-post/>
(Paragraph # 7)

Michael Woodward

Hello, electeds and others,

I am indeed a fan of light rail and voted for it in 2016, but from everything I have seen, read, and heard about this current plan, it is genuinely absurd. Worse, it's highly irresponsible. Some of it is even borderline ethical. And for HOW MUCH?

You know the facts. I can't believe no one on the board of directors has the chutzpah to stand up the truth.

It only takes one first "NO" to show others it's ok to do the right thing and you've got their back.

Be that leader! **Please vote No on Motion 2024-59** and support the **NO BUILD** option.

This project needs to go back to the drawing board.

Michael Woodward

Brien Chow

Sound Transit Board Meeting Written Public Comment by Brien Chow, Oct. 24, 2024, Union Station, 1:30 p.m.

I'm Brien Chow, Co-Founder Transit Equity for All, Outreach Chair of the Chong Wa Benevolent Association of Washington State

The West Seattle Link is over cost by \$7.1 billion dollars.

Yet King County Executive and Sound Transit Board Chair Constantine told the *Seattle Times*, "The worst thing we could do right now is be paralyzed and slow the project. Delay decreases the benefit and increases the cost" (Lindblom, Mike. 9/18/24).

Yet there's no problem delaying the voter approved 4th Ave. Transit Hub at Union Station, now at 21 months at a delay cost of over \$1 billion dollars and still going up as time goes on.

I only hope this board sees the injustice being perpetrated on Seattle's last remaining community of color, the Chinatown International District (also named one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places by the National Trust in 2023). There's no hesitation at slowing or not even doing the promised further studies of the voter approved 4th Avenue at Union Station Transit Hub.

It's nice to know that no matter what it costs, ST Board Chair Constantine is going to keep the promise of light rail for the neighborhood where he lives, in spite of his neighbors growing support for the No Build option.

- Why can't the voter approved promise of the Southend Transit Hub at Union Station on 4th Avenue be kept?
- Why is it West Seattle Link can go to the design phase to find out true costs while the 4th Avenue station cannot?
- Why can't the CID have an accessible, connected Transit Hub like the Northside (Everett to Seattle Downtown) has in Westlake Station?

Why are people of color always and forever left out and left behind when it comes to benefits for society?

The answer is clear: Uncaring Wealth, Power, Privilege, tinged by more than a dab of Racial, Social and Economic Injustice over the lowest median income and limited/non-English speaking Chinatown ID.

I call upon this board to Move Forward on 4th as much as you moved forward on South Lake Union and West Seattle...for the sake of Equity and Justice for the CID

Thank you,
Brien Chow

Jack Carr

ST Board,

My name is Jack Carr and I'm a resident of West Seattle in north Delridge, just a stone's throw from the upcoming Delridge station. I'm very excited for a future where I could easily access Alaska Junction or downtown Seattle on frequent, reliable public transit! I approve of the preferred alternatives that have been identified by the board because

they seem like the best available options. I'm not explicitly opposed to any alternatives (except for DEL-7 because it skips the Avalon station); but in the interest of saving time and money, I would prefer that the preferred alternative is advanced rather than additional studies on alternatives that do not need such consideration.

Most of all, please, consider the impact of additional delays or studies when it comes to this decision. As we have seen with the now-separate Ballard Link Extension, which has almost been sent back to planning square one, when projects are sent back for additional consideration or new alternatives are thrown in, the additional time, effort, and planning snowballs into a huge added cost for all parties. A waste of millions of dollars and years of delays that result in increased VMT and carbon emissions in the future when we end up with a city that continues to prioritize car travel - we're already waiting until 2032 at the earliest for this project! That is why I am writing to urge the Board to advance the Preferred Alternative out of planning and into the full design phase. Future generations of Seattle residents will thank you.

Thanks,

Jack Carr

[Bill Hirt](#)

Atten: Sound Transit Board

The following post from my blog details that Sound Transit is hiding Lynnwood ridership results demonstrating its failure to attract riders and the implication of that result on future extensions.

Bill Hirt

A previous post detailed how the initial Sound Transit Starter Line ridership for August showed 1695 riders, a fraction of 4000-5700 predictions. That plans to use Line 2 to provide half the trains to Lynnwood would require Sound Transit double the number of light rail cars in the Starter Line area. The result being operating costs will dwarf any rational farebox revenue. Subsequent Ridership—Ridership reports neglected to include the August results.

The September 26th Sound Transit Board meeting presentations included reports the light rail extension had 68,000 residents living within a mile of the 4 new Line 1 Lynnwood stations. That “71,000 rode the system just on opening weekend”.

The initial October release of Ridership—Ridership data indicated very few of those residents chose to ride Lynnwood Link. It included the September ridership from the August 30th debut for each of the four link stations and total boardings are listed below:

Lynnwood T/C	5094
Mountlake Terrace	1353
Shoreline North	947

Shoreline South	1002
Total Boardings	8395

Again, subsequent Ridership—Ridership reports neglected to include either August or September results. Thus, the ridership data detailed here is limited by what was recorded prior to deletion.

The 8395 ridership was "good news" for Line 1 riders because those using downstream stations won't be "crowded out" by Lynnwood Link riders. (Sound Transit concerns resulted in their implementing a 515 route from Lynnwood to Seattle and an additional Sounder route from Everett.)

The "bad news" for Sound Transit was the 8395 riders was far less than the 25,333 to 34,200 Sound Transit predictions and a tiny fraction of the 71,000 who rode the system on opening weekend. Clearly, 8395 riders using light rail each day for the commute into and out of Seattle does little to reduce I-5 congestion. Especially since most of the Lynnwood Link riders previously rode buses.

For example, the Initial release of those boarding at Northgate dropped from 8007 in August to 4085 in September. A clear indication many of the 5094 Lynnwood T/C boarders previously rode buses to Northgate for the commute. Some of those boarders were the result of Sound Transit's decision to terminate ST512 there rather than continue into Seattle. However, the number of ST512 boardings for September in the initial release wasn't recorded prior to it being deleted.

Also, many of the Lynnwood Links 8395 total boardings presumably the result of Community Transit's decision to use the Link to replace all the 400 routes into and out of Seattle. Commuters from Stanwood, Marysville, Lake Stevens, Mukilteo, Edmonds, Mill Creek and others were all routed to one of the Link's 4 stations.. However there's no information about how many or where they transferred or how many were dissuaded from using transit because of the need to transfer to and from light rail for the commute.

The "bad news" resulting from only 8395 riders is also the cost of providing those rides. The 8.5-mile extension essentially doubles trip length and cost from Northgate to Westlake. Sound Transit budgets light rail car operating costs at ~\$30.00 per revenue vehicle mile. Thus, the 8.5-mile extension from Northgate to Lynnwood adds \$2040 for each 4-car train's round trip.

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 4-car

operating costs. That next year when Line 2 trains are also routed to Lynnwood, enabling Sound Transit plans for routes every 4 minutes during most of the day. The costs of operation will more than double but do little to increase riders.

The “really bad news” for Sound Transit is the Lynnwood Link ridership again demonstrates the fallacy of its “field of dreams” approach that “if we build it riders will come”. That extensions to Everett and Federal Way are not only unlikely to reduce I-5 congestion, their operating costs will be a huge financial burden for the entire Sound Transit service area.

One can only hope the Sound Transit Board recognizes that reality rather than continue to hide the debacle.

Marilyn Kennell

Vote NO on M-2024-59

The information revealed in the Final EIS (published on September 20, 2024) is so unfavorable that the board should vote NOT to allow WSLE light rail to proceed to the design phase. The probable cost has risen to \$7 billion dollars. Sound Transit is looking at this as a budget problem and, M-2024-59 asks for time to “baseline” the project - in other words - move the goalposts to make their 75% cost overrun look affordable. At \$1.5 billion per mile of track, one of the most expensive light rail lines in the world. But this is much more than a budgetary issue.

WSLE light rail will profoundly affect the quality of the human and natural environment; it will bulldoze homes

and businesses, cut down acres of trees, and create “heat islands” and “food deserts” in our poorer neighborhoods. And it will not reduce greenhouse gas emission, improve transportation system efficiency, or meaningfully improve the mobility of West Seattle residents. We are asking the board whether this project should be built.

Rethink the Link presented the board with an alternative EIS-C (September 26, 2024) and this week we sent a copy to each of the board members. We hope to address information in Sound Transit’s 900-page FEIS that we found outdated, vague, incomplete, and inaccurate.

We are for mass transit. We support Bus Rapid Transit. We ask you to vote NO on M-2024-59. We also request that you consider the NO BUILD Option for WSLE.

The “NO BUILD” Option does not mean “BUILD NOTHING”! “NO BUILD” applies only to the \$7 billion 4-mile West Seattle stub. NO BUILD frees up that money for Sound Transit to build something better for the entire system. Money should be spent on the communities along the north-south corridor that have been paying for light rail - and waiting for light rail - for many years. The West Seattle project is unaffordable and it will be technically obsolete before it is complete in 2032. Supporting the NO BUILD Option for WSLE can benefit us all.

We have repeatedly asked for a Town Hall in West Seattle. We have many questions - and we have thoughtful solutions. Please vote NO on M-2024-59 to stop further waste of taxpayer dollars. Please consider the federally mandated NO BUILD Option. And please give us a say in our futures by holding a town hall in West Seattle.

Marilyn Kennell
West Seattle

[John Miller](#)

As a Junction business and property owner I am excited to see the possibility of West Seattle connected to the sound transit network .

But as a resident I'm hoping i am not the only one with huge concerns

- The construction challenges (pilings for the bridge) drilling a tunnel and years of commercial and residential traffic disruption
- advances in technology (AI)will change the landscape for both office work downtown and Transportation itself
- The price tag for a system that will only assist but not replace the commute out of West Seattle and people will have to bus to the WS station and transfer in SODO will most likely be underused but paid for years on end
- The displacement of homes and Businesses and lost business due to disruption
- The price tag for the West Seattle and Ballard links make it more feasible to connect with the network by an improved bus system
- the 7.1 billion price tag will build an impressive project but wont do 7.1 billion dollars worth of good

Jack Miller

Husky Deli family owned since 1932

Paul Heise

The attachments mentioned in this comment are included at the end of this document.

Good morning Sound Transit Board,

I'm writing to share another recent experience on the rolling homeless shelter your team refers to as Light Rail.

This time it was the Tuesday morning commute (10/22/24) from Lynnwood to Symphony station.

The attached screenshots outline the conversation I had with Sound Transit Security.

The end result of this interaction is the person who violated the Code of Conduct and most likely didn't pay the fare was left on the train, made a huge mess and left several of my fellow riders feeling very uncomfortable.

Wednesday morning was even better. We pulled into the UW Station and was greeted with a couple UW Police Officers, with their weapons drawn, one searched the entire train on the inside and the other followed his partner on the outside. No explanation as to why, not announcement from the light rail operator, the doors eventually closed, and we continued on our way. An extremely unnerving experience.

To reiterate, people DO NOT FEEL SAFE on the light rail system. Which leads to ask, do any of you ride the light rail on a regular basis to commute into the city?

Thank you,
Paul Heise

From: Meeting Comments <MeetingComments@soundtransit.org>

Sent: Friday, October 4, 2024 9:51 AM

Subject: RE: Safety Concerns and Lack of Security on Light Rail from Lynnwood

This Message is From an External Sender

Caution: Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning Paul,

On behalf of Sound Transit Board, thank you for your email regarding safety and security concerns on the light rail. I have been working with staff to provide you with a sufficient response and wanted to inform you that was underway. We thank you for your patience.

[Josephine Gamboa](#)

Program Manager-Board Administration

Executive Department, Sound Transit

Pronouns: she/her

From: Heise, Paul

Sent: Monday, September 23, 2024 1:50 PM

To: Meeting Comments <MeetingComments@soundtransit.org>

Subject: Safety Concerns and Lack of Security on Light Rail from Lynnwood

Dear Members of the Rider Experience and Operations Committee,

As a “professional commuter” for the past 6 1/2 years, I have relied heavily on public transit, including the Community Transit route 412, which was discontinued and replaced by the 901 route which now takes me from my neighborhood to the Lynnwood Transit Center. Last week, I tried using the much anticipated light rail, and I feel compelled to share serious concerns about the safety and security on this system.

My first two rides earlier in the week, on Tuesday and Wednesday, were for commuting to my office in Seattle. Those trips were disrupted by mechanical issues, which were addressed at the beginning of the meeting today. One item that is concerning is the lack of security on the train once we left the Lynnwood station. On Wednesday, a passenger got on in Shoreline and sat next to me who was openly drinking bourbon from a bottle. Then, when we were transferred to an already overcrowded train due to the breakdown, I witnessed another individual with an open container of beer (photo attached). All of this, plus my new commute is now 30-mins longer (1.5 hrs. vs. 45-50 mins) due to having to switch from bus to light rail.

On Thursday, my friend and I took the light rail from Lynnwood to attend a Mariners game. As we prepared to depart, we noticed a disturbance involving a man who appeared to be homeless or possibly suffering from a mental episode. Several security guards asked him to leave the train, but after a brief argument, the man refused. To my surprise, the security team withdrew, leaving him on board. Once the doors closed, this individual caused further disruptions, engaging in some minor pushing, and shoving with other passengers. Fearing for my safety and that of others, I texted security, who informed me that police would meet us at the next station. However, upon arrival, the only visible security presence was one guard leaning against a fence, preoccupied with his phone (photo attached) that did nothing to help. The situation was not resolved until the man was forcibly removed by frustrated passengers at the South Shoreline station.

Given these experiences, I have some important questions for the committee to consider:

- Why doesn't Sound Transit require passengers to pass through turnstiles like other major systems, such as those in New York, Japan, or Vancouver? Such systems seem to reduce fare evasion and provide an added layer of security by ensuring all riders are legitimate ticket holders.
- Why is there such limited fare enforcement, and what steps can be taken to ensure a more consistent presence of security officers to prevent disturbances and ensure a safer environment?
- Are there plans to address the open container violations and disturbances caused by individuals who may be struggling with homelessness or mental health issues? What policies are in place to balance compassion for those in need while protecting paying passengers?

I strongly urge the committee to address these concerns and consider implementing stricter fare enforcement measures, possibly including the installation of turnstiles, to ensure a safer and more

secure rider experience for all. Until then, I will no longer be using the light rail and instead will revert to commuting via bus with likeminded passengers who share my same concerns.

Thank you for your time and attention to these critical issues.

Respectfully,
Paul Heise

Christine Cranston

IMPORTANT AND URGENT: Please do not destroy the West Seattle Health Club. It's a core healthy part of the West Seattle community.

As a member of health clubs in that location for over 20 years, **I strongly oppose that decision.** The removal of the West Seattle Health Club would not only result in the loss of a gym but also displace a large community of over 6200 members and over 100 employees who travel to West Seattle and support the businesses in the area.

I love the West Seattle Health club because it includes all ages - from infants to 90 year olds - and it has a very wide range of healthy exercise options for all levels of fitness. It's also a racially, ethnically, economically, and sexual orientation diverse community. The teachers are excellent - knowledgeable and great examples of living a healthy lifestyle. I was a member of the club back when it was All Star Fitness. As of now, I enjoy the Pilates classes and the weights. I have friends at the club and acquaintances that it's a joy to see every week. The club is an antidote to the isolation and loneliness that many people are experiencing now. As you may know, physical exercise is one of the best ways to reduce mental and emotional health issues. So is community.

The club has a huge building with lots of space. It also has plenty of free parking. It would be prohibitively expensive and totally disruptive to move it to another location. Plus, there is no space left in West Seattle.

PLEASE CHANGE YOUR PLANS FOR WEST SEATTLE LIGHT RAIL SO IT DOES NOT NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE WEST SEATTLE HEALTH CLUB.

Thank you, Christine

Christine Cranston

Patrick Robinson

The 5 to 6 year period of construction and detours plus the elimination of 100 parking spaces will discourage people from visiting Junction businesses. Some will undoubtedly fail.

The projected number of riders (the same number as currently take the bus) is clearly inaccurate. It's dependent on people trading a one seat ride downtown on a bus for a two seat ride on train and

a bus, adding travel time and complication (not everyone is promised a seat) PLUS the delay of waiting for the Ballard line and additional tunnel till 2039 or later. With no certainty of the completion of the downtown and Ballard sections, it makes even less sense to put West Seattle first.

Autonomous electric vehicle (and battery) tech development are moving at lightning speed, and the arrival of one terabit per second 6G wireless internet speeds by 2032, amid the rapid, revolutionary growth of AI affecting employment, and retail in the downtown core suggest we would be spending close to \$8 billion to provide an 18th century solution in an era of dramatic change. We need flexible and affordable transportation solutions, not rigid station based solutions that don't serve the disabled and disadvantaged well.

The idea that "Transit Oriented Development" in the Junction would benefit local businesses is based on assumptions not in evidence. People leaving on transit are not engaged in shopping prior to leaving. People arriving on transit are going home, not stopping to shop or eat. Very few people take the bus to West Seattle for dinner. Nobody takes the bus to Costco.

Patrick Robinson
WestsideSeattle.com

Candace Shattuck

Sound Transit is trying to put the cart before the horse. Sound Transit should respond to the constructive criticism which has been offered and account for the budget BEFORE they are allowed to proceed, not while the project is underway. The eight-year-old "approvals" are pretty stale at this point. Please vote NO or NO BUILD on Motion 2024-59.

Candace Shattuck

Kirsten Whittemore

Dear Sound Transit Board of Directors,

I am writing in regards to the West Seattle Light Rail plan. As a fourth generation West Seattleite, I'd like to express my strong opposition to the plan and request the **No Build** option, as well as request that the money be used to improve our West Seattle roads and existing public transportation instead.

I oppose the plan for the following reasons:

- Displacement of residents. To my knowledge, it is estimated that approximately 500 people will be displaced. Regardless of the plan to assist and reimburse these residents, these are members of our community! Each is living their own unique life, including possibly facing illness or other hardship. It's inhumane to force people out of their homes regardless of the money. Additionally, West Seattle is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. Where will these people be moved to?

- Disruption (and possibly the demise) of our businesses. The businesses that will be impacted by this plan have immeasurable value to the community. It's folly to think that one of the largest childcare centers in Seattle or a health club that serves more than 6,000 people, will survive. The space and cost to re-establish those businesses elsewhere in West Seattle is just not realistic, not to mention the very real negative impact on real people if the businesses close. As a member of the West Seattle Health Club, I see first-hand how important the community at the club is and how essential it is to have a facility that is equipped to support the fitness needs of young, old, injured, healthy...the list goes on. Again, these are human beings that rely on the social interaction and the exercise. Where is the 75 year old woman who comes to water aerobics everyday going to go?
- Destruction of our ecosystems. We have written goals as a city to preserve our trees, mitigate climate change, rejuvenate our creeks, protect our wildlife! We are responsible for this. It is our moral obligation to do everything we can to ensure the health of our ecosystems. Without healthy air and water, humans cannot survive. Building the light rail will not improve peoples' quality of life, as the carbon emitted from the project and the loss of carbon sequestering trees will surely have an adverse effect on our air quality; not to mention the noise pollution. Where will the Herons of Pidgeon Point go? What will the fish do when they come back to Longfellow Creek and it's full of more run-off? Those are just two examples, but I strongly believe that the loss will be more than the gain.
- Cost and duration of the project. \$4 Billion Dollars! I know it's naïve of me to say, but don't we have other, more pressing issues in our city that that money could go to? I don't fully understand how money gets allocated, but I will assume that this money must be used for something related to infrastructure and/or transportation. So, we can't use it to help solve the homelessness problem or drug addiction problem we have in this city, but surely it can be used to improve our current infrastructure, including our crumbling streets.

I believe the prolonged chaos of this multi-year project will have devastating effects on our community. More tempers will flare in an already volatile driving environment, people will be dissuaded to come to West Seattle for the many fun events and sights, and the tension that built during the pandemic and over the past several years will be scratched like an old scab as people have to drastically change their routes and times to get anywhere. Will there be adequate support for SPD to direct traffic and handle the inevitable road rage and accidents?

It's too much to ask of this community! I'm all for change, but the sick feeling I have deep in my gut is that West Seattle will be changed forever; from the small, familiar neighborhood that my Great Grandfather homesteaded in and has remained relatively the same in my 57 years (aside from the massive influx of people and housing) to a generic "hot spot" with the shadow of this cement monolith obscuring the beauty of this neighborhood. Trees, people, fish, birds, communities, gone, including me. Sadly, I won't be able to stay and witness the destruction.

Please do not move forward with this project. I vote **No Build** and you will not get my vote in the future if you vote pro-build.

Sincerely,
Kirsten Whittemore

Unnamed Commenters

No vote on Motion No. M2024-59

Sound Transit is not building what voters approved as ST3 in 2016:

Voters are getting a different rail plan than Sound Transit presented as ST3 in 2016:

The original Ballard-West Seattle line (WSBLE) is now two separate lines – BLE and WSLE

The \$1.7 billion ST3 budget for WSLE is now \$6-\$7 billion. Listed Rapid Ride corridor improvements have not been made, and its 2030 delivery date will not be met.

The ST3 proposal did not describe Pigeon Point deforestation, “irreparable” habitat damage, or any notice of a large carbon footprint from construction as documented in earlier Sound Transit projects.

Additional carbon and pollution generated from 5-8 years of traffic congestion is not specified in the DEIS but may be tallied in SDOT’s (Seattle Dept. of Transportation) annual carbon assessment.

Since 2016, ST has altered proposed routes, plans, and station configurations without filing any DEIS amendments, or providing public notices as changes are made.

Though the Sound Transit Board of Directors has not approved a West Seattle route, Sound Transit is delivering notices of potential buyouts and teardowns to property owners along a “placeholder” route.

Sound Transit should account for this before they are allowed to proceed. At present they have only “concepts” of a work plan and should not be able to start bulldozing West Seattle until we see a workable budget and honest timeline. WSLE light rail will profoundly affect the quality of West Seattle’s human and natural environment.

Please reconsider light rail! My apartment among many other homes is on the displaced list. I am in a situation where finding new housing would be difficult if not impossible so I would be homeless. I rely on Jefferson Square businesses which is also on the displaced list - a West Seattle fixture for almost 40 years. I also don't drive so rely on public transport but say LIGHT RAIL STAY AWAY! Save our homes and businesses. Also the cost is too high when the current bus system works just fine. Money could be better spent such as for more affordable housing/helping those in need.

I am a resident of West Seattle. I am asking that all members of the Sound Transit Board of Directors please vote No on Motion M-2024-59.

The cost for an extremely short light rail link is excessive and will cause way more disruption than it will alleviate travel issues. The environmental impacts and the costs to residents and businesses that are “in the way” are more destructive than helpful.

Perhaps a Town Hall meeting with the people of West Seattle is in order? We have many questions that need to be addressed - and we have thoughtful solutions!

Sent from my iPhone

Comments received after the meeting's deadline

John Niles

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

See attached.

--

John S. Niles

President, Global Telematics | globaltelematics.com | [linkedin.com/in/globaltelematics/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/globaltelematics/)
Executive Research Director, CATES -- Center for Advanced Transportation and Energy Solutions
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Preview of book at <http://endofdriving.org>

Stephen Fesler

Boardmembers:

I am asking you today to reject the proposal to select a project for the West Seattle Link extension and I say that as somebody who rides public transportation, strongly supports regional transit expansion, Sound Transit 3, and somebody who is a journalist that covers this stuff.

Unfortunately, the project that we're being asked to build here is the wrong version of the West Seattle Link extension. It is a gold plated version. It is the most expensive option on the table, and it is an option that we should not be exercising.

I recognize that there's a lot of opposition to this project entirely, and I'm not telling you to never do this project, but the option that we're looking at has seen costs rise so rapidly, well beyond inflation, and it has everything to do with the choices that this board has made over time to keep more costs onto the project.

You know, the technical advisory group that this board has commissioned is right that you need to be making decisions quickly, but you also need to be making the correct decisions. And that is not happening. And this motion today is not the correct decision.

There are better ways to do this project. We can do it as an elevated alignment. We can do it cheaper than what the consultants and staff have proposed by limiting its bounds within the street.

But you know, when we're seeing costs for the ST3 program rise many times, even controlling for inflation, to what voters approved in 2016, the only way that we can deal with that is by delaying projects. I know there's a wishful thinking that, Oh, if we just do a different bidding process, we'll save some money. Oh, if we do some value engineering here and there, we'll save some money. You will probably will but, you're not going to end up reducing the cost of these projects by half to within their budgets. It's just not reality.

And unfortunately, West Seattle is the canary in the coal mine because we know that not only has this project risen to astronomical levels -- three times the cost per rider of Ballard Link -- and the Ballard Link extension itself is going to \$20 billion up from \$11 billion something. We are really out of bounds and being able to afford the most gold plated options with ST3. And my big fear is, if we continue down this road of always selecting the most expensive project design alternatives for every single project, because that's the politically expedient thing is, we will never be able to afford ST3. We will never complete ST3.

Vote no today.

Mark Leahy

Sound Transit / WSLE —

As a longtime West Seattle resident, retired biotech researcher/biologist by training (with many years on the finance side too), I can't support moving forward with the WSLE due to the extension's enormous damage to our environment — both near-term and my children/grandchildren's environment.

The EIS clearly details the environmental damage to Pigeon Point, and highly probable negative impact on neighboring waterways and watersheds. This is obvious.

The EIS also notes embodied carbon too, however I (and likely others) firmly believe the EIS drastically underestimates WSLE embodied carbon problem (construction materials, construction itself, etc.).

Embodied carbon is a HUGE problem for my children's future — and does not get the attention due. We should NOT be adding excess GHG into the atmosphere at this time only to hope to "save / recover

benefits" in the future. It doesn't work that way...emissions now stay in the atmosphere for decades / centuries and add to our atmospheric CO2 problem; every ton NOT EMITTED NOW is far more important and valuable than "reduced emissions in the future", and likely too late.

The amount of emissions attributable to WSLE will never be recovered — short of ST paying for carbon removal (e.g. Climeworks), incurring more cost to taxpayers. Furthermore, "payback analyses" are misleading, flawed when estimating future environmental damage/"benefits", and easily manipulated by assumptions (see BEV adoption assumptions in the EIS, ridership).

WSLE and similar large-scale infrastructure projects MUST consider alternatives that have lower associated embodied carbon. The huge upfront, centuries long impact of current emissions / embodied carbon is NOT a trivial problem.

Sound Transit and its Board acts as if it has only one method of transit service to WS ("light rail"), and will expand that "service" with abandon — without regard to topography, alternate transit options, impact upon our current and future environment, or any monstrously over budget, added cost to taxpayers.

Given construction cost AND embodied carbon emission the WSLE (using "light rail") is a mind-blowing, stupid idea. (This is without mentioning the damage to local businesses, displaced homeowners!)

The cost and limited service / "benefit" to downtown further confounds me — WSLE providing but a few stations and not even fully connected to ST Link. A second monstrous, ugly bridge over the Duwamish when we should be planning in the decades to come ways to free the river? If the project can't be done efficiently and with minimal environmental impact — and should not be built. (If you need alternative ideas, please send someone to Europe to learn.)

Better alternatives exist - number one being the electrification and expansion of the Rapid Line "C" to West Seattle (which I enjoy). NO BUILD for a better, future-minded solution.

Regards,
Mark

Mark R. Leahy MS, MBA

Betty Lau transcript of verbal comments

I want to commend boardroom staff for their professionalism, care and problem solving. They are under appreciated.

Here we are at 22 months of delay costing \$1.1 billion dollars and a continuing information embargo on the 4th Avenue Transit Hub studies!

Meanwhile West Seattle Link has a \$7.1 billion cost overrun, and Lynnwood, \$3 billion. And who knows how many other billions of cost overruns there are for East Link, SeaTac and Federal Way!

It seems stations in better resourced neighborhoods with cost overruns get solutions and generous, low-cost federal loans but not for a station in Seattle's largest remaining community of color, Chinatown ID. I refer, of course, to the taking away of the 4th Avenue Transit Hub for Downtown Expansion.

The last time Downtown expanded, it forced the Second Chinatown off Second Avenue over to King Street, our Final Chinatown.

And all because of racially unjust, parochial interests.

Technical Advisory Group lead Grace Crunican, "...also emphasized the importance of boardmembers seeing their roles as deciding what is best for the whole transit system, not just their individual jurisdictional projects or interests. "The boardmembers...need to represent Sound Transit," she said. "The staff is sorely missing a group of people that are there to solve the region's problems as opposed to representing the jurisdiction from which they came...What the program needs is a board that is worrying about the whole picture and getting to the end goal" (Fesler, Stephen. "Sound Transit Needs Tune Up, Less Board Micromanaging, Expert Panel Says," *The Urbanist*, Mar. 14, 2023).

Please, be the board that focuses on the goal of building a world class, accessible, connected, and equitable light rail system that works for and benefits everyone!

Thank you.



October 18, 2024

Sound Transit
Board of Directors
401 S Jackson Street
Seattle WA 98104-2826

Subject: Property at 2460 4th Ave S;
King County Parcel Number 7666204395

Dear Board Members.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is in receipt of the WSLE Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which includes the alternatives studied in the WSBLE Draft EIS plus cost savings and refinement concepts identified in the July 2022 Board Motion.

USPS has been informed that its property may be affected by one or more of the alternatives in the Final EIS.

Prior to the Board considering action and selecting the project to be built with anticipation of the issuing the Record of Decision USPS requests that prior to the design phase the following issues be considered.

Problem Statement

Sound Transit's Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) fails to provide adequate information and designs on how the construction of the West Seattle Link Extension will impact the United States Postal Service's operations located at 2460 4th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98134. Further, the U.S.

Background

With the publication of the Final EIS for the West Seattle Link Extension, the project has now reached the 30% design benchmark. The Final EIS is an important document that dictates how the project is expected to impact the environment (built and natural), respond to public concerns, assess and describe impacts, and provide reasonable discussions around mitigation. Sound Transit's Board of Directors will potentially select the project to be built on October 24, 2024. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is anticipated to issue a Record of Decision before the end of 2024, likely in support of building the project. From there, Sound Transit will have the authority to begin property acquisition, finish design, conduct additional engineering, seek permits, and enter into contracts for additional project elements. Once the FTA issues a Record of Decision, the project will pick up pace

with construction slated to begin in 2027 with some elements potentially starting sooner. Sound Transit's goal is to have the new line completed in 2032.

Geographic Context

The U.S. Postal Service facility is located in SODO, or South of Downtown, an industrial district in Seattle, Washington. With the Port of Seattle to the west, I-5 to the east, I-90 to the north, and large rail facilities throughout, SODO houses many logistics and freight operations. SODO has five main north-south arterials (East Marginal Way S, 1st Avenue S, 4th Avenue S, 6th Avenue S, and Airport Way S) and three main east- west connectors (S Holgate Street, S Lander Street, and S Spokane Street). An existing light rail station is already present along the SODO Busway, which abuts U.S. Postal Service facilities, and the West Seattle Link Extension will add a new line connecting the southwestern quadrant of the City of Seattle to the regional passenger rail system.

Potential Concerns for Postal Service Operations

Below is a list of the potential concerns provided by the U.S. Postal Service. There is an exhibit from Sound Transit at the end of this document and is provided for additional context.

New Overpass on S Lander Street

- Sound Transit is proposing a new overpass to be built between 4th Avenue S and 6th Avenue S along S Lander Street, where the U.S. Postal Service has its main access to the garage. This also serves as the main entrance for the U.S. Postal Service's freight operations.
- The Final EIS states, "During construction of the South Lander Street overpass, access from the United States Postal Service facility would be maintained at their southern access point, except for short durations over nights and weekends. However, pedestrian access to the United States Postal Service garage from South Lander Street would be closed during construction of this roadway overpass. The majority of the United States Postal Service access road interruptions are anticipated to occur over a 1.5-year period" (Chapter 4, page 4.14-12).

Potential Issues

- There are no specific designs provided in the Final EIS.
- We are unable to ascertain if the bridge can be constructed with dimensions that will retain access to the U.S. Postal Service's garage and meet design standards.
- Preliminary conversations have suggested Sound Transit would raise the intersections at 4th Avenue S and 6th Avenue S to make the overpass buildable, though the Final EIS does not discuss this.
- The eastern half of the existing overpass on S Lander Street near 3rd Avenue S will also need to be redone, suggesting potential closures for that overpass as well.
- Sound Transit states that the U.S. Postal Service will retain access to the southern entrance via a new access road. See the point regarding the access road for more

information.

- There will be a pedestrian facility to access the light rail station between the overpass and the U.S. Postal Service's facilities, creating a long, narrow corridor with little visibility. Public safety for transit users and U.S. Postal Service employees is a top concern along this corridor.

Access Road

- Due to the overpass, Sound Transit states in the Final EIS, "Alternative access to this garage would be provided on 4th Avenue South. Sound Transit is working with the United States Postal Service and the City of Seattle to ensure trucks and other vehicles are able to access the parking garage facility" ([Chapter 3](#), pages 3-19 and 3-20).

Potential Issues

- No specific designs are provided as a part of the Final EIS.
- Based off the schematic in [Appendix J, part 1 on page 11](#), the geometry of the proposed access road appears to be incompatible with some truck turning movements.
- The access road would have an uncontrolled intersection with 4th Avenue S, a very busy arterial, which is set to be reworked (see concern related to 4th Avenue S below).

Unspecified Changes to 4th Ave S

- The SODO Busway (along the U.S. Postal Service facility's east side) will be permanently closed, likely redirecting all buses to 4th Avenue S. There will be anywhere between 1,440 and 1,920 buses using 4th Avenue S every day during construction. There will be an unknown number of buses when the project is complete.
- The Final EIS states, "The mitigation measures being considered include transit queue jumps, business access and transit lanes, and freight and bus lanes. Specific mitigation for the permanent closure of the SODO Busway would be determined through coordination between Sound Transit, City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, Northwest Seaport Alliance, and King County Metro" ([Appendix N, part 1, page 4-26](#)).

Potential Issues

- The specific mitigation methods have not been determined, meaning impacts on the U.S. Postal Service and other entities along the 4th Avenue S corridor are largely undefined.
- Construction and sequencing of this project is undefined despite Sound Transit officials stating that buses would be relocated to 4th Avenue S in 2027, suggesting the changes to 4th Avenue S would occur prior to 2027.
- Given the potential mitigation methods, Sound Transit would likely trigger mandatory improvements, such as planting street trees, replacing roadway

concrete, and redoing sidewalks, adding impacts and complexity beyond what is included in the Final EIS.

- Without a specific mitigation plan in order, the impacts from and interactions between 4th Avenue S and S Lander Street cannot be determined.

The United States Postal Services' mission is to provide essential services and is a critical part of the nation's infrastructure, delivering essential services to American households and businesses.

Please consider the concerns raised in this letter moving forward with the Board's decision on the final plans.

Respectfully,

E-SIGNED by LETITIA.Y RUSSELL

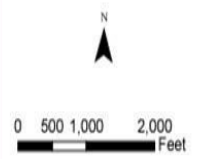
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Letiti
Manager, Realty Asset Programs



Area of Potential Effects (APE) for Sound Transit West Seattle Link Extension (July 2024)

- Station
- APE
- Segment Line
- Alternatives**
- Preferred Alternative
- Alternative Profile**
- Elevated
- At-Grade
- Tunnel
- Retained Cut





October 22, 2024

Board of Directors
Sound Transit
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Support for West Seattle Link Extension Preferred Alternative (DUW 1a)

Dear Board of Directors,

On behalf the Port of Seattle (Port) and The Northwest Seaport Alliance (NWSA), thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Sound Transit West Seattle Link Extension (WSLE) proposed project approval. We appreciate Sound Transit's direct engagement with Port staff as a cooperating agency and with NWSA as a participating agency and, especially, the opportunities to work with Sound Transit staff on maritime issues in development of the alternatives.

In 1911, the Port was authorized by the citizens of King County under Chapter 53 of the Revised Code of Washington to serve as a public port authority, charged with ensuring that Seattle's deep-water harbor is protected to serve as an economic engine for the region.

The unique partnership began in 2015, with the formation of the NWSA as a marine cargo operating partnership of the Port of Seattle and Port of Tacoma. NWSA is one of the largest container gateways in the United States, managing the container, breakbulk, auto and some bulk terminals in Seattle and Tacoma and serving as the international gateway for goods imported to and exported from Washington State.

Support for preferred alternative: Our maritime cargo terminals and the related properties we manage will be impacted no matter what alternative is selected, but we support the preferred alternative as it provides the lowest level of direct impact to our maritime cargo operations.

“Maintenance of Traffic” planning with port forecasts: During the years of construction and as recognized in the FEIS, Sound Transit will need to develop significant maintenance of traffic (MOT) plans that will include long-term road closures. COVID, recent labor strikes, and geopolitical issues have demonstrated that maritime freight volumes are volatile. We must continue planning for the cyclical nature of said freight volumes, recognizing the strengths of the Pacific Northwest as an international gateway.

Contractor coordination with POS/NWSA in contract specifications: As Sound Transit moves forward with this significant investment, we ask that the design/build project's specifications include that the contractor must coordinate MOT plans with the Port/NWSA. We look forward to providing freight information to support a resilient transportation system during construction.

An economically cohesive Duwamish MIC through business relocations: This vibrant light rail network will traverse urban centers and residential neighborhoods as well as the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC). The line benefits from stations with employment opportunities, such as in SODO and throughout the MIC, to complement the other planned and existing stations that are more suitable for housing. As the WSLE advances to construction, we recognize some businesses will be displaced. In the SODO area, we implore Sound Transit to minimize these displacements and support displaced businesses relocating within Seattle's industrial areas to the greatest extent possible. Our economic contribution is enhanced by the collocation of maritime and industrial businesses.

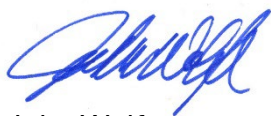
Transit-oriented workforce development: In addition, we will look to Sound Transit to support the maritime and supply chain ecosystem's future in the MIC as it seeks to sell acquired property following construction of the WSLE. We recognize that Sound Transit has a robust transit-oriented development (TOD) program that seeks to create thriving station environments and can be a partner in that effort for SODO. We are uniquely suited to support Sound Transit in creating a station environment that benefits from the maritime and local economic and employment base of SODO.

In summary and in the spirit of continuing our collaborative working relationship, as the project advances past the FEIS stage we request that Sound Transit:

1. Include a contract specification requiring coordination with the Port/NWSA on construction impacts including impacts to waterways and maintenance of traffic on truck streets.
2. Minimize interruption to waterway passage and rail traffic critical to maritime freight and the operation of other water-dependent businesses.
3. Continue to work with us on protecting freight fluidity. Major Truck streets are being impacted by the WSLE, and the transportation system needs to work for all modes.
4. Coordinate with the Port and NWSA in the relocation of on-street drayage truck parking. We can help keep truckers informed.
5. Engage the Port and NWSA early in the surplus property and TOD planning process. As property is redeveloped following construction, it is vital that new uses are compatible with port operations. Housing is not compatible.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comment. We look forward to our continuing our partnership and ongoing collaboration.

Sincerely,



John Wolfe
Chief Executive Officer
The Northwest Seaport Alliance



Karen Goon
Deputy Executive Director
Port of Seattle



October 23, 2024

Dow Constantine, Chair
Sound Transit Board of Directors
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chair Constantine and Board Members,

On behalf of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and our 2,500 members, I am writing to urge the Board to approve Resolution No. R2024-22, selecting the project to be built for the West Seattle Link Extension Project as recommended by the System Expansion Committee. We also ask you to approve the proposed amendment that directs additional work to reduce both the known and yet to be identified impacts of the proposed alignment, station location, and utility relocation on the community.

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 light rail 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. It will also advance construction plans to address community impacts.

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 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 deliver high-quality transit service that serves the people of Seattle and Sound Transit district for the next 100 years.

Sincerely,

Rachel Smith
President & CEO

SOUNDTRANSIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS | OCTOBER 24, 2024 | 1:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M. | PUBLIC COMMENT

FROM: Ralph B. Ibarra, President – DiverseAmerica Network

RE: Resolution No. R2024-23; Budget Increase for East Link Extension

Dear SoundTransit Board of Directors:

For the record, my name is Ralph B. Ibarra and I and my family have resided in King County since 1980 and we have owned residential property in the City of Algona since 1991. Also, for over 30 years I have operated a small business consultancy that is certified as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), and as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE). Honorable SoundTransit Board members, I consider myself one of your constituents.

I respectfully urge you to give due consideration for the significant impact to the number of small businesses/DBEs that performed work on the associated contracts identified in System Expansion Committee Motion No. M2024-64 - Increased Contingency Funds for East Link Extension Agreements and Contracts. Because lower-tier subcontractors are subject to flow-down requirements contained within the contract provisions between SoundTransit and Prime Contractors, many small firms suffered from the contributing factors outlined in the Key features summary of Resolution No. M2024-23: “Key contributing factors include the global COVID-19 pandemic, an extended ready-mix concrete delivery strike, quality issues, and contractor challenges meeting planned production rates.” Additionally, “Delay to substantial completion of construction and the start of revenue service attributed to **owner-initiated design revisions resulting in change orders (emphasis added)**, third party coordination requirements, and contractor quality issues and challenges meeting planned production rates.”

Moreover, any dispute between the Prime Contractor (Prime) and SoundTransit (Owner), causes an immediate suspension of payments to the lower-tier subcontractors that severely affects cash flow. The time it takes for the Prime/Owner disputes to be resolved delays the resumption of payments to subcontractors often adding 30 to 60 extra days to the typical lead time of 60 days for monies to be received. Here again, contractual flow-down requirements exacerbate the plight of lower tier subcontractors, as well as their obligations to pay their vendors in a timely manner.

For example, Sundancer Electric, Inc. (SEI) was a subcontractor on the E320 segment of the East Link Extension and was subject to the same circumstances and contributing factors that are being put forth as justification for approving Resolution No. M2024-23. It is accurate to state that the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the owner-initiated design revisions resulting in change orders was particularly costly for SEI that ultimately were not factored in the final tally of payments made to SEI under RTA/CN 0063-15 (Construction Contract with Shimmick-Parsons, Joint Venture). As such, reimbursement for added costs to the completed work by Sundancer and other small businesses on the East Link Extension is certainly warranted and will be an equitable action by the SoundTransit Board.

In closing, I enthusiastically endorse the purpose and intent of the Owner of Choice methodologies presented by Terri Mestas, Deputy Chief Executive Officer – Capital Delivery at last week’s SoundTransit Virtual Construction Expo, and particularly the Equity in Infrastructure Pledge ratified by the Seattle Pledge Signatories.

Thank you for your kind consideration and I am at your convenience for any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Ralph B. Ibarra, President – DiverseAmerica Network | 826 Algona Blvd N; Algona, WA 98001 |
Ralph@MBEWorld.com | Cell/Text: (253) 653-4645

Sound Transit Board Meeting Written Public Comment by Brien Chow, Oct. 24, 2024, Union Station, 1:30 p.m.

I'm Brien Chow, Co-Founder Transit Equity for All, Outreach Chair of the Chong Wa Benevolent Association of Washington State

The West Seattle Link is over cost by \$7.1 billion dollars.

Yet King County Executive and Sound Transit Board Chair Constantine told the *Seattle Times*, "The worst thing we could do right now is be paralyzed and slow the project. Delay decreases the benefit and increases the cost" (Lindblom, Mike. 9/18/24).

Yet there's no problem delaying the voter approved 4th Ave. Transit Hub at Union Station, now at 21 months at a delay cost of over \$1 billion dollars and still going up as time goes on.

I only hope this board sees the injustice being perpetrated on Seattle's last remaining community of color, the Chinatown International District (also named one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places by the National Trust in 2023). There's no hesitation at slowing or not even doing the promised further studies of the voter approved 4th Avenue at Union Station Transit Hub.

It's nice to know that no matter what it costs, ST Board Chair Constantine is going to keep the promise of light rail for the neighborhood where he lives, in spite of his neighbors growing support for the No Build option.

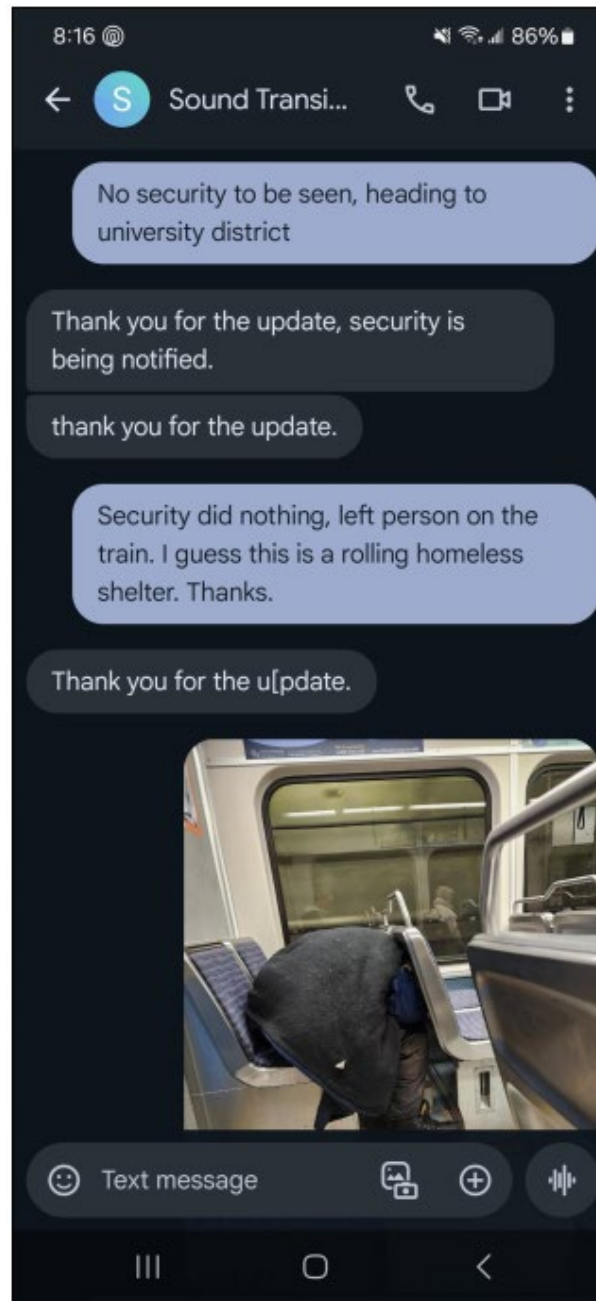
- Why can't the voter approved promise of the Southend Transit Hub at Union Station on 4th Avenue be kept?
- Why is it West Seattle Link can go to the design phase to find out true costs while the 4th Avenue station cannot?
- Why can't the CID have an accessible, connected Transit Hub like the Northside (Everett to Seattle Downtown) has in Westlake Station?

Why are people of color always and forever left out and left behind when it comes to benefits for society?

The answer is clear: Uncaring Wealth, Power, Privilege, tinged by more than a dab of Racial, Social and Economic Injustice over the lowest median income and limited/non-English speaking Chinatown ID.

I call upon this board to Move Forward on 4th as much as you moved forward on South Lake Union and West Seattle...for the sake of Equity and Justice for the CID

Thank you,
Brien Chow





Public Comment for the Sound Transit Board Meeting of October 24, 2024 regarding the Resolution to select a route for WSLE by John Niles. I'm a professional transportation policy analyst, with past research work funded by PSRC, USDOT, WSDOT, and California Department of Transportation aka Caltrans. I am also a Seattle resident and taxpayer, Sound Transit customer and Co-Chair of smartertransit.org.

I'm focusing on today's Board meeting Business Item 7C, the R2024-22 Resolution to select a route for WSLE in anticipation of it being constructed some years in the future. That is, if funding somehow can be arranged. Meanwhile, you are being asked to choose an unaffordable four-station package with a truncated and unproductive one, single station Minimum Operating Segment (MOS) lower cost option. This brings Sound Transit's long-march to a Record of Decision (ROD) for WSLE, a milestone, allowing the agency to acquire homes and businesses along the full route well before design is completed and construction begins. It also removes any chance of getting the agency to do an honest cost benefit analysis of the alternatives.

After reading through the WSLE FEIS, I have a few points for your consideration.

1. Your due diligence requires, say I, that you read the justification for selecting the No Build alternative based on evidence presented in the environmental process to date as covered in a document titled "Rethink The Link Final EIS-C" that has been distributed in several ways to all Board members, and posted at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62fa7817a9f2447f1d8f8c65/t/670c46c2352d6c38eff0cd37/1728857794411/RethinkTheLink_Final_EIS-C_v4.6.pdf. That document will be updated as the several local authors learn more in the deep pit of details that is the FEIS.
2. A key finding of the FEIS is this statement buried deep in the multi-volume document on page 6-21 in a section titled **Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts**

Some temporary impacts during construction would not be avoidable and could be significant and adverse in some locations. These impacts would include temporary but long-term lane, trail and/or roadway closures, and noise and vibration. Detour routes could reduce the impact of roadway closures, although delays, congestion, and inconvenience would still occur. Road closures would also require temporary Metro bus diversions. There could be adverse impacts on businesses in the project corridor, especially for businesses adjacent to the alternatives that depend on drive-by traffic. All Duwamish Segment alternatives would require short-term closures of the navigation channel and netting and scaffolding would temporarily reduce vertical clearance over both waterways.

3. These obvious construction impacts are part and parcel of choosing the light rail mode which of course requires construction of a trackway and stations, instead of making buses work better on modified road space configurations with transit priority signaling.

4. Another reason for requiring an actual alternatives analysis is the FEIS revelation that the carbon emissions from the construction of the project exceed the sum of carbon emission reductions following project opening. This is a potential problem with the EPA's Clean Air Act Section 309 Review that so far has failed to comment on the incomplete GHG analysis in the WSLE FEIS. Electric buses running on existing streets create a much smaller GHG emissions problem.

5. A truncated MOS with a single station in Delridge will likely be **all** the West Seattle light rail that is affordable in ST3. It's easy to predict the a downsize to MOS would reduce the attractiveness of proceeding into construction when extensive electric bus coverage of the entire West Seattle peninsula down to Burien could be implemented much faster and affordable for less than the price of a train to Delridge.

6. The environmental process/analysis for this project has consistently been flawed.

a. The FEIS attempts to justify selection of the light rail mode, as opposed to a bus rapid transit mode by this language:

“The [West Seattle light rail extension] project was included in the Sound Transit 3 Plan, financing for which was approved by voters in November 2016. The Representative Project in the Sound Transit 3 Plan identified mode, corridor, and station areas. The mode identified for this corridor was light rail.” [Comment response 4 on citizen comment 0672 in Appendix O of the WSLE FEIS]

b. Page 6.2 of the FEIS explains further why alternative modes are not considered:

A purpose of the project, as identified in Chapter 1, Purpose and Need for West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions, is to provide high-quality rapid, reliable, and efficient light rail transit service to communities in the project corridor as defined through the local planning process and reflected in the Sound Transit 3 Plan. The mode (bus) was considered in the Level 1 analysis but was not carried forward since it was not identified and analyzed in the Sound Transit 3 Plan.

In other words, the decision to build light rail was made prior to the EIS analysis. The modal analysis that was done, the “South King County HCT Corridor Study” was completed in 2014 by Sound Transit with ST2 funding and aimed at formulating the ST3 light rail program. Question to ponder: Is this ten-year old work an up-to-date, objective modal alternatives analysis for the Downtown Seattle to West Seattle corridor that justifies a multi-billion dollar, four mile light rail

line with unavoidable adverse construction impacts? Is this justification for the on-record forecast that WSLE will serve an additional 2000 transit riders per day in the 2040s, a remarkably insignificant incremental customer growth?

In the meantime, route selection for WSLE should be put on hold until a truly objective environmental process for this MegaProject is complete and how to pay for it becomes more clear. Unfortunately, the documented schedule in the Federal Permitting Dashboard [btw, not mentioned in the Sound Transit website for ordinary citizens to know about] shows the FEIS released on September 20 (done) and the Record of Decision on November 29 (planned). This period of slightly over two months is consistent with the NEPA established 30 Day period set for comments on the FEIS that will be incorporated into the Record of Decision.

However, ST collecting hundreds of comments in the spring of 2022, then taking over two years to document the government's response with several thousand pages of new FEIS text in the fall of 2024, and then finally putting citizens on a 30-day clock to respond may be legal, but it's unfair and hinders well-informed citizen participation.

From my earlier days in U.S. Naval Aviation, there was mantra pilots were taught to bring to mind when they were lost and coming too close to the ground: Climb, Conserve, Confess.

I suggest those piloting West Seattle Link Extension should climb, conserve, and confess.