

01/09/2025 System Expansion Committee
Meeting Written Public Comment
Submissions

Submissions

Justin Roll 2
Bill Hirt 2
Brien Chow 4
Betty Lau 5
MaryKate Ryan 6

Justin Roll

Sound Transit Board Meeting Comments,

Dear Sound Transit Board Members,

SPEEA union member and south Seattle resident here . I'd like to eventually be able to use light rail to commute to my job at Boeing in Everett. The north and south station option makes no sense and will reduce ridership. People like me will keep driving our cars. Please support a 4th or 5th ave station

Justin Roll

Bill Hirt

Dear Sound Transit Board,

This year like last year 2024 was another year of Sound Transit demonstrating a failure to effectively respond to the area's roadway congestion. That 2023 was a year of delay in demonstrating Sound Transit's plan for a light rail spine won't reduce congestion into Seattle. It ended with CEO Timmes leaving, "likely" because she recognized the 2024 East Link Starter Line and Lynnwood Link debuts will demonstrate Sound Transit's failed approach to public transit.

That similar concerns by potential transit system CEOs found by Sound Transit's outside search organization resulted in Sound Transit going to "in house" selection The result was a new ST CEO, and another year of folly.

It began with another year of Sound Transit not recognizing King County Metro, Snohomish Community and Pierce County Transit already provided bus transit to commuters that could have been increased to meet future needs. That 4-car light rail trains don't have the capacity to reduce multilane freeway peak hour congestion and cost too much to operate off peak.

That using light rail trains to replace bus routes reduced transit capacity into Seattle, does nothing to reduce GP lane congestion, and riders added by extensions reduce access for current riders. There was never any justification to spend hundreds of millions on light rail extensions beyond UW Stadium, across I-90 bridge, or beyond SeaTac airport.

The April 21 Seattle Times Traffic Lab front page article "Eastside's newest startup: Light rail line finally arrives" claimed it "will change how Eastsiders think about getting around" with 70,000 residents living within a mile of Starter Line stations. Yet the 3425 weekday boardings for the 8 stations in November indicated only 1712.5 average riders, a fraction of the 4000 to 5700 predicted.

Sound Transit made a similar claim that 80,000 residents living within a mile of one of the Lynnwood extensions would attract 24,000 to 35,000 riders. Yet, in November, only 6643 commuters boarded at one of the extension's 4 stations. That most boarders were former bus riders whose routes were terminated at one of the stations. Terminating bus routes does nothing to reduce I-5 GP congestion and reduces transit capacity into Seattle.

Thus, the cost of extending light rail tracks and routing 4-car trains to and from Lynnwood far exceed any benefits from reduced congestion. Extending light rail to Everett just adds to the problem. That the extensions across I-90 Bridge and beyond SeaTac will “likely” face similar problems.

The lack of riders on Starter Line and Lynnwood Link in 2024 also demonstrated another Sound Transit problem, the failure of their apparent “Field of Dreams” premise, “if we build light rail riders will come.” It's "unlikely" the number of commuters choosing to use light rail link from Ballard to SODO will justify spending more than \$12 billion for the link and second tunnel. That the number of West Seattle commuters choosing to use light rail won't justify spending more than \$6 billion for a second bridge over Duwamish Waterway from Alaska Junction to SODO.

2024 was also the year Sound Transit decided to no longer release the monthly Agency Progress Report. Ending nearly 10 years of 180 pages summarizing projects and major contracts status, risks and performance for capital projects. Each project had a Project Summary, Key Project Activities, Closely Monitored Issues, Project Cost Summary, Risk Management, Contingency Management, Project Schedule, and Staffing. Needed details reflecting Sound Transit's response to Starter Line and Lynnwood Link lack of ridership.

2024 ended with the Board approving the Sound Transit 2025 Proposed Budget and Performance Plan. The 2025 Budget Summary lists "Administrative" expense as \$34,259,000 and \$141,365,000 as "Administrative-agency admin support" expense. Yet the 2025 budget's Appendix C: “Departments and Staffing Budgets” details budgets by department total \$957.5 million for 1572 positions gives an average cost per position in 2025 of \$609,000. It's not clear why the difference in the Appendix and the board whose 18 members who receive an average of more than \$200,000 in compensation (from somewhere) never queried the difference..

The 2025 Budget also included Appendix I: Debt Obligations reporting they were only paying interest for several years on some of the bonds outstanding as of Dec 31,2023. That all of those bonds would be paid off in 2046. Five years after 2041, the end of ST3 taxes voters approved in 2016. What was new in 2024 was Sound Transit's 5/28/2024 getting TIFIA and RRIF loans totaling \$1.5 billion that won't be paid off until 21/31/2061, and twenty years after 2041

The bottom line being 2024 was another year of Sound Transit failures not recognizing light rail trains inability to reduce roadway congestion and that access to light rail doesn't assure ridership. That they approved a 2025 budget with "questionable" Staff budgets and borrowed money requiring repayments well beyond their authority to do so.

Sincerely,

Bill Hirt

Brien Chow

Written Public Comment by Brien Chow, Sound Transit System Expansion Committee Meeting, Th., 1_9_25, 1:30 p.m., Union Station

"Good afternoon, members of the System Expansion Committee." My name is Brien Chow, Transit Equity for All and Chong Wa Benevolent Association.

and I'm commenting today as a concerned citizen and advocate for equitable transportation.

Sound Transit needs to rebuild trust with the communities it serves.

A crucial step in this process is to...

radically improve how we gather and utilize community feedback.

Currently, the process lacks transparency and meaningful engagement.

Reports often claim to be based on community input... yet we rarely see concrete evidence of where this feedback originates.

This lack of transparency creates an environment where it's easy to manipulate public opinion and prioritize the voices of a select few.

A truly transparent process would:

- Clearly document: The dates, times, and methods used to gather feedback, including which community groups participated.
- Publicly share: All collected feedback, explaining why certain input was included and others were not.
- Hold follow-up meetings: To discuss these decisions with the community and answer questions.

Apply an equity lens:

- To ensure that the voices of marginalized communities are heard and that decisions benefit all residents, not just a select few.
- The recent CEO search report exemplifies these shortcomings. Without a transparent and inclusive feedback process, we cannot ensure that Sound Transit is truly serving the needs of the entire region.

I urge this committee to prioritize community engagement and transparency in all future decision-making processes. The future of Sound Transit depends on it."

These comments aim to:

- * Clearly and concisely state the issue and its impact.
- * Provide specific and actionable recommendations.
- * Emphasize the importance of equity and inclusion.

I hope this comment effectively addresses the concerns raised and encourages the System Expansion Committee to take action.

Thank you,

Brien Chow

Betty Lau

Hello System Expansion Committee Members,

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

3 Things:

1. Sound Transit needs to improve community and stakeholder trust.

One way is to list all feedback collected and make it public within a day of collecting it.

That never happens.

Resultant reports then hide behind "this came from community" and "community input is..." without a shred of evidence.

In my years of attending Sound Transit meetings, I have yet to see any feedback accepted from us, the vast majority of CID organizations, residents and businesses on 4th Avenue or on the types of information we want. Why is that?

2. In fact, we are now at two full years of information embargo on the promised 4th Avenue further studies.

All we have for a two year delay is a highly biased independent consultant's report, which at \$50 million per month x 24 months = \$1.2 billion of delay! That's a very expensive consultant's report.

3. The CEO Stakeholder Feedback report did not include CID stakeholders nor list that the CEO must have successful experience with diversity, equity, racial, social and economic justice for impacted communities of color

We want the CEO to commit to personally engaging with and collaborating with marginalized, underserved communities of color.

Happy New Year and Stay Off 5th!

MaryKate Ryan

Dear System Expansion Committee,

In 2022, the comment period for the West Seattle Ballard Link Extension DEIS was extended to 90 days to recognize the complexity of this project but also the challenges of engaging some sectors of Seattle's communities.

Today, we are asking the Board to advocate for *at least* a 90-day comment period for the forthcoming Ballard Link Extension DEIS. Additionally, we ask that translated materials be provided at the outset of this comment period, along with resources for language access throughout the process.

Thank you for your time,

MaryKate W. Ryan (all pronouns)

Preservation Planner

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