

# WEST SEATTLE TRANSPORTATION COALITION



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WSBLE Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comments  
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## Dear Sound Transit Board Members:

The West Seattle Transportation Coalition (WSTC) works to address transportation and mobility issues for the nearly 100,000 people living on the West Seattle Peninsula. WSTC's top issue has always been ingress-egress and mobility issues between our neighborhoods and Downtown or points beyond. The West Seattle Bridge Transportation Corridor (WSBTC) is the city's busiest transportation artery. It connects us with major north-south routes (SR 99, E Marginal-Alaskan Way, Airport Way, and I-5), and – pre-pandemic – carried more than 122,000 vehicles a day – 14,000 on the Spokane St Swing (low) Bridge, and 108,200 on the High Bridge (*SDOT 2017 Seattle Traffic Flow Map*).

As we have expressed in previous letters, our constituents know that light rail to West Seattle will be the biggest transportation project to affect our Peninsula this century, and they want to ensure we make improvements that benefit all of our neighbors in ways that outweigh negative impacts wherever possible:

- By providing new transportation alternatives to the vehicle congestion in the WSBTC;
- By ensuring that guideway and station locations bring real, tangible benefits to the neighborhoods directly affected and not just impacts to views and acquisition of homes and businesses;
- By protecting historic buildings, community gathering spaces, and businesses in the economic enterprise nodes within and around Youngstown and the Alaska Junction Urban Village; and
- By reflecting long-standing community outreach and neighborhood planning goals.

Comments presented here are specific to the West Seattle Link extension which covers about 4.7 miles and includes stations at SODO, Delridge, Avalon, and Alaska Junction. They continue to reflect three main objectives for this EIS Process:

1. Consider alternatives that present real, significant, and useful differences for study and comparison in identifying the best route options and station locations.
2. Ask the right questions to gather the data that will drive the final decisions made by the ST Board.
3. Consider disruption during and after construction, and provide suitable mitigation measures for what will be considerable change, including the possible destruction of historical structures and communities along proposed routes.

As your own Fact Sheet (January 2022) calls out, "Due to steeply rising real estate prices and other construction expenses, Sound Transit projects currently in early planning and design, including the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project are seeing significant cost estimate increases." In light of what we have learned in the last 2-3 years, **the WSTC strongly encourages consideration of placing some**

previously dismissed early alternatives back into to the scope of this EIS process for further study and consideration.

- **We urge further consideration of the so-called “long tunnel” option along the Yancy alignment** to avoid the destruction of many single-family homes and possibly even some taller multifamily structures in the Avalon neighborhood.
- **We also call for the reconsideration and further study of the so-called “Purple Line” alternative which featured a crossing of the Duwamish River at a point further south, tunneling through the Puget Ridge approximately along the SW Genesee alignment, then following the current elevated station and guideway alignments along that street** before entering a tunnel below the Avalon neighborhood and continuing underground into the West Seattle Junction.

We believe further study of these options for comparison and cost in response to our increased understanding of the costs and impacts of the current DEIS alternatives also helps to avoid a number of significant impacts and problems identified so far in this DEIS:

- The proposed station heights for some of the Delridge alternatives would be one of the highest in the entire system, and unusual for typical light rail systems. Such heights present very real impediments to accessibility and impacts to transfer times for passengers. We also know there have been problems in our system with maintenance and upkeep of escalators and elevators. Building stations that are even more dependent on such passenger conveyance systems seems like a step in the wrong direction.
- **Reconsideration of the “Purple Line” alternative helps to avoid the drawbacks to ALL of the current Duwamish bridge crossing alternatives**, including loss of maritime businesses and impacts to the electrical infrastructure and waterways by the North Bridge Crossings as well as the need to complete a significant cut-and-fill impact to the north end of Pigeon Point and environmental impacts to the Great Blue Heron Colony located there that would be affected by the South Bridge Crossings.
- These additional alternatives also could reduce the need for real estate acquisitions and noise mitigation and reduce impacts to historic buildings, community gathering spaces, and over 120 households and businesses in and around the historic Youngstown neighborhood.

**Within the existing DEIS alternatives, we strongly urge staff to continue to take further consideration of a Alternative Delridge Stations 5 & 6**, which the DEIS makes clear would have fewer residential displacements than the other alternatives. All alternatives except for Alternatives DEL-5 and DEL-6 would displace Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families offices. All alternatives except for Alternatives DEL-5 and DEL-6 would also affect the West Seattle Golf Course.

If we’re not open to consideration of actually repurposing part of the Golf Course for TOD potential, and other neighborhood enhancements, then why not make every effort possible to protect the course as-is.

**The WSTC Board continues to believe the EIS should study the cost and ridership impacts of deferring one of the three proposed ST3 station locations—or combining the Avalon and Delridge stations into the proposed Alternatives 5 & 6.** We are continuing to elevate comments by constituents who have called for dropping Avalon Station or truncating the line at Avalon or even Delridge, especially if station deferment provides funding to support other changes desired by the community.

- How would forecasted ridership, environmental impacts, cost, and other factors be affected by such a decision?
- Would building only two stations severely impact ridership or would ridership adjust itself?
- Can Metro adequately serve all three proposed locations with its future route planning or not?

We have significant questions about the future planning for bus routes provided to Sound Transit by King County Metro based on current ability to support routes, as well as concern for the validity of ridership modeling based on post-pandemic changes to the way we go about our daily lives. We encourage you to work further with Metro to refine this study in the Final EIS document.

Many of us were also shocked to see initial ridership numbers presented for the Avalon Station in parts of the DEIS document **estimating only 1,200 daily riders!** Yet, Sound Transit's analysis claims ridership would not change without this station. We encourage you to do more study of this modeling as King County Metro reps have told us informally that their bus ridership to that area could easily be diverted to one of the other two stations in the vicinity.

The WSTC looks forward to working with all of you throughout the Environmental Impact Statement process and beyond. Together, we are committed to helping Sound Transit deliver the elegant solution that will benefit all of the 100,000+ people living, working, and visiting the West Seattle Peninsula for many years to come.

Thank you for continued opportunities to dialogue and offer comment.

In Community,



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**Chair, West Seattle Transportation Coalition Board**  
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