

April 16, 2016 3:21 AM

# New long-term taxes would pay for Sound Transit expansion

*\$50 billion proposal would expand light rail, other transit options  
Car-tab, sales and property taxes would rise to pay for plan  
Most taxes would be collected for decades after project's built*

By Adam Lynn

Voter approval in November of Sound Transit's proposed \$50 billion expansion would result in a 108-mile light-rail network from Everett to Tacoma, Ballard to Bellevue.

It also would mean tax increases across three fronts.

The motor vehicle excise tax and the sales tax collected on behalf of Sound Transit would increase from current levels, and, for the first time in the regional transit agency's history, it would levy a property tax.

The taxes would be collected for decades, well beyond the proposed build-out date of 2041.

This from a [Sound Transit online FAQ](#) about the proposed ballot measure, called Sound Transit 3:

"As with virtually all major infrastructure projects, construction would be paid for in part using long-term bonds issued over the course of the project delivery period.

"Approximately 25 or 35 years after completion of the package, the retirement of those bonds would enable the agency to begin scaling back tax collections to the level needed to support ongoing operations and maintenance of the expanded system."

That's on top of taxes the agency already collects for two previous transit projects.

Supporters of the ballot measure, which the Sound Transit board will firm up in June, say the increased tax burden would pay for desperately needed [expansions of light rail, express bus service and Sounder commuter rail across the Puget Sound region](#).

That includes 16 projects proposed in Pierce and South King counties.

One project would extend light rail from Federal Way to the Tacoma Dome Station by 2033.

That project, estimated to cost between \$3.4 billion and \$4.2 billion, would mean Pierce County riders one day could take light rail to Sea-Tac Airport or into Seattle from Tacoma.

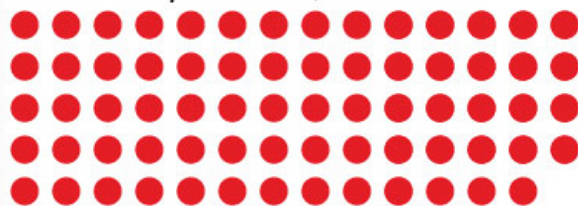


**PROJECT 3 (OPTION A).  
Extend light rail from Federal  
Way Transit Center to Tacoma**

**COMPLETION: 2033**

Fifteen miles of light rail to the Tacoma Dome Station running alongside state Route 99.

**Daily boardings: 49,000 to 69,000**  
*Each dot represents 1,000 riders*



**Project cost:**

**\$3.9-4.2 billion**

**Annual operating costs:**

**\$49 million**

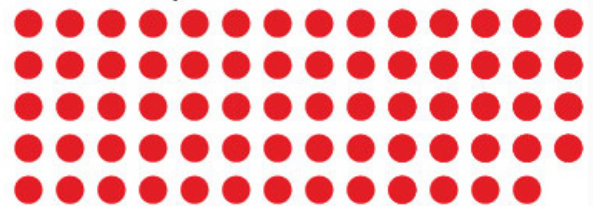


**PROJECT 3 (OPTION B).  
Extend light rail from Federal  
Way Transit Center to Tacoma**

**COMPLETION: 2033**

Fifteen miles of light rail to the Tacoma Dome Station running alongside Interstate 5.

**Daily boardings: 49,000 to 69,000**  
*Each dot represents 1,000 riders*



**Project cost:**

**\$3.4-3.7 billion**

**Annual operating costs:**

**\$49 million**

[Click for an overview of all proposed projects](#)

“The case for light rail is simple: At peak capacity, a light-rail line can carry 16,000 people an hour — in each direction — absolutely reliably,” King County Executive and Sound Transit board Chairman Dow Constantine said during a speech last month.

“And even if you never intend to set foot on light rail, it’s still in your interest to build it, because every person who chooses to ride the train is one less driver snarling up traffic for you.”

Others aren’t so sure.

The politically conservative Shift Washington website is a frequent critic of Sound Transit. In a post last month, it called the tax-based funding plan for Sound Transit 3 an open-ended “scam.”

“As if predicting their future incompetence, the liberals running Sound Transit made sure to add a ‘no sunset’ clause in ST3,” the post states. “In other words, Sound Transit could take as long as it wants to complete this plan’s pie-in-the-sky promises. Taxpayers’ hard-earned dollars would continue to flow in.”

Sound Transit estimates the new taxes would raise about \$27 billion during the 25-year construction phase and cost the average adult living in Pierce, King or Snohomish counties \$200 per year, or about \$17 per month.

The exact amount it would cost each adult or household depends on many variables, however.

The Sound Transit board is taking public input on the proposal through April 29 and hopes to firm up a ballot proposal in June to put before voters in November.

Here’s a look at the proposed tax increases:

### **Motor vehicle excise tax**

Also known as the car-tab tax, it’s the fee motorists pay each year to renew their license plates. The cost varies, depending on where a person lives.

Part of the overall fee paid by residents in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties goes to Sound Transit.

The agency currently collects 0.3 percent of vehicle value to fund projects approved by voters in 1996 and 2008. That adds up to about \$30 on a vehicle worth \$10,000.

Under Sound Transit 3, the transit agency’s collection would increase by 0.8 percent, to a total of 1.1 percent of value. That higher total would be collected through 2028, when the 0.3 percent tax is set to expire.

The 0.8 percent fee would continue indefinitely, according to Sound Transit spokesman Geoff Patrick.

A person owning the same \$10,000 car now would pay \$110 to Sound Transit annually as part of his or her license-plate renewal through 2028 and \$80 thereafter.

## **Sales tax**

Sound Transit currently collects 0.9 percent on each taxable sale in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties. That works out to 90 cents on a \$100 purchase.

Under Sound Transit 3, the agency would collect another 0.5 percent, raising the agency's total collection to 1.4 percent on each taxable sale. That works out to \$1.40 on a \$100 purchase, an increase of 55 percent.

The increase also would push the overall sales tax rate in many communities, including Tacoma, above 10 percent.

## **Property tax**

Levying a property tax is new ground for Sound Transit.

The agency thus far has raised local money for capital costs and operations through the car-tab fee, sales taxes and a tax on car rentals.

The Legislature recently gave the agency authority to begin collecting property taxes as well, a decision not supported by all.

In a Nov. 18 letter to the Sound Transit board, the mayors of DuPont, Lakewood and Steilacoom expressed concerns about the agency's use of property taxes to finance its projects and operations.

"Local governments, school districts, fire districts, library districts and other local taxing authorities rely heavily on these local property taxes," mayors Michael Grayum, Don Anderson and Ron Lucas wrote.

"Sound Transit should thoroughly consider the impact that use of its property tax authority could have on our local funding capacity and that of our junior taxing districts."

The Sound Transit 3 current proposal calls for a property tax of up to 25 cents per \$1,000 of valuation. That would be \$66.25 annually for a house valued at the current Pierce County median home price of \$265,000.

## **Other funds**

Sound Transit is counting on federal grants to pick up 11 percent of capital investments and long-term debt in the form of bonds to cover between 20 and 50 percent.

Fares to ride the agency's buses and trains are projected to cover about 40 percent of light rail operations and 20 percent of bus operations if the system is built out.

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## SOUND TRANSIT 3

# Projects around the South Sound

Sound Transit, the regional transit agency, proposes spending \$50 billion to expand light rail, Sounder commuter train and some bus services across the Puget Sound region. The agency has identified 17 projects in South King and Pierce counties that would receive money from the proposal, which the Sound Transit board plans to put on the November ballot. Here is a snapshot of those proposals. All costs, ridership numbers and time frames are estimates:

### PROPOSED PROJECTS



### CURRENT/PLANNED SERVICE



NOTE: All routes and stations are representative. Future investment/environmental study areas not shown.



#### PROJECT 1. Extend light rail from Kent/Des Moines to Star Lake

COMPLETION: 2028

Two miles of light rail with 1,240-space parking garage at new Star Lake station.

Daily boardings: 3,000 to 5,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$513-549 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$6.14 million**



#### PROJECT 2. Extend light rail from Star Lake to Federal Way

COMPLETION: 2028

Just more than 3 miles of light rail to Federal Way Transit Center with a new 400-car garage there.

Daily boardings: 7,000 to 10,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$550-589 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$8.75 million**



#### PROJECT 3 (OPTION A). Extend light rail from Federal Way Transit Center to Tacoma

COMPLETION: 2033

Fifteen miles of light rail to the Tacoma Dome Station running alongside state Route 99.

Daily boardings: 49,000 to 69,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$3.9-4.2 billion**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$49 million**



#### PROJECT 3 (OPTION B). Extend light rail from Federal Way Transit Center to Tacoma

COMPLETION: 2033

Fifteen miles of light rail to the Tacoma Dome Station running alongside Interstate 5.

Daily boardings: 49,000 to 69,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$3.4-3.7 billion**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$49 million**



#### PROJECT 4. Extend light rail from downtown Tacoma to Tacoma Mall

COMPLETION: 2041

About 3.5 miles of light rail with stations at South Pine Street and Tacoma Mall.

Daily boardings: 6,000 to 8,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$975 million-\$1 billion**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$11.8 million**



#### PROJECT 5. Expand Sounder commuter train platforms to accommodate 8-car trains

COMPLETION: 2024-36

The train platform projects originally were part of the ST2 ballot measure but were put off because of revenue shortfalls during the recession.

Daily boardings: Less than 1,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$98-105 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$2.49 million**



#### PROJECT 6. Expand Sounder commuter train platforms to accommodate 10-car trains

COMPLETION: 2024-36

Work assumes Project 5 is completed.

Daily boardings: Less than 1,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$133-142 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$4.53 million**



#### PROJECT 7. Additional Sounder commuter train service

COMPLETION: To be determined

Expand Sounder service during off-peak hours, including regular weekend service every 90 minutes from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Daily boardings: To be determined

Project cost: To be determined

Annual operating costs: To be determined



#### PROJECT 8. Auburn Station access improvements

COMPLETION: 2024-36

Build a 600-stall parking garage at the Auburn Sounder station along with pedestrian and bike improvements around the station.

Daily boardings: Not applicable

Project cost:

**\$41-44 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$420,000**



#### PROJECT 9. Kent Station access improvements

COMPLETION: 2024-36

Build a new 450-stall parking garage at Kent Station and make pedestrian and bicycle improvements in the area.

Daily boardings: Not applicable

Project cost:

**\$36-39 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$420,000**



#### PROJECT 10. Light rail from downtown Tacoma to Tacoma Community College

COMPLETION: 2041

About 3.6 miles of light rail with stations at South Union Avenue, South State Street, South Proctor Street, South Ainsworth Street, South Pearl Street and the college.

Daily boardings: 6,000 to 8,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$642-687 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$11.16 million**



#### PROJECT 11. Enhance bus service along Pacific Avenue from Tacoma to Spanaway

COMPLETION: 2028

Money would go to Pierce Transit to improve many aspects of bus lines along Pacific Avenue and build a new 350-stall Park & Ride at the southern terminus.

Daily boardings: 2,000 to 3,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$270-289 million**

Annual operating costs:  
Pierce Transit responsible for all ongoing costs.



#### PROJECT 12. Enhance bus service along Meridian Avenue/state Route 161 in Puyallup

COMPLETION: 2019-24

Money would go to Pierce Transit to improve bus routes from South Hill Transit Center to Puyallup Sounder Station and 168th Street East and a build new 350-stall Park & Ride at 168th Street East.

Daily boardings: Not applicable

Project cost:

**\$61-66 million**

Annual operating costs:  
Pierce Transit responsible for all ongoing costs.



#### PROJECT 13. Enhance bus service between East Pierce County cities and the Sumner Sounder Station

COMPLETION: 2024

Add pedestrian and bicycle improvements at Sounder stations from Tukwila to Lakewood, add off-site parking facilities, and additional bus/transfer facilities.

Daily boardings: Less than 1,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$31-33 million**

Annual operating costs:  
To be determined



#### PROJECT 14. South Sounder access improvements

COMPLETION: 2024-36

Add pedestrian and bicycle improvements at Sounder stations from Tukwila to Lakewood; add off-site parking facilities; additional bus/transfer facilities at stations.

Daily boardings: Not applicable

Project cost:

**\$291-311 million**

Annual operating costs:  
Not applicable



#### PROJECT 15. Extend light rail from Star Lake to Federal Way

COMPLETION: To be determined

Build a station in the McMillin area and another across North Meridian Avenue.

Daily boardings: Less than 1,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$207-222 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$4.4 million**



#### PROJECT 16. Sounder commuter train expansion to DuPont

COMPLETION: 2036

Two new stations (DuPont and Tillicum) with a 125-stall parking lot at Tillicum.

Daily boardings: 1,000 to 2,000  
Each dot represents 1,000 riders

Project cost:

**\$289-309 million**

Annual operating costs:  
**\$4 million**

Source: Sound Transit  
Staff graphic

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Stranger, 4/20/16

<http://www.thestranger.com/news/2016/04/20/23981803/tim-eyman-declares-war-on-sound-transitagain>

[News Apr 20, 2016](#)

# Tim Eyman Declares War on Sound Transit—Again

## The New Antitax Initiative That Could Blow Up Plans for Expanded Light Rail in Seattle

by [Heidi Groover](#)



*Choo Choo: Eyman's initiative would wipe out the amount of funding it would take to expand to West Seattle and Ballard. Kelly O*

Antitax initiative-monger Tim Eyman has declared war on Sound Transit. While his latest offering, Initiative 1421, doesn't mention the words "Sound Transit," Eyman's intent is clear.

Eyman didn't return requests for comment for this story, but on the website for his organization, Voters Want More Choices, you'll find this: "Seattle-centric Sound Transit is going to try to impose \$15-\$25 billion in additional taxes this year—our initiative derails that," the site reads. "Bring Back Our \$30 Car Tabs throws a much needed monkey wrench into what they're calling 'ST3.'"

The initiative would cap car-tab fees at \$30 statewide. Today, those fees vary across the state and are higher in Seattle and the surrounding area because of an added fee that helps fund Sound Transit. In the proposal for the next expansion of light rail, Sound Transit 3, car-tab fees (known

as the motor vehicle excise tax or MVET) become even more important. They would contribute \$6.9 billion—or a quarter of the new taxes proposed for ST3.

"That's the equivalent of both the West Seattle and the Ballard lines," says Shefali Ranganathan, executive director of Transportation Choices Coalition, the advocacy group that will run the campaign for ST3. "That money would be wiped out."

Statewide, some smaller cities depend on the MVET for basic road projects. According to an anti-Eyman coalition of transportation, business, and labor groups and some city governments, slashing the MVET to \$30 would blow a \$3.4 billion hole in transportation funding over 10 years.

"The loss would be horrible," says Andrew Villeneuve, who founded the Northwest Progressive Institute and whose full-time job is basically opposing Eyman initiatives. "It would be awful. And people who do not use a car would be the worst affected."

To wage war on urban transit, Eyman will rely on mistrust of Seattle from voters elsewhere in the state. The only voters whose MVET fees fund Sound Transit are those in the Puget Sound cities and counties where Sound Transit builds projects. Yet, by railing against "Seattle-centric" Sound Transit, Eyman is building a campaign message urging voters all over the state to get back at a transit agency they don't even pay for. In a list of reasons voters should support the initiative, Eyman and his associates Mike and Jack Fagan slam Sound Transit and its "multi-billion dollar choo choo train boondoggles."

"If you want your \$30 car tabs back, support our initiative," the site reads. "If you want to derail Seattle-centric Sound Transit, support our initiative." (A bit of irony here: Eyman is framing Sound Transit as too Seattle-focused in order to appeal to anti-Seattle sentiment in the rest of the state. Meanwhile, transit advocates inside Seattle are criticizing ST3 as too suburban. The plan would build more than four times as many miles of light rail tracks outside Seattle as inside the city.)

This isn't the first time Eyman has gone after car tabs or Sound Transit. In 1999, Eyman successfully pushed an initiative to replace the MVET with a \$30 fee. The state supreme court ruled that unconstitutional, but the legislature cut the MVET anyway. Sound Transit's MVET dollars were grandfathered and the agency was allowed to continue collecting, but only recently got the authority to collect *new* MVET cash. They're hoping to put that new authority to use on ST3, the biggest ever light rail package to get a vote in the region. Eyman also attempted (but failed) to block plans to build light rail to the Eastside back in 2011.

Eyman will need to gather 246,000 valid signatures by July 8 to get this latest idea in front of voters. He has yet to launch a signature-gathering campaign, but looks ready to bankroll one. The I-1421 campaign has raised about \$191,000, much of that rolled over from Eyman's antitax efforts last year. (Fremont landowner Suzie Burke, who has fought bike lanes and transportation taxes in Seattle in the past, has kicked in \$5,000.) According to Public Disclosure Commission records, Eyman's group has \$1.2 million in loans waiting to be directed to the car-tabs initiative—or another of Eyman's many ideas. Along with Eyman loaning himself \$250,000, the supporters offering those loans have bankrolled his efforts before: Clyde Holland, CEO of a Vancouver, Washington–based real estate investment firm; Kenneth Fisher, CEO of Camas-based Fisher Investments; and Mark Needham, the owner of a Yakima "family fun center."



Eyman often uses paid signature gatherers to make it onto the ballot. At \$1 per signature, he'll need about \$300,000 to fund that effort. The closer he gets to the deadline, the more he'll have to pay signature gatherers.

"Realistically, if he gets the money, he'll be on the ballot," Villeneuve says. "We're prepared to fight it."

If Eyman's initiative and ST3 both pass this fall, the Sound Transit Board would be left to decide which projects would be delayed or canceled, according to Sound Transit spokesperson Geoff Patrick. As thousands of new people are expected to move into the region, the choice won't be easy.

Eyman, who lives in Mukilteo, has made no secret of his dislike for transit that serves urban areas like Seattle and gets people out of cars and off highways. But as Sound Transit has rebuilt its reputation from near implosion in the 1990s, it's getting harder for Eyman to cast the agency as incompetent and wasteful.

"I think Eyman resents the fact that Sound Transit is delivering," Villeneuve says. "He wants the agency to be dead." ★

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Seattle Times, 4/19/16

[http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/sound-transit-must-add-north-seattle-light-rail-station/?utm\\_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm\\_campaign=724ea515ec-Morning+Brief+4+19+2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_5beb38b61e-724ea515ec-120294717](http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/sound-transit-must-add-north-seattle-light-rail-station/?utm_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm_campaign=724ea515ec-Morning+Brief+4+19+2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5beb38b61e-724ea515ec-120294717)

Opinion

# Sound Transit must add North Seattle light-rail station

Originally published April 18, 2016 at 4:57 pm Updated April 18, 2016 at 5:31 pm

A light-rail station at Northeast 130th Street would be ideal as a pedestrian and bicycle access point and would ease congestion at the Northgate and Northeast 145th Street station stops.

By [Debora Juarez](#)

Special to The Times

I RAN for Seattle City Council because I was tired of North Seattle being ignored in citywide and regional matters. I am hard-pressed to think of a more poignant example of this phenomenon than a future that leaves taxpayers staring helplessly at light rail as it breezes through their neighborhood without stopping.

Neighbors pushed hard for a Northeast 130th Street station. Their efforts were rewarded with crystallized public support, dedicated staff time from Sound Transit and constructive conversations regarding the community's vision for growth and density.

City of Seattle staff spent months toiling over citywide growth plans and housing-affordability goals, both of which hinged in a meaningful way on new transit and housing at Northeast 130th Street. Then, the Northeast 130th Street station was given a "provisional" designation in the Sound Transit 3 draft plan, with zero guaranteed funding and no targeted completion date. All the ongoing community efforts came to a screeching halt. Once again, North Seattle was ignored.

Research shows investments around Northeast 130th Street could make it an excellent pedestrian and bicycle access point, one which could alleviate stress on the heavy traffic projected to choke the Northgate and Northeast 145th Street light-rail stations. The research also found stopping at a Northeast 130th Street station would add a mere 42 seconds to light-rail travel times. As a matter of comparison, increased congestion has slowed travel times on Interstate 5 by a minute every three months over the last five years.



**Debora Juarez**

*Debora Juarez is a Seattle City Council member representing North Seattle.*

The Northeast 130th Street Station would be the focal point of a powerful east-west transit connection. Frequent buses would connect the booming urban villages of Lake City and Bitter Lake with light-rail service. These communities have high concentrations of communities of

color, English-language learners and low-income households. Car ownership is below the citywide average. These transit-dependent communities lack adequate resources to meet their existing and future transportation demands, and desperately need new ways to get around.

Furthermore, the Northeast 130th Street station was originally estimated to cost \$25 million if built concurrently with Lynnwood LINK, opening in 2023. The price would more than triple to \$80 million if we were to add the station at an even later date.

The logic behind designating the Northeast 130th Street station as 'provisional' is flawed."

Sound Transit board members, as well as agency staff, have told us they understand these facts and agree with them. My understanding is the late-breaking, "provisional" designation was due to concern that adding the station would disrupt a federal grant application.

The grant concern has been portrayed as an insurmountable obstacle. I hear this, but I disagree. Let me explain:

The argument I have heard is that the grant application for the section of rail in question has already been submitted, without a Northeast 130th Street station. Some say adding the station now would put us "in the back of the line" for a billion dollars from the U.S. Federal Transit Administration.

This argument is stunningly defeatist and ignores several crucial realities.

First, the grant application in question is chock-full of mentions of future plans for adding a Northeast 130th Street station. It should come as no surprise that the community is now looking to actually build the station.

Second, a constituent recently drew my attention to a similar project in Denver. There, city and county officials successfully added a station while construction of a federally funded light-rail line was actually in progress. Denver's federal funding was never jeopardized and the local community was not penalized for prioritizing its needs. As the Northeast 130th Street station is at an earlier developmental stage, it should theoretically be easier for us to modify our application.

The logic behind designating the Northeast 130th Street station as “provisional” is flawed, and the penalty for continuing to do so will be paid for by my constituents as well as all of Sound Transit’s taxpayers.

This is why district representation matters. This is why it is important to have people in leadership positions who know the needs of their communities. That is true democracy. I’m not taking my marbles and going home on this one.

Debora Juarez is a Seattle City Council member representing North Seattle.



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Seattle Times, 4/20/16

[http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/ballard-magnolia-seek-pricey-add-ons-to-sound-transit-light-rail-plans/?utm\\_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm\\_campaign=cda8d73d22-Morning\\_Brief\\_4\\_20\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_5beb38b61e-cda8d73d22-120294717](http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/ballard-magnolia-seek-pricey-add-ons-to-sound-transit-light-rail-plans/?utm_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm_campaign=cda8d73d22-Morning_Brief_4_20_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5beb38b61e-cda8d73d22-120294717)

# Ballard, Magnolia seek pricey add-ons to Sound Transit light-rail plans

Originally published April 19, 2016 at 8:24 pm

Some in the Ballard and Magnolia neighborhoods want expensive light-rail add-ons to November's Sound Transit ballot measure: a tunnel under Salmon Bay and elevated tracks west of 15th Avenue West.

By

[Mike Lindblom](#) and [Daniel Beekman](#)

Seattle Times staff reporters

Now that they've seen Sound Transit's expansion proposal for the November ballot, people from Seattle's Ballard and Magnolia neighborhoods are demanding a quicker and more expensive light-rail connection to downtown.

Business and civic groups in the [Northwest Seattle Coalition for Sound Transit 3](#) want a tunnel beneath Salmon Bay instead of a 70-foot-high drawbridge. They also seek elevated tracks west of 15th Avenue West in Interbay, instead of tracks in the median.

Transit activists from the volunteer group [Seattle Subway](#) are also arguing for elevated tracks through Interbay, and a bridge high enough to avoid nearly all boat traffic on the Ship Canal. Experience in Rainier Valley and Sodo shows how collisions can block light rail on the street, they argue.

City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw — whose district includes Queen Anne, Interbay and Magnolia — declared her support during a Tuesday night Sound Transit outreach forum at Ballard High School. So did Councilmember Mike O'Brien, who represents Ballard.

A tunnel and elevated tracks would add about \$600 million, [a draft comparison shows](#).

That would leave fewer dollars to finance the \$2 billion light-rail spur that transit-board Chairman and King County Executive Dow Constantine has promised his neighbors in West Seattle, using the Seattle area's share of future transit tax.

The Ballard project as proposed in March by Sound Transit calls for a new tunnel through Uptown, South Lake Union and downtown, bringing the full price to \$5 billion.

“Doing something that’s dramatically more expensive will bump against the financial capacity we have to build out the whole system — the goal of both West Seattle and Ballard in the same ballot measure,” Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff said in an interview.

The Sound Transit 3 proposal — now being aired in public forums before a final plan is set for the ballot in June — calls for a \$50 billion, 25-year program for construction, trains, buses and maintenance, including suburban light-rail extensions to Everett, Redmond, Issaquah and Tacoma via Federal Way, using new and existing taxes.

If approved, the increases in property, sales and car-tab taxes would average \$400 per household per year.

The coalition highlights a threat to road capacity for cars, if some of the six road lanes through Interbay are taken for rail corridor.

“We know it would be more expensive to do a tunnel, but 15th Avenue West is the only north-south through-street in the area,” Bagshaw said.

Bagshaw argued that predicted ridership on the Ballard line is far higher than for a West Seattle line.

“We need to consider this,” Bagshaw said. “I want Sound Transit to come back and tell me how much it would cost.”

This issue is bringing Seattle’s new system of electing City Council members by district to the forefront.

Metro King County Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles, who represents northwest Seattle, also supports a route that separates light rail from traffic, Bagshaw said.

City Councilmember Debora Juárez, of North Seattle, is asking for a light-rail stop where I-5 meets North 130th Street, even as Lynnwood officials warn that such stations would slow commuters on that line.

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Seattle Times, 4/23/16

[http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/25-year-wait-for-sound-transit-to-finish-light-rail-heres-why/?utm\\_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm\\_campaign=78cd62a470-Morning\\_Brief\\_4\\_25\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_5beb38b61e-78cd62a470-120294717](http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/25-year-wait-for-sound-transit-to-finish-light-rail-heres-why/?utm_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm_campaign=78cd62a470-Morning_Brief_4_25_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5beb38b61e-78cd62a470-120294717)

# 25-year wait for Sound Transit to finish light rail? Here's why

By Mike Lindbloom

Originally published April 23, 2016 at 8:00 am Updated April 23, 2016 at 6:49 pm



*The cutterhead of the Northgate Link tunnel boring machine (TBM1) is brought out of a 95-foot-deep retrieval shaft at the University of Washington Station on April 5, and construction workers help position it on concrete footings at the construction site. (Ellen M. Banner/The Seattle Times)*



**To complete such an ambitious light-rail project, it would take years for Sound Transit to collect the taxes, absorb citizen demands and deal with engineering challenges.**

A few nights ago in Ballard, a crowd of 300 people booed and hissed when Mike O'Brien, their Seattle City Council representative, said the neighborhood might not see light rail for 22 years.

The same frustrations are simmering up north, where the draft Sound Transit 3 plan, aimed at the November ballot, would take 25 years to reach both the Paine Field industrial area and Everett Station. Elected officials there are making a counterproposal they say would cut eight years off the timeline.

In most regions of the country, when expensive proposals are unveiled — and this one would raise sales, property and car-tab taxes an average \$400 per household per year — local politicians would brace for a tax revolt.

That may yet occur, but a more immediate threat for Sound Transit is disillusionment from the left. Urbanists, transit supporters and ordinary citizens are impatient.

“You’ve got a large voter base here,” said Mike Kahrs, a Ballard resident who stood up to question officials at the forum. “You’re going to put forth a package that would make us wait 22 years for service. Is that a wise decision?”

After years of encouraging people to demand light rail, Sound Transit has backed itself into a corner. To go big takes a very long time.

The \$50 billion program offers 58 miles of light rail, including the Everett-Tacoma “spine,” spokes to Ballard, West Seattle, Issaquah and Redmond, a new downtown Seattle tunnel and a Paine Field loop, plus Sounder commuter rail to DuPont, I-405 and Highway 522 bus lines and park-and-ride spaces. It will take a quarter century to do all that, officials say.

New taxes to fund construction would arrive very gradually, over five decades. In Seattle, the east downtown tunnel and five underground stations would have to fit among building foundations and other tunnels. And in the Northwest, everybody wants to be heard before the dirt turns.

“We’ve tried to be realistic about what it takes to deliver the projects,” said Ric Ilgenfritz, the agency’s planning director.

The size is a function of political geography.

A shorter, faster plan likely wouldn’t reach enough communities — or allow for enough colored route lines on campaign mailers— to attract support from the 1.7 million voters in Sound Transit’s service territory.

To ask for still higher taxes, for the purpose of accelerating the plan, is forbidden by a cap in a 2015 state law, even presuming voters could be persuaded to dig deeper.

Public comment ends Friday, followed by a final transit-board vote in June on a final plan for the November ballot.

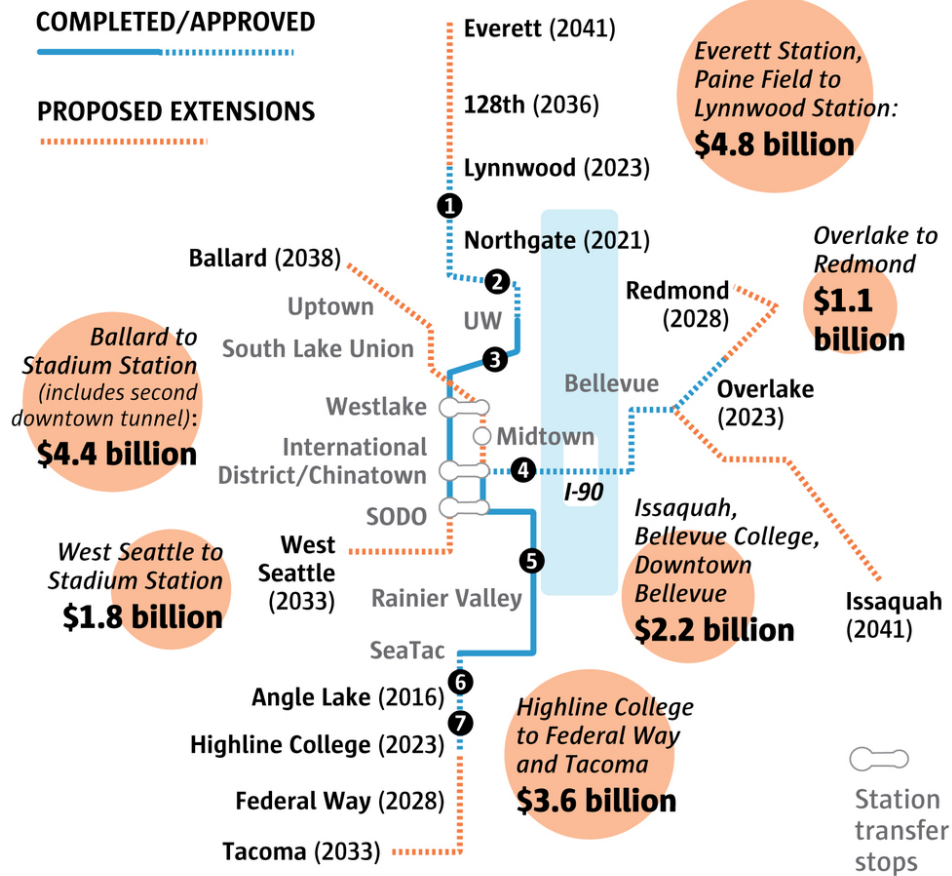
“We have a lot of people who want their project done first and want it done perfectly,” said Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff. He said the current version is workable, but that’s what the April barnstorming is about, to hear feedback.

“Bottom line is, it’s going to be important that folks not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Once we’ve worked it out with community partners as best we can, we need people to rally behind it,” Rogoff said. “When ballot measures fail, the next ballot measure brought back is smaller. Some projects in ST3, should it fail, may not be on the next measure going forward.”



# Costs and timing of ST3

These six Link light-rail extensions are the main pieces of a \$50 billion, 25-year package of light-rail, commuter-train, bus, and park-and-ride improvements heading toward a November ballot. This map shows rough construction costs published by Sound Transit last year, in 2014 dollars.



- Not all stations are shown.
- West Seattle and Bellevue trains continue to Northgate.
- In 2038, trains heading north from Tacoma would shift into the new east downtown Seattle tunnel that leads to Ballard.

## Costs of completed/ approved projects

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ❶ Northgate to Lynnwood: <b>\$2.3 billion</b>          | ❺ Westlake to SeaTac/ Airport: <b>\$2.7 billion</b>    |
| ❷ UW to Northgate: <b>\$1.9 billion</b>                | ❻ Angle Lake: <b>\$383 million</b>                     |
| ❸ Westlake to UW: <b>\$1.8 billion</b>                 | ❼ Angle Lake to Highline College: <b>\$470 million</b> |
| ❹ Chinatown to Bellevue-Overlake: <b>\$3.7 billion</b> |  |

Source: Sound Transit

KELLY SHEA / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Sound Transit, along with L.A. Metro, stands far beyond other regions in its ambition on this year's ballot to focus growth around high-capacity rail, said Jason Jordan, executive director of the national [Center for Transportation Excellence](#), which tracks pro-transit ballot measures.

Los Angeles voters this year are expected to consider a 40-year, \$120 billion request for a sales-tax increase of which two-thirds would go for transit and one-third toward streets and highways.

Tom Rubin, a prominent bus supporter, and former chief financial officer at L.A. Metro, considers the Seattle-area rail timeline realistic. "If the question is, why would it take 25 years for Sound Transit to build out 58 miles of light rail, a better question would be 'Why would anyone want to?'" he said.

The nonpartisan [Smarter Transit](#), formerly the Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives, accuses politicians of ignoring a cheaper transit solution — bus-rapid transit — that could be implemented much more quickly to go beyond the Lynnwood Station, which will open in 2023.

Here are some reasons ST3 would need a quarter-century:

- **Cash flow**

Similar to state highway funds, regional transit money is leveraged on the taxpayers' credit card.

Rail projects already approved or completed are so expensive that principal and interest payments are scheduled to continue until about 2050, including obligations of \$445 million a year during the 2030s. Existing taxes from Sound Move in 1996 and ST2 in 2008 are expected to cover about \$9 billion of ST3.

And the agency can't just sell bonds for the whole thing right away. Fiscal policies require that Sound Transit not commit to more than \$100 in debt payments for every \$150 of net income, after operating costs.

Chief Financial Officer Brian McCartan therefore must calibrate the start date for each track line and bond sale, so as not to get overextended in any given year. His full financial plan is expected in a few weeks.

Some transit boosters ask if cities, especially Seattle, could somehow offer lending capacity to Sound Transit. Whether that's doable, and whether it would ravage other city services, is undetermined.

"It's got to be part of the conversation," said City Councilmember Rob Johnson.

The current ST3 plan assumes federal grants would cover 11 percent of the light-rail work, and any increase would reduce the need to borrow. Previously the feds approved \$1.3 billion for the Tukwila-UW corridor and [\\$1.2 billion for the Northgate-Lynnwood segment](#), both favorable signs.

Cost estimates for new projects need to be somewhat high because so little engineering has been done.

“You don’t really know what these things are going to cost until you have 30 percent design, so they’re going to be pretty conservative,” said Scott Rutherford, University of Washington professor of civil engineering. “If everything goes right, [as on U-Link](#), you become heroes when you save \$150 million.”

Then there’s revenue risk.

Following the 2008 ballot win, the recession and slumping sales-tax revenues led Sound Transit to break its promise of a north Federal Way light-rail stop by 2023. That station and points south are in ST3.

### • Planning process

If there is any hope of saving time, Rogoff said, it’s in the preparation, not the construction.

Sound Transit says a major light-rail route has needed one to three years to study alignment options, an additional four to six years for environmental study and preliminary design, and two to three years for engineering.

Its \$3.7 billion East Link line took eight years to advance from voter approval to Friday’s groundbreaking, and Bellevue service won’t begin until 2023, two years late. Transit and Bellevue officials didn’t propose a specific alignment until after the 2008 election, and they struggled over how to split the costs of a downtown tunnel that was added at Bellevue’s insistence.



*A Sound Transit light-rail train heads over the Duwamish River in Tukwila during a training session in 2009. (Ellen M. Banner/The Seattle Times)*

Everett-area officials insist huge delays are unnecessary.

In their counterproposal last week, they suggested [placing the northernmost three miles next to I-5](#) instead of along Evergreen Way, reducing land costs and disputes.

“Wherever two or more are gathered in Snohomish County, there in the midst will be opposition to the ST3 2041 schedule,” said County Executive Dave Somers, a transit-board member.

Everett Councilmember Paul Roberts said his experience in siting Boeing aircraft factories, and the experience of other officials, prepares them for light-rail planning. The north line’s aerial trackway is straightforward to engineer and build, Roberts said, as proven at Tukwila and SeaTac.

“We know how to do this stuff and we have a team assembled to do it. We are going to figure it out,” he said.

Over in West Seattle, a proposed elevated route (instead of a tunnel portrayed as one possibility last year) may trigger lengthy study and complaints about bulk, as with the smaller, unbuilt Green Line monorail in the early 2000s.

#### • **Difficult engineering**

The University District, where the station is due in 2021, shows how unforeseen technical challenges can cause delays.

After it was approved on the 1996 ballot, cost estimates and schedules exploded following discovery of boulders under Portage Bay. The solution required a completely new route below Montlake Cut.

In the case of Ballard in ST3, that distant 2038 goal is driven mainly by the complexity of building a tunnel through downtown, uptown and South Lake Union. A second Westlake Station would be built just east of and below the existing transit hub — while trains operate nearby.

That’s the latest feature to make Link light rail more expensive than other Western light-rail programs, including Portland MAX. Sound Transit is building four-car stations to meet capacity far beyond current needs, along with miles of soft-ground tunnels, and unique pivoting rail joints on the I-90 floating bridge.

A tough question for Ballardites is whether a tunnel under Salmon Bay, [requested by community groups](#), would take more years to deliver than the 70-foot-high train drawbridge currently proposed.

For now, transit staff and consultants haven’t even estimated how long it might take to tunnel under Salmon Bay, because it would eliminate any chance to fund a West Seattle line, said spokesman Geoff Patrick.

Attempts to save money can backfire, as City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw hinted in a speech to the Ballard crowd.

“Every bridge has a cost as well; you have to buy more property, you have to be sure there are easements,” she said.

Councilmember Johnson cautioned that even 24-hour-a-day construction wouldn’t do much to speed the project.

Johnson, who isn’t 40 yet, joked about the underlying assumption “that everybody in this room will be dead in 22 years, but we’ll all be alive in 19 years.”

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[NEWS01](#)

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## Big meeting crowd presses for earlier light-rail service to Everett



Ben Watanabe / The Herald

People visit and discuss mass transportation Tuesday during an open house portion of the Sound Transit meeting about the light rail expansion ballot measure, Sound Transit 3 (ST3), being considered this year.

By [Noah Haglund](#)  
Herald Writer

[@NWHaglund](#)

EVERETT — Tension was palpable at Everett Station on Monday evening as an overflow crowd asked Sound Transit's CEO about [light-rail construction plans](#) that wouldn't reach here for 25 years.

Choose a route serving the industrial area around Paine Field, and it'll take longer, CEO Pete Rogoff

suggested. Move people to that area from I-5 with a bus rapid-transit line, and it could happen a decade sooner.

“Let me discuss briefly the elephant in the room — the delivery time of light rail to Everett,” Rogoff told the crowd early on.

The Sound Transit Board is preparing a November ballot measure to pay for a list of projects. They expect to finalize details in June for the Sound Transit 3 proposal, which is called ST3 for short. Meetings, such as the one held Monday in Everett, are helping to reshape the transit package.

It would take 25 years to realize all of the improvements in the \$50 billion plan, first released last month. Between Tacoma and Everett, the proposal would add 58 miles of light-rail track and 39 stations to serve more than a half-million people each day.

Political leaders in Snohomish County were pleased to see the Paine Field industrial area with its more than 50,000 jobs included on the proposed route.

But they have condemned the 25-year wait.

Sound Transit staff presented four options Monday.

In addition to the original draft released a month ago that would get Link light rail trains to Everett Station in 2041, there was a compromise plan Snohomish County leaders hoped would get [light rail to downtown Everett by 2033](#). Staff, however, estimated that plan would take five years longer to build.

Two other rail-line options would be 10 years quicker to build, but unlike the other proposals, they would follow the I-5 corridor. One would serve the Paine Field industrial area and the Everett Boeing plant with an east-west rail spur, the other with a bus rapid-transit line.

“You all are going to decide what the priority needs to be,” Rogoff said.

Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, a Sound Transit board member, said he remains committed to getting light rail to Paine Field. Somers called it irritating to see the bus-line idea resurfacing with such persistence, despite what he and other leaders have told the agency.

“We've been very clear on that,” he said.

While Somers and other Snohomish County leaders have staked out their ground, one tech-savvy Everett-to-Seattle commuter in his mid-30s said he'd be OK with a more direct route along I-5.

Tim Ellis compiles data about his daily bus commutes. For him, serving Paine Field by rail would be better, but he also worries about the detour from the freeway pushing commute times to over an hour.

“I feel that a train should be faster than driving a car most of the time,” Ellis said.

Also, the sooner it happens, the better.

“On the current timeline, who knows if I'd even use it?” he said. “Who knows whether I'm even going to be living here in 25 years?”

Everett Station's Weyerhaeuser Room was packed beyond its 240-person capacity for the meeting. Dozens

more people filled an overflow room.

Local mayors, county elected officials and professional planners attended, along with commuters, business leaders and activists of various stripes. Economic Alliance Snohomish County, which is backing a campaign to get light rail to Everett sooner, came prepared to hand out 200 T-shirts bearing the message: "Light Rail to Everett ... In Our Lifetime."

Rogoff assured the audience that all parts of the agency's three-county service area are upset about congestion — and as in Everett, want quicker solutions.

The three Sound Transit board members from Snohomish County — Edmonds Mayor Dave Earling, Everett City Councilman Paul Roberts and Somers — released an alternative proposal April 19. It aimed to shave eight years and hundreds of millions of dollars by using the Highway 526 and I-5 corridors between Paine Field and downtown Everett, instead of the initial plan of following Evergreen Way.

At Monday's meeting, a staff presentation showed that proposal falling a few years shy of its goal. It could be built by 2038 and would cost up to about \$4 billion.

That's roughly \$300 million less than the original proposal. Both are estimated to carry a similar number of daily riders, up to about 43,000.

Sound Transit also presented two other options that would serve the area of Paine Field and the Boeing plant with bus rapid transit or a rail spur, with a main line running along the I-5 corridor.

One plan, with a direct east-west rail spur to Paine Field from I-5, would cost up to \$3.6 billion and would carry about 46,000 people per day. Another plan, with a rapid-transit bus loop through north Everett down to 128th street via Paine Field, would cost up to \$3.4 billion and carry as many as 55,000 riders per day, staff estimated.

Sound Transit staff say that if approved, ST3 would cost an average adult taxpayer an extra \$200 per year. That would come through an increase in sales tax, property tax and car-tab fees.

The initial plan released March 24 would build out light rail to 128th Street in south Everett in 2036 and downtown Everett in 2041.

The plan also would connect the light-rail spine to Tacoma, and downtown Redmond, with new lines to West Seattle, south Lake Union and Ballard. A new Eastside line would serve downtown Bellevue, Eastgate and Issaquah. That line would reach Issaquah, a city along I-90 with more than 30,000 residents, at the same time as Everett, which has roughly three times the population.

The plan calls for bus rapid transit on the I-405 and Highway 522 corridors.

In 1995 and again in 2007, voters in Sound Transit's taxing district rejected expansion proposals. Both times, voters returned the following year to approve a revised ballot measure.

The 2008 [Sound Transit 2 measure](#) promised to extend light rail north from the University District to Northgate by 2021 and to Lynnwood by 2023. It paid for more commuter buses and for improvements to Sounder rail stations in Edmonds and Mukilteo.

That phase of improvements also is extending light rail from Seattle to the Eastside and south to the Kent-Des Moines area.

More than 1.6 million people in Snohomish, King and Pierce counties will have the opportunity to vote on ST3.

With about 250,000 of those voters, Snohomish County has less influence on the outcome. More than 1 million are in King County.

Sound Transit plans to collect feedback through Friday to reshape last month's draft plan. More than 28,000 people had taken a survey about ST3 as of Monday, said Geoff Patrick, a Sound Transit spokesman.

An online survey is available at [www.soundtransit3.org](http://www.soundtransit3.org). The agency also is accepting comments by email, [soundtransit3@soundtransit.org](mailto:soundtransit3@soundtransit.org), by regular mail, Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson St., Seattle, WA 98104, or by phone, 206-903-7000.

Sound Transit has scheduled more evening presentations on ST3, similar the one in Everett, for Tuesday in West Seattle, Wednesday in Redmond and Thursday in Federal Way. There's also a meeting from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday at Union Station in Seattle.

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*This story has been modified to more precisely describe the various plans under consideration by Sound Transit.*

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# Kirkland, Renton leaders want more from Sound Transit 3 package

Originally published April 26, 2016 at 7:22 pm Updated April 27, 2016 at 5:49 am

***Kirkland leaders are questioning whether their residents will get enough value from the Sound Transit 3 plan compared to the amount of taxes they will be paying. Renton leaders are raising some of the same concerns.***

By [Lynn Thompson](#), Seattle Times staff reporter

After waiting decades for their cities to be included in Sound Transit ballot measures, leaders of Kirkland and Renton, the sixth- and fourth-largest cities in King County, say they aren't getting their money's worth in the proposed Sound Transit 3 package and can't yet support it.

Kirkland residents pay \$19 million annually in current Sound Transit taxes. That would jump to \$44 million a year if voters in November approve the package in its current form, according to city figures. Renton residents now contribute \$23 million a year.

Yet neither city is included in ST3's big light-rail expansion.

"Kirkland does not want to oppose the ST3 ballot measure. Kirkland wants to be supportive. But we don't feel the draft plan has sufficient value for Kirkland voters," said City Manager Kurt Triplett.

Renton Mayor Denis Law echoed those concerns. "It's very frustrating for us. We're the only city of our size that hasn't received so much as a parking garage."

Both cities now are pressing the Sound Transit Board to reconsider its project list before finalizing the ballot measure in June. City officials say they have the employment centers and population growth to support high-capacity transit and both describe commutes on their arterials now as "gridlock."

Sound Transit Board members say they've heard the concerns being raised around the region about the [scope and pace of the ST3 plan](#). The [\\$50 billion draft proposal](#) calls for light rail to Redmond and Federal Way in 2028, to West Seattle Junction in 2033, Ballard in 2038, Bellevue College and Issaquah in 2041 and Paine Field and Everett Station also by 2041.

Sound Transit 3 would boost an average household's taxes by \$400 per year.

Snohomish County leaders, as well as Ballard and West Seattle residents, have complained light rail is arriving too slowly and not serving enough population centers.

"This is a debate I expect to have," said Metropolitan King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci, who is among the Eastside representatives to the Sound Transit Board. "I hope we can

address all the concerns as we amend the final plan in June, but we are not going to be able to do every project.”

Kirkland is asking that Sound Transit consider [bus-rapid transit on the Cross Kirkland Corridor](#). Leaders note that Kirkland has several major development projects recently completed or in the works, including [the expansion of the Google campus](#), a major rebuild of Totem Lake Mall and the big Kirkland Urban project downtown.

“It’s our job to make sure we have the transportation infrastructure to support our growth,” said Mayor Amy Walen. She said the current Kirkland projects in ST3 focus on I-405 and don’t conveniently connect residents to light rail. “We felt this round was the time to be connected to the (Sound Transit) spine. We need it,” she said.

The current ST3 package includes an analysis and environmental study of high- capacity transit from Bothell to Bellevue on the Eastside Rail Corridor, which includes the Kirkland Corridor. City leaders say there’s no guarantee there will be a Sound Transit 4 or that BRT on the corridor will ever be built.

The Kirkland request is complicated by a vocal group of residents that opposes any transit on what is now a walking and biking trail. The group, [Save Our Trail](#), opposes even the environmental study.

“Any study just opens the door for light rail or buses on the trail,” said Rose Dennis, a member of the group, which Monday sent a letter to the Sound Transit Board saying it will actively oppose ST3 if it includes any plan or study of mass transit on the trail.

Renton leaders are asking Sound Transit to re-appropriate \$68 million from the initial, 1996 package for HOV access to I-405 that was never built and use it to build a new transit center and parking facility at Rainier Avenue South and South Grady Way.

Mayor Law said Sound Transit 3 should include bus-rapid transit access to the new station as well as a 2,000-stall parking garage.

Renton has joined other Eastside cities including Bellevue and Bothell to urge Sound Transit to build a genuine bus-rapid transit system along I-405 that includes dedicated lanes, stations along the freeway and buses with multiple doors designed to “dock” at station platforms.

Law described it as the equivalent of light rail on rubber tires, something he said has been “talked about for 20 years and never seen.”

Renton City Council President Randy Corman said the current ST3 package offers Renton only one bus station — and it’s dependent on the state finishing its expansion of I-405 south of Bellevue first.

“I personally am considering voting against the ST3 package. I think many of the other council members are there as well,” Corman said.

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Seattle Met/Publicola, 4/27/16

<http://www.seattlemet.com/articles/2016/4/27/housing-affordability-formulas-and-parking-space-formulas>

Morning Fizz

# Housing Affordability Formulas and Parking Space Formulas

**Where will Seattle's affordable housing be and how did Sound Transit come up with its estimates for 8,000 new parking spaces?**

By

- [Josh Feit](#)
- 4/27/2016 at 9:21am

With the Sound Transit Three plan [including \\$661 million for about 8,000 new parking spaces so far](#) (there are a couple of parking projects still TBA), I asked Sound Transit to explain the methodology they used to come up with those numbers.

Building extensive parking has always struck me as [counterintuitive for a historic infrastructure development that's about upgrading mass transit](#).

Sound Transit spokesman Geoff Patrick's initial (self-fulfilling?) explanation seemed to confirm that thinking: "The inclusion of parking at some Sound Transit facilities recognizes that some riders have few convenient alternatives to access transit." With all the ST board's talk about transit oriented development, that reasoning undermines the sustainable land use philosophy that's supposedly at the heart of a major investment in regional mass transit.

There is not a formula here.

But more specifically: What data or research or logic backs up the assumption that "some riders have few convenient alternatives." And how does the ST3 plan put a specific number on "some?"

How exactly did ST reach the conclusion that the Redmond Tech Center to downtown Redmond light rail project, for example, needed 1,400 new parking stalls while the Bellevue to Issaquah stop needed 500?

"There is not a formula here, but a lot of discretion required," Patrick explained.

That discretion, he said, included assessing things such as density, local street grids, availability of land, and local zoning rules—which, again—seems like an approach that conforms to the status quo rather than altering it.

I have a public records request in to ST seeking an explanation of, potentially, the agency’s more scientific approach to the parking question.

One change? Patrick did reiterate: “[Going forward our CEO is looking forward to working with the Board to advance conversations about charging for parking.](#) This will not only incentivize using non-driving options for reaching facilities but help pay for parking and other access investments.”

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/traffic/article74926182.html>

## From Orting to Lakewood, officials want more sooner out of Sound Transit 3

*\$50 billion measure would expand light rail, commuter trains, express buses  
Officials across Pierce County say 25-year timeline is unacceptable  
Sound Transit board is considering changes*

By Adam Lynn, [alynn@thenewstribune.com](mailto:alynn@thenewstribune.com)

More and sooner.

That seems to be the consensus among Pierce County government officials about Sound Transit's \$50 billion plan to expand light rail, commuter trains and express bus services across the Puget Sound region.

From Lakewood to Orting, elected officials and city staff members bemoan the 25-year timeline for delivering some of the proposed services, and some wonder whether their residents would get their money's worth from the proposal.

"All the communities are going to be paying millions and millions, if not billions of dollars, and they aren't going to see anything for 25 years? How do we explain that?" Lakewood City Manager John Caufield told The News Tribune recently. "That's just way too long. They need to go back and look at that."

Tacoma City Councilman Robert Thoms pressed Sound Transit officials at a recent study session about getting light rail from Sea-Tac Airport to Tacoma sooner than the current 2033 projection.

"People are beyond excited for these transit options to come to their neighborhoods and their cities," Thoms said. "We absolutely need to figure out how we can move up project delivery."

It's a refrain heard across the region, not just Pierce County.

People are beyond excited for these transit options to come to their neighborhoods and their cities. We absolutely need to figure out how we can move up project delivery. Robert Thoms, Tacoma City Council

The mayors of Edmonds and Everett, and the Snohomish County executive, sent a letter to Sound Transit Chairman and King County Executive Dow Constantine on April 19, asking that the agency consider expediting the timeline for getting light rail to Everett.

The current proposal calls for that to occur by 2041.

“We are asking for completion of the line to Everett Station by 2033, 10 years after the completion of the Lynnwood City Center Station,” Dave Somers, Paul Roberts and Dave Earling wrote.

The mayors of Kirkland and Renton told The Seattle Times last week that they feel like their cities are being left out altogether.

“It’s very frustrating for us,” Renton Mayor Denis Law said. “We’re the only city of our size that hasn’t received so much as a parking garage.”

Sound Transit leaders acknowledge the frustrations.

“People want the projects delivered more quickly. We share that desire,” Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff said at a public meeting on the Sound Transit 3 proposal in Tacoma last month.

“We have an internal process going right now about how we could move up time lines on delivering some of these projects.”

The Sound Transit board has sought public and governmental comments on the plan for the past month.

“What we do know is that the plan the board ultimately adopts in June will be substantively different from the draft plan, and how it is different will be informed by that input,” Rogoff said in Tacoma last month.

The public would have the last word on any proposal in Nov. 8 vote.

Voters in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties would need to approve increases in sales, property and motor vehicle excise taxes to pay for the planned projects.

They include extending light rail from the airport to Tacoma, expanding Sound commuter rail to DuPont and beefing up bus service along the Pacific Avenue corridor from Tacoma to Spanaway.

## **PIERCE COUNTY WANTS AND NEEDS**

Pierce County governments have been making their pitches recently.

The current Sound Transit 3 plan calls for expanded Sounder train service to DuPont, with a new station in the Tillicum area of Lakewood.

Caulfield said Lakewood officials think that’s too little, especially given its residents projected tax contribution.

“If you compare what Lakewood and south Pierce County have received compared to what other regions have received, it’s not equitable,” he said.

Lakewood would like to see Sound Transit amend its plan for extending light rail to Tacoma Community College in exchange for extending the line to the Tacoma Mall, Caulfield said.

A bus rapid transit line then could connect the mall to Lakewood, giving its residents better access to shopping, jobs and transit connections into Tacoma and beyond.

If we could get some direct connectivity into the light-rail system, that would go a long way for Lakewood. John Caulfield, Lakewood city manager

“If we could get some direct connectivity into the light-rail system, that would go a long way for Lakewood,” Caulfield said.

Tacoma City Councilman Ryan Mello has said he thinks Sound Transit should include more resources for people who don’t commute by light rail.

Sound commuter trains and express buses can move more people more efficiently, Mello said at a recent study session on Sound Transit 3. He said he would support Sound Transit negotiating with the BNSF railroad for more access to its tracks for Sounder commuter rail.

“Light rail is sexy, and light rail is getting a lot of the attention and air time,” he said. “The fact is a commuter to points north from Tacoma to Seattle is going to continue to choose a bus or Sounder rail because it’s faster with way less stops. Commuters need more service.”

Orting Mayor Joachim “Joe” Pestinger said city leaders would like to see money either added to the plan or shifted from another project to expand Sounder service to the McMillin area, which is right outside Orting.

Such a line would give people who live in Orting, South Hill and housing developments on the Bonney Lake plateau alternatives to driving to the Sounder station in Sumner along state Route 162, which can become a parking lot during rush hour.

A railroad line already runs along state Route 162, Pestinger said.

The current Sound Transit 3 proposal includes money to study the feasibility of such a line.

“Of course, we would prefer to see something built,” Pestinger said, adding that city officials have been lobbying Sound Transit and encouraging Orting residents to send their comments to the agency.

Sumner Mayor Dave Enslow, also a Sound Transit board member, said he supports building the Orting line. Sumner suffers from severe traffic congestion during weekday rush hours as commuters flood into the Sound Transit bus and train station there.

“The question in my mind is, ‘How fast can Sound Transit build stuff?’ ” Enslow said. “If I had my druthers, they would start that sooner rather than later.”



## **‘A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE’**

How many changes would be made remains to be seen.

Pierce County Executive Pat McCarthy, who sits on the Sound Transit board, has called the current draft a good one.

“I feel really good about the project list,” she said at the Tacoma public meeting last month. “That doesn’t mean I’m not open to making some modifications.

“But we have to have a project list that will fit into the money we will have available if indeed the voters decide they want to support it.”

Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland, vice chairwoman of the Sound Transit board, said the hand-wringing and wrangling show people support transit.

“This is a good problem to have,” she said. “It shows people care.”

Staff writers Brynn Grimley and Adam Ashton contributed to this report.

[News](#)

## Sound Transit releases public input report about ST3 proposal



Sound Transit has major plans to expand light rail over the next couple of decades if voters approve a ballot measure in November.

— *image credit: COURTESY PHOTO, Sound Transit*

- May 6, 2016 at 12:23PM

The Sound Transit Board Executive Committee on Thursday heard a preliminary overview of nearly 35,000 responses received through May 2 providing input on the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Draft Plan.

“The overwhelming public interest we’ve heard during the past month confirms that residents continue to want solutions for our region’s rapid growth and chronic congestion,” said Sound Transit Board Chair and King County Executive Dow Constantine in a media release. “By far the most frequent and insistent message is support for completing transit expansions as quickly as possible. Our top priority will be looking for ways to improve project timelines wherever possible as we move toward a final plan.”

Voters will decide in November whether to approve funding for the numerous projects as the board prepares a final proposal for the ballot. The funding sources for ST3 include increased sales, car tab and property taxes. The measure could raise as much as \$15 billion over 15 years.

Public input received following the March 29 start of the comment period included an online survey that generated 34,706 responses. Approximately 1,250 people attended seven open houses that were held across the region, and Sound Transit presented to more than 50 local jurisdictions

and organizations. The agency received a total of 2,320 written comments from individuals and more than 90 letters from jurisdictions and organizations.

In all, 90 percent of the self-selected respondents who took the non-scientific online survey stated they strongly (80 percent) or somewhat (10 percent) support continued expansion of Sound Transit's system of light rail, commuter rail and express buses. Light rail expansion was the most highly supported transit mode, with 80 percent of respondents deeming it urgent (65 percent) or somewhat urgent (15 percent).

Alongside the public input, staff also commissioned a scientific phone survey to help guide development of the final ST3 plan. The survey of 1,000 voters in the Sound Transit District, which was conducted by EMC Research April 20 through April 30 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent, indicates that 76 percent of voters strongly (58 percent) or somewhat (18 percent) support expanding mass transit.

A presentation summarizing both the online and phone survey results is available in the document library at [soundtransit3.org](http://soundtransit3.org).

The phone survey also sought reactions to specifics of the \$50 billion ST3 Draft Package that the Board released for public input in March. Sixty-five percent of respondents reflected they strongly (30 percent) or somewhat (36 percent) supported the draft package in a question that described the associated tax increases. Following further questions about the costs and timelines for completing projects, 59 percent of respondents strongly (24 percent) or somewhat (35 percent) supported the draft package.

Last week, Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff briefed the Board on work that is underway to identify options for speeding up projects where feasible. He emphasized that at every open house the agency heard loud and clear the desire to speed up projects.

"The two major factors influencing project timelines are the time it takes to plan and build projects, including intensive work with local jurisdictions, and the time it takes to generate sufficient revenues through taxes, bonding and grants," Rogoff said. "While we will continue to be very straightforward with the public about what it takes to build these major investments, we are optimistic we will be able to deliver some improvements to project timelines."

Following the preliminary overview of public input, staff will develop a more detailed report analyzing the 2,320 written comments received as well as 17,378 responses to an optional open-ended question in the online survey.

By adding 58 miles of light rail with stations serving 35 additional areas, ST3 would establish a truly regional 112-mile system stretching from Everett in the north to Tacoma in the south and from Redmond and Issaquah in the east to Ballard and West Seattle. The draft plan responds to strong region-wide support for additional mass transit expansions as the region's population grows by an estimated million residents through 2040. The projected growth is equivalent to adding the current combined populations of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett.

[NEWS01](#)

Published: Thursday, May 19, 2016, 12:01 a.m.

## Taxes on the ballot: First come, first passed?

By [Jerry Cornfield](#)

Herald Writer

Could Snohomish County's [battle against a heroin epidemic](#) crimp [Sound Transit's delivery of light rail](#) into Everett and other Puget Sound communities?

It may depend on voters' tolerance for taxes, especially those living in south Snohomish County.

A measure on the August primary ballot would [increase the sales tax countywide](#) to generate millions of additional dollars for law enforcement agencies and criminal justice programs.

Then, in November, the [Sound Transit 3 proposal](#) will be [in front of the electorate in Everett and cities in south county](#). ST3 would hike a trifecta of taxes — sales, property and motor vehicle excise taxes — to raise billions of dollars for expanding light rail and bus service in the next quarter century.

Those behind each measure have polling data showing theirs can pass. But they're certainly worried about losing support from the Snohomish County electorate as each campaign gets into gear.

Strategists for the ST3 measure reportedly talked with a handful of Snohomish County leaders about holding off on the justice tax.

The transit proposal is [going to be a tough sell](#) in Snohomish County and it only gets tougher if voters' tolerance for tax measures is sapped by the time they receive their November ballot. Don't forget [many of them](#) also voted on boosting the sales tax for Community Transit last November. That means three significant tax hikes in a year.

Snohomish County Council member Brian Sullivan said action had to be taken to deal with the drug problem and rising incidents of property crime.

“This is a huge issue. There are those who will try to couch it as public safety versus public transit,” he said. “That certainly is not our intent.”

The County Council wanted their measure in front of voters in August specifically to avoid sharing the ballot with Sound Transit this fall.

A similar political conversation occurred in 2008. The County Council voted to put a \$163.2 million tax package to redo and expand the courthouse on that year's November ballot.

But Aaron Reardon, then county executive, [vetoed it as too costly](#). Sullivan said another reason was that the [Sound Transit 2](#) proposal was on the ballot and Reardon felt the county measure might mess things up.

Some think the inclination of the Snohomish County electorate to back the justice tax could be negatively

affected by debate on ST3.

This theory assumes so much attention will be paid to the transit proposal that the word won't get out on the purpose of the county measure and it will fail.

Right now, it's pretty much guesswork.

Christian Sinderman, a veteran political consultant who is managing the Sound Transit 3 campaign, is optimistic, as one might expect.

“Any time there are multiple tax measures on the ballot there's going to be concern,” he said. “But voters have a long history of supporting services they value.”

That theory will certainly be tested this year.

*Political reporter Jerry Cornfield's blog, The Petri Dish, is at [www.heraldnet.com](http://www.heraldnet.com). Contact him at 360-352-8623; [jcornfield@heraldnet.com](mailto:jcornfield@heraldnet.com) and on Twitter at @dospueblos.*

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[NEWS01](#)

Published: Tuesday, May 24, 2016, 12:01 a.m.

## Officials working to speed up light rail service to Everett

By [Noah Haglund](#)

Herald Writer

[@NWHaglund](#)

EVERETT — Snohomish County's elected leaders are trying to hasten light rail's arrival in Everett from the current quarter-century time line.

The County Council [passed two resolutions](#) Monday, promising full cooperation to process light-rail permits with counterparts in Lynnwood and Everett city government.

“It's really time that we're looking to save on all of this,” said Tom Rowe, special projects director in the county Executive's Office. “Sound Transit has identified permitting as one of the main issues.”

The 25-year schedule for light rail reaching Everett [caused widespread dismay](#) when a draft plan the Sound Transit 3 ballot measure was released in March.

Agency staff heard similar sentiments throughout the region — from Seattle to Tacoma to Redmond — during a series of public outreach meetings in April.

“Our main takeaway from the public comment period is that people all over, including Snohomish County, are interested in completing projects more quickly,” Sound Transit spokesman Geoff Patrick said.

The \$50 billion expansion plan for regional transit — known as ST3 for short — would result in higher sales tax and property tax as well as bigger car-tab fees. The measure is likely to reach voters in November.

The new planning agreement aims to convince Sound Transit that Snohomish County, Everett and Lynnwood are willing to do “everything possible under the law to speed the arrival of light rail to Everett,” County Executive Dave Somers said in a press release.

How much sooner remains to be seen. That should become clearer sometime after Thursday's [Sound Transit Board meeting](#).

This week's board discussion is expected to focus on changes to the draft ST3 plan. Board members hope to pick a final list of projects on June 2 then return on June 23 to approve a package to send voters in the fall.

A major impetus for the permitting agreement is Sound Transit's experience in Bellevue. While Link trains are due to start serving the Eastside city's downtown in 2023 via a tunnel, planning for that work at times was adversarial, Patrick said.

“The process of getting to a final plan in Bellevue took about two years longer than expected,” he said. “That

was based on a lot of back and forth about different alignment alternatives and mitigation issues before we got to an agreement.”

The three Sound Transit board members from Snohomish County have insisted on a route that serves Paine Field, rather than just paralleling the I-5 corridor. Sound Transit staff have said that sticking close to I-5 could speed up light-rail delivery to Everett by as much as a decade, but leaders here aren't interested.

Light rail already is scheduled to reach the Lynnwood Transit Center by 2023 as a result of the Sound Transit 2 measure passed in 2008. The agency is working to buy nearby businesses.

“We should see dirt flying and construction within the next year and a half,” said Paul Krauss, Lynnwood's community development director.

For the next phase of light-rail expansion through Lynnwood, city leaders agreed to settle for two new stations instead of three. They're now supporting one station near 188th Street SW near the southwest corner of Alderwood mall. Another future station would serve the Ash Way Park and Ride, in Lynnwood's future annexation area.

“The idea of that is that in helping to cut costs, that would help get the line to Everett and Paine Field sooner,” Krauss said.

The memorandum of understanding between Snohomish County, Everett and Lynnwood commits to have staff start processing permit applications the next working day after receipt. City and county departments are promising to assign the Sound Transit work the highest priority and to meet with the agency's staff at the earliest-possible stages of the planning process to avoid holdups later on.

The agreements aren't legally binding.

Council members passed the resolutions 4-0 on Monday with little fanfare.

The Lynnwood City Council was [scheduled to vote on the agreement](#) Monday and the Everett City Council on Wednesday.

“The intent is to show Sound Transit that we can work as a team up here in Snohomish County,” Everett planning director Allan Giffen said last week. “Really, this is just a commitment to work with them. There's nothing legally binding that says we have to waive anything. In fact, the (memorandum) that we're drafting will say we can't waive anything that is otherwise required by law.”

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Seattle Times, 5/25/16

<http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/renton-tired-of-paying-a-lot-getting-little-from-sound-transit/>

# Renton tired of paying a lot, getting few buses, no light rail from Sound Transit

Originally published May 25, 2016 at 8:00 pm Updated May 26, 2016 at 6:39 am

*The South King County city, left off the regional light-rail network and with only two express bus routes, is asking Sound Transit to include \$300 million in projects on the fall ballot.*



*Renton wants to replace the downtown Renton Transit Center with two bus-rapid transit stations and thousands of park-and-ride spaces. (Ken Lambert/The Seattle Times)*

People in Renton are paying about \$23 million in Sound Transit taxes a year and have little to show for it after two decades.

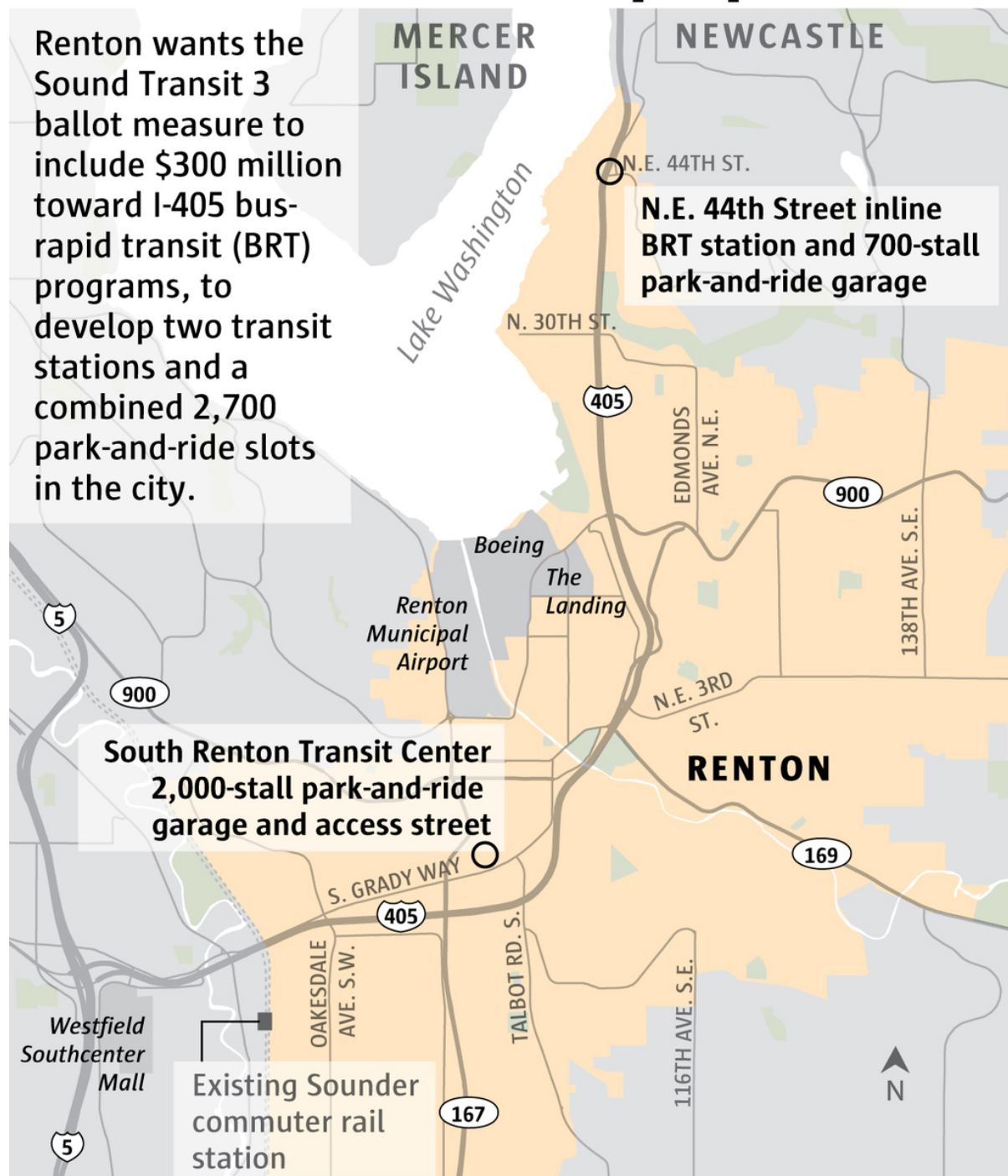
Only two ST Express bus routes pass through the city, while commuter rail is reachable in neighboring Tukwila.

Now that other communities from Everett to Issaquah to West Seattle are on the list for light rail in the upcoming Sound Transit 3 ballot measure, Renton leaders say they want more high-capacity transit, too.

The City Council is pressing for two bus-rapid transit stations along Interstate 405, bus-carpool roadways and 2,700 park-and-ride garage spaces — for a total \$300 million investment — instead of [the scaled-down version](#) described in a draft ST 3 package, released in March.

“To be very blunt about it, for the amount of money that we’ve put into Sound Transit, and have been for 20 years, we haven’t gotten value, and we will continue to pay for light rail to Redmond and Issaquah, and we won’t get anything,” Renton Councilmember Don Persson said at a Monday meeting.

# Renton's transit proposal



Source: Esri

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Renton, home to more than 98,000 residents, seems the most vociferous among many cities [sending final comments](#) to the [Sound Transit board of directors](#), which on June 23 will publish a 25-year, \$50 billion package for the November ballot.

Woodinville is asking for buses to run every 10 minutes to Bothell, instead of the proposed 20 minutes. Kirkland says it needs high-capacity bus or rail, along with safer pedestrian and bike

connections to I-405 BRT (bus-rapid transit) in the Totem Lake area, which is ripe for redevelopment. Down south in Pierce County, the mayors of Lakewood, Steilacoom and DuPont ask for more bus-rapid transit.

[The full Eastside BRT corridor](#), stretching from Lynnwood to Burien using I-405 and Highway 518, could require \$2.3 billion. Sound Transit in March proposed spending \$341 million.

A letter from six Eastside cities recommends the bigger version, plus feeder buses linking neighborhoods to I-405 stations, to provide “the equivalent of light rail on rubber tires.” Freeway buses would use the new express toll lanes north of Bellevue, to be extended south of Bellevue using new state gas taxes.

“We always anticipated that we were going to get the Cadillac BRT,” Persson said Monday. “This whole watered-down BRT plan has kind of hit us as a surprise.”

Currently, Sound Transit Route 560 from SeaTac to Bellevue stops in downtown Renton, while the 566 from Auburn to Overlake serves downtown and one freeway stop. King County Metro Transit also serves Renton.

Sound Transit Chairman Dow Constantine declined an interview request for this story.

Sound Transit Board member Claudia Balducci of Bellevue, also a King County Council member, said that on Thursday she would propose Eastside amendments, which she would not detail, that include “additional investments in Renton.”

[Renton City Councilmember Ruth Pérez](#) said she caught the ear of Constantine and an aide Friday, outside an event in downtown Seattle.

“I was really surprised that Dow really listened,” said Pérez. She mentioned how she always thought Renton would get light rail, because of big employers — such as Boeing — and its affordable housing. “Executive Constantine said Sound Transit’s really good at getting the projects [on time and on budget](#),” she recalled. “I said, all the money you won’t be spending on the Eastside, give it to Renton, because we deserve it.”

How did Renton fall behind?

Sound Transit’s first winning ballot measure, in 1996, earmarked \$63 million for bus-carpool ramps to I-405, at Park Avenue and Talbot Road. Those sites turned out to be a poor fit with the state’s subsequent master plan, to widen the freeway someday. Governments changed their focus to I-405 ramps at North Eighth Street, next to Gene Coulon Park and the now-booming Renton Landing area.

Meanwhile, Sound Transit condemned Renton land it needed to [improve the Tukwila commuter-rail station](#) a mile east of Southcenter. In a settlement, the agency agreed to set aside money [for future Renton transit](#). Within the past year, Renton decided to replace its downtown transit center, which it considers a bulky hindrance to shopping and housing. The city also decided not to add cars and buses near the Landing, [in favor of a South Renton megastation near the I-405/167 junction](#).

Fast-forward to this spring, when Sound Transit's Eastside BRT proposal offered Renton only one of its two desired I-405 stations — a \$117 million project in South Renton, with a bus hub plus 700 parking stalls, rather than the 2,000 requested by the city. And of that amount, \$67 million is from the old settlement — in essence, the BRT investment Renton was already pledged in 1996.

“We’re kind of in the Sound Transit rain shadow,” said Gregg Zimmerman, Renton public works director. “Some of these communities have commuter rail, some have light rail. Really we on the south end, and Woodinville and Kirkland in the north end, are fairly reliant on bus-rapid transit.”

Geometry is partly to blame for Renton's dilemma.

Its location, between East and South King County, sets it apart from the light-rail spine and its foreseeable branches, so communities like Renton become net donors to the rail program.

The city's apartment clusters are dispersed and divided by a tangled road grid — making it impossible for any single rail line to reach most residents. But they're ideal for RapidRide-type buses, and in fact Metro [envisions adding a Renton Highlands loop](#), to go along with its existing F Line.

Those could feed freeway bus stations, so they wouldn't cater solely to a park-and-ride clientele.

To Pérez, who joined the City Council in 2014, getting more is a matter of fairness to working people [who must commute from Renton](#).

“I am the person who speaks for all those people who can barely speak English; they are afraid of the government and won't talk to them. These people don't have cars; they need public transit to go to work every day.”

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[NEWS01](#)

Published: Thursday, May 26, 2016, 3:59 p.m.

## Revised plan brings light rail to Everett 5 years sooner

By [Noah Haglund](#)

Herald Writer

[@NWHaglund](#)

EVERETT — Snohomish County leaders are backing a new plan that would bring light rail to Everett at least five years sooner than promised earlier.

The South Transit Board on Thursday advanced a revised plan to add 58 miles of light-rail track between Tacoma and Everett, with dozens of stations to serve an estimated half-million people each day.

As initially proposed in March, [the Sound Transit 3 expansion](#) would not have brought light rail to Everett until 2041. The updated version would bring light rail to Everett Station by 2036. It would still follow the route local leaders had insisted on, serving Paine Field and the Boeing Co.'s Everett plant.

Everett City Councilman Paul Roberts, who serves as vice chairman on the Sound Transit Board, said he was pleased with a rail route that would connect to “the state’s largest manufacturing center at Paine Field and the population center in Snohomish County.”

He said the five-year shorter construction timeline was significant and could shrink further if Everett, Lynnwood and the county make good on [promises to coordinate engineering, planning and permitting](#).

County Executive Dave Somers said he supports the revised plan as a step in the right direction.

“While we would all like to have light rail reach Everett tomorrow, that is not realistic,” he said. “These large construction projects do take time. We need to ensure that Snohomish County is not left out of our region’s mass transit system, since the consequences of that to our economy could be devastating.”

Edmonds Mayor Dave Earling also supports the new timeline.

“This revised Sound Transit 3 plan is a good fit for our region’s needs and will provide the necessary backbone for growth, thus completing the long-awaited spine of light rail from Everett to Tacoma,” he said.

Earling said the expansion could help relieve traffic congestion in south Snohomish County and is “very worthy of support.”

The positive reactions contrast with [the criticism emanating from Snohomish County political circles](#) after the release of the plan that would have taken a quarter century to reach Everett.

Thursday’s decision helps focus the projects that would be funded through a tax measure the Sound Transit Board is preparing for the Nov. 8 ballot. The board expects to finalize details in June for the Sound Transit 3



proposal, which is called ST3 for short.

The route through Snohomish County would reach Everett Station via stops at Alderwood mall, the Ash Way Park-and-Ride, 128th Street near I-5, Paine Field and Evergreen Way near Highway 526.

The whole Lynnwood-to-Everett segment would open at once, in 2036.

The package would include a bus rapid transit route from Lynnwood to Burien via I-405, which Sound Transit would aim to have running by 2024.

Other regional additions would open up three years sooner than projected in the earlier ST3 draft. That includes building out light rail to West Seattle and Tacoma by 2030 and to Ballard by 2035.

Sound Transit also aims to deliver light rail to downtown Redmond by 2024, four years sooner than in the draft proposal.

Sound Transit officials say the faster timeline owes to a more complete financial picture. Staff now expect to raise more money more quickly. The cost of the expansion also would grow by \$4 billion, making for a \$54 billion total.

If the measure passes, people in Sound Transit's three-county service area would see increased car-tab fees, property taxes and sales tax. That's estimated to cost the average adult about \$200 per year.

Voters first approved funding for Sound Transit in 1996. The agency is now building out a second phase of expansion that voters approved in 2008. That includes completing the Link light-rail system north to the Lynnwood Transit Center by 2023.

More than 1.6 million people in Snohomish, King and Pierce counties will have the opportunity to vote on ST3. With about 250,000 of those voters, Snohomish County has less influence on the outcome. More than 1 million are in King County.

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Kent Reporter, 5/26/16

<http://www.kentreporter.com/news/381044131.html#>

[News](#)

## Sound Transit Board proposes faster completion of ST3 light rail extensions



The Sound Transit Board promises to speed up completion of light rail projects if voters approve a measure in November to increase fees and taxes.

— *image credit: COURTESY PHOTO, Sound Transit*

- May 26, 2016 at 4:24PM

### For the Reporter

Sound Transit Board members on Thursday outlined proposed changes to the Sound Transit 3 Draft Plan, with emphasis on completing light rail extensions sooner.

“Across the region we heard vocal support for completing projects sooner,” said Sound Transit Board Chair and King County Executive Dow Constantine in a media release. “Speeding up these light rail expansions will give riders earlier relief from our region’s ever-worsening congestion.”

Under proposed changes, the ST3 plan slated for voter consideration in November would build a total of 62 miles of light rail with stations serving 37 additional areas. Improvements outlined at the meeting would speed up most of the extensions by two to five years.



Light rail to Everett via Paine Field would open five years earlier than previously stated. Extensions to downtown Redmond and Federal Way would be completed four years sooner, while the Ballard, West Seattle and Tacoma extensions would open three years sooner.

During the delivery of projects the agency would work with partners to further improve timelines where feasible.

“These amendments accomplish the longtime goal of a truly regional light rail system faster than we thought we could, reaching Tacoma three years earlier while extending Tacoma Link to Tacoma Community College two years earlier,” said Sound Transit Boardmember and Pierce County Executive Pat McCarthy. “Our changes also include increasing investment in Sounder, which we heard today has seen ridership increases over the past year.

“The plan extends platforms to accommodate two more cars, provides funding for track capacity expansions for adding trains and extends service to Tillicum and DuPont, with additional parking in DuPont. These and other investments will help Pierce County thrive as our population keeps growing.”

Details of the proposed changes to the ST3 Plan are available at [soundtransit3.org](https://www.soundtransit.org).

Board members proposed a number of significant new projects and refinements that would be constructed as the region’s population grows by nearly a million residents by 2040. Seattle’s light rail extension to Ballard would be completely grade separated on 15th Avenue. A new light rail line between Issaquah and Bellevue would extend further to reach south Kirkland. Expanded Sounder commuter rail capital investments in South King County and Pierce County would increase system capacity, enhance service, and extend the line to Tillicum and DuPont.

Changes would expand early projects slated for completion within the first eight years, including improvements to Bus Rapid Transit on I-405 between Lynnwood and Burien with added facilities in Kirkland and Renton. A new station at 130th Street in Seattle would move from provisional to fully funded status.

The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to vote on proposed updated projects and timelines at a special meeting June 2. The Board is scheduled to adopt completed language of the plan on June 23 to meet election submission deadlines.

The improved timelines and added projects are primarily enabled by refinements including adjusting the financing plan for the ST3 measure to modestly increase the issuance of bonds, improving the region’s financial capacity by approximately 8 percent or \$4 billion. The \$54 billion in investments would be funded through new voter-approved sales, MVET and property taxes. The improved timelines and added projects would not change the measure’s estimated additional \$200 annual or \$17 monthly costs for a typical adult in the Sound Transit District.

The two major factors influencing project timelines are the time it takes to generate sufficient revenues through taxes, bonding and grants; and the time it takes to plan and build projects, including intensive work with local jurisdictions and other partners. Sound Transit CEO Peter

Rogoff today updated the Board on options the agency will pursue to reduce the time required to plan, permit and construct major projects, with emphasis on working with local jurisdictions to speed up project development.

“The actions this week by the Snohomish, Everett and Lynnwood councils pledging to work with Sound Transit to speed up the process is precisely the kind of partnership we need to get commuters out of traffic sooner,” Rogoff said.

Over the course of the public input period on the ST3 Draft Plan that wrapped up earlier this month, Sound Transit heard strong continuing support for mass transit extensions. An online survey generated nearly 35,000 responses and more than 1,200 people attended seven open houses held across the region. The agency received a total of 2,320 written comments from individuals and more than 90 letters from jurisdictions and organizations. By far the most frequent theme was interest in completing projects more quickly.

In a phone survey that Sound Transit conducted last month, 65 percent of respondents stated they strongly (30 percent) or somewhat (36 percent) supported the ST3 draft package in a question that described the associated tax increases. Following a question describing the plan’s previously proposed project timelines, 59 percent of respondents strongly (24 percent) or somewhat (35 percent) supported the draft package. The [soundtransit3.org](http://soundtransit3.org) website includes a presentation summarizing the public input and phone survey.

• **Proposed ST3 timelines for light rail extensions:**

Everett via the Southwest Everett Industrial Center would open 5 years sooner, in 2036

Downtown Redmond would open 4 years sooner, in 2024, only one year following the completion of the voter-approved East Link light rail extension

Federal Way would open 4 years sooner, in 2024

Tacoma would open 3 years sooner, in 2030

West Seattle would open 3 years sooner, in 2030

Seattle’s Ballard extension would open 3 years sooner, in 2035

The Tacoma Link extension to Tacoma Community College would open 2 years sooner in 2039

New light rail stations at Seattle’s Graham Street and Tukwila’s Boeing Access Road would open 5 years sooner, in 2031

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<http://seattletransitblog.com/2016/05/26/sound-transits-updated-st3-plan-bigger-faster-stronger/#more-80298>

# Sound Transit's Updated ST3 Plan: Bigger, Faster, Stronger

May 26, 2016 at 6:35 pm By [Zach Shaner](#)



AvGeek Joe (Flickr)

Responding to universal angst about the pace of the [Sound Transit 3 \(ST3\) Draft Plan](#), this afternoon the Sound Transit (ST) Board [introduced a series of amendments](#) **that propose a leaner, faster Sound Transit 3 measure**. The Board will vote on each of these amendments at its Special Meeting on June 2, ahead of a final vote on June 23 to adopt the plan and send it to the ballot. Cumulatively, these amendments represent a dramatic improvement in nearly every aspect of the plan, and they indicate a clear responsiveness by Sound Transit on behalf of the public. Advocates won or at least saw movement on nearly every issue.

The amendments were preceded by presentations from CEO Peter Rogoff and CFO Brian McCartan on project delivery and the ST3 finance plan, respectively. Rogoff outlined his desired improvements in project delivery, including narrowing studied alternatives, bringing jurisdictions in earlier in the process, establishing schedules well ahead of final design, and looking at new procurement processes such as “Design/Build”. Rogoff seemed intent on sharing the burden for timely delivery with the host cities, and ensuring that cities and counties are more joint partner going forward rather than just permitting authorities.

But the real news came from CFO McCartan's Finance Plan update. We'll be getting more details in a meeting with ST finance staff next week, but staff told STB that Sound Transit underestimated its bonding capacity by up to 10%, with the recalculation centering on the tricky overlap period between the winding down of ST2 bonds and the ramping up of ST3 bonds. All other financial policies will likely remain intact, as will all other conservative planning assumptions (such as a 6-year EIS process per project). So the timeline improvements above reflect primarily financing considerations, and there would be considerable scope for further improvement via streamlined permitting and environmental review.

### Sound Transit 3 Project Timeline Updates Draft Plan Revision, May 26, 2016

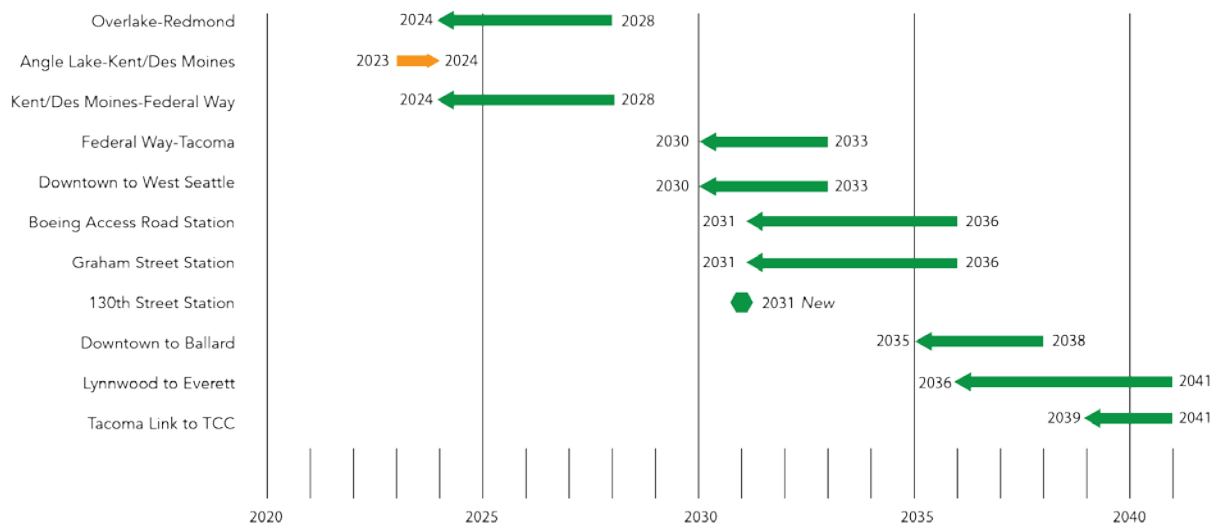


Chart by the Author

### North King (Seattle)

- The Ballard Line would **be fully grade separated** and be delivered **3 years sooner**, in 2035 instead of 2038.
- The **West Seattle line gains 3 years**, moving from 2033 to 2030.
- In a huge win for advocates, the **130th Street Station gets full funding**, though it would open in 2031.
- **Graham Street Station gains 5 years**, moving from 2036 to 2031.
- Sound Transit will make **a roughly 10% contribution to Madison BRT** and **pay for interim improvements on Rapid Ride C and D**.

### South King County

- The Federal Way extension **gets bumped up 4 years to 2024**, just a year after East Link and Lynnwood Link. The Angle Lake to Des Moines stretch would be delayed a year, from 2023 to 2024, and Angle Lake-Federal Way would be built as a single project.
- Boeing Access Road Station **would be bumped up 5 years**, from 2036 to 2031.

## Pierce County

- The Federal Way-Tacoma Link extension **would be bumped up 3 years**, and would open with West Seattle in 2030.
- The Tacoma Link streetcar extension to Tacoma Community College **would also gain 2 years**, from 2041 to 2039.

## East King County

- The Issaquah line would still open in 2041, but **would gain an extension from Wilburton Station to South Kirkland**, and trains would interline via East Main instead of Wilburton.
- Renton would get its planned parking garage and transit center relocation as part of I-405 BRT, and would add new direct access ramps at NE 44th Street in Newcastle/Kennydale.
- Kingsgate's parking would be reduced and its TOD increased.

## Snohomish County

- **Everett would see light rail 5 years sooner**, in 2036 instead of 2041, *and* Snohomish County leaders get the Paine Field deviation. Trains would run via SR 526 and I-5 from Paine Field to Everett. Rather than opening first between Lynnwood and Mariner, the entire Lynnwood-Everett segment would open together in 2036.

## Sounder

Martin will be writing more about Sounder in the next few days, but the primary changes at this point are a dedicated capital program (funding level TBD), extension to Tillicum and Dupont, and the full funding of 10-car platforms, **giving Sounder a 43% capacity boost** on top of any new trips.

## Downtown Tunnel Funding

While the draft plan allocated 80% of the cost of the new tunnel to North King/Seattle and 20% to Pierce County – reflecting the Ballard to Tacoma operational plan for the Green Line – the updated finance plan **allocates the new tunnel's costs to all 5 subareas** as a “regional asset”, alongside such things as fleet acquisition and Operations and Maintenance Facilities (OMF). Though we had heard rumors that the tunnel funding would be proportional based on subarea revenue, we were surprised to learn today that instead it will be allocated based on projected ridership, or on the subarea origin of any rider using the new tunnel.

We'll ask Sound Transit for more details on this, and we'll be curious to hear the Expert Review Panel's take, but it does seem to present some problems. It seems strange to allocate *real* money on the basis of *projections* that are informed by ([inevitably flawed](#)) ridership models that are themselves based on problematic population growth models such as those published by PSRC. On the other hand, it does seem to marginally increase North King's financial capacity.

## **Infill Stations**

As outlined above, all 3 infill stations (Boeing Access Road, Graham, and 130th) would be fully funded and would open the same year, in 2031. Staff told us that they would be built concurrently to have a shorter (but more severe) service disruption period.

\*\*\*

The gist is that, if passed, there would be continuous construction and incremental line openings over a 20-year period between 2021-2041:

- **2021:** Northgate, UDistrict, Roosevelt
- **2023:** 145th, 185th, Mountlake Terrace, Lynnwood, Judkins Park, Mercer Island, South Bellevue, East Main, Bellevue Downtown, Wilburton, Spring District, Bel-Red, Overlake Village, Redmond Tech Center
- **2024:** Kent/Des Moines, Star Lake, Federal Way, SE Redmond/Marymoor, Downtown Redmond
- **2030:** Alaska Junction, Delridge, new Sodo station, new Stadium station, South Federal Way, Fife, Tacoma Dome
- **2031:** Boeing Access Road, Graham Street, N. 130th
- **2035:** Ballard, Dravus, Smith Cove, Uptown, South Lake Union, new Westlake platform, Midtown, new International District platform
- **2036:** Alderwood Mall, Ash Way, Mariner, Paine Field, South Everett, Everett
- **2039:** Tacoma Link streetcar extension
- **2041:** South Kirkland, Factoria, Eastgate, Issaquah

In the coming days we'll have more in-depth reports on the ST Finance Plan, the planned Sounder improvements, and more.



Stranger, 5/26/16

[http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2016/05/26/24129433/sound-transit-3-changes-more-light-rail-projects-to-open-faster?utm\\_source=Sightline%20Institute&utm\\_medium=web-email&utm\\_campaign=Sightline%20News%20Selections](http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2016/05/26/24129433/sound-transit-3-changes-more-light-rail-projects-to-open-faster?utm_source=Sightline%20Institute&utm_medium=web-email&utm_campaign=Sightline%20News%20Selections)

## SLOG

[News](#) • [Transportation](#)

# Sound Transit 3 Changes: Light Rail Projects Could Open Faster

by [Heidi Groover](#) • May 26, 2016 at 3:27 pm



Sound Transit is proposing some important changes to [Sound Transit 3](#). Sound Transit

Light rail could take you from downtown Seattle to Ballard and West Seattle sooner than previously expected under a set of changes to Sound Transit 3 unveiled today.

In March, Sound Transit announced the [\\$50 billion tax package](#) it planned to take to voters in November. If approved, that package would expand light rail throughout the city and region. But some of the sexiest projects for Seattle voters—lines to Ballard and West Seattle and a new station in south Seattle at Graham Street—weren't going to come online for two decades, [causing angst](#) among transit advocates.

Today, Sound Transit announced that because of a new funding analysis, the agency will be able to borrow more money and **shave a few years off** those timelines if ST3 is approved by voters. Overall, Sound Transit 3 will increase from a \$50 billion package to \$54 billion total, but the tax rate will not increase. (More on that later.) The timeline improvements are modest, but affect projects all over Sound Transit's three-county taxing district.

Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff said today concerns about the long timelines were "one enduring and consistent theme" during recent public feedback on the ST3 plan.

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I know changes of three or five years are hard to get *that* excited about when projects are still 15 years out—we need better transit, like, yesterday—but this is good news. Faster timelines mean faster congestion relief and better chances ST3 can pass.

"What we will be able to tell the public is that **you'll see these projects open every few years**," says Shefali Ranganathan, the executive director of Transportation Choices Coalition, which will run the pro-ST3 campaign this fall. "That's a very big selling point."

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- Instead of building [light rail to Ballard](#) alongside traffic on 15th Avenue, the agency would elevate the line through that area. That change would make that line more reliable and add about \$150 million to the package. (Some want to go even further and build a pricey [tunnel under Salmon Bay](#) for this line, but the agency shows little appetite for that.)
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Now, let's talk about how we're going to pay for all this.

The \$4 billion total equals an 8 percent increase in the original ST3 plan. Yet, Sound Transit says **taxpayers won't pay any more** in yearly taxes than under the original proposal. ST3 will cost the average household in the taxing area about \$400 in new taxes per year, according to Sound Transit.

How is that possible?

Sound Transit officials say a new review of the agency's bonding program showed they can borrow more money sooner than they previously thought without endangering their credit rating. That money will allow Sound Transit to build projects faster. (Help from local governments on permitting and zoning could speed projects up even more.) This new financial review was underway when the agency released its initial package in March, but it wasn't finished yet. Because of that, their financing assumptions for the first draft of ST3 were "very conservative," Rogoff said.

While the annual cost to taxpayers will remain the same under these changes, **the taxes will last longer**. Under any version of the ST3 proposal, projects would be done in 25 years but taxpayers would keep paying off bonds beyond that timeframe (and then continue paying for operations costs even after the bonds are paid off). With this increase, that payback will take a little longer. The agency does not yet know exactly how much longer, a spokesperson said. In any case, paying back those taxes will likely be combined someday with another light rail measure—the eventual Sound Transit 4—meaning we'll all probably just keep paying indefinitely.

The Sound Transit Board will vote on these changes in a special meeting next Thursday. They'll vote in late June on whether to send the full package to voters.

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<http://www.seattlemet.com/articles/2016/5/27/sound-transit-revises-expansion-with-expedited-timeline-suburbs-lead-the-way-on-zoning-changes>

Morning Fizz

# Sound Transit Revises Expansion with Expedited Timeline, Suburbs Lead the Way on Zoning Changes

**Suburbs agree to help pay for downtown Seattle tunnel and streamlined permitting process. What's Seattle doing?**

By

- [Josh Feit](#)
- 5/27/2016 at 9:31am

1. The Sound Transit Board announced its revised ST3 proposal yesterday; it's [a new version](#) of the light rail expansion measure to Everett, Tacoma, Issaquah and within Seattle that the agency originally announced in March. Responding to community criticism that the ST3 plan, which is on this November's ballot, took too long to get built, the new proposal gets light rail to Ballard and West Seattle along with Everett, Redmond, and Tacoma a little sooner. The Ballard extension from Downtown, for example, will come on line in 2035 instead of 2038 and the West Seattle line from Downtown will come on line in 2030 instead of 2033.

But three other (and bigger) wins for Seattle: The Ballard line will be grade separated (it will be elevated along 15th), North Seattle is getting the new station it wanted (the 130<sup>th</sup> Street station in Pinehurst in 2031), and costs of the second downtown tunnel will be paid for regionally, rather than just by taxes generated in Seattle.

Speaking of taxes, the slightly faster timeline—14 and 18 percent decreases in years for Ballard and West Seattle construction respectively—is possible because the agency retooled its financing plan to get more bonding capacity, getting more money in the door sooner. The change increases ST3 from a \$50 billion plan to a \$54 billion plan, though tax payers would still be paying the same amount annually, about \$400 per household.

Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff said it may be possible to speed up the timeline even more with a series of process changes: going with a design/build contract instead of a design/bid/build contract, reversing “the backward” process of having staff design stations and alignments and then presenting them to stakeholders by instead having senior staff meet with stakeholders first

to deal with concerns upfront. And finally, Rogoff stressed that local municipalities could speed up delivery by making zoning changes to permit light rail sooner.

Tweeting about this last point from the meeting yesterday, I went with the hashtag “SuburbsSchoolingSeattle” because Rogoff pointed to suburbs like Redmond and Snohomish, as examples, where local governments had made light rail a “permitted use” in advance. Making light rail a permitted use from the the get-go cuts out much of the finicky building permitting process along the way. Seattle has not done this; we *love* our process. Issaquah, Kent, and Redmond have also done upzones too, by the way, which could be another sticking point in Seattle.

I asked mayor Ed Murray, an ST board member, if Seattle was ready change permitting rules as a way to get light rail on the ground faster. He told me: “Whether we would make [light rail] a permitted use is something we need to explore. There are things we would give up as a city that we might be willing to give up to expedite the process, but we need further discussion to understand exactly what that would mean.”

(And as [Seattle Times reporter Mike Linblom points out in his report](#) on yesterday’s announcement, another Seattle level change to accommodate the revised plan—specifically, including the 130<sup>th</sup> Street station now—would mean the neighborhood would have to go along with a density upzone around the station.)

The suburbs haven’t totally become model urbanists, though. File this one under suburban mysticism. Giving into demands from the Issaquah city council and the Lake Forest Park city council that, as Lake Forest Park deputy mayor Catherine Stanford put it yesterday (as if she was reading a Zen Buddhist koan): “If you want to get people out of their cars, you need to provide more parking”—the ST board responded with more surface parking in Renton, more parking for Issaquah a new North Sammamish park and ride.



<http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/light-rail-stations-could-open-sooner-under-new-sound-transit-plan/>

# Light-rail stations could open years earlier under new Sound Transit plan

Originally published May 26, 2016 at 3:12 pm Updated May 27, 2016 at 7:29 am



*Light-rail riders may see more elevated lines like the one for the Mount Baker Station. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times, 2014)*

**From Everett to Federal Way and Redmond to Ballard and West Seattle, light-rail service would start a few years earlier than Sound Transit had proposed in March. New finance strategies make it possible, says the agency, which is preparing**

**the November ballot measure.**

Light-rail extensions would be built faster than originally proposed, with Everett getting service in 2036, five years sooner than Sound Transit had announced, and Federal Way and Redmond coming online as soon as 2024, under a revised plan released Thursday.

The quicker timelines, for a Sound Transit 3 ballot measure to go before voters this fall, are possible mainly because of new financial assumptions and strategies, said Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff.

The overall cost of projects in the ballot measure would rise to \$54 billion, a \$4 billion increase from the [package released in March](#), but the tax rate would not change. An average household would pay \$400 in yearly property, sales and car-tax increases if voters in urban Snohomish, King and Pierce counties say yes in November.



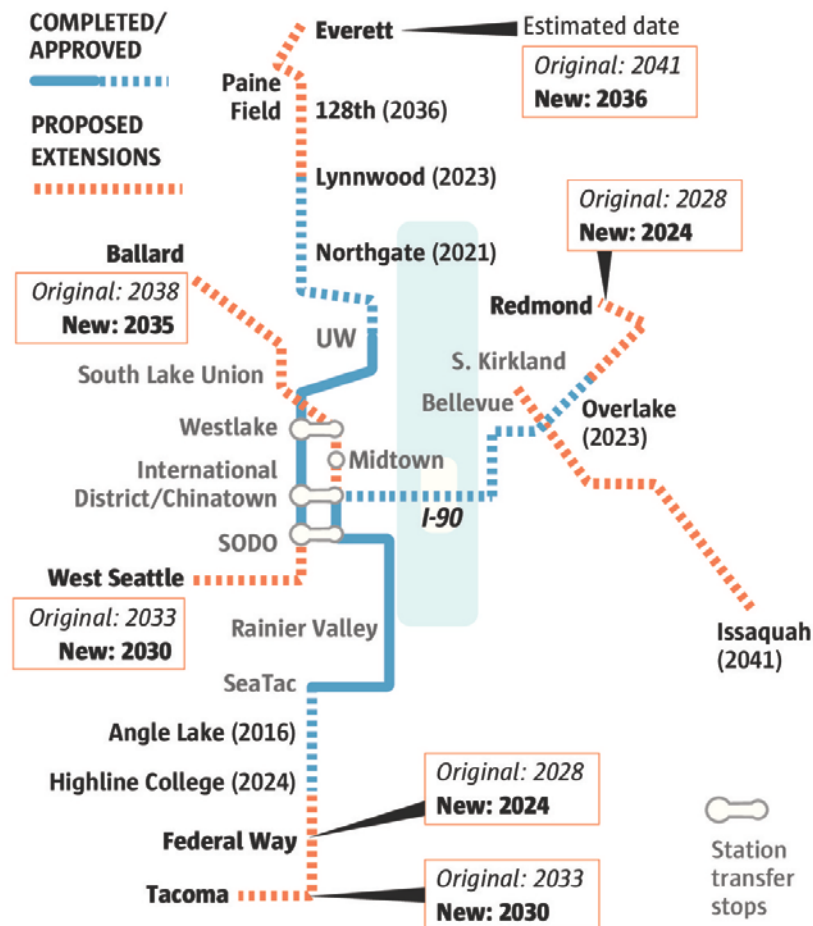
Other shortened timelines include Ballard light rail in 2035, three years sooner than in the March draft plan; West Seattle in 2030, three years sooner; Federal Way to the Tacoma Dome in 2030, three years quicker; and stations for South Graham Street in Rainier Valley, and Boeing Access Road in Tukwila, by 2031, five years sooner.

Although the 2020s and 2030s remain a long time to wait, Thursday's announcement is meant to respond to the clamor for service. In seven public forums and 2,300 written comments, Rogoff said, a common theme has been that people wanted projects delivered years faster than the March proposal outlined, to give them a way out of traffic congestion.

"Folks are fed up, having reached the saturation point, and they want relief sooner," he said before Thursday's board meeting.

## Quicker schedule for ST3

Sound Transit now proposes opening light-rail extensions years earlier than announced in March. Here is a look at some of the changes in the timeline for station openings.



- Not all stations are shown.
- West Seattle and Bellevue trains continue to Northgate.
- In 2035, trains heading north from Tacoma would shift into the new east downtown Seattle tunnel that leads to Ballard.

Finance details weren't immediately available Thursday, but Rogoff said consultants found the agency could sell an additional \$4 billion in bonds between the sunset of the Sound Transit expansion program under way now and the 25-year construction plan outlined in Sound Transit 3. Bonds would hit the market quicker, and plans call for 30 percent of projects to be debt-financed.

A route change in Everett also helped. The line would still veer west from the 128th Street/Mariner Station to Paine Field as elected officials want, but it would arrive at downtown Everett along Interstate 5 rather than over Evergreen Way — saving \$300 million in land and trackway costs.

The new schedule represents an especially big win for Federal Way, which was supposed to get a north-end station by 2023 in the Sound Transit 2 measure approved in 2008, a promise the agency broke during the last recession. If the new plan succeeds, the city would end up

slipping only a year beyond the ST2 timetable.

To help make it possible, the Highline College station would be postponed one year, to be finished in 2024 as part of the whole Angle Lake-to-Federal Way corridor. And the 2024 line would reach downtown Federal Way.

A final Sound Transit board vote on what to put on the fall ballot is expected June 23.

The \$54 billion program would be funded by federal grants and three tax increases: a yearly property tax of \$25 per \$100,000 home value; a sales tax of 4 cents per \$10 purchase; and an annual car-tab tax of \$80 per \$10,000 vehicle value. The estimated household average of \$400 more per year is close to double what residents now pay for Sound Transit measures approved by voters in 1996 and 2008.

## **New Seattle, Renton details**

In Ballard, the agency is so far sticking to its decision to build on 15th Avenue West through Interbay, but would spend \$150 million to elevate the tracks — an investment in preventing collisions with street traffic. The plan released Thursday rejects a Salmon Bay tunnel that could add \$450 million, which was requested by a community coalition.

[Renton is having only part of its wish fulfilled](#) for big park-and-ride capacity at a future Interstate 405 bus-rapid transit corridor, to open in 2024. Thursday's plan adds a north-end stop at Northeast 44th Street with 200 parking spaces, not the 700-stall garage sought by the City Council. And at the future South Renton bus-rapid transit (BRT) station, there would be a 700-stall garage, adding capacity similar to the Tukwila International Boulevard Station — but far short of the 2,000 spaces the city wanted.

Transit leaders envision South Renton as a hub where King County Metro's RapidRide buses and Sound Transit BRT converge, and thought a 2,000-stall garage excessive, said Ric Ilgenfritz, planning director.

A North 130th Street light-rail station for Seattle, championed by new Seattle City Councilmember Debora Juarez, made it into the plan with a 2031 opening date. Earlier studies said it would add only 1,000 daily passengers, but the City Council is now planning for an "urban village" there that would place more residents near light rail.

The deadlines are not legally binding, so long as Sound Transit is building and maintaining corridors in its ballot plans. The measure will require that tax rates be reduced after projects are built, spokesman Geoff Patrick said.

The agency has been forced to delay or alter routes — years ago, for instance, scrapping a deep, expensive First Hill Station for light rail — to cope with cost overruns and economic recession.

On the other hand, in recent years the agency [finished the University of Washington/Capitol Hill light-rail extension](#) for \$1.75 billion, or \$200 million below the construction budget. And in Tukwila and SeaTac, elevated lines have been delivered on time and on budget, and most of the suburban ST3 rail is planned for elevated guideway, or surface near freeways.

## Paying for a Seattle tunnel

In a potentially controversial move, Rogoff suggested the suburbs help pay for a [second transit tunnel in downtown Seattle](#), which he says is needed to add capacity for the whole region. That tunnel, continuing to South Lake Union and Seattle Center, would form a helix-shaped network downtown, so that West Seattle trains run to Northgate and Everett, while trains from Federal Way, SeaTac and Rainier Valley continue northwest to Seattle Center and Ballard.

Of the \$1.7 billion downtown portion, about \$850 million would come from taxes collected outside Seattle, based on the projected percentage of residents using both downtown Seattle tunnels. The division of costs among Snohomish County, the Eastside, South King County, North King County and Pierce County would be based on the principle that people arrive from all directions.

Sound Transit Board Chairman Dow Constantine left open some possibility for Ballard or West Seattle tunnels to be considered after the election — for instance, if the agency learns that tunneling costs might decrease. Bellevue gained a downtown tunnel after the 2008 election by contributing land and dividing extra costs, beyond the aerial alignment on the ballot. But it took [two years of tense negotiations](#) to agree on that, delaying the project.

“That is not something we’re going to allow to happen. We’re not going to let schedules slip,” Constantine said. The agency is actually striving to shave another year or more off Thursday’s timelines, by speeding the permit process through Redmond, Everett and potentially in Seattle.

Mike Lindblom: 206-515-5631 or [mlindblom@seattletimes.com](mailto:mlindblom@seattletimes.com). Twitter [@mikelindblom](https://twitter.com/mikelindblom)

Stranger, 5/26/16

[http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2016/05/26/24129433/sound-transit-3-changes-more-light-rail-projects-to-open-faster?utm\\_source=Sightline%20Institute&utm\\_medium=web-email&utm\\_campaign=Sightline%20News%20Selections](http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2016/05/26/24129433/sound-transit-3-changes-more-light-rail-projects-to-open-faster?utm_source=Sightline%20Institute&utm_medium=web-email&utm_campaign=Sightline%20News%20Selections)

## SLOG

[News](#) • [Transportation](#)

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[http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/ballard-pushing-for-light-rail-tunnel-even-though-drawbridge-appears-headed-for-ballot/?utm\\_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm\\_campaign=4a3e3769af-Morning\\_Brief\\_5\\_31\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_5beb38b61e-4a3e3769af-120294717](http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/ballard-pushing-for-light-rail-tunnel-even-though-drawbridge-appears-headed-for-ballot/?utm_source=The+Seattle+Times&utm_campaign=4a3e3769af-Morning_Brief_5_31_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5beb38b61e-4a3e3769af-120294717)

# Ballard pushing for light-rail tunnel — even though drawbridge appears headed for ballot

Originally published May 31, 2016 at 6:00 am Updated May 31, 2016 at 7:46 am



*The Ballard Bridge opens to let a sand-and-gravel barge with a pusher tug through. (Greg Gilbert / The Seattle Times)*

***Sound Transit didn't budget for an expensive Ballard tunnel in its latest ST3 light-rail proposal, but elected officials are keeping that option open.***

On Seattle's Beacon Hill, people can descend by elevator, walk beneath [sculptures of space creatures](#), and catch a speedy light-rail train downtown. On Capitol Hill and at the University of Washington, [the new transit tunnel](#) already carries 30,000 passengers a day.

A four-mile tunnel is being built from Husky Stadium to the future Northgate Station, and digging just began in downtown Bellevue.

So why not Ballard?

## The agency's proposal

The [draft Sound Transit 3 plan](#) includes:

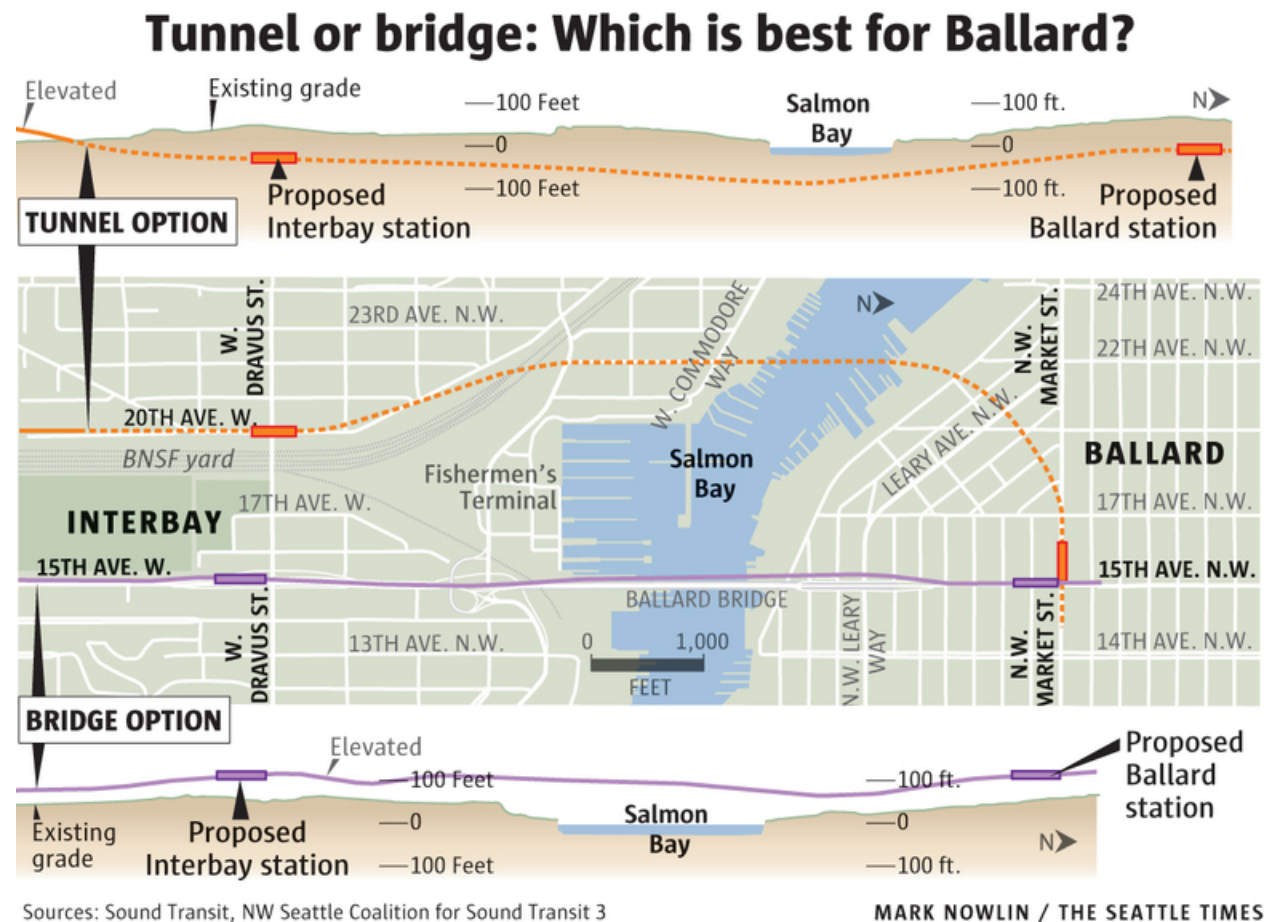
- Elevated trackway over the median on Elliott/15th Avenue West.
- A 70-foot-high drawbridge next to the Ballard road bridge.
- Station over the intersection of 15th Avenue Northwest at Northwest Market Street.



# The residents' proposal

The [Northwest Coalition for Sound Transit 3](#) recommends:

- Elevated trackway that crosses from Elliott over the BNSF Railway Yard, to bend north above 20th Avenue West.
- A shallow Interbay Station near 20th and Dravus.
- Tunnel beneath Salmon Bay, into Ballard.
- Tracks curve east, into an underground station in Ballard.



A coalition of residents and some politicians have been pushing for a light-rail tunnel under Salmon Bay — at a cost of \$450 million — and may continue to do so, even though the Sound Transit 3 ballot measure this fall is expected to instead offer a less-expensive drawbridge.

But transit-board Chairman Dow Constantine is leaving the tunnel as a possibility to be explored after the election.

“There’s still the environmental study, the consideration of various alternatives, the conversation with the community about the exact way in which the line’s going to be built in Ballard,” said Constantine, who is also King County executive. “In fact, if over time we’re able to reduce the cost of tunneling, that could be an alternative to be considered, along with the elevated line.”

Confused?

Sound Transit's choice of a drawbridge, confirmed in last week's [ST3 ballot-plan update](#) from CEO Peter Rogoff, isn't legally binding.

The agency describes the elevated corridor above 15th Avenue West as a "representative alignment." That means the ST3 package would provide enough money for a 70-foot-high bridge in 2035, not a tunnel.

So the debate could go on for some time.

## **Funding a tunnel**

The main argument for a tunnel is that light-rail passengers would avoid being delayed by a predicted four bridge openings a day to let tall boats pass.

"You know that the bridge isn't going to open, you're not going to find yourself stuck in traffic," said City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, whose district includes nearby Magnolia.

The prime drawback of tunneling is the \$450 million cost — equivalent to adding two miles of elevated trackway, theoretically enough to continue to Crown Hill or spend elsewhere.

"There's a tension between the quality of service on any particular line, and how many lines you can build," said former Mayor Mike McGinn, a longtime Ballard light-rail advocate, who says he hasn't take a position on the tunnel-drawspan debate.

Even without a tunnel, the \$54 billion regional package would cost an average household \$400 per year, if voters in urban Snohomish, King and Pierce counties say yes in November to property, sales and car-tab tax hikes to add 62 miles of rail, plus bus and parking facilities.

A tunnel might take additional time to design and build.

On the other hand, an [8-foot diameter sewer tunnel](#) was bored under Salmon Bay three years ago. That success suggests Sound Transit wouldn't repeat the crisis at Portage Bay, where in 1999 boulders were discovered in soft soil, the cost increased by \$1 billion, and the light-rail tunnel path to the University of Washington was moved beneath sturdier Montlake Cut.

Politically, transit leaders might risk a sort of underground arms race.

If a tunnel is promised to Ballard, requests are inevitable from West Seattle, which has a steeper slope, and narrower rights of way to cram in a 22-foot overhead track from the Nucor Steel mill to The Junction.

Last week, the City Council passed a rather bland resolution asking that tunnels be considered in both Ballard and West Seattle, "if cost savings within the ST3 program or additional funding resources become available."

"We know that the tunnel is likely going to be more expensive and probably take longer to build, but there's still a lot of interest," Councilmember Mike O'Brien, who represents Ballard, said in May 17 committee session.

In a later interview, O'Brien said he doesn't see much public appetite, following voter approval of the \$930 million Move Seattle levy, for a Seattle-only tax to pay for a tunnel.

City Councilmember Rob Johnson, who is on the transit board, said city officials are also thinking about an idea suggested in the past by Mayor Ed Murray — that Sound Transit contribute to a Ballard bridge that would carry not just light rail, but also cars, bikes and pedestrians.

Amanda Kay Helmick, co-founder of the [West Seattle Transportation Coalition](#), said her side of town is just grateful to be considered for rail, in 2030. They're fighting to catch up politically with the Ballard-South Lake Union corridor, which has undergone [\\$2.8 million in route studies](#), started under McGinn.

West Seattle residents haven't taken clear positions yet, but Helmick said, "a short tunnel makes more sense for The Junction than having an at-grade or elevated option."

That way, tracks could still cross a fixed Duwamish River bridge, to an elevated Delridge Station as proposed, but then plunge underground for a mile or so.

Already, the ST3 plan includes an east-downtown tunnel, to add capacity for the whole region. The tunnel-boring machines would likely start their work near Stadium Station and go all the way to Uptown, where elevated tracks would emerge to Interbay.

One possible place to find money for a tunnel would be scrapping one of two currently proposed South Lake Union stations, to save \$300 million. They're proposed only a few blocks apart, at the Denny-Westlake crossing and the Harrison-Aurora crossing. Sound Transit originally mapped just one, but the city of Seattle requested both, in [a letter last July from transportation director Scott Kubly](#).

But support for scaling back appears nil, and elected officials say SLU is becoming so crowded that it needs both stations.

## Bridge pros and cons

A drawspan would delay trains.

Sound Transit's proposed 70-foot-high train-only bridge wouldn't open as often as the 44-foot Ballard road bridge, which averages 12 daily openings.

A light-rail drawbridge could be expected to open twice a day in winter and four times a day in summer, on average, said Karen Kitsis, project planning director. The North Seattle Industrial Association's president, Eugene Wasserman, predicts as many as six daily openings.

Most are for tall-masted sailboats, but working ships also need high clearances. Three dry-docks east of Ballard would probably generate 150 to 200 openings per year for clients' boats 70 feet or taller, said Hobie Stebbins, operations manager at Lake Union Drydock.

Trains likely wouldn't be interrupted from 7 to 9 a.m. or 4 to 6 p.m., when road drawbridges already stay lowered.

When they open, Seattle drawbridges require four minutes on average — brief enough for light-rail dispatchers, with trains arriving every six to 10 minutes, to perhaps coordinate passage with bridge tenders. Trains can resume service from nearby stations immediately, unlike car drivers who must wait for vehicles ahead.

Ben Broesamle, coordinator for the [Northwest Seattle Coalition](#) for Sound Transit 3, says that even more than the frequency of span openings, a greater concern is that sooner or later, a mechanical failure would stop train service for hours. “Our view is, the risk of a blockage is unacceptable,” he said.

Broesamle echoes the view of young adults that decades from now, a tunnel would flow gracefully into a potential Sound Transit 4 crosstown tunnel, from Ballard to the University District. This is because excavation would occur west of 15th Avenue, then curve so a Ballard Station would be oriented east-west.

Another reason to tunnel is that 50,000 cars, trucks and buses would be delayed on 15th because construction cranes or gantries to build an elevated line would block some lanes for up to two years, said Wasserman.

[Jeanne Kohl-Welles](#), a County Council member from northwest Seattle, said last week's plan tweaks by Sound Transit are good news for Ballard overall.

The overall timeline was accelerated three years, to 2035 in Ballard and 2030 in West Seattle; the board heeded the local outcry to separate all ST3 trackways from road traffic; and the door remains open to discuss tunneling, which she still favors. And she's familiar with debates over the visual impact of aerial trackways, from her tenure on the unbuilt Seattle Monorail Project in the early 2000s.

Kohl-Welles wants to see the finance plan, and wants to understand community sentiment about other issues, such as whether tracks could continue north.

“There are a lot of elements,” she said.

Having just watched regional politicians embrace a fully elevated, grade-separated line, Broesamle said the coalition will invite them to take another step — by delivering a tunnel to make the light-rail system even more reliable.

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In Our View / Sound Transit 3

## Linking light rail plan with public support

By The Herald Editorial Board

Having shaved five years, and maybe more, from the estimated arrival of Sound Transit's Link light rail system in Everett, officials within Snohomish County believe supporters can make their case to voters to approve a \$15 billion funding package in November.

Of the polling Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson has seen, he believes the message from voters will be, "Yeah, it's a lot of money, but do it now and do it right."

"Do it now" is a relative term with long-range transportation projects; we're now looking at light rail in Everett by 2036, maybe 2034.

The Sound Transit Board this week will [consider final revisions to its now \\$54 billion plan](#) to extend the Link light rail system north into Everett, south to Tacoma and elsewhere in the region, to complete a regional transportation system.

Officials in Snohomish County who are part of that board — Everett City Council member Paul Roberts, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers and Edmonds Mayor Dave Earling — and joined by Stephanson during a meeting with The Herald Editorial Board, have signed off on the plan as now proposed: The timetable for getting light rail to Everett Station — including a jog out to Paine Field — has been [moved up five years from the initially proposed 2041 to no later than 2036](#), and potentially earlier if county officials and those in Everett and Lynnwood are able to advance work more quickly on engineering, design and permits.

The plan also provides more definition for the likely route north that many have sought: From the proposed Lynnwood Transit Station at 200th Street SW and 44th Avenue West, completion of which is expected in 2023 or 2024, the route will head north along the I-5 corridor to 128th, west to a station at Paine Field, then along Highway 526 back to the I-5 corridor and north to Everett Station.

There were earlier suggestions that the best way for Snohomish County supporters to move up the timeline from 2041 would have been dropping the route's link to Paine Field, but such a concession would have reduced the effectiveness of light rail to move the greatest number of commuters and would have left a still growing base of aerospace and manufacturing jobs underserved.

Some thought also was given to completing the Lynnwood-to-Everett portion in two phases, rather than bringing the route online all at once, to open a station at 128th ahead of Everett Station's completion. But, Somers and Stephanson said, that would have involved additional cost, delayed the opening of the Everett Station terminal by a year and might also have lessened chances for later federal funding.

The four officials also sounded confident that the county, working with Lynnwood and Everett, will be able to knock one to two years off the 2036 goal by coordinating efforts for planning, design, environmental and other permit reviews. Both Somers and Stephanson said the coordination won't seek to get around requirements, nor is the effort something the cities or county wouldn't do for other projects.

With a final package firming up, the work now will begin to convince voters in the Sound Transit district to approve a package of taxes to pay for a significant portion of it, including increases to the sales tax, car license tabs and property taxes that will cost the average taxpayer about \$200 more each year.

Recognizing the growth that Snohomish County can expect in the next few decades — 200,000 more people and 50,000 to 75,000 new jobs — the county and the rest of the region will need the capacity that a complete light rail system can deliver.

Convincing the voters will take a commitment by Sound Transit officials to careful management of construction now and operation in the future to avoid the problems now seen in transit systems in California's Bay Area and Washington, D.C. (Here's a suggestion, Sound Transit: When you open the Everett Station terminal, skip [the \\$850,000 party you threw](#) for the opening at Capitol Hill and Husky Stadium stations in March. We're fine with a simple ribbon-cutting.)

In other words, with public money at stake, "do it now, but do it right."

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