

October 25, 2005

The Honorable Representative Ed Murray  
203 John L. O'Brien Building  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA  
98504-0600

Dear Representative Murray,

Thank you for your letter of October 20<sup>th</sup>, regarding the Expert Review Panel's role in reviewing the Sound Transit Board's recent decision to eliminate the First Hill light rail station from Sound Move Phase One. We were sorry that you were unable to attend the Panel's meeting last week, but we were pleased that Beth Redfield was able to participate in the two-day session.

As Beth may have reported to you, the Panel received a lengthy briefing on the issues surrounding the First Hill station on the first day of our meeting. Included in the materials we received was the work plan for assessing alternatives for serving the First Hill station area. We learned that those alternatives include evaluation of soils stabilization methods, shifting the location of station platforms, new locations for the station, and providing other transit connections to the community. The Panel also had an opportunity to tour the First Hill area. At the conclusion of our tour of the I-90 corridor on Thursday afternoon, the Panel toured the First Hill neighborhood and the proposed First Hill and Capitol Hill stations. On Friday the Panel reviewed the requests contained in your letter and spoke about our response to it.

The Panel's reactions were varied. Panel members understood the difficult choice facing the Sound Transit Board. The First Hill community is a high density neighborhood with several regional employers and a university nearby. It appears to be the kind of neighborhood that should be served by a regional high capacity transit system. Alternatively, the risks associated with the construction of the proposed station seemed to be significant and could affect the schedule and cost of the entire North Link project.

As you point out in your letter, it is not the Panel's role to review decisions regarding implementation of Phase One of Sound Move. However, we learned on Friday afternoon that the multiple alternatives for providing high capacity transit service (including alternative station locations) to the First Hill community will be considered in the development of an ST2 package of improvements, thus fall within our purview.

We will review the key assumptions for all ST2 projects, and assess the reasonableness of those assumptions. For all ST2 projects, including First Hill projects, we will examine assumptions related to system ridership, capital and operating costs, constructability, and project risks.

The Panel will meet again in mid-January, at which time we expect to be briefed on the draft package of ST2 projects being considered by the Sound Transit Board. After that meeting we will forward to you any comments we have on the assumptions supporting the ST2 projects, including the First Hill station.

If you have any further questions or comments please feel free to contact me at 404-385-2246, or John Howell, the Panel's Administrator, at 206-223-7660, ext. 102.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Meyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Meyer  
Chair, Expert Review Panel

cc. Governor Christine Gregoire  
Secretary Doug MacDonald  
Joni Earl