

Sound Transit 3 Expert Review Panel

June 1, 2016

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Dear Sirs,

In our April 26 letter we identified several higher level issues that we presented to the Sound Transit Board on April 28. In that letter we also said that we intended to draft a second letter to follow up on several more detailed questions and issues from our April 11/12 meeting. The following provides additional comments the Panel had at our April meeting, and several outstanding questions. We are working with Sound Transit staff to have written or verbal answers to these questions and issues by our next meeting on June 6.

Panel Comments

Transit Oriented Development Policies

The Panel was briefed on the new requirements adopted by the State legislature earlier this year, regarding use of Sound Transit surplus property for affordable housing purposes. The members understand the importance of using public assets to support the creation of a diverse housing stock. The Panel believes that creating successful TOD also requires the development of a mixture of residential, retail, and office development. The Panel would encourage Sound Transit to develop TOD policies that allow for mixed use development, even when affordable housing is being developed.

The Cost of Access Improvements

The ST3 plan includes resources to ensure that system riders can access rail and light rail stations, and bus transit hubs, in a variety of ways. The system access program includes \$100 million. There are project allowances in the ST3 project budgets for non-motorized access, and for bus/rail integration. As the Panel reviewed the preliminary project budgets and system-wide funds, we noted that the cost to provide access for a system rider will vary greatly depending on the type of access provided (i.e., facilities to accommodate buses, pedestrian or bicycle

improvements, park and ride lots, parking garages, etc.). As project designs and plans are developed the Panel would encourage the Sound Transit Board and staff to analyze the cost per rider for the different forms of access improvements being considered. This should not necessarily be the sole criterion for an anticipated improvement, but it should be considered as part of the analysis and decision process.

Partnerships to Increase the Local Labor Pool

In our April 26 letter we stated that, “The Panel is concerned about the supply of qualified construction contractors available to accomplish general construction, structures, track work, systems and station work in a timely manner.” Although we will receive a briefing at our next meeting on the proposed revisions to the Draft System Plan, we understand that the Sound Transit Board has received proposals to shorten a number of the construction schedules for ST3 projects. This could place even more pressure on the available supply of qualified contractors and on the local labor pool.

Given the anticipated increase in design and construction activity to accomplish both the ST2 and ST3 programs, Panel members believe there is an opportunity to work in partnership with higher education institutions and skilled labor unions to develop joint programs to increase the local labor pool. Sound Transit should be developing partnerships that would create opportunities for young people to train for construction jobs. Panel members are aware of local models in this region where companies have created such partnerships to increase the supply of local labor.

Outstanding Questions from the April Meeting

Based on the briefings the Panel received at the April meeting, the following is a list of questions the Panel would like to have addressed at our next meeting:

- Has Sound Transit considered asking transit agencies in neighboring counties outside the ST district who may provide service at the end of the proposed light rail or Sounder lines to create a partnership regarding potential funding agreements for station or parking improvements? If not, why not?
- What are the Sounder ridership forecasts, with and without the ST3 enhancements? We would appreciate receiving more detail about the significant increase in Link light rail riders during the first quarter of 2016.
- At the April meeting the panel was told that regional population and employment forecasts were modified, which resulted in a modest decrease in projected ridership. The Panel understands the relationship between the two. However, we would like an

explanation regarding the current upward trend in ridership and how that is consistent with the reduced long-term ridership forecast.

- The Panel would like the most current information about the expected impacts of taking buses out of the downtown Seattle tunnel.
- What are the assumptions built into the ST3 finance plan regarding the anticipated fare structure? Are there any near-term decisions that need to be made about the fare structure for ST3 services? What is being communicated to the public about fares for ST3 services?
- We would like to see a comparison of the original schedules for all ST2 projects (as assumed based on the voter approved ballot measure), with the actual schedules for those ST2 projects completed, and the current projected schedules for those projects still in design and/or construction.
- For the ST3 measure, what is the typical cost per household by county or sub-area? Given the use of property tax as a revenue source for ST3, and the different average property values in each county, we would like to see how the impacts vary by county or sub-area.

Our next meeting will occur on June 6. At that meeting we will be reviewing the Draft System Plan and the ST3 draft finance plan. We expect to provide comments from that meeting prior to the Sound Transit Board's anticipated final action on the ST3 plan on June 23.

Thank you for the continued cooperation of your respective staffs. Please let us know if you have any questions about this letter or our remaining work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Jacobson", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Jim Jacobson
Chair

Cc: Expert Review Panel Members
Ric Ilgenfritz, Sound Transit
Amy Scarton, WSDOT