



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

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*The Seattle Transit Advisory Board shall **advise** the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City **on matters related to transit** and the possible and actual impact of actions taken by the City upon all forms of public transportation.*

*The Board shall be provided the opportunity to comment and make recommendations on City policies, plans, and projects as they may relate to **transit capital improvements, transit mobility, and transit operations** throughout the City...*

*The Board shall help facilitate City policies, plans, and projects that support local and region-wide transit mobility efforts, to help **ensure a functioning and coordinated transit system** throughout the City and region.*

*The Board shall function as the **public oversight committee of revenues collected under Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD) Proposition 1**, as described in Resolution 12 of the STBD...*

The Board shall make an annual report to the City Council on the status of its work program and the achievement of its goals.

**City Council Resolution
31572**

City of Seattle
Seattle Transit Advisory Board

March 31, 2026

To: Mayor Katie Wilson, Seattle City Councilmembers

Re: Seattle Transit Measure Renewal Priorities

Mayor Wilson and Seattle City Councilmembers,

One of the TAB's duties is to "function as the public oversight committee of revenues collected under Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD) Proposition 1" - now known as the **Seattle Transit Measure (STM)**. The Board takes this responsibility very seriously and is pleased to provide our comments on the new STM that will be proposed and sent to voters later this year.

For this next STM Renewal, **we recommend increasing the sales tax to its maximum rate of .30%** and extending the length of the measure from the previous six years to the maximum allowable ten years. We believe this tax rate and timeline will enable long-term planning, guarantee a stable funding source, and make Seattle a world-class transportation destination.

Additionally, we recommend earmarking **at least 60% of funds for purchasing transit service**, an increase from the 50% allocated by the current measure.

Research consistently shows that **travel time is the strongest predictor of how people choose to travel**, meaning faster and more frequent transit directly increases ridership. Reliable transit that reaches every part of the city is the most effective way to encourage mode shift away from single occupancy vehicles, a goal that has been specifically and aggressively set by the Climate Change Response Framework, part of the Seattle Transportation Plan.

Therefore, **restoring transit service to 2019 levels or higher and fully funding and implementing the Frequent Transit Network (FTN) are our top priorities for the STM**. The original purpose of the STBD/STM was to directly bolster transit service within the city. The TAB is incredibly supportive of continuing this directive in the form of additional bus trips, improving frequency on weekends and off-peak hour usage.

Transit costs have increased year after year during the current STM. We believe that by increasing the sales tax rate and extending the length of the STM renewal, we will have the resources required to cover costs over the next decade.

This prioritization of service funding would help realize the vision of the FTN by ensuring more routes operate with **10-minute service or better**. Every neighborhood should have all-day direct bus service to Downtown Seattle or its nearest link light rail hub. The long-running KC Metro operator shortage has made it so the city cannot purchase as much service as it has funding for. With the end to that shortage in sight, the city now has the opportunity to aggressively increase the transit service purchased and available for riders.

The TAB also strongly supports the STM model of increasing funding for late night service and off-peak service. A plan cannot be socially equitable if it does not take into account all users and all the time that they use transit services. We have moved from a 9-to-5 lifestyle to a 24/7 model, and **you cannot ask riders to move from their single occupancy vehicles unless you offer them a viable and frequent alternative**.

Finally, the TAB **strongly supports the continuing funding of programs such as the Trailhead Direct and pilots to increase transit access such as South Delridge Metro Flex**. These programs clearly demonstrate the value of expanding transit access—both by connecting riders to popular natural destinations like parks and mountain areas, and by providing flexible, on-demand shuttle service that helps bridge the gap for trips not served by fixed-route buses.

TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

In the wake of the 2024 Transportation Levy providing a strong alternative funding source, the **TAB supports fewer funds proportionally going towards capital projects from the STM successor** as we believe direct transit service should be the priority. However, we still support some level funding towards these projects. Capital projects bring the added benefit of making each dollar go farther. Metro service costs have dramatically increased over the last few years, following high inflation post-pandemic trends. **Projects that increase bus speed through reserved lanes and signal prioritization can improve how many bus trips we get for each operator hour we purchase**. These capital projects should be forward thinking projects that improve transit performance and help keep up with the rapid pace of inflation.

TRANSIT ACCESS PROGRAMS (TAP)

We strongly support allocating funding to continue and expand the Transportation Access Program. Improving both transit service and access to that service should be the two main priorities of the new measure. TAP attacks the latter by offering ORCA cards to thousands of users, which results in millions of rides, a decrease in single occupancy vehicle usage, and progress towards the goals of safety, sustainability, livability, equity, and mobility, all-in-one. The TAB strongly supports continuing and expanding this program.

TRANSIT SERVICE – STREETCAR

The TAB supports the continuation of funding needed for the Seattle Streetcar program. Sound Transit has ended funding for the Seattle Streetcar and the Commercial Parking Tax has seen decreased revenues post-pandemic. STM has picked up the slack, spending over 10% of revenues on Streetcar operations. Both lines are enjoying a rebound in ridership with the First Hill Streetcar being an especially strong performer.

However, the two lines are not being used to their greatest potential. The city has allowed plans for the Culture Connector to languish for over a decade. This is a broken promise to neighborhoods and people throughout the city and has components of the system, such as the SLU line, not being used as well as they could be otherwise. **We highly recommend the city reopen discussion and planning on the Culture Connector to maximize the effectiveness of the Streetcar system. We also recommend that other, more permanent funding sources be explored** so the Streetcar system's continuing existence is not solely contingent on the STM and its successors every few years.

PLANNING & ANALYSIS

The TAB supports continuation of funding for needed planning and analysis. We anticipate this being a small yet necessary slice of available funding.

The current STM had a material scope change last year, five years into its lifetime, that took \$5M that would have gone towards transit service to fund the ST3 City team, 50 positions that will be needed for the city to collaborate with Sound Transit during ST3 project construction. **While the TAB supports the creation and funding of these positions, we are not convinced that the STM successor is its most appropriate funding source.** We wrote against the material scope change as we believe changing the intent of a measure after it is passed erodes voter trust and should be avoided. While advertising usage of funds from the outset can avoid that issue this time around, we also believe that the STM successor should focus directly on transit service with large personnel funding such as the ST3 City Team coming from more permanent, appropriate sources. ST3 projects are not contingent on the passage of the STM successor. The ST3 City Team's existence should not be contingent on its passage as well.

EMERGING NEEDS

Emerging Needs was a category meant to provide emergency assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the West Seattle Bridge Closure and is not anticipated to be relevant to the STM successor.

The TAB appreciates the updates it receives during their monthly meetings from various transit agencies and City departments on what is being planned, what is being built, and how STM funds are making these projects happen. The STM's successor is an opportunity to not only keep our current system

a float, but to **build a transit system that is frequent, environmentally friendly, economical, effective, open to all riders, and helps create a city where everyone has the ability and the support to get to where they need.**

Sincerely yours,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB)