



**Seattle**  
Department of  
Transportation

**TAB Members:**

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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**

October 25, 2023

Seattle City Council  
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Mayor Bruce Harrell  
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Dear Mayor Bruce Harrell and Councilmembers,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB) is pleased to share our responses to the recently released 2024 City of Seattle Budget, focusing on relevant transit and transportation expenditures, especially those dealing with the Seattle Transit Measure (STM), of which the TAB is mandated to provide financial oversight.

**Seattle Transit Measure Emerging Needs**

**Background:**

The STM allows for up to \$9 million annually to support Emerging Needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of the West Seattle Bridge. In 2022, the Emerging Needs category supported additional transit service purchases to mitigate the closure of the West Seattle Bridge (which reopened to traffic in September 2022). Following the budget transmittal, SDOT provided an updated spending plan showing planned spending for Emerging Needs at \$6 million in 2023 and \$3.5 million in 2024. This would be a \$5.3 million reduction of spending in Emerging Needs for 2024. (But, reallocated for Capital Needs.)

The City Council has asked the TAB for a response on this category, and we are happy to provide one. Option A: Reduce appropriations for Emerging Needs to match planned spending, as proposed by the Mayor and SDOT, including adding bus lanes and purchasing more bus transit service hours.

## **Funding for the First Hill Streetcar**

The City of Seattle needs to find a long term and sustainable funding source for the First Hill Streetcar. The Mayor's original proposal of using the Commercial Parking Tax (CPT) is not sustainable since the funds have been reduced as fewer commuters are working or driving to the Downtown corridor. For 2024, the TAB will support using STM funding to help ensure the successful operation of the First Hill Streetcar, as we also know that subsidies from Sound Transit are also ending and this use of its fund balances is supported. Going forward, the TAB supports using STM fund balances and 2024-2026 funds to support the First Hill Streetcar, but would do not want them to be the primary funding source, and will monitor this in our oversight role.

The TAB knows that the majority of funding in the STM is for purchasing service hours and keeping transit services adequate to meet the needs of the community. However, we do have concerns that post COVID, there have been ongoing driver shortages, canceled runs, and items that funding alone cannot solve. Therefore, the TAB welcomes the opportunity for updates in 2024 on increased service hours and runs, or a realistic assessment of what can be accomplished with the work force and usable buses available. The TAB understands that SDOT does not control any hiring or staffing issues for transit operators, and will work with the regions transit agencies for additional updates and information. But, SDOT, in conjunction with the TAB, can optimize existing service hours through the further development of transit infrastructure, such as adding dedicated bus lanes or having more intersections with Transit Signal Priority technologies. The TAB continues to support the use of STM funds in the 2024 budget to support these goals.

## **Transit Service and Planning and Analysis**

SDOT has presented its proposed spending through 2026. The TAB's comments are listed below:

- The TAB will always support the increase in purchasing transit service hours, and understands that there are no changes until Fall 2024, as we are updated by SDOT and Metro Transit on the realities of hiring operators, solving a parts/supply shortage in a post COVID world.
- The TAB was updated on the rebranded METRO Flex service in designated areas, and supports having pilot service areas in 2024-2026, as passengers in underserved areas, those facing barriers to service, will be the beneficiaries of this program.
- The continuation of the Trailhead Direct Service though the end of the STM is fully supported by the TAB, and also support future investments in water taxi and water taxi shuttles in 2024, unless better uses for these funds occur.

## **Transportation Access Program (TAP)**

In its responses to the last two STM Annual Reports, the TAB has stated its full support of using STM funding for the TAP. From starting as a small pilot program in the International District area, to now covering more underserved and BIPOC communities in Seattle, as well as, working with the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) to provide fully subsidized ORCA cards to residents on 103 SHA owned and managed properties. With a cap of \$10M annually, per STM regulations, the success over the past two years merits the \$9M funding budgeted through 2026.

## **STM Capital Project Budget**

SDOT and the TAB collaborated on creating our priorities for capital projects, and SDOT is using these “(1) corridor projects focused on transit travel time and reliability, (2) safe route to transit and safety and security at bus stops, and (3) wayfinding improvements for peds and cyclists traveling to transit stops.” SDOT has planned for STM Capital Project Funding of \$15M in 2024-2026, and the TAB fully supports their plans and projects. The 2023 \$12M Bridge Proviso is allowed to have funds used over time, subject to the restrictions in the proviso, until the STM ends, so currently \$6M was allocated for 2023 projects, and \$2M allocated annually for 2024-2026 (\$6M). The TAB will monitor the remaining bridge proviso expenditures by SDOT, and will ask to have the Council to have the proviso lifted, if the funds can be repurposed in other STM categories.

## **Future Use of Provisos on STM Funds**

The TAB fully respects that it is the right of any Councilmember to place a proviso on STM funds during the budgeting process. But, if this is done, the TAB requests that we be notified in advance of its issuance, and provided with time to issue a response. We also understand that in some categories, proviso funds may be rolled over in future years until fully spent or the proviso is lifted. The TAB will monitor the restrictions on any proviso and move to have it lifted, if the monies can be reallocated for other needed STM uses.

Sincerely yours,

The Seattle Transit Advisory Board (TAB)