



City of
Bellevue

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January 21, 2016

Sound Transit Board
c/o Board Administrator
Sound Transit
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: City of Bellevue comments on Sound Transit Phase 3 Candidate Project Scopes

Dear Chair Constantine and Members of the Board:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the candidate project scopes under consideration for inclusion in the Sound Transit Phase 3 (ST3) System Plan. Thank you for building on lessons learned from ST2, and engaging local jurisdiction on the project scopes early in the planning process. ST3 will be most successful if its projects mirror local land use and transportation plans, and blend with community character by incorporating elements like grade-separated crossings, for example.

As communicated in our July 14, 2015 comment letter and “Interest Statement,” the City of Bellevue has a vital interest in ensuring that future regional transportation projects maximize the investments of ST2 and meet the growing needs of the Eastside and the region in a potential ST3 ballot measure. As the candidate project scopes are solidified and the draft plan is formulated in the coming months, we expect ST3 to maintain subarea equity, enhance intra-eastside connections, and demonstrate multi-agency coordination.

Maintain Subarea Equity

It is imperative that the ST3 System Plan address the needs of the Eastside in a comprehensive fashion to serve the substantial expected population and employment growth in the East King subarea, and to maintain the principles of subarea equity as defined in ST2 (i.e. Utilizing local tax revenues for transportation programs and services that benefit the residents and businesses of a subarea generally in proportion to the level of revenues contributed by that subarea).

Should ST3 be approved by the voters, the Eastside will be making a significant tax investment into the package. A responsible plan will carefully balance planned projects with available funds from each subarea, rather than borrow across subarea lines. This balance should be transparent to the voters so that the public can clearly understand the full cost of ST3, and be confident their investments will deliver a system that gets them where they want to go. We have invited Sound Transit staff to our February 8 Council meeting to explain how the plan will address these important considerations.

Enhance Intra-Eastside Connections

Bellevue’s priorities acknowledge and emphasize the many interests and goals shared among Eastside cities. The ST3 System Plan must recognize that High Capacity Transit (HCT)

connections between Eastside cities are as critical to the overall regional network as cross-lake connections. As noted in Bellevue's Transit Master Plan vision, transit service should be designed to help more people reach more destinations in less time.

Bellevue strongly urges the Sound Transit Board to move the following HCT projects forward into the draft ST3 System Plan, including the altered project scope elements described below:

- 1. Project E0-2: Fully implement I-405 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from SeaTac to Lynnwood, consistent with the I-405 Master Plan early in the ST3 funding cycle.** As currently described, the lower capital I-405 corridor BRT option is only slightly better than current Regional Express (REX) bus service. For example, the proposed low capital BRT from the Lynnwood Transit Center to the Bellevue Transit Center is essentially the current 535 REX route. This service will be subject to I-405 congestion and delays as buses weave from the Express Toll Lanes (ETL) to the general purpose lanes and back to serve outside transit stops. This is not BRT, and is not acceptable because it will not adequately serve the growing Eastside or maximize the taxpayer's investments.

ST3 implementation must be full BRT, which includes dedicated transitway with inline flyer stops, or at the very least remain in the ETL lanes serving only inline stops; vehicles with multiple doors for entry/exit, designed to "dock" with stations to eliminate a step-up onto the bus; frequent, all day service, intuitive maps and simple schedules; off-board fare collection; transit signal priority for faster, more efficient service; and sophisticated communication systems to track vehicle locations and provide real-time arrival information directly to passenger cell phones or kiosk displays.

For the I-405 BRT project to meet the needs of the growing Eastside travelling public, the scope must include:

- In-line BRT station at Canyon Park with a connection to the pedestrian overcrossing of I-405;
- Expanded parking garage at Canyon Park;
- In-line station in Kirkland at NE 85th Street;
- Extending NE 6th Street to 120th Avenue NE in Bellevue;
- In-line station at 112th Avenue SE with a pedestrian bridge connection to the park-and-ride;
- Expansion of the 112th Avenue SE Park-and-Ride;
- In-line station at North 8th Street in Renton;
- Direct access to the Tukwila Sounder Station;
- At least one additional in-line station south of I-90;
- Non-motorized access improvements and other service improvements paired with related capital improvements (signals, signage, lighting);
- Consideration of alternative routing for northbound BRT that exits at I-90 to Bellevue Way SE to serve the South Bellevue Station, East Main Station, and Bellevue Downtown Station along arterial streets before returning to I-405 via the NE 6th Street direct access ramp; and

- Expanded vehicle fleet to meet service/headway goals (project number R-02).
- 2. Project E-03: Build light rail from Totem Lake to Issaquah via Bellevue to connect these three regional growth centers with fast, frequent and reliable transit service.** Move forward with the project as described in the E-03 project analysis, including the Bellevue College Connector project, with the following scope modifications:
- Allow for the project to be built and opened for service in phases;
 - Provide flexibility to allow for alternative High Capacity Transit considerations on certain segments of the route;
 - Include an elevated non-motorized crossing of NE 8th Street at the Eastside Rail Corridor to provide access between Wilburton Station, located on the north side of NE 8th Street, and the redeveloping Wilburton area on the south side of NE 8th Street. Additionally, the crossing will serve people walking and bicycling along the planned Eastside Rail Corridor multi-use trail as well as provide access from the street level of NE 8th Street; and
 - Ensure the Eastside Rail Corridor multi-use trail be preserved for recreational use in addition to transit use.
- 3. Project E-04: HOV Direct Access at Renton/N 8th Street.** In lieu of the proposed North 8th Street HOV direct access ramps in Renton, provide a new transit center and parking garage at Rainier Avenue South and South Grady Way.

As supportive elements of greater connectivity on the Eastside, Bellevue supports inclusion of the following projects (as described in the project analysis sheets released on December 4) for inclusion in the draft ST3 System Plan:

- Project E0-1: Complete ST2 East Link LRT to Downtown Redmond (per the Record of Decision) as the first project completed under ST3.
- Project E-05: Build the North Sammamish Park-and-Ride.
- Projects N-09 and N-10: Implement BRT on 145th Street and State Route 522 to create a HCT connection between the Eastside and the greater Seattle area via the north end of Lake Washington.

Lastly, although it is not under consideration within the candidate projects proposed for inclusion within the ST3 System Plan, the Board should begin planning for HCT considerations—including the potential for light rail—on the SR 520 Bridge to complete the HCT loop across Lake Washington and increase mobility between the two largest job centers of the region.

Demonstrate Multi-Agency Coordination

While we appreciate the time constraints that Sound Transit is under to meet the June deadline for potential inclusion in a November 2016 ballot, we are concerned that there is not sufficient time or information available to understand the complete transportation network for which the ST3 candidate projects are integral to creating.

We continue to work with Sound Transit staff to understand specific elements from the December 4 project sheets, however as presented these analyses are missing several critical components including detailed information pertaining to the:

- System Access Improvements (project number R-05);
- Regional Express Bus Service (project number R-01);
- Transit Oriented Development Program (project number R-07); and
- Coordination with King County Metro, both current service and Long Range Plan integration.

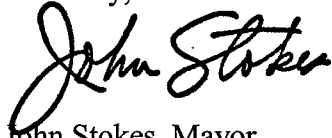
Furthermore, Bellevue staff has met with Sound Transit staff to better understand the ridership forecasting modeling used throughout the candidate project sheet analyses. There are serious concerns that the ridership assumptions do not fully capture local land use plans, localized trips, and regional transit integration, which affect ridership estimates for all the Eastside candidate projects. City staff will submit a technical memo to address these concerns.

This information is critical to understanding how the candidate projects will integrate into a complete regional transportation network—no matter the operator—and maximize the public’s investment in ST3. It is important to note that connecting people to places they want and need to get to with frequent, reliable and affordable transit is a social equity issue. ST3 provides a real opportunity to close current service gaps, but must be closely integrated with other transit agencies and local jurisdiction plans for this opportunity to be fully realized. The public deserves a thorough update on how this coordination is coming together, and we invite you to provide this at an upcoming Council meeting.

Bellevue will continue to be engaged in the development of the ST3 System Plan in collaboration with other Eastside cities and Sound Transit. Ongoing coordination between our staffs will be vital as we work to carefully align city planning efforts—such as our Grand Connection, which will provide a non-motorized crossing of I-405 between the east and west sides of Bellevue—with the work underway in ST3.

Thank you for considering the City of Bellevue’s comments. Please contact David Berg, P.E., Transportation Department Director (dberg@bellevuewa.gov, 425-452-6468) if you have any questions or want to discuss in greater detail.

Sincerely,



John Stokes, Mayor

Attachments:

- City of Bellevue Interest Statement Concerning Sound Transit’s Phase 3 (ST3) System Plan
- City of Bellevue July 14, 2015 ST3 Comment Letter

cc: Bellevue City Council

Brad Miyake, City Manager

Peter Rogoff, CEO, Sound Transit

Dave Berg, Transportation Department Director, City of Bellevue

Ric Ilgenfritz, Deputy Director, Sound Transit



**City of Bellevue Interest Statement
Concerning Sound Transit's Phase 3 (ST3) System Plan
July 13, 2015**

The City of Bellevue has long embraced and advocated for a multimodal approach to addressing local and regional transportation challenges. The network of highways, high-occupancy vehicle facilities, express and local bus service, regional trails and future light rail serving our region and the Eastside must work as a highly integrated system to serve the needs of the growing population and to sustain a healthy economy.

Looking at the expansion of the regional system beyond ST2 is timely now that East Link is progressing and will be operational by 2023. The planning and implementation of the ST3 System Plan will extend beyond the next 25 years. ST3 must be integrated with and support local and regional plans that have identified areas for significant growth over that time period. The City of Bellevue urges the Sound Transit Board to build on the implementation of ST2, especially East Link light rail, to make the most of those investments in keeping with the principles of subarea equity (i.e. Utilizing local tax revenues for transportation programs and services that benefit the residents and businesses of a subarea generally in proportion to the level of revenues contributed by that subarea). The following projects, in order of priority, are critical to developing a more extensive and efficient transportation system that better serves the current and future needs of Bellevue, the Eastside and the region:

- 1. Complete ST2 Light Rail to Downtown Redmond.** Bellevue strongly re-affirms its support for completing East Link light rail to Downtown Redmond as envisioned in ST2. This should be the first project designed and constructed in any ST3 funding package.
- 2. Fully Implement Bus Rapid Transit from SeaTac to Lynnwood Consistent with the I-405 Master Plan.** I-405 bus rapid transit has been partially implemented since the I-405 Master Plan was adopted in 2002. Fully implementing bus rapid transit along the entire I-405 corridor from SeaTac to Lynnwood, is an essential component for the Eastside and the region. High-quality bus rapid transit on I-405 is the north/south spine needed to connect Eastside cities with frequent, reliable transit and complement the east/west spine provided by East Link light rail.
- 3. Strategically Implement System Access Improvements.** In order to maximize the benefits of the system, it is critical that ST3 projects include an array of access improvements such as: expanded regional park-and-ride capacity; safe and accessible bike and pedestrian connections; and opportunities for transit-oriented development, including affordable housing, within walking distance of high capacity transit stations consistent with local plans. Sound Transit should coordinate with other transit providers and WSDOT to ensure the entire high capacity transit system has adequate and strategically placed park and ride lots at the outer edges of the region to intercept trips "upstream" in highly traveled corridors.

Sound Transit should evaluate new technologies that emerge over the life of the ST3 System Plan and implement those that can improve access and increase use of the system.

- 4. *Provide a High Level of Transit Connecting Eastside Cities.*** Cross-lake traffic represents only one portion of regional travel patterns. A growing proportion of trips are destined for or occurring among Eastside cities due to the growth in population and increased employment on the Eastside. One of the most important corridors to serve current and future growth is a high-capacity connection from Kirkland to Issaquah via Bellevue. Along with East Link and I-405 bus rapid transit, connecting the three regional growth centers along this corridor would add an important third high capacity transit spine to the Eastside network. Sound Transit should evaluate the cost-effectiveness of light rail, bus rapid transit, or a combination of modes that can cost-effectively connect Kirkland, Bellevue and Issaquah. The Eastside Rail Corridor offers an opportunity for serving that portion of the connection between Kirkland and Bellevue. The Bellevue College Connector should be a component of the Bellevue to Issaquah segment. Increased regional express bus service is integral to the success of ST3. Regional express service is necessary to supplement the high capacity transit component of the system and to provide interconnectivity among Eastside cities and the region.
- 5. *Implement a Highly Integrated System.*** One of the core priorities of the ST3 System Plan is system integration among transit providers. Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan*, Proposed Frequent Transit Network, is a critical component to improving future mobility for the Eastside. ST3 projects must be based on close coordination among local jurisdictions and transit providers to ensure a fully integrated, multi-modal approach to optimize the effectiveness of the regional network.
- 6. *Consider High Capacity Transit along the Eastside Rail Corridor.*** The Eastside Rail Corridor is a valuable regional and local asset that provides exciting opportunities for a combination of high capacity transit and regional trail facility in the same corridor connecting Kirkland and Bellevue, at a minimum, and potentially extending south to Renton and north to Woodinville. Bellevue strongly supports consideration of the corridor for high-capacity transit (i.e. light rail as well as bus rapid transit). It is important that planning for the corridor is consistent with Bellevue's 2013 Eastside Rail Corridor Interest Statement, particularly as it relates to long term implementation activities: *"Ensure affected local intersections and state highway interchanges along the corridor are carefully analyzed, planned and phased, especially where there are overlapping or competing interests for uses of the ERC right-of-way in highly constrained locations."*
- 7. *Include the Bellevue College [Regional] Connector in the Next Plan.*** Bellevue appreciates the Sound Transit Board's inclusion of the 142nd Place SE transit corridor serving Bellevue College's increasing student population in the *Long Range Plan Update*. Eighty percent of the trips coming to the college originate outside of Bellevue and improving this corridor will provide significant operational reliability and travel time savings for transit. The City urges that this project be a priority in the ST3 System Plan.

8. ***Support Transit-oriented Development (TOD) Consistent with Local Plans.*** Sound Transit should partner with cities to implement TOD around light rail stations, when consistent with local plans, through strategic use of remnant property and capital investments that facilitate TOD and ridership. TOD should include affordable housing consistent with the goals of the Growing Transit Communities Partnership.

Adopted July 13, 2015
Bellevue City Council



July 14, 2015

Sound Transit Board
c/o Board Administrator
Sound Transit
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: City of Bellevue Interest Statement on Sound Transit's Priority Project List for the Phase 3 (ST3) System Plan

Dear Chair Constantine and Members of the Board:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft Sound Transit Phase 3 (ST3) Priority Project List (List). The City of Bellevue has a significant interest in ensuring that future regional transportation projects maximize the investments of ST2 and meet the growing needs of the Eastside and the region. Bellevue has been engaged throughout the Long Range Plan Update process and now the ST3 System Plan development. The attached "Interest Statement" and the specific projects listed in this letter reflect the City Council's highest priorities, in order. We strongly urge the Sound Transit Board to include these priorities in the ST3 System Plan.

Bellevue's priorities acknowledge and emphasize the many interests and goals shared among Eastside cities. It is imperative that the ST3 System Plan address the needs of the Eastside in a comprehensive fashion to serve the substantial population and employment growth that is expected and to maintain the principles of subarea equity (i.e. Utilizing local tax revenues for transportation programs and services that benefit the residents and businesses of a subarea generally in proportion to the level of revenues contributed by that subarea). The ST3 System Plan must recognize that high capacity transit (HCT) connections among and between Eastside cities are as vital to the overall regional network as cross-lake connections. It is also important that future expansion of the system recognize local land use and transportation plans and conscientiously balance those with regional priorities. Finally, it is also important to note that Bellevue's priorities and interests align with all eight *core priorities* identified by the Sound Transit Board for development of the ST3 System Plan.

Following is a list of the City's priority projects to accompany the priorities in the attached interest statement. These projects are essential to maximize the investments of ST2 and to serve the future growth of the Eastside and the region. The Bellevue City Council strongly urges the Sound Transit Board to include these projects in the priority project list for further analysis and evaluation and for inclusion in the ST3 System Plan.

- 1. Complete ST2 East Link LRT to Downtown Redmond (per the Record of Decision)**
- 2. Fully Implement I-405 BRT from SeaTac to Lynnwood Consistent with the I-405 Master Plan**

- Alternative routing for northbound I-405 BRT that exits at I-90 to Bellevue Way SE to serve South Bellevue Station, East Main Station, and Bellevue Downtown along arterial streets before returning to I-405 via the NE 6th St direct access ramp;
- Service improvements paired with I-405 BRT related capital projects;
- Freeway-to-Freeway HOV ramps between I-405 and SR-520—south leg to east leg—in East King;
- NE 6th Street Extension in Bellevue;
- Freeway-to-Freeway HOV ramps between I-405 and I-90 to and from Issaquah in East King;
- In-line BRT station at 112th Street SE and expansion of Newport Hills Park-and-Ride in Bellevue.

3. Strategically Implement System Access Improvements

- Include an elevated crossing of NE 8th Street at the Eastside Rail Corridor to provide access between Wilburton Station, located on the north side of NE 8th Street, and the Wilburton area on the south side of NE 8th Street. The crossing will serve people walking and bicycling along the planned Eastside Rail Corridor multi-use trail as well as provide access from the street level of NE 8th Street;
- Add park-and-ride capacity to the system, including new facilities for north Sammamish and Issaquah. Increase system connectivity for light rail, bus, and automobiles through consideration of additional parking in collaboration with Bellevue and the private sector in the area between the Wilburton Station and Downtown Bellevue, including the possibility of joint layover space for Metro and Sound Transit;
- Coordinate with Bellevue and King County to implement the three-party agreement for realignment of 120th Avenue NE to increase TOD potential at the OMSF site;
- Evaluate and implement emerging technologies that can be applied to improve access and increase use of the system.

4. Provide a High Level of Transit Connecting Eastside Cities

- Evaluate and implement cost-effective high capacity transit (e.g. light rail, bus rapid transit) connecting Kirkland to Bellevue to Issaquah;
 - Eastside Rail Corridor offers an opportunity for serving that segment from Kirkland to Bellevue;
 - Wilburton Station and the Bellevue College Connector to the I-90 corridor should be components of the Bellevue to Issaquah segment;
 - New stations constructed at Totem Lake, Kirkland Downtown, South Kirkland, Eastgate, and Issaquah.
- Increase Regional Express Bus Service, including all-day frequent service:
 - Between Redmond and Crossroads in Bellevue with stops at Redmond Transit Center, Redmond Technology Center, Overlake Park-and-Ride, Crossroads Shopping Center, and Bellevue Transit Center. Service improvement paired with NE 6th Street extension over I-405 to connect to Bellevue Downtown Transit Center;

- Between Kirkland and Factoria in Bellevue with stops at Kirkland Transit Center, Houghton Park-and-Ride, Redmond Technology Center, Eastgate Park-and-Ride, and Factoria Boulevard. Service paired with Bellevue College Connector;
- Between Eastgate and UW Station with stops at Bellevue College, Bellevue Transit Center, Yarrow Point Freeway Station, Evergreen Point Freeway Station, Montlake Interchange, and UW Station. Service improvement paired with Bellevue College Connector and NE 6th Street extension over I-405 to connect to Bellevue Transit Center;
- Between Issaquah and Mercer Island with stops at Issaquah Highlands Park-and-Ride, Issaquah Transit Center, Eastgate Freeway Station – and including an alternative routing with stops at South Bellevue Station, East Main Station, and Bellevue Transit Center. This service is paired with the new park-and-ride in Issaquah.

5. Implement a Highly Integrated System

- Develop integrated service plans with King County Metro consistent with Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan*;
- Improve system access through improved connections to stations (see priority 3 above).

6. Consider High Capacity Transit along the Eastside Rail Corridor

- Segment connecting Kirkland and Bellevue;
- Light rail or bus rapid transit;
- Preserve regional trail throughout the corridor.

7. Include the Bellevue College [Regional] Connector Project

- Between the intersection of 142nd Place SE and SE 36th Street on the south end and SE 24th Street and Kelsey Creek Road on the north end. The corridor spans the length of the 142nd Pl SE Bridge over I-90 from SE 36th St to SE 32nd Street, continues north along Snoqualmie River Road to its intersection with Kelsey Creek Road, and proceeds north to SE 24th Street;
- Snoqualmie River Road roadway surface reconstruction to support increases to frequent bus service, construct sidewalks and provide accessible bus stops and modify the 142nd Pl SE/SE 32nd St Intersection;
- Separated off-street path connecting 145th Pl SE bikes lanes to the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail;
- Weather protection on 142nd Pl SE for people who use transit, walk, and bicycle;
- College Transit Center along the corridor;
- All-day frequent service with the increase in regional express bus service described above.

8. Support Transit-oriented Development (TOD) Consistent with Local Plans

- Make remnant properties available for TOD;

- Fund capital improvements to facilitate development and ridership;
- Support affordable housing as part of TOD consistent with the goals of the Growing Transit Communities Partnership.

Bellevue will continue to be engaged in the development of the ST3 System Plan in collaboration with other Eastside cities and Sound Transit. We would welcome the opportunity to provide information during the next phase of analyzing the priority projects and developing the draft ST3 System Plan. Thank you for considering the City of Bellevue's comments. Please contact David Berg, P.E., Transportation Department Director (dberg@bellevuewa.gov, 425-452-6468) if you have any questions or want to discuss in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Claudia Balducci
Mayor

cc: Bellevue City Council
Brad Miyake, City Manager
Mike Harbour, Acting CEO, Sound Transit
Ric Ilgenfritz, Deputy Director, Sound Transit

Attachment:

- City of Bellevue Interest Statement Concerning Sound Transit's Phase 3 (ST3) System Plan