



April 28, 2016

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

Re: I-405 corridor cities joint ST3 comment letter

Dear Chair Constantine and Members of the Board:

The cities of Bellevue, Renton, Bothell, Newcastle, and Clyde Hill and the Town of Beaux Arts Village appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Sound Transit 3 (ST3) System Plan. In the past nine months, through individual city comment letters, as well as through joint city communications, we have stated to the Board our urgent need for high quality transit projects in the I-405 corridor. The following shared comments are in addition to those from our individual jurisdictions.

The Eastside is a vital and growing area, and an integral component of the regional economic engine. Eastside cities are projected to reach nearly 700,000 residents and more than 550,000 jobs by 2040. We are interconnected both geographically and economically, and have many common interests and goals.

Our cities are united in our desire for quality High Capacity Transit (HCT) the length of the I-405 corridor, the transportation spine of the Eastside. This corridor connects the east to the north and to the south. It carries nearly a million trips of people to job and housing centers throughout the region every day, and the need for additional transit capacity is only growing.

The I-405 corridor needs a HCT investment consistent with that of light rail. Although we appreciate the inclusion of bus service on I-405 in the draft plan, what is described as "I-405 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)" does not qualify as HCT, but rather regional express service with improved headways. Full BRT, as we have requested of the Board in our previous communications, and as envisioned in the I-405 Master Planning effort that was sponsored by Sound Transit and WSDOT, is the equivalent of light rail on rubber tires.

Full BRT will include center-running operations the length of the system and serve in-line stops throughout the I-405 corridor. As described in the draft plan, there are no in-line stops planned north of Kirkland, and perhaps even more concerning, no stops at all between downtown

Bellevue and south Renton. Full BRT will also include branded vehicles with multiple doors for entry/exit, designed to “dock” with stations to eliminate a step-up onto the bus, and off-board fare collection. We have seen little evidence of these characteristics of full BRT in the draft plan.

We again ask the Board to work with Sound Transit staff to deliver full BRT in the I-405 corridor, as described in the WSDOT/Sound Transit I-405 Master Plan. We understand that building a BRT system the equivalent of light rail on rubber tires is costly. To offset these costs and to maximize taxpayer transportation investments, it is essential that Sound Transit work in close coordination with WSDOT during the continuous build-out of I-405 to capitalize on one-another’s efforts. The Board should consider dedicating funds for further study of additional I-405 system BRT stations to help plan for this coordination and to prepare for ST4. Our jurisdictions are ready to work with Sound Transit and WSDOT staff to identify the most expedient locations for stops in every segment of the corridor as planning continues to move forward.

Lastly, for BRT to be successful, there must be a robust bus feeder system in place. Sound Transit should preserve the 600,000 regional bus service hours outlined in the draft plan throughout the duration of the ST3 package to ensure a high quality bus network continues to feed riders to the system. These investments should include adding service to overcrowded and high ridership routes.

ST3 has the potential to create transit connections within the Eastside, and provide connections between the Eastside and the rest of the region. It is critical that our cities, Sound Transit and WSDOT work in unison to address the important ties between land use and transportation in the early planning phases of ST3 to realize the maximum potential of this regional investment.

Thank you for considering our comments as we plan for our region’s future mobility.

Sincerely,



John Stokes
Mayor, City of Bellevue



Dennis Law
Mayor, City of Renton



Rich Crispo
Mayor, City of Newcastle



Andy Rheame
Mayor, City of Bothell



Richard Leider
Mayor, The Town of
Beaux Arts Village



George Martin
Mayor, City of Clyde Hill