



SEATTLE NEEDS A NEIGHBORHOOD MUNICIPAL RAIL SYSTEM

Let's lay down tracks. Sound Transit is in the process of building a rail system to serve the entire Puget Sound region. Seattle should build our own neighborhood municipal system for the people who live and work in our great city.

We can do this now. We have the authority. We have the funding capacity. Let's be the Seattle that is proud of our cutting-edge neighborhood trains, rather than just dismayed by our congested potholed streets. Let's fix our problems and step forward.

We need a network of trains that are separated from traffic!

But why?

Seattle has waited far too long to have a world-class transit system. Our streets are choked. Many Seattle residents, and thousands of regional commuters, simply do not have a reasonable alternative to driving. Furthermore, those who do have access to Metro service are left sitting in buses stuck in the same congestion as passenger cars.

Sound Transit is doing a bang up job of building a regional rail system, but Seattle needs a system that can serve our neighborhoods now—a **neighborhood municipal rail system**.

We need a complete system that will connect to regional rail, as well as provide the people of Seattle with a viable option for getting around our city quickly and conveniently.

We cannot wait for Sound Transit. Currently, Seattle's portion of central link is less than 10 miles. The extension to the University District will add 3.5 more miles. ST3 will add a few more, but that is far off into the future. The First Hill Streetcar, which is about to open, was approved the same time as Sound Transit's East Link and that is not set to open until 2023. **We cannot wait any longer.**

Luckily, we have already started to build such a system. In less than two years, our city built and began operations for the South Lake Union Streetcar. After roughly three years of construction, the First Hill line will begin operation this year. The existing streetcars were pilot projects—experiments. We have a lot to improve upon, especially the need for the system to be **separated from traffic**, but we have learned that we can build our system in a short time frame.

When we put our minds to something, we get it done!

We can build a robust system now without having to wait for decades. We are the city that passed the most progressive minimum wage in the nation. We can do more.

Where will the new lines go? Where they are needed most. Ballard and West Seattle saw growth occurring without rail. Creating this type of locally-managed and flexible system means we can respond much more quickly to growth trends rather than waiting for the region or Olympia to recognize our needs. We can plan with Sound Transit the best places for **neighborhood rail** to complement regional light rail.

But isn't Sound Transit building rail?

Yes, but not neighborhood rail, and not enough and not to enough places. These lines will supplement, and complement, the lines that Sound Transit builds to connect our region, by connecting our neighborhoods to each other, and to the regional light rail lines. Big cities have regional rail, and neighborhood (municipal) rail. So should Seattle.

Won't it just get stuck in traffic like the streetcar?

No. Neighborhood municipal rail would have its own lane, priority at traffic signals, and be completely separated from traffic. That makes it like Portland's MAX, Sound Transit

on MLK, or Seattle's proposed new Center City Connector. We also could use the proposed tax source to upgrade the South Lake Union and First Hill lines to separate them from traffic, and make them more useful as real mass transit.

Don't we need complete separation of vehicle lanes, using either tunnels or bridges?

There are places where this might make sense for neighborhood municipal rail. And it certainly makes sense for Sound Transit, which is trying to connect distant places. However, for shorter neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections, full separation from traffic means neighborhood municipal rail will move plenty fast. For example, connecting Ballard to Fremont, Fremont to the University District, or the junctions in West Seattle would not require any bridges

or tunnels. And, the money we save by not tunneling or building elevated structures means we can connect many more neighborhoods. A complete network linking the city's neighborhoods will have tremendous value.

This can work. One hundred years ago we had a neighborhood municipal rail system with nearly 200 miles of track connecting West Seattle, the Central District, Madison Park, Downtown, Queen Anne, Ballard, the Rainer Valley, and many of our other neighborhoods (see picture on left). We can afford to build a new system that reconnects our community. We can build this new system quickly. We can have a world class transit system. Let's expand what we've started and complete 100 miles in 10 years.



How do we pay for it?

Costs for neighborhood municipal rail vary widely. A 75-100 mile long system would cost us one billion dollars. This total is nearly the same as the mayor's current transportation funding proposal, but would give us a complete neighborhood municipal rail system, not just piecemeal fixes.

We have the ability to put a 30-year measure on the ballot to fund such a system today.

We don't have to ask the legislature. We do not run into caps or limits. We can do it. This type of long-range bond

would cost homeowners less than \$200 annually.

What about maintenance and operation?

The first streetcar line had overwhelming support from local businesses. While the residents of Seattle will pay for the infrastructure, Seattle businesses will be asked to pay for the operation and maintenance through an employee hours tax, similar to a head tax. Businesses will benefit from the system through reduced commute costs for their employees, but also increased revenues, as it has been demonstrated that people traveling by transit and bicycle spend more in the city than those who drive.

Doesn't this mean a new transit agency?

No it doesn't. Seattle already manages its local streetcar line. Like Sound Transit, it contracts with King County Metro to hire drivers and operate the system. Seattle could continue to do so, capturing administrative efficiencies, but having control of where and how to build neighborhood municipal rail.

Is it possible?

Asking Seattle homeowners to pay \$200 annually is not a request to make lightly. But, Seattlites already pay some of the lowest taxes in the nation. Everyone knows how hard it is to get around the city and the problem is only getting worse. Things won't start to turn around until more of us

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have the option to use a world-class neighborhood municipal rail system. This plan, as well as improvements to our other transportation facilities—a complete bicycle network and efficiency improvements for cars on arterials—will get Seattle moving again.

We are a city that has repeatedly voted in favor of transit funding. From Forward Thrust a half century ago to additional Metro funding last year, we are a city of people who understand the need for improved and added transit capacity. This is the most comprehensive plan yet proposed—a hundred miles of new rail in ten years

Let's lay down tracks!

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