



TO: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
FROM: Rebecca Boydston, Council Assistant, City Manager’s Office
T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution sending recommendations to Sound Transit Board on ST3 draft proposal –
May 3, 2016
DATE: April 29, 2016

SUMMARY:

A resolution authorizing the City Council to send a letter to the Sound Transit Board expressing the City of Tacoma’s recommendations on the ST3 draft proposal as identified in Exhibit A.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Marilyn Strickland
Deputy Mayor Ryan Mello

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

The requested resolution best aligns with the City Council Strategic Policy Priorities of:

- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Assure outstanding stewardship of the natural and built environment.
 - The recommendations address the overall plan of the city to provide high quality public transportation options connecting the various communities within Tacoma to each other, as well as to the broader region.
 - The recommendations include ensuring public transportation is available to all our residents to serve both their commuting and day-to-day needs.
 - The recommendations also address an increase in public transportation sooner than currently planned, which will have positive environmental aspects.

BACKGROUND:

The Transportation Commission has noted that many other communities have commented on the ST3 plan, whereas Pierce County has been relatively silent. They wrote a letter to the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee recommending we ask Sound Transit for several revisions. We concur with many of their recommendations and would like the full council to consider signing the letter and expressing the City of Tacoma’s recommendations to the Sound Transit Board.

ISSUE:

There are 4 issues that we would like to address that largely coincide with the recommendation of the Transportation Commission.

- 1) **Deliver Central LINK Extension Sooner:** Work creatively with partners to deliver Central Link Light Rail to Tacoma Dome Station by 2026. We know this is ambitious, and will require creativity to speed up financing and permitting, but we believe it is doable. Tax payers and commuters stuck in traffic are demanding transit options as soon as possible and we must do everything we can to deliver the program more quickly. Moreover, the City of Tacoma is prepared to do everything within its power to assist Sound Transit in speeding up the permit process, while balancing the proper review, public engagement and environmental processes.



- 2) **Sounder Commuter Rail Improvements:** Tacoma needs more specifics included about the expanded Sounder Commuter rail service. The draft as proposed is vague as to improving commuter rail service. Tacoma would like to see more details as to what those improvements may be, including specific numbers that reflect any proposed increase in the number of trains running both ways, expansion of hours they run, or increased frequency. South Sound Commuters need more frequent trains during rush hours, more trains running in both directions and span of service extended from 6 am – 9 pm at night or later to serve more riders with more reliable, frequent commuter options. Sounder Commuter Rail will be a faster way for commuters to get from Tacoma to Seattle compared to Link Light Rail and therefore, we must deliver more frequent service and a greater span of service.
- 3) **High-Capacity Transit Study from Tacoma Dome Station to Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center:** Tacoma requests Sound Transit to fund a study in preparation for future expansions which includes Light Rail expansion from Tacoma Dome Station to the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center. Linking the various areas of our city to regional transit centers is a high priority as it will enable our citizens to use the services of the broader Sound Transit expansion – connecting our most densely populated centers with high-capacity transit.
- 4) **Express Bus Service Continuation & Enhancement:** Finally, Tacoma would like Sound Transit to reconsider the assumption that rapid bus service will be discontinued when the link is completed. BRT investments are critical in the beginning phases of ST3, and we look forward to the immediate positive effect they will have on the community. With the travel time to Seattle via central link being estimated at 60-75 minutes, express bus service may continue to be the quickest option for commuters and therefore continue to play a critical role even after light rail is connected to Tacoma Dome Station.
- 5) **Tacoma Link Expansion Corridor Study:** While the draft plan has already identified an expansion of the Tacoma Link to Tacoma Community College from the Hilltop, we believe funding an additional corridor study to connect additional neighborhoods with the Tacoma Link would promote efforts to provide a local match in advance of funding the project in future Sound Transit funding cycles.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternative is to not comment on the proposed ST3 plan. As mentioned, many other communities have commented extensively on the draft plan, and we want to ensure Tacoma’s voice is heard and our community’s best interests are well represented.

RECOMMENDATION:

We therefore respectfully request the council to consider signing the letter making the above recommendations to the Sound Transit Board.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.