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March 5, 2018

TO: THE SOUND TRANSIT BOARD  
WEST SEATTLE, BALLARD LINK COMMENTS  
SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL  
JEANNE KOHL-WELLES, King County Council District 4  
RIC IGENFRITZ, Sound Transit  
LEDA CHAHIM, Sound Transit

CC: ANDREW GLASS HASTINGS, Seattle Department of Transportation  
KAREN KITSIS, Sound Transit  
CHRIS RULE, Sound Transit Via Email

FROM: NORTHWEST SEATTLE COALITION - SOUND TRANSIT 3

RE: BROAD COALITION REQUESTS LIGHT RAIL TUNNEL UNDER SHIP CANAL AND  
ALIGNMENT WEST OF 15<sup>th</sup> AVENUE WEST IN INTERBAY

The communities and businesses that make up the Northwest Seattle Coalition straddle the Elliott Avenue West and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue West corridor, spanning north and south of the Ship Canal, generally in King County Council District 4. Our communities are growing rapidly and favor aggressive delivery of maximally reliable transit to relieve current congestion and help meet the mobility needs of our neighborhoods' current and future population growth.

The Northwest Seattle Coalition requests that Sound Transit prioritize the following requirements in its studies: long-term reliability, future expansion, and minimizing impacts to other modes in the corridor both during construction and permanently. We advocate strongly for a West Interbay route, ideally running under 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue West with a below-grade station at Dravus Street; and a Tunnel to Ballard under the Ship Canal, ideally with a below-grade station under Market Street. This is the exact alignment Sound Transit studied in Candidate Project C-01c in December 2015. We request the Candidate Project C-01c alignment be chosen as the Preferred Alternative.

The representative alignment would construct light rail in the middle of Elliot and 15th Avenues West and utilize a drawbridge over the ship canal. Unfortunately, the representative alignment will have serious negative impacts during construction and permanently on freight, transit, and vehicles travelling to Ballard on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue West and would be permanently unreliable in constructing a drawbridge like those that are too often stuck in the open position in Seattle. Unlike the cases of other drawbridges, these trains and passengers will have no alternative options to

leave Ballard. Given the enormous investment of construction time and public funds, we cannot allow the Sound Transit 3 corridor to be a subpar investment in our future mobility.

The Elliott Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue West corridor, the aorta of our communities, had 54,500 vehicles crossing the Ballard Bridge daily in 2014 (per SDOT), over double the traffic of Martin Luther King Way South. This corridor is becoming increasingly congested and there are no signs of improvement. Ballard has grown by about 2,000 private parking spaces in recent years. The Interbay neighborhood is projected to grow similarly. Expedia proposes to add 2,000 parking spaces to its campus, which will open in 2019. The Elliott/15th corridor operates like a section of plumbing pipe with control valves at the Ballard Bridge and where the corridor meets downtown at Denny Way. When the control valves are stuck, nothing moves. To this mix, ST3 proposes to remove car capacity on Elliot Avenue and 15th Avenue West with elevated rail pylons and to perpetuate the current “control valve” impediment by using a draw bridge to cross the ship canal. The final Preferred Alternative must enhance, and not diminish the current and potential future carrying capacity of the entire 15th Avenue West Corridor, both during and after construction, all without blocking residents, workers, and patrons from utilizing both sides of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue West.

Our coalition continues to recommend advancing alternatives that deliver much more reliable, rapid transit service with fewer negative impacts to travel in the corridor. These alternatives, which involve: using a corridor to the west of 15th Avenue West; crossing the ship canal by means of a tunnel; and constructing an underground station in Interbay, and in Ballard which would offer the best options for future north and east expansions. The alignment is identified in Sound Transit planning documents as Candidate Project C-01c. Our continuing advocacy is based on our priorities of maximizing reliability and potential for future expansion to both Crown Hill and the University District, while minimizing negative impacts to other modes of travel in the corridor.

In addition to maximally reliable service, we need it much sooner than 2035. We believe that Sound Transit’s priorities must be first to deliver the maximally reliable Ship Canal tunnel crossing to this a high ridership corridor, and second to ensure the fastest delivery schedule possible.

Getting ST3 right is essential for our neighborhoods’ future mobility. Thank you for considering our comments and the Tunnel to Ballard as the locally Preferred Alternative. Please direct questions about our letter to Ben Broesamle, the contact and coordinator for the Coalition and Chair of the Transportation Committee of the Magnolia Community Council. He can be reached by cell phone at (310) 562-2759 and by email at [contact@nwseattlecoalition.org](mailto:contact@nwseattlecoalition.org).

The Northwest Seattle Coalition is sending this letter on behalf of its member organizations listed on the following page. The Coalition continues to grow as additional organizations join our coalition and endorse our advocacy.

Very truly yours,

The Northwest Seattle Coalition

The Northwest Seattle Coalition consists of the following organizations that have approved this position on behalf of their respective memberships:

The Ballard Alliance as its predecessor organizations: the Ballard Chamber of Commerce and the Ballard Partnership for Smart Growth  
Central Ballard Resident's Association  
The Coalition of Magnolia, Queen Anne, & Interbay  
Crown Hill Neighborhood Association  
Interbay Neighborhood Association  
Magnolia Chamber of Commerce  
Magnolia Community Council  
The Magnolia Trail Community  
North Seattle Industrial Association  
Queen Anne Chamber of Commerce  
Queen Anne Community Council  
Uptown Alliance  
West Woodland Neighborhood Association  
Whittier Heights Community Council

# Northwest Seattle Coalition

**MAP KEY**

**REQUESTED ROUTE**

- ELEVATED
- ■ ■ ■ TUNNEL
- ■ ■ ■ LONG RANGE PLAN EXPANSION
- STATION AREA

**SOUND TRANSIT PROPOSED ROUTE**

- ELEVATED
- ■ ■ ■ TUNNEL
- STATION AREA
- SOUND TRANSIT 2 LIGHT RAIL

