



NORTHWEST SEATTLE COALITION For Sound Transit 3

Contact: Ben Broesamle, Coalition Coordinator
Email: contact@nwseattlecoalition.org

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TECHNICAL PAPER REGARDING REQUEST FOR CANDIDATE PROJECTS C-01c, C-01e, C-07, and FUTURE CONSTRUCTION of C-01g, C-02 and P-09 TO BE ADVANCED TO NOVEMBER BALLOT AND THEIR DELIVERY ACCELERATED.

The Ballard-Interbay-Uptown corridor is projected to serve 60,000 to 74,000 riders per day, in isolation, the highest ridership of any rail corridor proposed in Sound Transit 3. The Northwest Seattle Coalition consists of eleven Northwest Seattle industry, business, and neighborhood organizations that seek the most reliable light rail alignment in the Ballard-Interbay-Uptown corridor, and the timeliest construction and delivery of this high-ridership service. Specifically, the Coalition asks the Sound Transit Board to:

- A)** select ST3 Candidate Project C-01c: a subway line connecting Ballard, through a tunnel under the Ship Canal, and then following a western alignment through Interbay. The proposed route would include stations in Uptown, near Prospect Street, and at Dravus Street west of 16th Avenue before terminating in an underground station in Ballard. The Interbay alignment would cross over the Elliot Avenue and 15th Avenue to run along the west side of Interbay, thus avoiding any reduction in carrying or turning capacity on 15th Avenue West and minimizing construction impact. It would utilize a tunnel to pass under the ship canal.

- B)** decrease the time to delivery of the Ballard subway line by whatever means available, including but not limited to accelerating the EIS process, partnering with the city for efficient permitting, or other means. After selecting the routing that best serves Northwest Seattle's future, the next highest priority must be speed in new service delivery because of the current and future growth in both housing and jobs in neighborhoods that use the corridor, both north and south of the Ship Canal.

Included, on the last page of this document, is a map of the preferred route that should be presented to voters in November, 2016 to be built as part of ST3.

A) Deliver the most reliable system:

The Draft Sound Transit 3 System Plan route consisting of at-grade rail on Elliot Avenue

West and 15th Avenue West with a draw bridge across the ship canal is a very short-sighted solution. At-grade rail would remove or block existing transit, freight, general-purpose or turn lanes on Elliot Avenue and 15th Avenue West both during construction and permanently. The rapid growth and planned density of the neighborhoods in Northwest Seattle increase the urgent need to provide increase the corridor's overall capacity to move goods and people in both the interim and long-term. The negative impacts, to transit, freight, businesses and people, both during and after construction of light rail must be avoided by avoiding the 15th Avenue and Elliot Avenue right-of-ways as much as possible.

This would adversely affect the movement of people and goods from the Ballard industrial area, Interbay, Fishermen's Terminal, Magnolia, West Queen Anne, adjoining neighborhoods and points well north of Market Street to downtown Seattle forever.

Relying on a draw bridge across the ship canal will degrade the transit service, make it more difficult to retain the high ridership that the line is slated to attract and permanently hinder the reliability of the route that should be expanded to both the north, to Crown Hill, Northgate and Lake City, and east, to the University District.

The Coalition supports a Sound Transit 3 Final System Plan including the following candidate projects:

- C-01c – Constructing the **most reliable and highest capacity route with the best options for future expansion (as identified by Sound Transit)**:
 - underground station in Ballard
 - tunnel under the Ship Canal not susceptible to boat traffic impact
 - routing west of 15th Avenue, thus not impacting 15th Ave West,
 - new downtown tunnel truncated to a Westlake Transfer Station
 - add a tunnel segment between Pike Street and Royal Brougham Way. Note: We recognize that accelerating delivery of the Ballard Line might require deferring other vital work, such as a second downtown tunnel, until either federal, state, or regional funding becomes available or additional demand is imminent. The system impact of deferring a second downtown tunnel can be partially mitigated by undertaking interim improvements to the existing downtown tunnel (ST candidate project C-07).
- C-07 – Constructing Sound Transit-proposed improvements to the existing Transit Tunnel (International District to Northgate) to increase **frequency of trains to less than three minutes** and increasing the capacity of the system in the interim, until the new tunnel can be extended south of Pike Street.
- C-01e – a Sound Transit proposal to **include a station in South Lake Union** between Westlake Station and Seattle Center in the vicinity of SR 99 and Harrison St.

and Future Extensions:

- Deferred portion of C-01c – Downtown Tunnel from Pike Street, just south of a Westlake Transfer Station, to Royal Brougham Way
- C-02 – from Market Street in Ballard to the University District
- P-07/C-01g – from Market Street in Ballard to Bothell via Crown Hill, Greenwood, Northgate, and Lake City

The Final System Plan route proposed to the voters needs to:

- **have the absolute highest possible reliability** to maximize ridership and opportunities for system expansion. Future riders must know their train will be on time and take a definitive amount of time to travel between stations. This will also reduce delay for trips throughout the region, increase ridership, and support equitable transit-oriented development in our growing Urban Centers;
- **include a new Ship Canal tunnel and route to the west of 15th Avenue which would be additive to the corridor's overall mobility capacity. The route must enhance, and not diminish the current and potential future carrying capacity of the critical 15th Avenue West Corridor during and after construction.** This corridor currently serves 55,000 vehicles per day, double Martin Luther King Way South. Buses must have their peak period bus-only lanes retained throughout construction without removing general purpose lanes. Removing up to 50% of the general purpose lanes will cripple this vital north-south artery;
- **be extensible and support additions to the East and North.** This key connection should not function as a chokepoint for the future phases as the City and Sound Transit expand the system. **All necessary structures and systems must be built into one underground Market Street station in Ballard from its inception** so that service can be easily expended to the north and to the east from the Ballard station as the system expands in both directions;

The Coalition supports Candidate Projects C-01c, C-07, and C-01e because they meet the above needs. Unlike the draft plan, C-01c will have the highest reliability, have the most positive capacity impact and least negative construction impact for mobility in the 15th Avenue West Corridor, while providing the most future riders with equitable transit-oriented lifestyles.

B) Shorten the delivery time to under 20 years (from 22 years)

The Coalition recognizes the many complexities in constructing light rail in the Ballard-Interbay-Uptown corridor. Nevertheless, the high ridership projected in this corridor and the current planned growth in our neighborhoods necessitate bringing us light rail much sooner than currently proposed.

Sound Transit has many opportunities to accelerate service delivery, especially as selecting an alignment that has overwhelming neighborhood approval will mitigate some risks that are built into the current timeline. Mitigating those risks at the outset will enable shorter environmental review and permitting times, for example.

Dramatically speeding up the schedule for the Ballard line might also involve changing priorities, including postponing one or more projects in order to “Make room” for the new high-ridership line. To do so in a way that is equitable across all Sound Transit jurisdictions, we suggest looking closely at funding interim efficiency improvements to the existing downtown tunnel (project C-07) and postponing the construction of a the duplicative segment downtown tunnel, south of Pike Street.

As stated in our transmittal letter, the draft proposal asks residents and businesses in the high-ridership Ballard-Interbay-Uptown corridor to pay taxes for 22 years before receiving any service improvements at all from Sound Transit, while reducing the corridor’s capacity and reliability immensely during construction. This corridor already experiences daily congestion on its busiest streets and more density—both housing and jobs—is planned. This growth is desirable for our neighborhoods, but we need to both avoid construction impacts reducing the capacity of the corridor and to have transit relief sooner than planned. To address the difficult situation until light rail is constructed, we request that Sound Transit work with its counterpart agencies, the Seattle Department of Transportation and King County Metro, to deliver short-term, interim transit service improvements similar to those proposed in other corridors elsewhere in the ST3 package while at the same time not constructing a route that would severely reduce the reliability and capacity of this corridor’s main artery during construction.

Thank you for your attention to our ideas on elements that we consider most important for reliable and timely new light rail serving Ballard, Interbay and Uptown including Seattle Center. The Coalition appreciates your time, your excellent work, and care in planning for the Region’s future transit needs.

Thank you for your attention to our input on elements that we consider most important, as Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, and King County Metro move forward with planning for transit service between Ballard and downtown Seattle. The Coalition appreciates your time, your excellent work, and care in planning for the Region’s future transit needs.

The contact and coordinator for the Coalition is Ben Broesamle, Magnolia Community Council. He can be reached by cell phone at (310) 562-2759 and by email at contact@nwseattlecoalition.org.



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