

June 9, 2015



Sound Transit Board Chair
King County Executive Dow Constantine
c/o Board Administrator
Sound Transit
401 S Jackson St.
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: City of Kirkland's Comments on the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) Priority Project List

Dear Executive Constantine,

I am writing to you in your role as Chair of the Sound Transit Board, as well as in your role as King County Executive, providing regional leadership in transit planning. The City of Kirkland has been tracking the ST3 Long Range Plan updates process with interest and appreciates that Sound Transit staff has engaged the City of Kirkland and other stakeholders throughout the process. In December 2014 the Sound Transit Board adopted an updated Long Range Plan (LRP), which is a required element of Sound Transit's authorizing legislation.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with input on the ST3 Project Priority List (PPL). The LRP is a blueprint for the long-term vision of the region's High Capacity Transit (HCT) network. In and around Kirkland, the LRP identifies transit on the following corridors:

- **SR 520:** Regional express bus and/or HCT from the Seattle side of SR 520 to Redmond
- **I-405:** Regional express bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), and/or light rail (LRT)
- **Eastside Rail Corridor:** HCT from SR 522 to SR 520 serving the Totem Lake Urban Center and South Kirkland Park and Ride
- **SR 522:** Regional express bus and/or HCT from I-5/NE 145th Street to I-405

The LRP update leveraged corridor studies, which included studies of the Eastside Rail Corridor (LRT, BRT, and commuter rail), I-405 BRT, Kirkland-Bellevue-Issaquah (LRT and BRT), and University District-Kirkland-Redmond (LRT and BRT).

Currently the Sound Transit Board is developing a draft Priority Project List, which begins to narrow down the corridors and modes that will be considered for an updated System Plan. The System Plan could then be taken to the voters as an ST3 package in November 2016. A staff draft of the PPL was presented to the Sound Transit Executive Committee on May 7th and included completion of LRT to downtown Redmond, I-405 BRT and LRT from Totem Lake to Issaquah via the ERC and I-90.

Over the next months the City of Kirkland will engage with Sound Transit, as well as other Eastside cities, to suggest potential additions or changes to the PPL. Once the PPL has been developed, the City of Kirkland would like to actively work with Sound Transit to further refine projects on the PPL to ensure the best possible projects are considered for the System Plan.

The City of Kirkland eagerly looks forward to supporting an ST3 package that delivers improved transit service to the City's residents. Kirkland has long supported regional transit investments including Sound Move and ST2 because transit is key to the Kirkland's land use, economic development, livability, and

sustainability goals. Kirkland has a long tradition of investing in the quality of life of its communities, and a ST3 package that meaningfully advances HCT service through Kirkland would provide a much needed alternative to driving.

The City of Kirkland looks forward to increased transit oriented development (TOD), especially in the Totem Lake Urban Center where HCT investments could be a catalyst for development. Currently roughly one-third of Kirkland's employment is in Totem Lake and as the City grows, a greater share of housing and employment growth must occur in Totem Lake. By 2031 nearly half of Kirkland's employment is planned for the Totem Lake Urban Center.

ST3 Priority Project List Comments

City of Kirkland staff has synthesized its major comments on the PPL in the list below. This list does its best to present the City's priorities in a brief and simple way. City of Kirkland staff and I look forward to working directly with the Sound Transit Board and the Sound Transit staff to discuss these priorities. Kirkland staff will also be developing additional details to be presented at future points in the public process.

- **Identify the Financial Capacity of the Eastside.** The City would like to understand the financial capacity of the East Subarea under both the House and Senate proposals as this will influence the City's priorities moving forward. Kirkland understands there is a limit to the dollars that can be allocated to the eastside and will prioritize projects based on financial realities.
- **Advance ST2 Investments.** Deliver on investments and planning from Sound Move and ST2. Completing investments in I-405 BRT is a key priority of the City with improved access for Kirkland residents at NE 85th Street and the southern portion of the Totem Lake Urban Center. The extension of East Link to downtown Redmond should also be a strong priority, as should an HCT connection from Issaquah to Bellevue.
- **Connect Downtown Kirkland, Google, and the 6th Street corridor to regional transit service on I-405.** Downtown Kirkland is one of the densest and most established historic downtowns on the Eastside and development projects are underway that will bring thousands of new jobs and hundreds of new housing units to Downtown Kirkland and the 6th Street within the next five years. ST3 must provide a high-quality connection between these areas and regional transit service on I-405. Fixed guideway connections or people movers to the corridors are potential solutions. The City would like to work with Sound Transit to identify ways in which access to regional transit service can be accomplished.
- **Consider BRT as well as LRT along the Eastside Rail Corridor between Totem Lake, Bellevue and Issaquah.** The City would like to see both BRT and LRT included in the PPL, with one of these two HCT projects included in a final ST3 package. The potential revenue constraints to funding LRT along the ERC makes it prudent to keep lower cost options like BRT on the table. The city requests that Sound Transit work with the City to better develop these concepts including routing through Downtown Kirkland and the Totem Lake area.
- **Support TOD in the Totem Lake Urban Center.** The City sees Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) as essential for its continued growth and economic development, with the Totem Lake Urban Center at the heart of this goal. This includes both TOD on publically owned land, such as the Kingsgate P&R, but also TOD on privately owned land. Improved access to HCT, beyond that provided by the Totem Lake Freeway Station, could help catalyze development in the Totem

Lake area. Recommendations of the Growing Transit Communities partnership (of which Kirkland is a member) should guide these investments.

- **Provide additional detail for some projects on the priority project list.** It is hard for the City to respond to the bus based aspects of the PPL due to the lack of detail. Even with a build out of the HCT system a variety of Eastside corridors will still have Express Bus service. For example the City would like AC-5 (I-405 BRT) to be better defined in the PPL including capital investments and service patterns. Project ES-6 (ST Express service) is another project in which additional detail in the PPL is important for the City. The City will provide more detailed feedback on these projects at a later date.
- **Invest in an integrated transit network.** Much of the City's transit service is provided by King County Metro. As the region's HCT network grows, change to some of Kirkland's core routes, particularly the 255, could be made. The City requests that Sound Transit, Metro and other partners work together to better detail these potential changes and identify investments that can be made as part of ST3 to develop a seamless and integrated transit network in the future. Capital investments such as freeway stations, direct access ramps, transfer station improvements, and speed/reliability improvements should all be considered.

Sincerely,



Amy Walen
Mayor, City of Kirkland

cc: Sound Transit Board
King County Council
Bellevue City Council
Kirkland City Council