



CITY OF KIRKLAND
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
425-587-3000

MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Andreana Campbell, Interim Government Affairs Manager
Stephen Padua, Transportation Manager

Date: April 1, 2026

Subject: **Draft Letter to Sound Transit Board**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council reviews and approves the draft letter to the Sound Transit Board, as shown in Attachment 1, for the Enterprise Initiative.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The Sound Transit Board is addressing a \$35 billion funding gap to complete the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) voter approved package, through a process called the Enterprise Initiative.
- The Enterprise Initiative considers delays, reductions and other adjustments for all projects in the ST3 package.
- The drafted letter highlights Kirkland's priorities for the Enterprise Initiative, including proposed options if the Sound Transit Board does decide to defer the Line 4 project.
- Discussions are happening at the Sound Transit Board and subcommittees later this month, so staff is seeking Council's direction by providing feedback on the draft letter. Council's feedback will guide how staff and Council will respond to anticipated project proposals.

BACKGROUND:

In 2016, regional voters approved the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) package which expands high-capacity transit services, such as light rail, across Pierce, King and Snohomish County. In 2025, Sound Transit projected an estimated \$35 billion funding gap to complete the ST3 package. The financial gap was due to lower-than-expected revenues, rising construction costs, and continued uncertainty related to tariffs and federal funding commitments. In response, the Sound Transit board created the Enterprise Initiative, which is a process to update the ST3 plan and the agency's long-range financial plan. By June, Sound Transit anticipates making decisions on potential cost-containment strategies, including project delays, scope reductions, and other adjustments. The bus rapid transit service, Stride program is not impacted by the Enterprise Initiative because it was baselined prior to 2025.

The South Kirkland to Issaquah Link project, also known as the future 4 Line, is one of the projects vulnerable to delays and scope reductions under the Enterprise Initiative. As described in the ST3 plan, the project would construct light rail service from the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride to Central through Bellevue along the Eastrail and then out to Issaquah via I-90.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The Enterprise Initiative is under review at four Sound Transit Board Committees and the full Sound Transit Board. The following timeline includes all the meetings staff are tracking for Enterprise Initiative discussions.

- April 9 – Sound Transit Expansion Committee
- April 23 – Sound Transit Board
- May 14 – Sound Transit Expansion Committee
- May 25 – Sound Transit Board
- June 11 – Sound Transit Expansion Committee
- June 28 – Sound Transit Board

Staff proposes the attached draft letter to communicate Kirkland's priorities for the Enterprise Initiative in time for the April Sound Transit meetings. The priorities outlined in the letter are:

- Retain the Line 4 project in the plan and avoid an indefinite deferral.
- Ensure equitable treatment across jurisdictions and alignment with the ST principles for the Enterprise Initiative if scope changes are considered.
- If Line 4 is deferred, fund interim frequent transit service for impacted Eastside cities.
- If Line 4 is deferred, expand the High Capacity Transit (HCT) environmental study to evaluate service options between Downtown Redmond and Totem Lake along Willows Road.

Staff seeks council feedback on this draft letter and then approval to send it to the Board.

NEXT STEPS:

Following council discussion, staff will finalize the letter and send the letter to the Sound Transit Board.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Draft Letter to Sound Transit Board

April 7, 2026

Honorable Dave Somers, Chair
Sound Transit Board
401 S Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: City of Kirkland's priorities regarding Sound Transit's Line 4 project

Dear Chair Somers and Sound Transit Board Members:

On behalf of the City of Kirkland, thank you for your continued leadership through the Enterprise Initiative to address current financial and programmatic challenges. We appreciate the complexity of these decisions and the importance to deliver a comprehensive, integrated system designed to meet growing mobility demands, reduce congestion, and advance climate and equity goals.

As the Board considers future investment approaches, we respectfully request your attention to the following points regarding the Line 4 project and transit service to Eastside communities:

Retain the Line 4 project in the plan and avoid an indefinite deferral.

The Line 4 connection between Kirkland, Bellevue, and Issaquah is a critical component of the voter-approved transit vision for the Eastside. Indefinitely delaying this investment would leave significant mobility needs unmet for decades for these eastside communities while our residents and business continue to pay the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) taxes. The Kirkland community has intentionally aligned its land use and housing strategies to coordinate with regional transit investments to ensure the success of future planned high-capacity transit.

Ensure equitable treatment across jurisdictions if scope changes are considered.

If the Board needs to consider significant reductions we ask that all affected jurisdictions be treated equitably and in alignment with the Sound Transit Boards principles for the Enterprise Initiative.

If Line 4 is deferred, fund interim frequent transit service for impacted Eastside cities.

Eastside cities to be served by Line 4 have been contributing significantly to Sound Transit for decades and deserve some service for their investment. If the Board chooses to defer the voter-approved Line Sound Transit should develop and fund some form of frequent transit service for the affected cities. Kirkland is eager to partner with Sound Transit to develop feasible options for interim frequent transit investments.

If Line 4 is deferred, expand the High Capacity Transit (HCT) environmental study to evaluate service options between Totem Lake in Kirkland and Downtown Redmond along Willows Road. Kirkland requests a high-capacity environmental study to evaluate the feasibility, cost, and high-level design of a potential HCT service connecting downtown Redmond to Totem Lake in Kirkland along Willows Road. This change is to recognize a significant gap in east-west connectivity on the Eastside. The study will evaluate service options to link two major Eastside regional centers experiencing significant growth and provide Kirkland and Redmond with HCT connectivity which advances the long-term transit vision for the Eastside.

Kirkland will also be requesting the opportunity to meet with individual board members to discuss Kirkland's recommendations. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Transportation Manager, Stephen Padua at SPadua@kirklandwa.gov. We value our long-standing partnership with Sound Transit and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively toward a high-quality, equitable, and interconnected regional transit system.

Sincerely,

Kelli Curtis, Mayor
City of Kirkland

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