

December 28, 2022

Board of Directors
Sound Transit
401 S. Jackson St.
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Members of the Sound Transit Board of Directors:

We are leaders of CID-based organizations whose work serves the interests of small business owners, cultural organizations, family associations, healthcare providers, patients seeking culturally responsive medical care, low-income residents, immigrant/non-English speaking elders, and property owners in the Chinatown International District (CID). Since 2018, we have met consistently with one another to share concerns and understandings about the West Seattle Ballard Link Extension project (WSBLE).

We wish to be clear. We want a station in the CID and we believe the best location for a new station is on 4th Ave S. The current design for a 4th Ave S station is inadequate and the CID community has asked Sound Transit to make improvements to construction impacts, duration and costs. We have seen minimal progress to date to address these concerns.


While there has been some progress on a 4th Ave. “shallower” option, station depth is not a top priority for the community. Rather, we redirect you to the issues raised in our collective DEIS comment letters regarding the duration of construction, extent of “cut and cover,” the impact of detour and haul routes, timing and staging of street closures, among other issues. A more complete list of our concerns is attached.

An improved 4th Ave. S. station location promotes broader regional connectivity and maintains a direct connection between the CID, SeaTac airport and other areas south of Seattle. Losing this connection would be detrimental to residents, business owners and visitors. The 4th Ave. S location also provides opportunities to revitalize Union Station after years of inactivity, which could serve as a central hub of activity for commuters and visitors into the surrounding areas.


Importantly, the 4th Ave. S. location centers a fragile community that has long endured the impact of systemic racism and the negative consequences of public works projects that benefit the region outside of South Downtown. **We ask that Sound Transit continue to put energy into studying and addressing the identified issues to make 4th Ave S a safe, connected and thriving hub in the CID.** 4th Ave S has been a focus of the WSBLE project for years. To abandon it at this stage for new options we know little about would be counterproductive.

We stand ready to serve as a constructive partner to alleviate current and future displacement pressures that harm the CID. We recognize and appreciate that the Sound Transit board and staff have committed to engaging the community in this process. We believe in this project and in the ingenuity of the Sound Transit team and look forward to continuing to work with Sound Transit to find solutions that result in the best investment of public funds that will benefit both the region and the CID.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
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CC:

Seattle City Council
The Honorable Bruce Harrell
Senior Deputy Mayor Monisha Harrell
Deputy Mayor Greg Wong
Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington

Summary of Community Concerns Regarding 4th Ave. S.

We believe that careful attention to community concerns through the project design phase would address issues along 4th Ave. S.

1. Extended length of “cut and cover” tunnel is harmful for the community, even if the trade-off is decreasing the station depth
2. Duration of construction: While the duration has been shortened by one year, additional changes to address BNSF concerns added one year. The community needs to see new plans to shorten the duration of construction.
3. Further definition of haul routes, automobile, freight and pedestrian detours.
4. Size and impact of construction footprint need to be further minimized
5. Improved project coordination between Sound Transit, City of Seattle and King County to leverage opportunities to combine infrastructure projects and minimize disruptions. Upgrades to bridges, utilities, sidewalks, and bus shelters could all use the same construction period as the tunnel and station project.
6. Inter-agency coordination to improve pedestrian improvements to the Jackson Street corridor between 2nd and 5th.