

WOW Transportation Focus Group

Volume 1, Issue 1

Oct. 5, 2015

Introduction

Hi. I'm Vic (as in Victor H. Bishop, P.E.). I'm a Professional Traffic Engineer who has worked in the transportation arena in the Puget Sound region since 1964, when I came to the Northwest to attend graduate school at the University of Washington. After receiving my MSCE in 1966 I worked as a traffic engineer for Boeing developing the 747 site in Everett. In 1968 I joined a small consulting firm as its second employee, which I eventually owned and operated for 37 years. I retired from active consulting in 2007. In those 41 years I worked on many street projects all over the region. I claim over 250 intersections that have had a traffic signal with my name on it (most have since been replaced over time, as is the nature of transportation in a growth area in a growth era). I strived to make the arterial street system work better.

I have been exposed to transportation policy issues all of my professional life. I now feel free to openly express my opinions on them.

I currently serve as a Board Member and Chair-Elect of the Eastside Transportation Association (ETA, www.eastsideta.com), an appointed member of the City of Bellevue Transportation Commission, an appointed member of the King County Metro Service Guidelines Task Force, a volunteer on the King County Municipal League Transportation Committee, a Life Member and past-president of the Institute of Transportation Engineers Washington Section, a Life Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a resident of the City of Bellevue. I am having more fun than ever.

Transportation is an immensely complicated subject. There are multiple jurisdictions, interests and outcomes that can be discussed. We will try to simplify some issues.

A few basic philosophies:

- I'm a **roads advocate**; here's why: **Freedom**, it **works**, best for the **environment**, fundamental to the **economy**.
- We have been led to deliberately, consciously under-fund our road infrastructure for at least 3 decades.
- Transit is an important, SMALL part of the transportation system.
- Buses work in our region; light rail does not.
- Light rail: **Does too little, costs too much and takes too long**.
- Congestion is the problem. We can do something about it.

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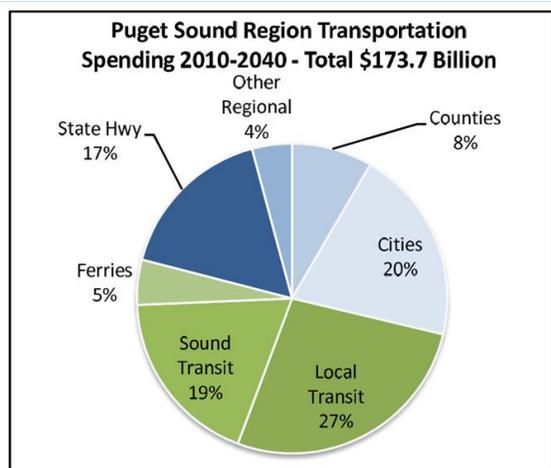
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Transportation Basics

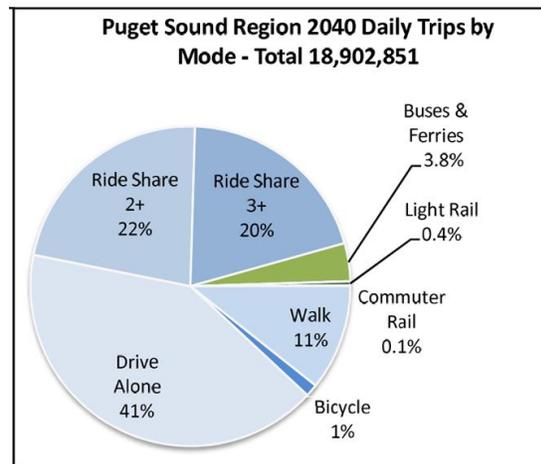
A good place to start is the current regional plan for transportation. There is one. It is called **Transportation 2014**, adopted and published by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in 2014 (<http://www.psrc.org/transportation/t2040>). It was created in 2010 and recently updated in the spring of 2014, called the 2014 Update. The actual 2014 document is a 136 page tome with multiple Appendixes, an Executive Summary and lots of official approvals. You may never have heard of it.

The attached two pie charts summarize the big picture of the plan in terms of how much money we will spend under the plan and how we are projected to travel if we spend the money that way. (See page 4 of the Key Performance Measures document at <http://www.effectivevtransportation.org/What%20the%20Data%20Shows%205.20.15.pdf> for the full report. We will dig into additional charts from this report in the future.)

The Proposed Spending



Projection of how we will Travel



Some Data

PSRC projects that we will spend \$173.7 Billion on transportation (about a 37% increase in spending above our 'current law' taxes in the next 25 years). The region will grow by more than 1,000,000 people by 2040 and the regional daily 'person trips' will be nearly 19 million every weekday.

The first pie chart shows in green that PSRC expects to spend just over half of the money collected for transportation in the region on transit and ferries. The second chart shows that the Plan projects that about 4.3 % of the daily 'person trips' will use the transit system by 2040.

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This says that we 'plan' to spend over half of our regional transportation dollars on a subset of our system that will carry less than 5 % of the daily trips.

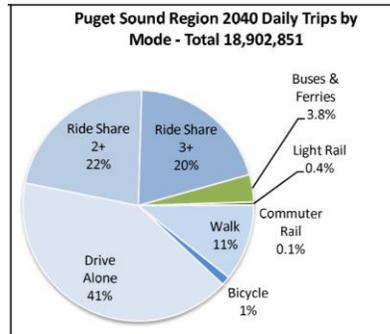
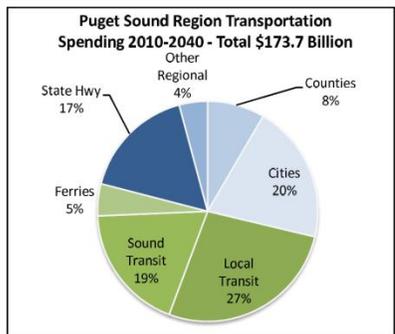
The 'plan' also says that we will travel less, congestion will be more severe and our mobility will be more restricted.

I suggest that this 'plan' is not acceptable.

More details of the 'plan' too come.

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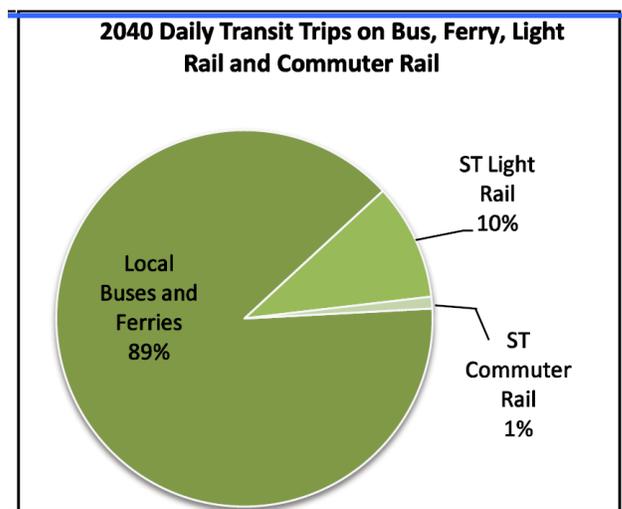
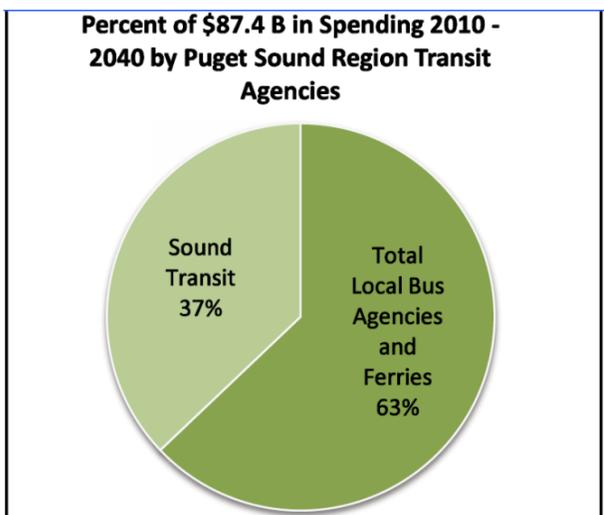
Transportation 2040, the regional transportation plan prepared by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in 2014 calls for spending \$174 Billion on all transportation with half of that sum spent on transit alternatives and the other half spent on roads. After that extraordinary expenditure on transit in the four county region (King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap Counties), transit will carry only 4.3% of the region's nearly 19,000,000 million daily trips.



Blue = Roads
Green = Transit

Drilling down to the transit portions of the regional plan allows us to see the proposed utilization of the projected transit dollars by types of transit. The following pie charts show the projected division between the light rail and bus transit options. Sound Transit is the regional transit agency for the urban areas of King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties. Sound Transit provides the light rail transit system plus the Sounder Commuter Rail and a Regional Express Bus system (REX).

In PSRC's vision, Sound transit will spend 37% of the region's \$87.4 Billion transit budget while providing service for only 10% of the daily transit trips on Light Rail and 1% on Commuter Rail, or about one half of one percent of the regional daily person trips.



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Oct. 20, 2015

The local buses are provided by five separate transit agencies, dominated by King County Metro Transit, a division of the King County government. Community Transit, Everett Transit, Pierce Transit and Kitsap Transit are the others. Collectively these agencies (plus the ferries) will receive 63% of the funds and carry 89% of the passengers.

This data has been compiled into a report I co-authored with John Niles and Maggie Fimia entitled Key Performance Measures, found at <http://www.effectivetransportation.org/What%20the%20Data%20Shows%205.20.15.pdf>

The extraordinary expenditures for transit in the plan allow for the doubling of the current transit service in the region while barely moving the needle on the portion of the region's person trips served by transit in 2040. The large allocation of resources to light rail allows tiny increases in light rail ridership while leaving the bulk of the region's residents stuck in traffic with worse congestion than experienced today.

Sound Transit recently convinced the Washington State Legislature to allow Sound Transit to go to the ballot in November, 2016 to ask voters for more taxes for light rail to fulfill their dream of light rail from Everett to Tacoma, Seattle to Redmond and Ballard to West Seattle through a new tunnel in Downtown Seattle. This proposal will be called "ST 3", for the third phase of the Sound Transit vision. The agency recently held a round of public forums asking local agencies what transit goodies they would like without discussing costs or outcomes. The agency is now evaluating the goodies and will propose a plan in 2016 to be included in the \$15 Billion tax request to the voters. This plan is being proposed when the 2008 taxes approved by the voters for light rail will not bring service to the respective communities until 2023.

While the politicians and urban planner's dream of light rail to serve their proposed "Transit Oriented Development" (TOD) – see <http://www.psrc.org/growth/tod/>, the vast majority of residents are using their preferred mode of transportation, their car, stuck in traffic getting to their jobs, schools, widely dispersed errands and needs of their daily life. And, we get "Managed Express Lanes" on I-405!

Light Rail Does Too Little, Costs Too Much and Takes Too Long.

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Volume 1, Issue 3

Oct. 28, 2015

Transportation is Front and Center

Transportation issues are reaching a fever pitch here in the Puget Sound.

- The City of Seattle has the \$930 million Move Seattle proposition on the Nov. 3, 2015 Seattle ballot.
- WSDOT opened I-405 with two Managed Express Toll lanes last month with \$330 million of gas tax revenue.
- The 2015 Washington State Legislature approved an 11.9 cent gas tax increase for roads with significant reforms in the state statutes relating to transportation in July, 2015 (allocating \$1.2 billion for I-405, Bellevue to Renton).
- Construction of East Link from Seattle to Microsoft through Downtown Bellevue using the I-90 Center Roadway and South Bellevue Way will start in 2016, pre-empting the Center Roadway starting in 2017.
- Sound Transit has been authorized by the legislature to ask voters for \$15 Billion in additional taxes for Regional Transit (read Light Rail) in November, 2016.
- The U.S. Congress is in the final stages of adopting a five year Surface Transportation Act for the federal role in our transportation system (the federal gas tax is now 18.4 cents per gallon, last increased by President Clinton in 1993).

Now comes the Seattle Time's event at Kane Hall at the University of Washington, Gridlocked: Driving solutions to our regions traffic jams, on Thursday, Oct. 29, 2015 (<http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/transportation-roundtable-qa-what-are-the-driving-solutions-to-our-regions-traffic-jams/>). This event is sold out, but will be videoed with showing schedule to be determined.

The program will be headlined by four 'experts' who have been featured in the Seattle Times this week and are quoted in the link above. Bryan Mistele, CEO of Inrix, the Kirkland based worldwide transportation data collection firm (www.inrix.com) is the one of the group making sense.

Inrix is standing the transportation data collection industry on its head. Here-to-fore we have had to rely on road tubes or vehicle detectors or cameras or other data collection systems that have been labor intensive and static, giving sparse data at few locations. Inrix is collecting billions of data points daily around the world that is real time and dynamic. The company has experts creating algorithms to make real time sense of the data and changing the way we think (the xxx minutes to Seattle, Bellevue, etc. signs you see on our local freeways is Inrix data, purchased by WSDOT for display). And, maybe, the urban planning industry can get some real data for planning purposes.

Stay tuned.

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WOW Transportation Focus Group

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Nov. 3, 2015

Transportation Discussions

The Seattle Times sponsored a Livewire discussion on transportation at the University of Washington on Thursday, Oct 29 called Gridlocked - Driving Solutions to our Region's Traffic Jams. The video of the discussion can be found at <http://www.seattlechannel.org/explore-videos?videoid=x59920>. Brian Mistele, CEO of Inrix and former speaker at ETA was on the panel. This is an hour and a half video. See Brian at the following minute markers on the video: 14:06; 29:11; 42:55; 55:11; and 1:12:47. Brian spoke some truth into the Seattle centric, transit dominated discussion.

The Puget Sound Region is expected to grow by about one million people by 2040. About 200,000 of that growth will likely be in the City of Seattle, leaving about 800,000 new residents for Bellevue, Tacoma, Everett and the other 30 +/- cities within the Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) of King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties.

Whenever the Seattle interests talk about gridlock and solutions for traffic jams, the discussion revolves around transit access to the 9% of the region's employment base that is in the Central Business District of Seattle. Access to the other 91% of the region's jobs is left out. Clearly, job access to Downtown Seattle is important, but it is not the only, nor, dare I say, the most important issue for the vast majority of the taxpayers in the region.

This is a common theme for taxpayers and transportation advocates in most large metropolitan areas of our great country. This week an organization called **The American Dream Coalition** is having its annual conference in Austin, TX; see http://americandreamcoalition.org/?page_id=4003. This is a coalition of light rail plan fighters and property rights enthusiasts. The Eastside Transportation Association will be well represented in Austin.

Favorite authors and primary speakers at the conference include:

- Wendell Cox, Demographia, <http://www.demographia.com/dwc-sketch.htm>.
- Randal O'Toole of the Cato Institute, The Anti-planner, <http://www.cato.org/people/randal-otoole>.
- Dr. Ronald Utt, The Heritage Foundation, <http://www.heritage.org/about/staff/u/ronald-utt>.
- Tom Rubin, Transportation Accountant, http://americandreamcoalition.org/?page_id=3979.
- Baruch Feigenbaum, The Reason Foundation, <http://reason.org/experts/outofcontrol/1171.html>.

The conference is recorded with video available and selected clippings will be offered.

Meanwhile, PSRC's **Transportation Futures** Task Force, including Senator Slade Gorton, is about to wrap up their report. See <http://www.thefuturestaskforce.org/task-force/>.

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WOW Transportation Focus Group

Volume 1, Issue 5

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So who is this White Elephant soaking up all of our money?

Sound Transit is the non-elected government agency in the Puget Sound region that is focused on providing light rail at enormous cost to carry a tiny fraction of our daily and peak period person trips at some date in the distant future using regressive taxes to support the elite employees that work in downtown Seattle. **Light Rail does too little, costs too much, takes too long.**

Sound Transit is a creation of the Washington State Legislature. It is officially the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, authorized by RCW 81.112.010 in 1992

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_Transit,

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=81.112.040>). The agency was put to the voters first in 1995. The first ballot issued failed; it was revised and re-submitted to the voters in 1996 with voter approval. The County Councils of King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties formed the agency in 1996 to provide high capacity transit for the region.

The 1996 ballot issue provided for the first phase of the system called Sound Move. Sound Move included three operating systems; Sound Transit Express Bus (REX), Sounder Commuter Rail and Link Light Rail. Sound Move promised light rail from the University of Washington at NE 45th St. through Downtown Seattle to SeaTac Airport in 10 years, or 2006. Commuter Rail was to run from Tacoma to Seattle and Everett to Seattle using the private freight rail tracks. The REX buses were to connect the suburban cities.

The tax rates approved in 1996 were 0.4 % sales tax and 0.3 % motor vehicle excise tax (<https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/sites/default/files/SoundMove.pdf>) which would raise about \$2 billion, allow bonding against the taxes for over \$1 billion, attract three quarters of a billion in federal grants and add some fares for a total program of \$3,914,000,000. This 1996 ballot issue promised 'sub-area equity', which means that revenues raised within a subarea is required to be allocated and spent within the subarea.

Sound Transit has its own taxing district that includes the urban areas of the three counties (http://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/about/stdistrictmap07_10.pdf). This includes the Cities and unincorporated urban areas within the Urban Growth Boundary.

Sound Transit is governed by an 18 member Board of Directors that are elected officials of the three counties and the cities within the district, appointed by the County Executives of the three Counties in a population proportional way, plus the Washington State Secretary of Transportation. The Board has 10 King County members, four from Pierce County and three from Snohomish County plus the WSDOT Secretary. Thus, it is a federated board of politicians elected for a local office (County Executive, Mayor or Councilmember of a county or city) and appointed to manage this multi-billion dollar agency to provide high capacity transit for the region. RCW 81.112.040(1) requires that at least half of the members from each county also serve on the governing body of a public transportation system. That is, at

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least 9 of the 18 members must be on a bus transit system board. King County Executive Dow Constantine is the current Chair of the Board; he appoints the 10 King County members.

High Capacity Transit is defined in our region as Bus Rapid Transit or Light Rail. The Sound Transit Board has chosen Light Rail as the appropriate high capacity mode for the core system.

Sound Transit soon discovered that the cost to tunnel under Capital Hill to serve the University of Washington was at least double their ballot issue estimates and that it would take much longer to construct. The plan was revised without a vote of the people and an Initial Segment of Sound Move was devised to serve Downtown Seattle to Tukwila with Central Link. The Initial Segment opened to service three years late in 2009, and was soon extended to the airport.

Sound Transit estimated ridership on Sound Move's light rail at approximately 107,000 daily riders after a startup period. Ridership estimates for the current 2015 Central Link light rail operation from Downtown Seattle to SeaTac Airport is approximately 40,000 daily boardings, about 1/4 of 1% of the nearly 15,000,000 daily person trips in the region. Extensions of the light rail line to S. 200th St. south of the airport and to Husky Stadium at the University are promised in 2016.

In 2007 Sound Transit went back to the voters to add more taxes for the second phase of light rail, called ST 2. This would extend the light rail transit line south to Redondo Beach, north to Lynnwood and east to Redmond through Bellevue using the I-90 Center Roadway to cross Lake Washington. The package was tied to a road improvement package called the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) in a single ballot issue. This issue failed at the ballot box in 2007.

Sound Transit returned to the ballot in 2008 with a ST 2 plan for transit only for an additional 0.5% sales tax increase to raise \$7.7 billion plus extending the original Sound Move taxes, bonding, federal grants and fares for an additional \$17.8 billion program. The measure was approved by the voters in 2008 and is now under construction, for an expected opening date of 2023 to Northgate and through Bellevue to the Microsoft Campus in Redmond http://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/st2/transitexpansion/st2_plan_web.pdf. Lynnwood, Redondo Beach and Downtown Redmond will come later.

Sound Transit now receives over \$2 million per day of your taxpayer dollars to plan, design, build and operate this light rail system to serve the businesses and employees of Downtown Seattle.

The 2015 Legislature authorized Sound Transit to go back to the voters in November 2016 to request an additional \$15 billion of your taxes to extend the light rail to Tacoma, Everett, Redmond and to add a new line in Seattle from Ballard to West Seattle through a new tunnel through Downtown Seattle (the existing tunnel will be at capacity with ST 2 trains in 2023) -

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the final project list is expected to be approved by the ST Board in the spring of 2016. The local agency wish list can be found at http://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/2015_0827_ST3_CandidateProjectsList_web.pdf.

We find ourselves with a mega-agency governed by local politicians appointed by central city elected County Executives planning and building a light rail system to serve the 9% of the region's jobs in Downtown Seattle at enormous cost to the region-wide taxpayers with legislative authority to ask voters for a massive expansion of their tax revenue.

In issue 2 we identified that Sound Transit is planned to get 19% of the entire region's transportation tax revenue and, by 2040, might carry 0.5% of the region's person trips (about 0.25% today). Meanwhile, the vast majority of taxpayers commuting to the other 91% of the region's jobs (spread out all over the place in a scatter diagram) and doing their daily routines are stuck in massive traffic jams. Who is in charge here?

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Volume 1, Issue 6

January 20, 2016

I-405 Managed Express Toll (HOT) Lanes – A Revolt!

The HOT (High Occupancy Toll) lanes on I-405 have increased congestion, reduced safety and failed to gain acceptance by most drivers. What a Mess! **There is a revolt at hand.**

Let's be clear. HOT lanes can't work if there is no congestion in the General Purpose (GP) lanes. If the GP lanes were allowed to work well, there would be no 'market' for the excess capacity in the HOT lanes, so no one would buy their way in. It's the same concept as the HOV lane system – you have to create congestion in the GP lanes in order to encourage more drivers to carpool to use the free HOV lanes. Therefore, the whole HOV lane system for the last 30 years - and the new HOT lane system - is a public policy to create congestion in the GP lanes so select drivers who follow the government preferred behavior (or are financially able to afford it in the new version) can use the elite lanes paid for with gas tax dollars assessed to all drivers.

The I-405 Managed Express Toll Lanes project was opened to traffic on Sept. 27, 2015 with dynamic variable tolling for two lanes between Bellevue and Bothell and one lane between Bothell and I-5 in Lynnwood. In addition, there are three non-tolled GP lanes between Bellevue and Bothell and two non-tolled GP lanes between SR 522 in Bothell and I-5. The cost of this nearly three year project is in the \$450 million range, using gas tax revenue. This revenue was authorized and raised for construction of GP lanes open to all users per the I-405 Master Plan in 2003 and 2005. In 2011 the Legislature changed the rules and reallocated the revenue to the HOT lane concept.

WSDOT reports the results as a success. The people still stuck in traffic have a different idea. Rep. Mark Harmsworth of Mill Creek has introduced a bill ([HB 2312](#)) in the 2016 Legislative session to change the current operation. Senator Andy Hill has introduced a companion bill in the Senate (SB 6231).

The Washington Policy Center has produced a Legislative Memo with an analysis of the data to date which was presented to the Senate Transportation Committee on January 14 at a hearing on the bill ([WPC memo](#)). Bob Pishue, Director, Coles Center for Transportation at the Washington Policy Center identifies four Key Findings in his memo:

1. Speeds and toll revenue are not as expected.
2. GP congestion (average speeds) has not improved as projected (after \$450 million).
3. Is the policy question about congestion relief or raising money?
4. PSRC says a single HOT lane would work better. Maybe we should try it.

How Can I Help?

Call in support of HB 2312 now (or email) the legislators on the House Transportation Committee (Click here for the [Legislators](#)). The House Committee needs a push from voters.

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WOW Transportation Focus Group

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January 20, 2016

I-405 History

I-405 was constructed in the 1960s into the 1970s as part of the initial Interstate Highway system funded with 90% federal gas tax revenue and 10% state gas taxes. The initial highway was constructed as a four lane suburban limited access freeway. It extended from I-5 in Tukwila to I-5 in Lynnwood through Renton, (now) Newcastle, Bellevue, Kirkland, Bothell and Snohomish County. Over the years an additional GP lane was added in each direction between Bellevue and Bothell.

In the circa 1980's a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane was added in the median the full length between Tukwila and Lynnwood, operated as a 2+ HOV lane. This was also funded with significant dollops of federal gas tax revenue. The intent was to get people out of their cars through the Commute Trip Reduction Act (bet you didn't know there was such a thing – see [CTR](#)), in part by encouraging car pools.

In the mid-1990's the I-405 corridor had become so congested that the Legislature authorized the I-405 Corridor Master Plan process to figure out what to do. A three year, \$7 million evaluation

The I-405 Master Plan will ultimately:

- Add up to 2 lanes in each direction in I-405
- Develop a Bus Rapid Transit line with stations along I-405 and expanded transit centers
- Improve key arterials
- Accommodate an additional 110,000 trips per day in the corridor
- Reduce time stuck in traffic by over 13 million hours per year – an average of over 40 hours per year per regular user
- Produce travel time savings valued at \$569 million each year
- Save \$42 million each year in decreased traffic accidents
- Create 1700 new vanpools – a 100% increase
- Increase local transit service by up to 50% within the study area
- Build 5,000 new park-and-ride spaces
- Create eight new pedestrian/bicycle crossings over I-405
- Enhance freight mobility through better interchanges, travel time reduction, and updated and technologies
- Provide much-needed economic benefits for Washington State – for each \$1 million spent on new construction, an additional 30 jobs are created

and SEPA/NEPA Environmental Impact Statement project culminated in adoption of the I-405 Master Plan ([I-405 Master Plan](#)) in 2002. This plan had an extensive public process, evaluated many alternatives ranging from all transit to all highway alternatives and many in between, looking at 2030 travel projections.

The I-405 Master Plan was approved by every city in the corridor, King County, Snohomish County, Sound Transit, WSDOT, and USDOT. It received a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Record of Decision ([ROD](#)) in October, 2002, a critical document required to spend federal gas tax dollars on an Interstate Highway.

The Approved Plan included the items in the blue box, had an estimated cost of about \$7 Billion (year 2000 \$), with \$5 Billion for I-405 GP lane additions, one billion for a Bus Rapid Transit system on I-405 plus another one Billion for local arterial streets at the various interchange access points. The first item in the adjacent box means about 120 lane miles of new capacity in the 30 mile corridor. Most of the rest also add up to significant 'capacity' enhancements. **HOT lanes are not on the list.**



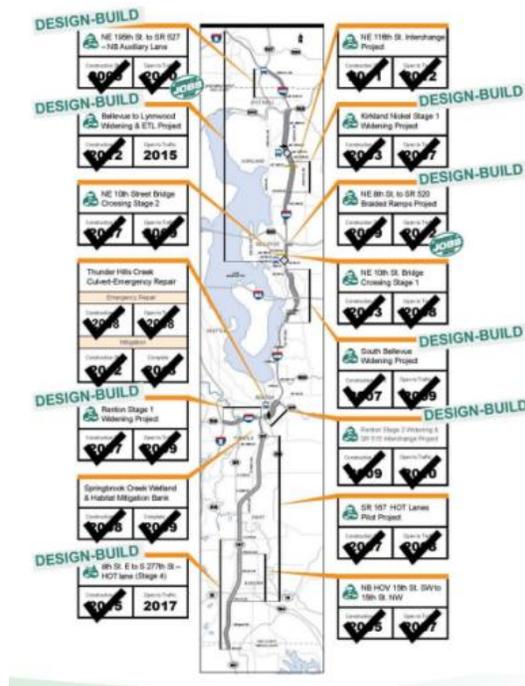
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January 20, 2016



The 2003 Nickle and the 2005 9.5 cent gas tax (Transportation Partnership Account – TPA) increases included about \$2 billion for I-405 upgrades. This provided an additional lane in each direction plus upgrades between I-5 in Tukwila to SR 167 in Renton, adding the SR 515 interchange in Renton plus upgrades to the mainline to SR 169, an auxiliary lane northbound from Coal Creek Parkway to I-90, additional lanes each direction from NE 6th St. in Bellevue to I-90 with a new bridge over I-90, the northbound braided ramps between NE 8th St. and SR 520, auxiliary lanes in Kirkland between NE 85th and Totem Lake and an auxiliary lane northbound from NE 195th St. in Bothell to SR 527 in Snohomish County. About this time WSDOT realized that SR 167 down the Kent/Auburn Valley really was an extension of I-405, so some resources were allocated to extending the SR 167 HOT lanes to Auburn. See WSDOT’s I-405 Corridor Project Progress brag sheet shown here and at slide 16 of [I-405 Capacity Projects](#).

Sound Transit effectively loaned WSDOT funds (through the so-called ‘Land Bank’ system - [Land Bank](#)) for the direct access ramps to the HOV lanes at NE 6th St. in Bellevue and NE 128th St. in Kirkland. In 2006 Sound Transit ignored the Approved I-405 Master Plan (see the second item in the box) and asked the East King County voters to approve a Light Rail line from Seattle to the Microsoft Campus through Bellevue rather than the approved bus rapid transit (BRT) on I-405. Eastlink was accepted by the voters and is starting construction this year.

By 2010 the concept of Managed Express Toll Lanes had hit the national transportation scene and WSDOT convinced the legislature that I-405 was a viable candidate. The 2011 Legislature authorized the current operation in RCW 47.56.880. The Washington Transportation Commission was commissioned to conduct an analysis which was completed by Cambridge Systematics for \$1.8 million in 2012 ([Cambridge Systematics](#)).

The analysis was devastating; the Legislature did not read it and authorized WSDOT to construct the current operation with Nickle and TPA gas tax revenue that was originally authorized for GP lanes, in RCW 47.56.880.

In July 2015 the Legislature authorized an additional \$1.2 billion for HOT lanes between Bellevue and Renton, including direct connected HOT lane ramps between I-405 and SR 167 to the south. Those interchange ramps are fully designed with construction to start in the spring of 2016. WSDOT has already signed the construction contract. If the 2016 Legislature acts on the HB 2312 this year, the design of the new HOT lanes can be revised before they are constructed.

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WOW Transportation Focus Group

Volume 1, Issue 7

February 1, 2016

Congestion is the Problem

Traffic **congestion has increased dramatically** in the Puget Sound Region in the last several years. This is an obvious truth to anyone who drives a car – and that’s most of us. This is not inevitable. It is the direct result of the **choices our leaders have made**.

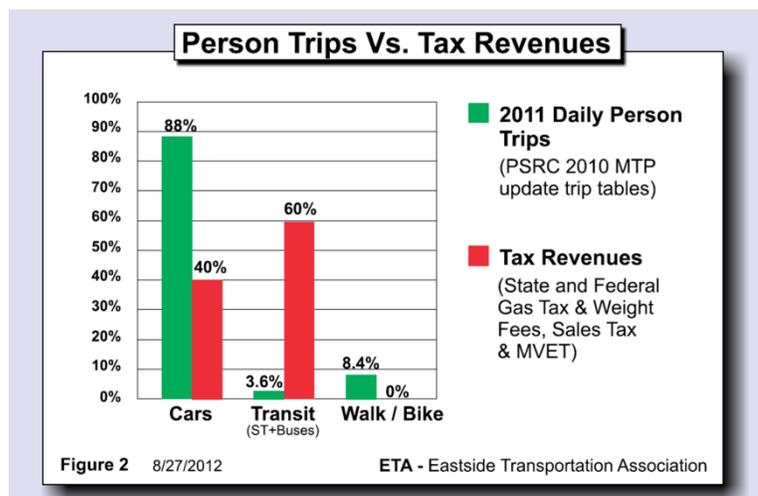
The rail transit lobby loves to claim that “**We cannot build our way out of congestion**”. You hear that at almost any public discussion on transportation. **Nonsense!** It is a choice the region has made. Here is some data on the results of those choices.

SOME SOURCE DATA

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is starting to keep track of the congestion growth. In September, 2015 PSRC published **Stuck in Traffic: Fall Edition** ([click here](#)). A couple of tidbits: From chart 3, **Delay increased by 20%** in 2015 while traffic volume increased by only 1%. Hours of delay on the regional freeway system has increased by 95% since 2010.

The **population and jobs** in the non-Seattle urban area of King County have grown substantially more than in Seattle. Seattle has 662,400 of King County’s 2,052, 800 people. That means that the non-Seattle and rural areas of King County have more than 2/3 of the population. Seattle is growing, but the rest of King County has grown by more people. Same with jobs. Job growth is a scatter diagram around the county. Roads serve virtually all travel in King County. When we under-invest in roads, we under-invest in our local economy. PSRC’s Stuck in Traffic data highlights our under-investment, particularly in the Puget Sound Region.

Somewhere **just under 90% of all regional daily travel is done in cars and small trucks**, with about 3.6% in rail and bus transit, about 8% by walking and way under 1% on bikes. See ETA’s Person Trips Vs Tax Revenues chart in [The War on Cars](#). When you consider that all of the bus trips are on roadways, a very large portion of the walking trips are on sidewalks adjacent to roadways and most bike trips are on roadways, over 99% of our region’s person trips are on the roads.



WOW Transportation Focus Group

Volume 1, Issue 7

February 1, 2016

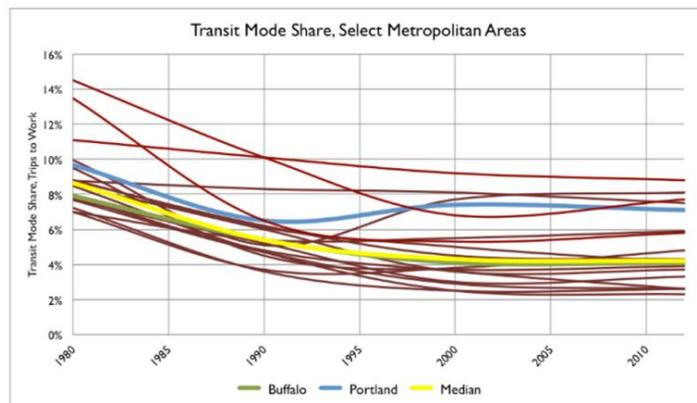
WSDOT publishes an annual **Congestion Report**. The 2015 report is found at [here](#). The Congestion Report identifies that 90% of the congestion in the entire state occurs in King and Snohomish Counties. WSDOT's Congestion Report is loaded with data of existing conditions on the State Highways.

Inrix, the Kirkland based leader in world-wide mega-data on traffic identifies the Seattle area as the seventh most congested region in the nation ([Inrix](#)). We are better than Los Angeles but worse than Houston and Chicago. The Seattle metropolitan area ranks about 20th in regional population in the United States.

While the congestion on our roads is increasing dramatically before our eyes, we do things like Managed Express Toll Lanes on **I-405**, propose **\$27 billion light rail** train concepts to increase rail transit ridership from ¼ to ½ percent and spend \$12 billion on our system to **reduce travel lanes from 20 to 18** (combination of I-90, SR 520 and the SR 99 Tunnel – see ETA's [The War on Cars](#)).

In the Seattle area we decided to under fund our road system to enhance the potential for transit ridership over the last three decades. We have poured resources into transit while seeing the portion of the region's daily person trips carried by transit reduced from over 6% in the 1980's to under 4% today. Yes, the transit ridership has gone up, but the region has grown a lot and the portion of trips by transit is down.

Seattle is not alone. Yonah Freemark [reports](#) “...while light rail may appear to make the public transportation system more appealing to the average rider, the construction of such a system will not automatically result in increased transit use. The data from 30 years' experience with the mode in the United States make that very clear”. This chart



shows the multi-year transit results in metropolitan areas that constructed light rail systems in the 1980's. Transit ridership share is down in all of these metro areas.

We can reduce congestion if we decide to. That is a **decision** we get to make. Today, our leadership is taking us in the wrong direction. The results are obvious in the daily commute trip delay increases. We can do better.

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Volume 1, Issue 8

January 13, 2016

Congestion is the Problem

Traffic **congestion has increased dramatically** in the Puget Sound Region in the last several years. This is an obvious truth to anyone who drives a car – and that’s most of us. This is not inevitable. It is the direct result of the **choices our leaders have made**.

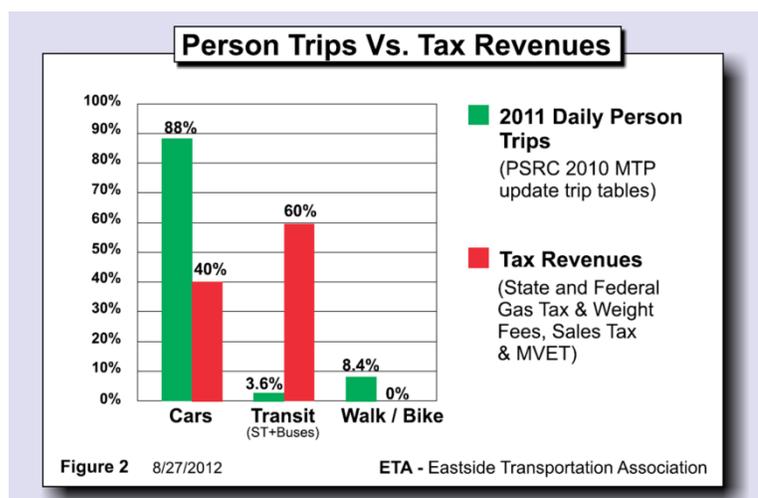
The rail transit lobby loves to claim that “**We cannot build our way out of congestion**”. You hear that at almost any public discussion on transportation. **Nonsense!** It is a choice the region has made. Here is some data on the results of those choices.

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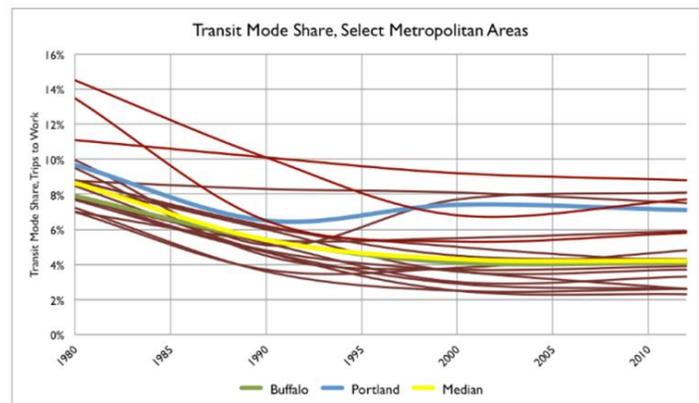
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Volume 1, Issue 9

March 10, 2016

One of Sound Transit's Fabrications

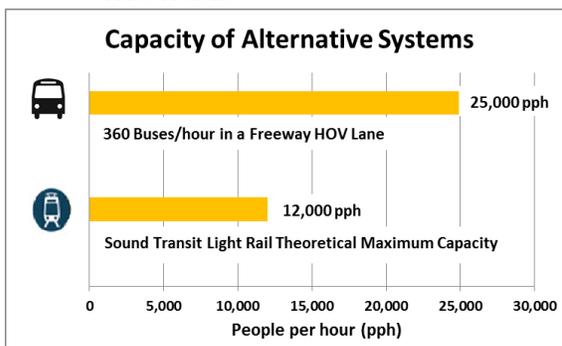
Sound Transit overstates the effectiveness of light rail on a consistent basis in an effort to convince voters to support their outrageous tax grab. ST also denigrates the potential of alternatives such as Bus Rapid Transit. A rigorous evaluation of these claims has been completed by the Eastside Transportation Association (ETA) with reports at www.eastsideta.com. The bottom line is that **buses can and do carry more people in a single lane than does light rail in Seattle.**

Sound Transit justifies the expenditure of vast sums of tax payer dollars based on a wide range of assumptions and claims, many of which are false and/or fabrications. One of the fabrications has to do with the stated ability of light rail trains to carry people in comparison to a freeway lane. The claim is that a light rail train track can carry 12,000 people per hour (pph) whereas a freeway lane can carry only 2,000 pph as shown in this Sound Transit slide. Sound Transit Board Chair Dow Constantine recently upped that number to 16,000 pph in a King 5 TV broadcast on Feb. 29

Sound Transit's Propaganda



The Truth



The truth is that a freeway lane can carry more than double the people per hour in buses if it is operated as an exclusive bus lane, as shown here and in [A FREEWAY LANE CAN MOVE MORE PEOPLE THAN LIGHT RAIL at rail capacity.](#)

All it takes is 170 buses per hour in a freeway lane to match light rails' capacity as built by Sound Transit. Currently, there is no demand for that level of transit in the Seattle area.

In fact, as shown in [How People Really Choose to Travel at rail ridership](#), the I-5 carpool lane from Downtown Seattle to SeaTac carries more people than the Sound Transit Central Link light rail, in both the peak period of travel and on a daily basis.

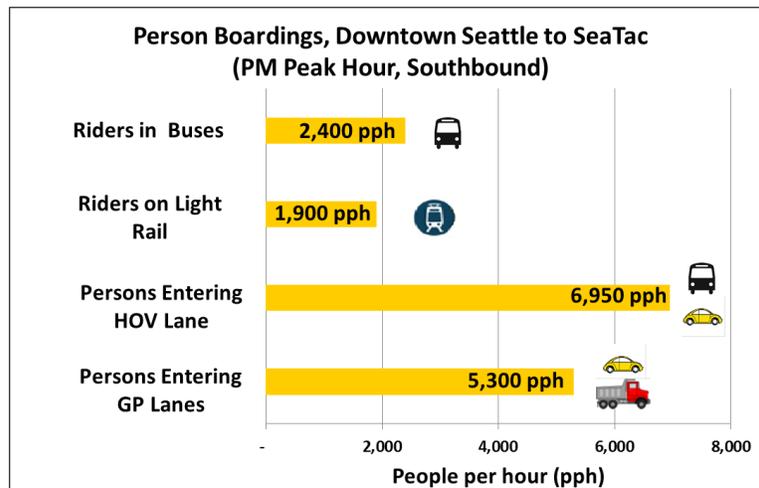
This is a corridor that has both a light rail train that has been in operation for over five years and an HOV lane traveling between the region's major employment center of Downtown Seattle and the airport. The HOV lane beats the light rail in all cases. In this

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corridor with the only operating light rail line in the region, the bus agencies have scheduled 62 buses southbound in the afternoon peak hour. These buses carry more people than the light rail line does, at a fraction of the cost.



So, Sound Transit tells the politicians and the voters that a light rail line can carry six times as many people as a freeway lane when the truth is just the opposite. Buses in a freeway lane can carry more than twice as many people per hour as the rail line, and where they are currently in competition, the I-5 HOV lane carries 3.6 times as many people per hour as the rail line in the peak hour, and the buses in the HOV lane actually carry more people than the rail line going to the same place.

It's also true on a daily basis. The pair of I-5 HOV lanes between SeaTac and Downtown Seattle carry three times as many people per day as Central Link light rail. See [How People Really Choose to Travel](http://www.eastsideta.com) at www.eastsideta.com.

Keep your eyes open. Sound Transit staff presented the initial analytical analysis of the 'wish list' projects to the Sound Transit Board on Dec. 4. You can view the video of the Board Meeting at [wish list](#). This is the first of many rounds of information being prepared to encourage the voters of the light rail district to say yes to the planned **ST 3 ballot issue** scheduled to be presented at the November, 2016 general election. This will be the largest tax increase request in the history of the state, at about one billion dollars a year, forever. Sound Transit will have a "suggested" list of goodies they will provide for the billion/year, but there will be no hard requirement, and no sunset of the taxes if past history is of any value.

When you hear Sound Transit promoting spending your tax dollars on light rail with tax dollars to benefit congestion, hang on to your wallet and ask questions.

Light Rail: Does too little, Costs too much, Takes too long.

Victor H. Bishop, P.E. Chair-Elect, Eastside Transportation Association (ETA)
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March 17, 2016

Big Win on I-405 Tolls

Drivers on I-405 had a big win this week when the Washington Transportation Commission ordered the removal of tolls on the I-405 Managed Express Toll (HOT) lanes at night, on weekends and on six major federal holidays starting at 7:00 pm, Friday, March 18.

Vic Bishop, Chair-Elect of the Eastside Transportation Association, along with two other ETA Board Members and a representative of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce made public comments on the record at the March 15 regular meeting of the Commission after a detailed presentation by WSDOT staff showing the analysis of the options available. The Commission subsequently unanimously approved the toll removal on an emergency basis (for public health and safety) and started the process to make the changes permanent.

Removing these tolls at night, on weekends and holidays is one of the band aids Governor Inslee and the Democratic leadership recommended in February, after the 31,000 STOP405tolls petition created a major political battle. It is a good band aide, but misses the major point. House Transportation Committee Chair Judy Clibborn (D), 41st District, Mercer Island refused to allow a hearing in her committee on HB 2312 which would have undone one of the two HOT lanes between Bellevue and Bothell to become an additional general purpose lane. Other band aide measures were also recommended by the Governor and legislators that still need to be acted upon, like replacing the northbound auxiliary lane from SR 520 to NE 70th St. and from SR 527 to I-5. However, the Commission has no authorization to implement those issues.

See the blog post on STOP405tolls.org at <http://stop405tolls.org/2016/03/15/wstc-opens-405etl-to-all-on-nights-weekends-but-doesnt-address-the-biggest-problems/> for more details.

None of the recommended band aids would have a major impact on the biggest issue of providing congestion relief for the vast majority of I-405 users getting to and from a job on the weekdays. The legislature made a choice in 2011 to implement the two lane Managed Express Toll Lanes after \$250+ Million of construction for new lanes paid for with gas tax revenue from the 2003 and 2005 gas tax increases. Initiative 912 was an attempt to repeal the 2005 gas tax increase which specifically identified these lanes as general purpose lanes.

I-912 was soundly defeated by statewide voters in November, 2005 and WSDOT proceeded to make improvements to I-405 and other state highways. We now have new lanes paid for with general gas tax revenue which require a toll to use in the commute times with significant congestion in the general purpose lanes.

Remember, Managed Express Toll lanes cannot work unless there is congestion in the general purpose lanes. The managers must have congestion to create an incentive to pay the toll.

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Watch for more ST Fabrications about U-Link

Sound Transit is opening the U-Link connection between Downtown Seattle and Husky Stadium ten years late and at least double the cost of the originally approved ballot issue in 1996 by voters. Watch for exclamations of “Under budget and six months early” by light rail proponents. This of course is after multiple moving of the goal posts for budget and schedule.

The 1996 Sound Move ballot issue by Sound Transit promised light rail from NE 45th St. in the University District to SeaTac Airport within 10 years (that would have been 2006, not 2016) for just under \$3 Billion and would carry 105,000 daily riders. After many disastrous explanations the Initial Segment of Central Link opened in 2009 from Westlake Center in Downtown Seattle to Tukwila Station costing more than the total original budget. It was extended to the Airport later that year. In 2015 it carried fewer than 40,000 riders per day.

On March 18, 2016 U Link will open to revenue service north to Husky Stadium, still short of the promised NE 45th St. Station (that won't open until 2021, when ST 2 finally kicks in with service to Northgate). Only passage of ST 2 in 2006 and a major grant from the Federal Transit Agency allowed ST to move ahead with the current U Link segment.

King County Metro Transit is implementing a major re-routing of their buses serving northeast Seattle to terminate at the Husky Stadium Station, right at the Montlake Triangle. Watch for traffic congestion reports related to this transfer location designed to enhance rail ridership with major transfers from buses. When Eastlink opens in 2023 Sound Transit projects that 80% of the rail ridership will be transfers of existing transit riders from buses.

The opening of U Link to Husky Stadium has been carefully timed to be the opening salvo for the campaign to ask voters for over \$1 Billion in new taxes per year forever (that's over \$500 per year per average household, escalating with inflation over time) for light rail extensions in Seattle and elsewhere. The ballot issue will be set this summer for a November vote. **Hang on to your wallets.**

Light Rail: Does too little, Costs too much, Takes too long.

Eastside Mayors and Legislators support BRT on I-405

Six eastside mayors and eleven legislators from five legislative districts have written letters to Sound Transit in support of providing effective Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on I-405 in comments on the proposed ST 3 plan.

Effective BRT means running in the HOT lanes with five additional direct access ramps like the ones at NE 6th St., NE 128th St. on I-405 and at the Eastgate Park and Ride on I-90. This would be consistent with the I-405 Master Plan approved in 2002 by 27 local agencies, including Sound Transit and WSDOT and with a Federal Highway Administration Record of Decision (ROD) in 2003. Up to this point Sound Transit and WSDOT have ignored the BRT portion of the Approved Master Plan. Sound Transit currently has about regional express (REX) bus routes that use I-405 to connect Bellevue with Everett, Lynnwood, Bothell, Renton, Burien and Kent with 20 to 60 minute service. This is not BRT.

The Mayors of Bellevue, Bothell, Renton, Newcastle, Clyde Hill and the Town of Beaux Arts Village submitted a joint comment letter to Sound Transit on May 2, 2016.

“...Full BRT, as we have requested of the Board in our previous communications, and as envisioned in the I-405 Master Planning effort that was sponsored by Sound Transit and WSDOT, is the equivalent of light rail on rubber tires.

Full BRT will include center-running operations the length of the system and serve in-line stops throughout the I-405 corridor...”

The April 28, 2016 comment letter from the eleven legislators in the corridor including Rep. Judy Clibborn, Chair of the House Transportation Committee also supports high level BRT on the I-405 corridor. Legislators from the 41st, 48th, 33rd, 1st and 11th Legislative Districts signed this letter.

“...any BRT system along the I-405 corridor should mirror the quality and dedicated access that comes with Light Rail Transit service. It is critical that the BRT system serving I-405 be center running, serve in-line stations, sync up with express and local bus service, and most importantly is closely coordinated with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and its BRT plans as laid out in the I-405 Master Plan...”

On May 2, 2016 Mayor John Stokes, City of Bellevue, sent the City’s comment letter to Sound Transit that includes:

“...We request that the Board amend the ST3 plan to include a center running BRT system the length of the I-405 corridor that serves, at a minimum, in-line stops at the following locations:

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- Canyon Park (Bothell);
- Northeast 85th Street (Kirkland);
- 112th Avenue Southeast (Bellevue/Newcastle);
- Northeast 44th Street (Renton); and,
- North 8th Street (Renton)..."

The City of Bellevue letter also requests that a full vetting of the options to serve Issaquah be included in the plan, rather than the light rail plan proposed in ST 3.

Conceivably, the Sound Transit Board may get the message that BRT on the I-405 corridor is a reasonable option for High Capacity Transit in East King County, consistent with the Approved I-405 Master Plan.

Sound Transit will be combining the formal comments received by May 2, 2016 with comments from the various Public Hearings on the \$50 Billion tax plan that is being proposed as ST 3 over the next 2 months. A final plan will be developed by late June, with a Ballot Issue adopted by the ST Board in July for the November, 2016 ballot.

Light Rail Does Too Little, Costs Too Much, Takes Too Long.