



June 11, 2020

Dear Sound Transit leadership and members of the Sound Transit Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on program realignment options and criteria. While I know that the Executive Committee may take action today, I also know the full Board takes a great interest in program realignment and evaluation criteria.

Last month, TCC and sixteen other organizations delivered a [letter](#) outlining our shared goals and values for transit, as well as considerations for program realignment. Overall, **we value deep community engagement, social and racial equity, and a sustainable and multimodal system that allows everyone to access transit easily, affordably, while remaining in their communities.**

We still urge you to do as much engagement as possible, not just *despite* but *because of* the huge public health crises at hand. Now more than ever it is important to hear the needs of those that rely on transit the most, and how those needs may have changed.

In an effort to hear more from our partners and the public before the Board takes action on program realignment criteria we developed a quick survey that was developed and administered in under 48 hours, using the options presented to the Board. Below are the results for your consideration. Of course this is not a statistically significant study, nor does it reach all the populations that are in most need of a voice right now. In the time we had, we were unable to translate materials, nor define the technical terms used by Sound Transit. It was not accessible to those without internet access, nor were we able to target specifically those who are still riding transit.

But the overall message is clear: the public is hungry for an opportunity to weigh in on this critical process. If the criteria are an important part of the prioritization process, it is therefore important to engage the public on these criteria.

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- Copy of the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZF2XFPY>
- Responses: 101 responses in about 14 hours
- Demographics
 - About 19% respondents have an annual income under \$50K
 - About 6% self-reported disability that affects mobility
 - About 24% live outside of King County
 - About 14% non-white

Priorities related to additional revenue or debt capacity

- General support 62-77% for all ideas **except raising fares (14%)**.
- **Finding new revenue sources was the highest at 77%**
- Other ideas included other revenue sources such as income tax and capital gains tax.
- 7% of people said they didn't know or indicated in the comments that they didn't understand the options.

Priorities related to reducing costs

- Most people supported pursuing lower-cost loans (71%) and leveraging financial market tools (55%). Fewer people supported containing operating costs (30%) or reducing capital costs by reducing scope (16%).
- **17% didn't know or indicated in comments that they didn't understand the options.**
- Several indicated to cut fare enforcement and large parking projects.

Priorities related to method of delaying projects

- **More people favored phasing projects by opening in segments or with some elements deferred to a later date (54.55%)** than delaying some projects more than others (43.43%). **Only 2% of respondents favored delaying all projects equally.**
- Comments included questions about what elements of projects would be left out and who would be making that decision.

Priorities related to criteria

- Among all 12 ranked criteria (core and other), **socio-economic equity was prioritized highest**, followed by ridership potential, connecting centers, equity, and sequencing. However, **many indicated they didn't understand why there were two versions of equity and what the difference was**. Tenure and outside funding scored lowest.
- When asked what additional criteria Sound Transit should consider, the following were all mentioned more than once:
 - **Density**
 - **Sustainability & climate**
 - **Cost per rider/mile**

Other ideas for dealing with the budget shortfall

- Get grants from large companies that stand to benefit, like Amazon, Microsoft, and Boeing
- Raise parking rates
- Raise fares for those who can afford it, lower them for those who can't
- Value capture from land around stations
- Defund fare enforcement
- Cut parking

- Pursue authority for additional revenue sources or help push legislature to pass new revenue sources including: income tax, property tax, carbon tax, gas tax, tolls, pay per mile, special taxing districts, impact fees,

Questions about definitions of the criteria and other terms

- What does the spine mean?
- What does it mean to advance logically beyond the spine? (*many* questions on this)
- What is the difference between equity and socio-economic equity? (The definition of “equity” did not make sense to many people, instead some suggested emphasis on the large percentage of people who are transit dependent/cannot drive at all.)
- How are you measuring operability? It seems to overlap with many other definitions.
- “Outside funding” is vague.
- What is a regional center?
- Did not understand the financial options/tools
- Did not understand what it meant to cut operating costs

Priorities of highly impacted communities

When filtering for just POC priorities, lower-income folks’ priorities, and disabled individuals’ priorities, there were not many noticeable differences, though an increased prioritization of equity and completing the spine, and comments strongly supporting more and better outreach and connecting car-dependent communities.

Recommendations related to gathering input on the program realignment going forward

- Host listening sessions with multiple options of days/time.
- Pay people for their time (especially BIPOC folks)
- Provide childcare options during these sessions or meaningfully engage with children on their transit experiences too (future riders treated right!)
- Increase transparency and ALSO be proactive about finding (and then communicating to public) funding measures that won't just continue to take from residents
- Show that you're doing your part to increase accountability to local voters and advocating for increased action on the part of state and federal governments
- Pay attention to the South Sound
- Spread the word to businesses - not enough people know about this
- More public engagement
- Town halls
- More surveys
- We need regional quarterly or annual civic/municipal surveys that gather people's broad attitudes about priorities, with effort to get high participation, to information this kind of decision making
- Ensure you get equitable representation from each area you are looking to serve. Demos in some areas are more active than others but don't reflect overall sentiment.

- Extend outreach to include a broader scope of respondents and resources for your outreach efforts
- ST needs a robust but quick formal public outreach process for this. The board cannot rush into a decision by expecting the public to provide comment at Board meetings.
- Non-English language diversity and outreach
- Is this survey research non-English speaking/non-English dominant populations, and via mediums that don't require an internet connection?
- Survey people in person on buses and light rail - these are the people actually using transit
- Consider gathering information from residents outside the ST district. I would suggest testing willingness to pay/ support in Gig Harbor peninsula, Vashon Island, and other "outlying, but served" communities
- Host and promote webinars to educate on different financing tools. Use participatory budgeting techniques to convey information and receive input.
- Make public outreach as open and easy to participate, lest a minority of "loud voices" dominate the public input process
- Need to be mindful that people of color have less access to online tools for feedback so the results of the survey likely is skewed from that perspective.
- It's important to share enough information so people can make informed decisions, but not so much that it's overwhelming - this is very difficult to do well. Perhaps share overview and additional details. Would be great to pay community leaders for their time helping gather input.
- Make more time for community input. Be flexible and open to the current pandemic and unrest that we are facing. Learn from the current situation and apply equitable transportation frameworks to your projects.
- Send me brief text surveys based on my location and ridership habits so I can opt-in to providing more regular information about my habits....use proximity sensors at bus stops to see how long people are waiting for buses to passively collect that information anonymously.