

June 13, 2012
Sound Transit Board of Directors
401 South Jackson St
Seattle WA 98104

Dear Sound Transit Board of Directors,

Thank you for your hard work to develop an integrated access plan for the future Northgate Link light rail station. We share your vision of transforming Northgate into a bikeable, walkable and transit-rich community with a light rail station safely accessible by all modes of travel.

Like the 69 percent of Seattle voters who approved the Sound Transit 2 ballot measure in 2008, we are excited about the opportunities North Link will provide when it reaches the Northgate station and beyond. And like the many members of the community who have participated in the decade-long planning process for Northgate, we are looking forward to the station opening and the corresponding access investments that will make it safe and convenient for everyone to access the station, whether they're arriving on bus, train, car, foot or bike.

But we're concerned that as currently proposed the integrated access plan for Northgate will make it less convenient and more dangerous for the overwhelming majority of people who will access the station on transit, foot and bike, while only benefiting the small minority of people who will arrive at the station through other means.

According to Sound Transit statistics, right now the Northgate Transit Center serves more than 5,000 riders each weekday, 70 percent of whom get there on transit, foot or bike. Over 70 percent of the people who drive to the transit center live within 3 miles, and nearly half live within two miles. We've spoken with many of these folks and they have told us that they wish it was safe for them to walk or bike to the transit center. Since we haven't made the investments necessary for them to do so, many are forced to drive.

Also according to Sound Transit, in 2030, 92 percent of the 15,000 people accessing the light rail station each weekday will get there on transit, foot or bike. Accordingly, Sound Transit's fact sheet for this project states, "It is not feasible to meet future transit demand at Northgate and achieve land use goals without shifting focus to non-driving access modes such as expanding rail-bus connections and pedestrian and bicycle access."

Given this statement, the numbers regarding how people will access the station, the goals and policies in Seattle's comprehensive plan, and the community's vision for the future of the neighborhood, we were confident and hopeful Sound Transit would propose an access plan that would focus on making it safer and more convenient for people to walk, bike and take transit to the station

Therefore, we were disappointed when at the May 24 Sound Transit Board meeting, agency staff presented a proposal that would spend \$30-\$40 million of limited taxpayer dollars on a 900-stall parking garage benefiting the 8 percent, and less than \$2 million on the 92 percent. We are even more disappointed that after over 100 citizens took time out of their busy lives to attend last week's open house to express their concerns with this proposal; your agency appears ready to discount the vigorous community opposition to this plan.

Despite our disappointment with the current proposal, we believe that you still have an opportunity to get this project right.

We strongly urge you to take a balanced approach and invest at least \$50 million in a package of investments that will make it safe and convenient for everyone to access the station, whether they arrive on transit, foot, bike, or in a car. This package should spend at least as much on making it safe and convenient for the 92 percent of people who will access the station on bike, foot or transit as it does for the 8 percent who will arrive through other means.

A balanced integrated access plan should include a package of investments like:

- Pedestrian projects identified as high priorities in the Northgate Coordinated Investment Plan (CTIP) and in Seattle's Pedestrian Master Plan;
- A significant portion of the funding necessary for a pedestrian/bike bridge over I-5 to North Seattle Community College and Licton Springs (identified in both the CTIP and Seattle's Bicycle Master Plan);
- Improved bus service; and
- Family-friendly bicycle infrastructure like neighborhood greenways and cycle tracks accessing the station.

We have attached detailed recommendations regarding potential bicycle improvements and are happy to provide any additional information you may require.

A balanced integrated access plan should also ensure that those who need to access the station in modes other than transit, foot or bike can safely do so. While we recognize that Sound Transit has legal obligations to mitigate parking displaced during construction, there are multiple potential options for doing so and we do not need to solve a temporary problem with a permanent blight. We are confident that agency staff can resolve this complex issue through creativity and innovation, if they are provided with direction to get it done.

Seattle recently generously agreed to help fund Eastlink and a \$200 million tunnel through downtown Bellevue because this change in the project would honor Bellevue's land use plans and the community's vision for the future of the city. Since Seattle voters have provided the votes needed for Sound Transit to exist as an agency and now generate approximately half of Sound Transit's revenue, we are hopeful that Sound Transit will honor Seattle's land use plans and community vision as well.

A balanced integrated access plan that invests at least \$50 million in making it safe and convenient for how 100 percent of riders will arrive at the station will align with the goals and policies in Seattle's comprehensive plan and the community's vision for the future of the neighborhood.

Thank you again for your hard work to develop an integrated access plan for the future Northgate Link light rail station. Please take a balanced approach and invest at least \$50 million in a package of investments that will make it safe and convenient for everyone to access the station, whether they arrive on transit, foot, bike or in a car.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chuck Ayers".

Chuck Ayers
Executive Director
Cascade Bicycle Club