

October 13, 2022

Hon. Kent Keel, Chair, and Members of the Board  
Julie Timm, CEO  
Sound Transit  
401 S. Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98014

RE: Support for East Link Eastside-only Starter Line and feasibility analysis

Dear Chair Keel, Members of the Board, and CEO Julie Timm,

As Eastside partners, we eagerly anticipate and welcome Sound Transit light rail service to our communities. While the continued delays to East Link and their impacts have been challenging, we appreciate the transparency Sound Transit has demonstrated in sharing project delays and construction challenges. As the agency works to resolve complex questions and mitigate ongoing risk, we write to express support for an Eastside-only starter line, as suggested by Board member Claudia Balducci, and request completion of a feasibility analysis as quickly as possible. The Eastside line, which is nearly complete, will benefit our communities and the region and will help realize the extensive preparatory investments that have been made to date.

**Considerable investments have been made.** Since 2008, Eastside cities have planned for growth with greater density and mobility connections in anticipation of East Link opening. The private sector responded, and tens of thousands of new jobs are coming to the Eastside. Hundreds of millions of dollars in private and public sector investments are in place or coming to support this growing economy, including multi-modal light rail access and transit-oriented housing. Our communities have invested extensively and accelerated projects along the corridor to be ready for a mid-2023 opening date. Among projects that are directly tied to, and impacted by, East Link service delays include:

- Microsoft, the City of Redmond, and Sound Transit have partnered to construct pedestrian and bicycle bridges over SR520 that connect the SR520 regional bike trail, Microsoft campus, and nearby multifamily homes to Overlake Village and Redmond Technology Stations. The bridges are scheduled to open in 2023.
- City of Bellevue's BelRed corridor transformation includes new and widened arterial streets, transit-oriented development at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue, restored streams, and new multimodal amenities connecting to the Spring District/120th and BelRed/130th stations.
- Sound Transit's signature public/private transit-oriented development at the Operations and Maintenance Facility-East will deliver 500 new housing units, offices and retail spaces.
- The Eastrail, an uninterrupted 42-mile trail, connects diverse communities with transit and mobility options, including the NE 8th Street bridge that will connect directly to the Wilburton Station in 2023.
- Private developments in areas such as Downtown Bellevue, East Main, Wilburton, The Spring District, Overlake, SE Redmond (Marymoor Village), Downtown Redmond, and Totem Lake are adding - and will continue to add - significant numbers of new housing units and jobs by companies, such as Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft, and myriad smaller companies. Public and private commitments have been made to improve environmental sustainability, housing, equity, and access for residents throughout our region. All these plans, investments, and commitments benefit from East Link opening as soon as possible.

**Ongoing delay has other costs.** The current situation fosters uncertainty in the community and has other financial and opportunity costs. Residents of new transit-oriented development projects have limited mobility options until East Link is operational. Sound Transit infrastructure already in place sits empty or underused, including transit hubs and park and ride facilities. Current transit riders between Bellevue and Redmond endure a 40-minute trip that with the opening of an Eastside line would otherwise turn into a 17-minute trip, saving thousands of hours of travel time.

**Proceed with due care.** Opening a starter line would require system resources, but the main implementation cost is a line that Sound Transit already slated and budgeted to deliver. Agency staff must evaluate the balance of operating costs versus benefits like Sound Transit staffing continuity. Ridership impacts must be understood. To be viable, the timeframe must make sense - making it imperative to complete a feasibility analysis as quickly as possible.

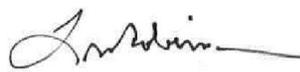
**We urge immediate and swift next steps.** The Puget Sound Region has collectively invested in the shared vision of a connected transit system with mobility options for all. If analysis supports the Eastside-only starter line, the entire region benefits: residents, employers/employees, the environment, and the economy. Not least among beneficiaries is Sound Transit which can demonstrate a commitment to delivering East Link in the most expeditious manner possible. We welcome regular public updates on your efforts to explore this option. Again, we strongly urge you to prioritize a transparent feasibility analysis of an Eastside-only starter line.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for your ongoing efforts to expand reliable and safe transit options to the region.

Sincerely,



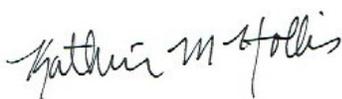
Hon. Angela Birney, Mayor  
City of Redmond



Hon. Lynne Robinson, Mayor  
City of Bellevue



Hon. Penny Sweet, Mayor  
City of Kirkland



Katherine Hollis, ED,  
Eastrail Partners



Geoff Crump, COO,  
Hopelink



Kelli Refer, Executive Director,  
Move Redmond



Kim Sarnecki, CEO,  
Together Center



Jeff Tomlin, MD, CEO,  
EvergreenHealth



Joe Fain, President and CEO,  
Bellevue Chamber of Commerce



Patrick Bannon, President,  
Bellevue Downtown Association



Kristina Hudson, CEO,  
One Redmond



Guy Palumbo, Director  
Public Policy, Amazon

*Ian M. Goodhew*

Ian Goodhew, Head of  
Government and  
External Relations PNW,  
Google



Gregory K. Johnson, CEO,  
The Spring District / Wright  
Runstad & Company



Sara Lazkani, Public Policy  
Manager, State and Local,  
Meta



Barb Wilson, Puget Sound Local  
Government Affairs, Corporate,  
External, and Legal Affairs,  
Microsoft