



Sounding Board Recommendation

Executive Summary

The extension of Link light rail to Capitol Hill and the University of Washington stations was an opportunity for King County Metro Transit and Sound Transit to redesign transit service not only in the areas near the stations but also for neighboring districts. Metro, in particular, looked to leverage the fast, frequent, and reliable Link service to free resources that would otherwise duplicate that service and apply them to create a more frequent and intelligible network of connecting routes. The Link Connections Sounding Board was tasked to evaluate that redesigned network and its refinements via a six-month process. This report contains the Board's observations and recommendations regarding the proposed restructure.

The Board largely favors changes that create a network of increased frequency and reliability while retaining connections between neighborhoods and commercial centers served by the current network and in some cases creating new connections. Most regular commuters' routes will be unaffected under these revisions and some will benefit from more convenient or more frequent service. The proposed network sometimes requires transfers for trips that were once one-seat rides; the Board feels that the benefits from improved frequency and reliability outweigh the inconvenience of losing some direct routes. However, the trade-off means that facilitating transfers will be of utmost importance; the Board has recommendations for changes to infrastructure and customer information to improve the transfer experience, some of which require partnership with other organizations.

While current riders make the best of the system we have now, there are many who can't or choose not to ride due to infrequent, unreliable buses; there is no place east of I-5 and north of NE 45th St with frequent service. With the current lack of frequency, transit riders make a significant time commitment when they travel other than established commute routes, especially if they have to transfer; it best serves people who can elect to use a car for spontaneous or infrequent trips.

The proposed changes double service along major corridors in Northeast Seattle, including NE 65th St, 25th Ave NE, and 35th Ave NE, increase frequency throughout the project area, and make transferring easier. With this restructure, the Sounding Board expects spontaneous and less common trips to be easier, improving access for transit-dependent populations without diminishing the peak network. Additionally, and importantly, the proposal provides access to the regional transit system without requiring users to go downtown.

The Board acknowledges the work of the planners in the transit agencies and the contributions of the many affected municipalities, employers, community groups, and individuals that brought this proposal forward. It particularly recognizes the extensive effort to inform the public of the opportunity represented by the Link extension and to gather, evaluate, and respond to public

input in the final design.

Vision

The Sounding Board strongly supports Metro's efforts to create a more intelligible, frequent transit network in coordination with the opening of Link light rail stations on Capitol Hill and at the University of Washington. We appreciate Metro planners' creative responses to community feedback. Strengthened by Seattle's Proposition 1 funding, Metro's final restructuring proposal delivers more reliability and frequency, enabling more people both to commute and take spontaneous trips without the need of a car. At the same time, we believe it respects existing transit patterns, so that it offers individuals more options without causing unnecessary disruption to their established routines.

King County and the City of Seattle are experiencing rapid population growth, adding more people who need to move around our already congested region. Our roadways are constrained by geography; to keep this region moving, King County wants to encourage people who currently drive to ride transit. Convenient and reliable mass transportation is one way to do that.

An effective transit network must be intelligible, frequent, and reliable. Riders need to be able to see clearly how to get from one point to another, so they feel comfortable using transit for more than their regular commute. Transfers need to make sense and involve minimal wait times; with a frequent system, transfer opportunities expand the realm of destinations. Likewise, riders need to have confidence that buses will arrive as scheduled in order to depend on them to travel to appointments, pick up children from childcare, get to a theater before the curtain goes up, and make myriad other trips that require predictable travel times and reliable service. Our transit system needs to get people where they need to go, when they need to get there, with reasonable speed and reliability.

We believe this restructure is a good step toward achieving the system we need. We encourage Metro to continue to pursue this course, identifying opportunities for fresh approaches that better serve transit riders.

Public Process

In November 2014, King County Metro Transit and its interagency partners began public outreach regarding transit revisions in response to the extension of Link light rail to Capitol Hill and the station at Husky Stadium. The first phase of outreach used a wide array of notification methods to elicit public comments from multiple audiences, with approximately 6000 responses.

Those responses fed into two alternatives for U-Link transit revisions, which were again presented to the public for comment through multiple means in March, 2015. The Link Connections Sounding Board also evaluated the two alternatives. Metro and others evaluated more than 6000 responses from the public as well as input from the Sounding Board to shape a revised alternative. That alternative was offered for public comment in May, 2015. Comments from this additional public outreach further modified the alternative to address outstanding concerns. The result is the proposed ordinance going forward.

North and Northeast Seattle

Though the Metro project area included both Capitol Hill and Northeast Seattle, the northeast easily sees the most dramatic restructure. Where transit in Capitol Hill was already marked by a network of frequent service, Metro is proposing unprecedented service levels for NE Seattle. The changes brought about by the proposed restructure would dramatically reshape transit use patterns in the areas north of the Ship Canal. Connections to the downtown core would become more reliable by having riders transfer to Link to head downtown instead of having passengers ride often-delayed Routes 71, 72, or 73 directly to and from downtown. The service hours now spent traveling downtown would be reallocated to creating a frequent transit grid in places that have never seen more than half-hourly service. Along with consolidating service onto fewer streets, these changes open up a number of new possibilities to run errands, visit the mall, and get to work via bus. We believe that both existing riders and new riders will be excited about the new options the proposal gives them for travel north of the Ship Canal.

Certainly Metro is taking a risk in re-orienting the bus network around the Link station at Husky Stadium. The loss of one-seat rides downtown (such as on Routes 71, 72, and 73) is going to be controversial and acceptance of the transfer to Link at Husky Stadium hinges on making the transfer experience at Montlake as frictionless as possible. In order to realize the full benefits of light rail to the UW, we believe that a number of issues should be addressed. They include things such as improved transit access to the station area and investments in real-time information and wayfinding. There are other small areas where the board feels other mitigating changes are warranted. Overall, we believe the current proposal does a good job of preserving existing transit connections while increasing system intelligibility and frequency.

Montlake Triangle

Until Northgate Link opens in 2021, the focus of the proposed northeast network will be the Link station at Husky Stadium. Correspondingly, the biggest hurdle in attracting people to ride Link is the transit and transfer experience surrounding the Montlake Triangle. As the station is sited far away from the amenities of the main campus, we urge the University and Sound Transit to provide sufficient facilities for waste, so the increased foot traffic doesn't negatively impact the station environment. Since the station is located at the southeast edge of campus rather than central campus; it will be very convenient for riders during events at the stadium and for patients and staff of the medical center, but less so for destinations on the main UW campus. A great many riders using this station will be going to and from campus itself or the bus lines that run through it.

The transfer experience in this part of Northeast Seattle is awkward; congestion on Montlake Boulevard coupled with a lack of bus-only lanes in this area require that riders inbound from the northeast disembark on Stevens Way and walk to the station down Rainier Vista and across the pedestrian overpass. The University will be adding a new set of stops at Mason Road, adjacent to Rainier Vista, but this still leaves a more than five minute walk to the station. We feel that it is important to route buses to stop as close to the station as possible, since the walk to transfer will still eat up time for the thousands of commuters, visitors, and other riders expected to use it each day.

Ideally, Metro would be able to shorten the transfer walking distances by running buses in both directions along Montlake Boulevard in front of the station. While this is practical in the

northbound direction, southbound Montlake Boulevard is so heavily congested that Metro cannot depend on it for southbound travel to the station. For this reason, the Sounding Board strongly supports efforts of Metro and interagency partners such as WSDOT, SDOT, and the University of Washington to incorporate a southbound bus-only lane along Montlake Boulevard. As it is now, the traffic configuration prioritizes inefficient single occupancy vehicles above higher-capacity, more space-efficient buses. A move such as this would allow buses to drop passengers much closer to the station, and would shave five minutes off of transfers from these bus routes.

Metro has made other necessary improvements to the triangle transfer area which were within its purview; stops on Pacific St were moved closer to the station, improving access for riders of Routes 48, 271, ST 540, ST 541, and ST 542. A new stop southbound on Montlake Blvd NE between NE Pacific Pl and NE Pacific St will be convenient for riders boarding outbound Routes 44 and 45. A new stop northbound on Montlake Blvd near the station will facilitate transfers to outbound Route 78 and to and from Route 65.

Neighborhoods North of the Ship Canal and East of 20th Ave NE

The neighborhoods in Northeast Seattle such as Ravenna, Wedgwood, Sand Point, and Laurelhurst experience some of the greatest changes of any area under the proposed network. Service levels along most north-south corridors are dramatically improved to 15 minutes or better and new east-west connections to Green Lake, Fremont, and South Lake Union are provided along NE 65th St. Some of these service hours come from deletion of Routes 71 and 25, changes that we know will be controversial. That the changes in this area are so bold is not without reason. Even when Link is extended to Northgate in 2021, transferring onto Link at Husky Stadium to get Downtown or to Capitol Hill will remain an attractive option for riders in many of these neighborhoods. The proposed network reflects this fact though even larger reductions in travel times downtown would be possible if a more direct path south on Montlake Blvd were a reliable option.

Route 65: Frequency improvements on all days of operation effectively double the number of trips on this route. In addition its path of travel near the station at Husky Stadium is revised. Southbound, it travels as now via Pend Oreille Rd and Stevens Way through UW campus. Then it loops back south via 15th Ave NE and east via NE Pacific St and NE Pacific Pl to stop northbound on Montlake Blvd NE near the station entrance. Its northbound routing continues north from there onto NE 45th Street, Sand Point Way NE, and its current routing. Signage and announcements should make it clear that people who prefer not to walk to the station from Stevens Way and those boarding from the station have a short walk from and to the bus stop.

Route 372: The route will add Saturday and Sunday service as well as later evening service until approximately midnight, seven days a week. This extended service will operate at least every half hour. Weekday morning and midday frequency is improved as well.

Route 78: This route replaces portions of Route 71 in the Wedgwood and View Ridge neighborhoods in response to community feedback. We feel it is unfortunate that it duplicates already frequent service along Sand Point Way between 47th Ave and 65th St, while failing to reconnect the Ravenna and Bryant neighborhoods with the University District. Daily, About 450 riders (20% of ridership) on Route 71 board on the segment along NE 65th St and roughly 25% of riders on southbound trips get off between 65th and 15th Ave and Campus Parkway. However, we appreciate that both Route 78 and revised Route 73 serve Children's Hospital. It also restores half-hour service to portions of Laurelhurst.

Routes 64/76/74: All of these peak-only routes receive more trips to help offset the loss of one seat rides downtown. In addition, Route 64 is revised to serve South Lake Union and First Hill while bypassing the downtown core. Route 76 receives more trips to make up for the losses from Route 64. NE 65th not only retains its entire peak network, but sees off-peak service doubled via new Route 16. Route 74 also receives more trips in the morning and afternoon.

Neighborhoods East of I-5 and West of 20th Ave NE

The Board believes that the U District, Roosevelt, Maple Leaf, and Northgate neighborhoods are well served by the current proposal. The deletion of Route 72 and the revision of Route 73 are likely to be controversial as they will no longer provide one-seat rides to downtown. But we believe that the transit experience from these neighborhoods to the major destinations of the downtown core, Northgate, and along University Way will in many instances improve. While one-seat ride travel time between NE 65th St and the downtown core is substantially slower via revised Route 16, it is replaced with very frequent (6-8 minute) service to and from the Montlake Triangle. Travel times to the downtown core are unlikely to be significantly reduced due to the station location at Husky Stadium and the transfer time penalty, but reliability should improve substantially particularly for “reverse peak” trips from downtown where buses currently cannot take advantage of the I-5 express lanes. Travel times and reliability to and from Capitol Hill are significantly improved. In addition, east-west connections are improved by adding frequency and a new connection to Roosevelt, Ravenna, and Sand Point along NE 65th St. We strongly support Metro’s proposed changes in these areas.

Route 48/45: The proposal splits the current Route 48 in the U-District at 45th and 15th Ave with overlap down to the Montlake Triangle. The northern portion is renumbered Route 45 and has improved frequency on Sundays from half-hourly to every 15 minutes. The split does require a transfer for riders who want to continue south of the Ship Canal but the Board believes that increased reliability gained by splitting the route better serves the majority of ridership. We also feel that Metro missed an opportunity by removing the proposed through-routing of Route 45 with Route 271. This through-routing would have provided a valuable cross-lake connection to employment centers in on the eastside where many residents of these neighborhoods work.

Route 66: The proposal turns Route 66 into a peak-only route connecting Maple Leaf and Northgate to South Lake Union, Downtown, and First Hill. Potential downsides to this change are crush-loads on the peak-only trips and disconnecting Eastlake and the Denny Triangle from Roosevelt and Maple Leaf. However, there was little negative public comment regarding these revisions during the outreach phase.

Route 67: This route gets 15 minute or better service between Northgate and the Montlake Triangle. In addition the routing is revised from running on 5th Ave NE to running along Roosevelt Way through Maple Leaf before switching over to use University Way south of Ravenna Blvd. The Board concurs with Metro that the new routing is desirable as it connects the retail hearts of each neighborhood. The Board also believes that adding a stop at NE 40th St. and University Way would facilitate transfers to routes a block east at 15th Ave NE.

Route 70: Keeping Route 70 on its current routing provides a good complement to U-Link and ensures that residents of Eastlake have access to grocery stores in the U District while students in the U District still have direct access to residences, jobs, and businesses in Eastlake and South Lake Union.

Route 72: The deletion of this route is offset by the revision to Route 73 from the U District north through Roosevelt and Maple Leaf. However, the current proposal cuts off Maple Leaf from direct service to Lake City. Having Sound Transit Route 522 stop at 80th and Lake City Way could mitigate the disconnection and also provide one seat rides downtown for parts of Maple Leaf at off-peak times.

Routes 73: The new Route 73 routing solves three problems that were brought to Metro's attention during public comment: hills between Roosevelt and 15th Ave NE in Maple Leaf that reduce transit accessibility, lack of service on the Roosevelt and 12th Ave couplet in the U District, and loss of direct service between Pinehurst and neighborhoods to the south. This routing provides a good complement to Route 67 and combines with it to provide very frequent service from UW station to the west side of campus and points north. Direct one-seat rides to downtown via this route would disappear as it would be through-routed with Route 78. The Sounding Board regretted the lack of weekend service on this route pair but failed to reach a consensus as to what solution was favored.

Neighborhoods North of Lake Union and West of I-5

The sounding board wholeheartedly supports the changes Metro is proposing for Wallingford, Green Lake, Fremont, and East Ballard. Changes in these areas are small and are mostly in the form of additional service frequency and span thanks to both Proposition 1 funding and service hours being re-allocated due to Link opening. The route changes proposed in this area are generally responses to rider feedback and supported by public comments in the outreach process. There are only a few route-level comments to make in this area:

Route 16: This route becomes a backbone of frequent all-day travel connecting many neighborhoods north of Lake Union and the Ship Canal with downtown and South Lake Union. It is revised to run along NE 65th St from Green Lake all the way to Sand Point and is taken off Aurora in order to pass through the center of Fremont before continuing along Dexter Ave into South Lake Union and onto the downtown core. Service levels along the new routing are improved to 15 minutes or more every weekday from early morning until 10 pm and from 9 am to 10 pm on weekends.

East-west service along NE 65th St was identified as a priority during the Seattle Transit Master Plan process and strongly supported by feedback from surveys during the outreach phase of Link Connections. There are certainly riders in Wallingford, particularly those who ride from near the QFC, along Meridian Ave N, and in the Tangletown area, who will experience longer trips to downtown by an estimated 7 to 10 minutes. For others along the route, fast alternatives are provided by Route 26X or the E line. This routing is likely to reduce reliability due to Fremont bridge openings during off-peak hours and weekends. Despite these drawbacks, the sounding board believes that the revised Route 16 is a good idea in its current form.

Route 26/26X: This route is extended northwards from its current terminus at Ravenna Blvd and Green Lake Way along the current Route 16 path north to North Seattle College and then directly to the Northgate Transit Center via N 92nd St and First Ave NE rather than north to Northgate Way and east to 5th Ave NE. Also, the route will follow its express routing along Aurora and onto N 40th St in Wallingford. These changes are necessary due to revisions to Route 16. The Board believes that while a few folks will be inconvenienced, the faster travel times to the transit hubs at Northgate and Downtown will draw ridership and improve reliability issues caused by the Fremont bridge.

Route 28X/28: Shifting this route onto Aurora (its current express path) is a response to rider feedback and while it does bypass the heart of Fremont, the revised routing along NW 39th St leaves less than ¼ of a mile walk to reach downtown Fremont. Reliability is improved by avoiding the Fremont Bridge.

Capitol Hill

The two primary areas slated for restructuring - NE Seattle and Capitol Hill - differ in fundamental ways. While the proposed restructure in NE Seattle is a radical structural change - leveraging Sound Transit's investment to provide unprecedented frequency and network legibility - the Capitol Hill restructure mostly represents a difference of degree rather than kind. It is a delicate compromise that reduces redundancy and increases frequency while also retaining more of the legacy network in response to public feedback.

The Sounding Board acknowledges and appreciates the difficulty of responding adequately to mixed and often conflicting public feedback, and we support the current proposal as the best compromise that can be achieved for this restructure. The proposed network preserves current endpoints for most routes while changing their intermediate pathways, increasing access to Capitol Hill Station while preserving one-seat rides for key constituencies.

Route 8: PM peak congestion on Denny Way significantly degrades basic mobility for Route 8 riders on a daily basis, even in far away neighborhoods such as Judkins Park and Rainier Beach. Though a major rethinking of the Denny corridor is the only hope for transit reliability, the Sounding Board strongly supports the proposal to split Route 8 at Mount Baker TC and use Proposition 1 funds to increase layover time. If significant improvements to Denny can be achieved, we support the original proposal for a frequent crosstown route serving Lower Queen Anne, Capitol Hill, and Madison Park.

Routes 9/60: Though the Sounding Board also recognizes the necessarily limited scope of any restructure, we are disappointed that Routes 9 and 60 were not included in this proposal. We believe that the resulting partial restructure unnecessarily duplicates service hours between the Rainier Valley, Beacon Hill, and Capitol Hill, and also between Capitol Hill Station and Downtown Seattle. As an alternative, we are supportive of the Seattle Transit Master Plan's vision to reinvest these service hours in a new crosstown trolley route serving the U District, Capitol Hill, Beacon Hill, and Othello, with a shift from Broadway to 12th Avenue as capital funding allows for new trolley wire to be installed.

Routes 11/43: The proposal reroutes Route 11 to Capitol Hill Station via the Route 43 pathway, and deletes Route 43. The Sounding Board appreciates the boldness and network legibility of the original proposal for a crosstown Route 8 between Uptown, South Lake Union, Capitol Hill, and Madison Park, but given the intractable unreliability of Denny Way and the negative feedback received from Madison Park residents, we understand and support Metro's revision to the current proposal. This proposal represents the best compromise, providing Madison Park access to Link, preserving the highest ridership portion of Route 43 on Thomas/John/Olive, and preserving a one-seat ride to Downtown for current Route 11 riders in Madison Valley and Madison Park.

Though most former Route 43 riders will enjoy enhanced connections, riders along 24th Ave E are likely to be moderately inconvenienced. Backtracking to UW Station, even when faster, will be both unintuitive and susceptible to Montlake congestion. For these riders, improving the reliability and passenger experience of transfers is the key to making this network concept function. We are particularly concerned about transfers between Routes 8, 11, and 48 at the intersection of 23rd Ave E and E John. We urge Metro to frequently assess the performance and reliability of these routes in the year following U-Link opening, and we urge Metro to work with SDOT to leverage planned investments in the corridor to add pedestrian-activated signals, curb ramps, lighting, wayfinding signage, and any other amenities that would improve the passenger experience.

The Sounding Board acknowledges the loss of service on Madison between 19th and 24th. Though inconsistent with both Madison BRT and with intelligible Madison corridor service, we feel it is an acceptable tradeoff to achieve other needed network improvements. Current Route 11 riders who board between 20th and 24th will have short walks to 19th Avenue (Route 12), E Thomas St (Route 11), or E Union St (Route 2), none of which exceed ¼ mile.

Given the common pathway that will be shared on Route 8 and Route 11 between MLK/Madison and Olive/Summit, the Sounding Board strongly recommends scheduling these routes for even 15-minute headways along their shared corridor on evenings and weekends.

Route 12: Though the Sounding Board generally supported the previous concept to delete Route 12 on 19th Avenue and shift Route 49 to Madison Street, we support the current proposal to leave Route 12 unchanged. Though the 19th Avenue tail chronically underperforms, we acknowledge its legacy value for Capitol Hill residents, and we also acknowledge that retaining the current Route 12 allows Madison to retain frequent service, allows Route 11 to connect to Capitol Hill Station, retains trolley service on Madison in the expectation of eventual BRT, and adequately mitigates the loss of Route 43.

Route 25: The Sounding Board supports the deletion of this route. One of us, a regular Route 25 rider, acknowledged that it is one of the most underused routes in the system. Current riders along Fuhrman and Boyer will be required to go to 24th Ave E, Eastlake Ave E, or Harvard Ave E to reach the U District and to Eastlake or Harvard to reach the downtown core. With a short walk, restored Route 47 will serve riders near Lakeview/Belmont. Users along the Laurelhurst loop, an admittedly small number, will be required to walk to the new Route 78 or to Sand Point Way NE, but will also enjoy double the frequency. Also, like most others in Northeast Seattle, riders to and from Laurelhurst must transfer at UW Station to continue to the downtown core.

Route 49: The Sounding Board supports retention of Route 49 between the U District, North Broadway, and Capitol Hill Station. However, we feel that continued Route 49 service to Pike/Pike is excessive given the retention of Route 10 along its current pathway. We acknowledge that Metro received comments about both overserving and underserving Pike/Pine, but we feel that 7.5 minute combined evening frequencies between Downtown and Broadway/Pine are excessive, especially given inadequate 30 minute evening and weekend frequency on Route 8. We urge Metro to look at reinvesting service hours from Routes 9, 49, and 60 in order to boost evening and weekend service on Route 8 to frequent levels.

Other Areas

Other areas are impacted to some degree by changes more directly related to Northeast Seattle and Capitol Hill. The areas west of I-5 are discussed above. Except as noted, the Board endorses these changes.

Eastside: Sound Transit will create new Route 541 for 12 to 15 weekday peak trips between Overlake and Campus Parkway in the University District. Some Route 545 trips will be converted to Route 542 weekday peak trips which will operate between Bear Creek P&R and the University area. Route 540 will have revised routing via Houghton P&R and I-405 for faster trips, alternating with Metro Route 277. As mentioned elsewhere, some stops in the Montlake Triangle will be moved to be closer to the U-Link station at Husky Stadium.

South Lake Union: The more-frequent Route 16 will operate on Dexter, closer to employment locations in South Lake Union. Revised routing of routes 26 and 28 on Aurora Avenue moves them further from those locations along with their through-route partners routes 131 and 132, but reliability of these pairs should improve by avoiding the Fremont Bridge. Route 64 will change to serve Fairview Ave N in South Lake Union and Route 66 will become a peak-only route also revised to serve South Lake Union. In addition, Route 70 will begin later operations weekday and Saturday evenings and gain all-day service on Sundays. Route 8 will have added midday weekday trips and may experience greater reliability from having been split from its southern portion (new Route 38.) Absent infrastructure changes to further improve reliability (discussed elsewhere), Route 8 could benefit from further frequency additions, especially in the evenings.

Southeast Seattle: This area benefits most from the revisions to routes 8 and 48. The southern portions of these routes should see reliability improvements by being split from their northern portions. For Route 8, the split is at Mount Baker, with Route 38 covering the southern portion. For Route 48, the split is in the University area, with the northern portion renumbered Route 45. Route 48 also sees greater frequency in the mornings and middays, seven days a week. Both splits require a transfer for certain riders: those continuing past Mount Baker (8 and 38) and the U District (45 and 48.)

Overall recommendations

As we've noted above, many routes in this proposal are hindered by infrastructure challenges. Additionally, there are some areas where we believe the system might run more effectively with changes in the distribution of service hours. With such a large restructuring, we also recognize the importance of evaluating its efficacy and maintaining the flexibility to adjust service as needed.

Infrastructure

Metro cannot solve infrastructure issues alone. We urge Metro and its partner agencies and institutions, including Sound Transit, SDOT, WSDOT, Seattle Police Department, and the University of Washington to work together to reconfigure roads, reposition transit stops, and address the other issues that prevent the network from performing as effectively as it could.

In particular, we recommend the following infrastructure improvements:

Wayfinding and Real-Time Transit Information: As described previously, the Montlake Triangle will become a critical transit hub as riders transfer to and from the light rail station at Husky Stadium. Because there are four separate outbound bus stops for different routes on or opposite the triangle itself, and more on Stevens Way, extensive wayfinding signage is needed throughout the area. This should consist of real-time bus arrival displays at the station and each of these stops to provide a comprehensive view of stop locations, arrival times, and destinations for each bus and train. Essentially, Montlake Triangle should be treated as a single, multi-bay transit center, with area and Sound Transit station maps replicated at each bus stop in the Montlake Triangle. Additional wayfinding signage should direct people to the pedestrian overpass as a means to avoid street-level intersections. During the first few weeks after the restructure, Metro and Sound Transit should provide even more extensive guidance to help riders navigate the system.

Though transfers at the Capitol Hill station are closer together, wayfinding signage and real-time transit information will also be crucial there. Additionally, wayfinding and real-time transit information should be provided at other busy or confusing transfer points, such as 23rd & John, University Way, and Campus Parkway.

We also encourage Metro to emphasize Link stations on headsigns for all routes either terminating at or passing through a Link station (e.g. “UW Link Station, via Green Lake” for Route 45, and “Madison Park, via Capitol Hill Station” for Route 11). This is especially important for Route 48, as traveling north to the UW station to catch a train south to downtown is counterintuitive.

Montlake Blvd Southbound Transit Lanes: Because buses cannot travel reliably on southbound Montlake, routes have been designed to go through the UW campus, which creates longer walking paths for transfers to the light rail station and can cause confusion. While serving the UW campus will continue to be a priority, a southbound bus-only lane on Montlake Blvd would make direct, more intuitive routing possible where appropriate.

Denny Way Reconfiguration: Congestion on Denny Way makes Route 8 notoriously unreliable. Increasing frequency on Route 8 will not be truly effective until the bus is able to travel Denny Way at predictable speeds. We understand that Metro and SDOT are currently studying possible remedies for Denny Way, and we encourage them to find a solution as soon as possible. In the meantime, we'd welcome incremental improvements to help ease the painful situation for Route 8 riders.

Enforcement: SDOT has been adding bus-only lanes to city streets in a laudable effort to provide priority to transit. However, not all drivers honor the posted restrictions. SPD, partnering with SDOT and Metro, needs to enforce bus-only lanes throughout the city.

Sound Transit Route 522 stop on Lake City Way: The deletion of Route 72 in the current proposal disconnects the Roosevelt area from Lake City and removes a reasonably fast one-seat ride downtown. Adding a stop for ST Route 522 on Lake City Way between 15th Ave NE and NE 80th Street could mitigate both shortcomings at minimal expense. The Sounding Board strongly urges Sound Transit to add this stop.

Metro Route 67 stop at NE 40th Street & NE University Way NE: Adding a stop at NE 40th Street & NE University Way NE would facilitate transfer to east-west buses to and from campus and north-south routes on 15th NE.

Distribution of service hours

Generally, we are pleased with the way the service hours have been distributed. Greater frequency throughout the system should make it more accessible to more people. Additionally, the greater frequency in evening and weekend service on many routes will provide more flexibility to people who are choosing whether to drive or take transit to evening and weekend activities. However, there are a few areas we believe service hours could be redistributed more effectively:

Shifting Hours from Route 49 to Route 8: Route 8 should have more frequency on evenings and weekends. Meanwhile, Route 49 provides frequent service that largely duplicates the light rail service, as it runs from Pike/Pine to Broadway to the U District. We believe it would be appropriate to shift some service hours from Route 49 to Route 8.

Redundant Service on Pike/Pine: Currently, many riders rely on buses on Pike and Pine to travel from Capitol Hill to Downtown. With the new light rail station on Capitol Hill, most of those riders will find it more convenient to take the train. The Sounding Board believes the proposal provides excessive service on Pike/Pine, and encourages Metro to monitor those routes for opportunities to shift service hours to other corridors.

Evaluating the Restructure

We are glad that Metro recognized the opportunity afforded by the University Link light rail extension to re-envision service in Northeast Seattle and Capitol Hill. The high-capacity, fast connection to downtown allows more efficient transfer opportunities and frees up service hours to benefit other corridors. The resulting system, as proposed, is by far more logical and more useful than our current system.

Metro's proposal includes bold and significant changes to the network. While we believe Metro's planners have carefully considered the impacts of these changes, it's impossible to predict exactly what will happen. Additionally, riders will need some time to adapt, and their eventual traffic patterns may not be immediately apparent. Therefore, we encourage Metro to closely monitor ridership levels throughout the system periodically over the next few years.

Though Metro regularly monitors operations and ridership after its service revisions, a large system change warrants more comprehensive evaluation. King County should devote resources to assessment, including surveys designed to capture the ridership behavior of the same individuals before and after the changes. Given the scope of the changes, Metro will need to be prepared to adjust service levels as warranted, especially in areas of overcrowding. Immediately after implementation, if there are capacity issues with Link light rail trains during non-peak times, Metro and Sound Transit should add train capacity or provide additional bus capacity to meet this demand. Additionally, Metro should perform a more thorough administrative review of the changes in this proposal one year after they're implemented, when ridership data should be clearer.

Sounding Board Process

This project generated a lot of impassioned feedback from community members and stakeholders, and it was the Sounding Board's job to help prioritize this feedback. We

deliberated over the possible negative impacts of the new system, but on balance feel that the new structure will positively impact the great majority of riders. Though some neighborhoods were unhappy with the last public proposal, we tried to balance their concerns against those who didn't speak out, and advocate for a fair and useful system. Unfortunately, this does not mean that every person served by the network is better off, but it does mean that the new allocation of resources creates a better system for the great majority of users. Indeed, though one of our Sounding Board members is a regular rider of Route 25, proposed for deletion, she still acknowledges that the resources given to that route are under-utilized, and are better-used to bolster areas with more demand.

In fact, setting aside certain necessary investments outside the scope of this particular transit plan, the biggest criticism we can levy against the restructuring process is that it took such a huge event to trigger it. Our project area was limited to Northeast Seattle, Capitol Hill, and certain adjacent areas, but we had no difficulty thinking of areas across the city and the county that would benefit from such a process. The difficulty of a transit system that stretches as far back as ours does is that it was amended and appended bit by bit as different needs arose, but infrequently with the opportunity to redesign the system as a whole. During this process, the planners at Metro were given free rein to redesign the network from scratch, and as a result, the product reflects current needs rather than past patterns. We would encourage Metro to apply similar methods to restructures of this scope to expand the area accessible by frequent transit.

A consensus report respectfully submitted by the Link Connections Sounding Board

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- *Sean Peterfreund, Madison Valley/Central Area*
- *Zach Shaner, Capitol Hill (writing committee member)*
- *Erin Tighe, Northeast Seattle (writing committee member)*
- *David Wiggins, Madrona*