



CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON
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May 11, 2015

Ron Lewis
Sound Transit
401 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ron:

On May 4th our City Council unanimously approved the attached Town Center Sound Transit/Parking Subcommittee Report included with Agenda Bill 5068. The Council also reviewed your May 1st letter addressed to the Council and me.

With respect to your letter the Council asked that I express its concern that, while your letter described a willingness to continue our discussions, it did not respond to the specific issues raised by the City.

First, as detailed in the April 28 memorandum, the concept presented on April 20th envisions an operation of a magnitude that this Council cannot support and is therefore, we believe, not a useful starting point for further discussions.

Second, as we expect that a substantial revision to what has been developed to date will take time, Council proposes to now engage in independent discussions regarding mitigating loss of mobility. As you are aware, those discussions are required by the 2004 Amendment to be concluded prior to closure of the center roadway.

I believe it is important that we reconvene our working group, together with Metro as soon as feasible. I will ask our staff to contact you to find a date for our next meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Bassett".

Bruce Bassett
Mayor



MEMORANDUM

City of Mercer Island

DATE: April 28, 2015
TO: City Council
FROM: City Council Town Center Sound Transit/Parking Subcommittee
(Mayor Bruce Bassett, Deputy Mayor Dan Grausz, Councilmember Debbie Bertlin)
RE: Bus Intercept and Sound Transit Funding Update

This is a follow-up to our prior report of March 26, 2015. Since that report, the City of Bellevue and Sound Transit have reached agreement on various issues involving East Link Light Rail. There are aspects of that agreement as well as the 2009 Agreement between Sound Transit and the University of Washington that may be relevant to further discussions between Mercer Island and Sound Transit.

In addition, on April 23 the Sound Transit Board of Directors approved the 60% Base Line budget for East Link. The budget assumes the construction of a Bus Intercept on Mercer Island. Sound Transit documentation acknowledges that progress would continue on the basis of concurrence with the City, and Sound Transit continuing discussions of funding additional commuter parking on Mercer Island. The Subcommittee has repeatedly made it clear to Sound Transit that Council has not approved Bus Intercept.

On April 20, 2015, members of the Subcommittee and City Manager met with Sound Transit and King County Metro staff to receive an update on the Bus Intercept project. The Subcommittee requested this meeting as we felt our community and Council had been dealing for too long with insufficient information and ambiguity on a number of fronts regarding the potential impacts of the proposed project. We acknowledge this meeting was held before Sound Transit and Metro had fully developed their proposal. The information provided, however, was sufficient to enable us to unanimously conclude that Bus Intercept, as presented by Sound Transit and Metro, is not a basis for further negotiations. The following paragraphs describe what was shown.

1. **The physical construct:** We were shown a computerized model still under development that Sound Transit and Metro have been working on for the purpose of providing Islanders an approximate representation. The model provided us with a visual depiction of the actual operations of Bus Intercept and included the flow of buses into, out of and within the facility as well as on City streets through Town Center and along North Mercer Way. Automobile traffic was also modeled. The representation, though incomplete, did convey a sufficient sense of the magnitude of the Bus Intercept's physicality:
 - a. Three lanes for buses on the west side of 80th Ave. with the western most lane having five spaces for loading/unloading, the eastern most lane having four layover spaces, and

the center lane used for buses to enter and exit the facility as well as go into and out of the loading/unloading and layover spaces.

- b. Two holding spaces on the 80th Ave. off-ramp from I-90 westbound that could be used temporarily if for some reason it was not possible for an arriving bus to immediately enter the facility.
- c. Expansion of the bus pull-out area on the south side of North Mercer Way to accommodate up to 4 buses.

The proposal would result in a substantial facility on 80th Ave. and a net increase of at least 12 bus spaces on Mercer Island.

2. **Operational Parameters:** Metro has not yet provided firm operational parameters or data that would sufficiently inform us as to bus volumes, bus routes on Mercer Island, how many buses would travel through the Town Center, or the number of buses parked or driving on Mercer Island at different times of day. Consequently, we are unable to come to definitive conclusions as to these issues. We have, however, made it clear to Sound Transit and Metro that under any construct, an agreement acceptable to Council will include firm and enforceable limits on key operational parameters such as these.
3. **Traffic flow:** There would be two general purpose traffic lanes on 80th Ave. (one in each direction). Traffic flow through the area would be controlled by programmed traffic lights at North Mercer Way and SE 27th that would enable buses to cross both lanes of general traffic over 80th Ave. as needed, from and to I-90. Although the supplement to the FEIS is still not released, it was communicated by Sound Transit that Level of Service C could be maintained at both intersections. As traffic flow is a topic of keen concern to our citizens, we anticipate close Council scrutiny of LOS assumptions and resulting data should new constructs be proposed.
4. **Pedestrian, bicycle flow and safety:** Sound Transit and Metro had not yet sufficiently developed the model to show how the flow of pedestrians and bicycles would be handled through the area. They did confirm there would be a pedestrian walkway of unspecified width to the west of the loading/unloading lane. Assuming this would also serve as the place that passengers use for purposes of getting on and off the buses, we can envision adverse impacts on passenger and bicycle mobility on 80th Avenue.

We recognize and appreciate the diligent efforts of Sound Transit and Metro in developing a Bus Intercept concept that they had hoped would be acceptable to the Council and Islanders. We further appreciate that transit service is of regional importance, that Islanders have consistently supported light rail at the ballot and that Islanders use existing bus service and will be significant users of light rail once it becomes operational.

Based on what we were shown, however, we have serious doubts as to the viability of Bus Intercept on Mercer Island as presented. There does not seem to be any combination of minor revisions and mitigating efforts that could lead us to recommend its consideration or anticipate its approval by the City Council.

The magnitude of the proposed facility and the operating flexibility that Sound Transit and Metro seem to require make it more important than ever that these and all relevant agencies revisit other options to locating Bus Intercept on Mercer Island. An operation and physical infrastructure of the scale that was

presented would not be compatible with the available physical area, existing road/pedestrian/bicycle network or surrounding uses, nor would it bring any obvious benefit to Islanders.

More broadly, Council and Subcommittee discussions with Sound Transit to date have considered both Bus Intercept and mitigation for loss of mobility. Since the Subcommittee believes the Bus Intercept as presented is not tenable, for the present we recommend the two issues should be separated for the purposes of negotiations. Negotiations regarding loss of mobility will necessarily involve both Sound Transit and WSDOT, be complex, and likely require retaining outside legal counsel and transportation experts to assist us in that effort. The Subcommittee recommends this effort be initiated immediately.

With the Council's concurrence, we will communicate these two messages to Sound Transit and Metro:

1. The Bus Intercept as reflected in the simulation and discussions is untenable on the basis of its physicality; lack of acceptable operational limitations; and traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle impacts.
2. We propose negotiations regarding mitigation for loss of mobility for the present be a separate and distinct effort (apart from the proposed Bus Intercept).