



**Who is CORE?** We are concerned neighbors who live in LFP, who are sharing information of ST3 and its impacts on our community. **Contact:** [info@lfpcore.org](mailto:info@lfpcore.org) [www.lfpcore.org](http://www.lfpcore.org)

March 1, 2023

**An open letter to the Sound Transit Board of Directors, CEO Julie Timm, and CFO John Henry, concerning Sound Transit's plans to build a 1.2-mile dedicated eastbound bus lane (BAT) in Lake Forest Park:**

**Over the past several months, Lake Forest Park residents and elected officials have emphasized four critical points to the Sound Transit Board and staff regarding design and construction of the planned 1.2-mile dedicated eastbound bus rapid transit (BRT) lane through Lake Forest Park. Of foremost importance are:**

- 1. The significant loss of property and probable significant adverse environmental impacts to our city.**
- 2. The lack of good faith, effective engagement with the citizens of Lake Forest Park, including homeowners who stand to lose use and enjoyment of their properties.**
- 3. The continuing requests from our city's Council, Mayor and administration to briefly pause the process in order to study project refinements that could save millions of dollars in construction costs, resulting in less property acquisitions and less harmful environmental impacts, without undue delay.**
- 4. The impassioned, reasoned advocacy from Lake Forest Park citizen groups for the evaluation of an alternative to a dedicated eastbound bus lane, urging instead the use of bus queue jumps (already planned for NE 145th Street), signal priority along SR 522 and redesigned bus stops consistent with the scale of the area that would maximize tree conservation.**

**The citizens of Lake Forest Park deserve complete responses to the above concerns rather than the broad generalities they have been given from Sound Transit staff. Accordingly, we request that the Sound Transit Board specifically instruct staff to examine the queue jump option, as outlined in critical point 4, above.** Instead of a dedicated 1.2-mile eastbound bus lane, utilize bus queue jumps and signal priority along Bothell Way. Allow for reduced bus stop footprints at NE 153<sup>rd</sup> and NE 165<sup>th</sup> streets which have minimal numbers of bus boardings and disembarkings. In addition to savings in construction costs, reduced property acquisitions and less irreversible adverse environmental impacts, 50%-80% of the transit time savings would remain intact.

**What is the basis for our requests?** The following overview is derived from documents obtained from the Sound Transit website and Freedom of Information Act requests. **It details the enormous cost to taxpayers for the purpose of reducing the SR 522 bus transit time through Lake Forest Park during the afternoon weekday eastbound rush hour, from South Shoreline Light Rail Station to Bothell, by only 2.3 minutes.**

Analysis from Documents:

Assuming the figures used here are reasonably accurate compared to more current, undiscoverable cost analysis by City on the SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT, to us there seems to be a straightforward conclusion here. The gain, 2.3 minutes estimated faster bus commute through Lake Forest Park, is not worth the pain. The enormous expense to obtain it, the fact that there are much less expensive design alternatives, that Sound Transit has a multi-billion dollar "affordability gap," and that there is an obligation specified in the annual realignment review to look, every year, for cost-saving options to current plans all require the Sound Transit Board to review the return on investment on this section of SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT, running through Lake Forest Park, to determine if there is a more cost-effective alternative. It is Sound Transit Board's fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers, and the residents of Lake Forest Park, to act.

**1. How did Sound Transit choose the current design (BAT lane and the "West Shift") for Lake Forest Park?**

a. In 2019 and 2020, Sound Transit reviewed three alternative design approaches here:

i. **March 2019:**

1. ***Option 1: Refinement 1 Lake Forest Park "Safe Highways" Preferred.***  
This refinement calls for a 1.2-mile dedicated eastbound BAT lane running exclusively on the east side of Bothell Way.
2. ***Option 2: Refinement Alignment 2. This refinement would have the eastbound BAT lane run about half the distance on Bothell Way, from NE 155th to just past 41st Street south, almost to the Town Center.***

ii. **Early 2020:**

1. ***Lake Forest Park "West Shift" design.*** Sound Transit announced it was "considering a shift of roadway widening to the west side of SR 522 to reduce property impacts and ensure more residents can maintain access to their homes."

iii. **June 2020:**

1. ***Sound Transit selects refinement 1 with the "West Shift" design.*** even though it acknowledges it "costs more," citing the following limited rationale:
2. Shifting the roadway widening to the west allows more property owners to stay in their homes and minimizes the overall change to the neighborhood."
3. They could avoid as many as "6 full property acquisitions".
4. "Making use of existing right-of-way reduces the need for property purchases."
5. "Widening SR 522 exclusively on the east side of the road between 38th Avenue NE and 41st Avenue NE in Lake Forest Park could cause significant impacts to driveways."

- b. No documentation was discovered that explains the process or analysis done selecting the "Refinement 1" along with the "West Shift design change, analysis that examined:
  - i. Cost of property acquisitions (not right of way), including total private properties impacted (the number of partial and full), the total square footage required, and the estimated cost of acquiring the properties.
  - ii. Construction costs and time to build.
  - iii. Comparative reduction of bus transit times.
  - iv. The number of tree removals required.
  - v. The need for, extent, and cost of retaining walls required for each design.
  
- c. **September 22, 2021**, immediately after the completion of Sound Transit's "Realignment Process," the Board unanimously approved Resolution R2021-07 making SR522/145th BRT a "project to be built" at the cost of \$544mm. Two years later, the cost had increased 25% to \$651 million, with warnings additional cost increases and delays were likely.

**2. Lack of Public Engagement: Sound Transit Community Outreach efforts in Lake Forest Park.**

- a. ***Open Houses/Community Meetings:***
  - i. Only 2 Sound Transit SR 522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT Community Open House Meetings were held since the "West Shift" design decision, one in 2020 and another in March 2021. They generated 458 comments (emails, notes on yellow stickies, and written comments); only 47 people from Lake Forest Park attended the 2021 Open House.
  - ii. Sound Transit announced plans to hold an Open House in Lake Forest Park on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 from 3-7 pm—an inconvenient time for parents and working people, guaranteeing limited participation at this open house.
  
- b. ***Community Outreach:***
  - i. Sound Transit staff have continuously conflated legally required contacts with property owners concerning property acquisitions with "community outreach." Sound Transit Staff reported 550 inquiries received from residents and homeowners in Lake Forest Park over the past two years, providing no facts or figures as to the source or subject of the inquiries but suggesting many of these were related to property acquisitions.
  
- c. **SR522/145th BRT Elected Leadership Committee:**
  - i. The SR522/145<sup>th</sup> Elected Leadership Committee has not met since February 22, 2019. Of the members listed on Sound Transit's website, three of the five members no longer serve on their respective City Councils; two of the three Sound Transit Board members listed no longer serve on the Sound Transit Board. No meetings are currently scheduled.

3. **How much is Sound Transit spending in Lake Forest Park to build SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT?**

The document “Phase 1 Refinement Report” dated March 2019 (pg. 5.2) has breakouts of costs by City for “property acquisition” and “cost of construction and construction management.”

- a. **It shows the disproportionate investment in Lake Forest Park.**
- b. Of the estimated (adjusted for inflation) cost of \$145mm for property acquisitions, 67% is spent in Lake Forest Park.
- c. Of the estimated cost of \$318mm construction and construction management, 49% is spent in Lake Forest Park.
- d. Of the estimated \$464mm total cost of property acquisitions and construction) on SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT, 55% is spent on LFP.
- e. It costs \$148mm per mile for roadway in Lake Forest Park, 2.8 times the average for the entire SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT.
- f. It costs \$109mm per minute of saved bus transit time in Lake Forest Park (2.3 minutes), 2.1 times the average for the entire SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT.

PM Weekday 3 Hour Peak Commute Bus Transit Time Saved No Build vs Build 2042										
City	Property Acquisition and Permits	Percent Property Acquisition & Permits	Total Cost Constructin & Construction Mgmt	Percent Construction & Construction Mgmt	Total Cost	Percent Total Cost	Miles of Roadway	Transit Time Saved (Minutes)	Total Cost Per Mile of Roadway	Cost Per Minute Saved
Seattle/Shoreline	\$45,351,120	31%	\$63,445,900	20%	\$108,797,020	23%	1.4	9.7	\$77,712,157	\$11,160,665
<b>Lake Forest Park</b>	<b>\$97,370,700</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>\$155,760,500</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>\$253,131,200</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>\$148,900,706</b>	<b>\$109,895,820</b>
Kenmore	\$0	0%	\$13,956,700	4%	\$13,956,700	3%	3.3	1.7	\$4,229,303	\$8,225,886
Bothell	\$2,399,900	2%	\$85,755,650	27%	\$88,155,550	19%	2.2	1.9	\$40,070,705	\$45,962,226
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$145,121,720</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$318,918,750</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$464,040,470</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>\$53,958,194</b>	<b>\$29,620,278</b>

- g. In addition, 54% of the 204 homes and business owners on SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT required to give up all or part of their property are in Lake Forest Park accounting for 67% of the total cost of property acquisitions and permits.

4. **How much dirt and topsoil excavation and fill needs to happen to build SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT?**

- a. Sound Transit’s SEPA Environmental Check List, March 2021 page 42 provides details on the amount of excavation and fill that must take place by City. The chart below shows the details:

City	Total cubic yards of dirt and topsoil removed	Total cubic yards of dirt and top soil moved in	Total cubic yards of dirt and topsoil moved in and out	% by City	# Trucks loads required
Seattle	7,800	640	8,440	6%	444
Shoreline	600	1,600	2,200	2%	116
LFP	56,000	34,000	90,000	64%	4,737
Kenmore	6,000	7,200	13,200	9%	695
Bothell	16,000	10,000	26,000	19%	1,368
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,400</b>	<b>53,440</b>	<b>139,840</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,360</b>
<b>Dump Truck Capacity/ Cubic Yards</b>	<b>19</b>				

- b. A total of 139,840 cubic yards of material, mostly dirt and topsoil, must be hauled in and out of Lake Forest Park to complete the project. The average weight of a cubic yard of dirt and topsoil is one ton.
- c. 64% or 90,000 cubic feet of this material is to be hauled in and out of Lake Forest Park.
- d. Assuming the maximum capacity of a dump truck is 19 cubic feet, it means that a minimum of 4,737 dump truck loads are required in Lake Forest Park alone.
- e. If the work were to take a full year, it would require 91 dump truck loads in and out of Lake Forest Park each week for 52 weeks.
- f. The impact to SR522, the noise, damage to the environment and roadway are not documented in the Sound Transit SEPA Environmental Checklist document.

5. How much does the dedicated 1.2-mile eastbound bus lane in Lake Forest Park contribute to the estimated 15.7-minute reduced bus transit time during the eastbound PM weekday rush hour trip from the South Shoreline Light Rail Station to Bothell?

a. The spreadsheet:

“SR522BRTBus2024and2042NoBuildandBuildTravelTimesummary.xlsxs” has detailed transit time estimates by intersection "build Vs. no-build" for PM weekday peak hours. It shows:

- i. Lake Forest Park contributes an average of 2.2 minutes (14%) to the total 15.7 minutes, **with an eastbound BAT Lane.**
- ii. 62% (9.8 of the 15.7 total minutes saved) occurs in the 145th St section, **which has no BAT lanes.**

Time Saved Between Intersections, Eastbound Weekday PM Peak Hours.				
Intersection	Transit Time Saved (min)	% of Transit Time Saved	Cumulative Time Saved	City
Start: 5th/148th	-	-	-	Seattle/ Shoreline
145th/15th	7.9	50%	50%	Seattle/ Shoreline
145th/30th	1.9	12%	62%	Seattle/ Shoreline
Bothell Way/ 153rd	0.5	3%	66%	Lake Forest Park
Bothell Way/ 165th	0.9	6%	72%	Lake Forest Park
LFP/Bothell Way	0.8	5%	77%	Lake Forest Park
Bothell Way/61st	0.4	3%	79%	Kenmore
Bothell Way/68th	0.2	1%	81%	Kenmore
Kenmore P&R	0.1	1%	82%	Kenmore
98th/182nd	1.0	6%	88%	Kenmore
185th/104th	0.8	5%	93%	Bothell
UWB	1.1	7%	100%	Bothell
End: Beardslee/195th	-	-	-	Bothell
Total	15.7	100%	100%	

b. **Without BAT lanes**, the bus's average speed on 145<sup>th</sup> increases 133% from 4.8 MPH (no build) to 11.2 MPH (with build). **With an eastbound BAT lane**, the bus speed in Lake Forest Park increases 33% from 10.7 MPH/no build to 14.2 MPH w/build.

**6. What is the status of SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT? Based on the Agency Progress Report Capital Programs published December 2022, pg. 168:**

- a. The current forecast for (SR522/145<sup>th</sup> BRT) completion is Q4 2027, or a total of 10 months past the Sound Transit Board realignment milestone. The realignment schedule is aggressive, and staff have routinely informed the Board that the current schedule is inconsistent with the target and affordable schedule.

It is not too late to compare the cost and benefit of the Queue Jump Proposal to the current 60% Design Package with an analysis of the real impacts to our City: tree removal, continuous tall retaining walls, property acquisitions, and roadway noise. The Sound Transit Board has a fiduciary responsibility it has so far failed to exercise. It has the obligation outlined in the annual realignment process to step in now and to do the right thing for taxpayers, transit riders, and the City of Lake Forest Park.

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Documents Referenced in this Report:

- 1) **SR 522/NE 145<sup>th</sup> Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Phase 1 Refinement Report FINAL March 2019.**  
Page 5.2 presents City by city cost breakouts.
- 2) **SR522BRTBus2024and2042NoBuildandBuildTravelTimessummary.xlsxs**  
shows bus travel times build Vs. no build scenarios by bus stop.
- 3) **AE 0055-17 6.2.1 Transportation Technical Memorandum, March 2021,**  
provides detailed information for each City concerning build Vs. no-build scenarios for transit times and LOS (length of service).
- 4) **Agency Progress Report Capital Programs published December 2022, pg. 168.**