File #: Res 32055, **Version:** 1

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION relating to Sound Transit; providing recommendations to the Sound Transit Board as to the selection of the Preferred Alternative for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project to be studied in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

WHEREAS, a Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) was created for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish County region by action of their respective county councils pursuant to RCW 81.112.030; and

WHEREAS, in November 2016, the voters of the three-county Sound Transit district approved Sound Transit 3, a funding measure to expand the regional transit system including the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) project, and which included a Representative Alignment that described generally the alignment and the number and location of light rail stations to be provided; and

WHEREAS, on May 23, 2019, through Motion M2019-51, the Sound Transit Board identified the Preferred Alternative, Preferred Alternative with Third Party Funding, and other alternatives to be studied in the WSBLE Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS); and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle was a Cooperating Agency in the development of the WSBLE DEIS and continues to work collaboratively with Sound Transit through a Partnering Agreement, affirmed by Resolution 31788, and a Project Administration Agreement, authorized by Ordinance 125563; and

WHEREAS, on January 28, 2022, Sound Transit released the WSBLE DEIS for public review with a 90-day public comment period through April 28, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the WSBLE DEIS provided new information on the impacts of the project and provided the basis for updating cost estimates for the alternatives studied; and

WHEREAS, the City submitted extensive comments on the WSBLE DEIS to Sound Transit, identifying a

range of areas where additional analysis is needed to sufficiently demonstrate compliance with City codes and regulations, assess potential project impacts, as well as identify where more work is needed to articulate potential mitigation strategies as required under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) as part of the WSBLE Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS); and

WHEREAS, the City has engaged with stakeholders throughout the WSBLE project area to help community understand and interpret the analysis in the DEIS, as well as gauge interest and concerns in the potential project locations and proposed project design through a broad range of venues, and has worked to incorporate priorities and feedback from that community engagement into its consideration of the WSBLE DEIS and a Preferred Alternative for the WSBLE project; and

WHEREAS, the City and Sound Transit have partnered on a Joint Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) to advance equitable distribution of project benefits, avoid disparate impacts, and promote project-wide RET outcomes, as well as address the specific needs of the RET-priority communities of Chinatown-International District (CID) and Delridge; and

WHEREAS, the Sound Transit Board is expected to take action to confirm or modify the Preferred Alternative to be studied in the WSBLE FEIS; and

WHEREAS, the Sound Transit Board may also consider cost saving ideas and design refinements that may require additional environmental review; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:

Section 1. City's goals and objectives. The City recognizes the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) to be one of the largest infrastructure projects in City history, bringing both transformative opportunity to improve access and mobility for Seattle community members, and likelihood of significant impacts as the project is constructed through existing neighborhoods. In recommending a Preferred

Alternative for study in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), the City seeks to maximize benefit while minimizing impact and harm, by advancing alternatives that further the following values:

A. Racial equity. Promote equitable benefits and avoid disparate impacts.

B. Safety + user experience. Locate and design stations to maximize ridership and access to the Sound Transit system, providing for safe access and circulation that minimizes pedestrian risk.

C. Community. Minimize residential and business displacement and impacts to existing neighborhood assets; ensure compatibility with housing, employment, and industrial land uses; and maximize opportunities to further equitable TOD and other community-identified priorities.

D. Environmental Protection. Minimize impacts to sensitive environmental areas.

E. Financial Stewardship. Facilitate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars by seeking highest benefit for dollars spent, helping maintain the project schedule and budget, and prioritizing future expansion opportunities in planning and design.

Section 2. The City Council and Mayor of Seattle commend Sound Transit for its diligent work on the WSBLE Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The City encourages the Sound Transit Board to select as the Preferred Alternative the best system for the long-term needs of riders, surrounding communities, and the broader regional system. In consideration of the City's goals and objectives for the project and information provided in the DEIS, the City Council and Mayor support the following Preferred Alternative to be advanced into the FEIS for the WSBLE project.

A. West Seattle Junction Segment (Avalon and Alaska Junction stations): Preference for WSJ-5, medium tunnel to Alaska Junction station at 41st Street SW with retained cut Avalon station.

B. Delridge Segment (Delridge station): Preference for DEL-6, elevated lower height Delridge station at Andover, conditioned on additional refinements to optimize transit integration and user experience for commuters arriving from Racial Equity Toolkit (RET)-identified communities including South Delridge and White Center. The additional refinements should include the creation of a transit access study for areas further

south in the corridor that will access the new station by bus, include protections for Longfellow Creek, and minimize potential conflicts between pedestrians and freight movements in the area of the proposed Andover Station.

C. Duwamish Crossing Segment: Preference for DUW-1a, South crossing, conditioned on adequate mitigation of impacts to parks, recreational areas, and natural habitat at Pigeon Point and the West Duwamish Greenbelt.

D. SODO Segment (SODO station): Preference for SODO-1b, at-grade south SODO station, conditioned on resolution of engineering challenges associated with additional overpasses needed along Lander and Holgate Streets.

E. Chinatown-International District (CID) Segment (CID station): The City is not able to state a preference given inadequate information in the DEIS related to business and residential impacts, construction and transportation impacts, and potential mitigation strategies. The City recommends that Sound Transit advance a focused six- to nine-month planning process with CID and Pioneer Square community members and community-based organizations, Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, King County Metro, and other interested partners. This process should focus on the 4th shallow and 5th shallow alternatives, with the aim of more in-depth work in community to provide mitigation and improvements to these alternatives, and ultimately providing the Sound Transit Board with improved alternatives to consider advancing into the FEIS. This process would:

1. More fully address the community's concerns with the existing alternatives, helping ensure complete information is provided on potential impacts as well as strategies available to avoid/minimize those impacts, and providing mitigation where impacts cannot be avoided;

2. Develop modifications to the 4th and 5th Avenue shallow alternatives that reduce impacts to community and to local and regional transportation systems, reduce the costs of these alternatives, and develop more complete mitigation plans; and

3. Initiate a broader community development strategy that furthers RET outcomes and addresses project and cumulative impacts and historic harm to community from past infrastructure projects, and engages the City, Sound Transit, King County, and philanthropic and other partners.

F. Downtown Segment (stations at Midtown, Westlake, Denny, South Lake Union, and Seattle Center): Preference for a mix-and-match approach to the Downtown segment that optimizes stations from both DT-1 and DT-2 alternatives as follows:

1. Midtown Station: DT-1, tunnel Midtown station at 5th Avenue,

2. Westlake Station: DT-1, tunnel Westlake station at 5th Avenue,

3. Denny Station: DT-2, tunnel Denny station at Terry Street, conditioned on refinements to provide station access from the north and south of Denny Way, and connection to DT-1 South Lake Union station at Harrison,

4. South Lake Union: DT-1, tunnel South Lake Union station at Harrison Street, and

5. Seattle Center: DT-2, tunnel Seattle Center station at Mercer Street, conditioned on the need to ensure a mitigation plan is developed and fully implemented to address traffic and access impacts associated with construction along Mercer Street, and to avoid, minimize, or fully mitigate impacts to the Seattle Center campus and its resident organizations as well as affected properties along the corridor. Mitigation plans should address the unique noise and vibration impacts to performing arts organizations at Seattle Center, both during construction and during permanent light rail operations.

The City acknowledges that a mix-and-match approach in downtown will require additional design and analysis to fully understand its environmental impacts, and cost and schedule implications.

G. South Interbay Segment (Smith Cove station): The City is not able to state a preference given inadequate information in the DEIS related to transportation and visual impacts associated with construction and operation of an elevated guideway along Elliott Avenue West with SIB-1 and SIB-2, and impacts to Environmentally Critical Areas with SIB-2 and SIB-3.

H. Interbay and Ballard Segment (Interbay and Ballard stations): Preference for IBB-2b, retained cut Interbay station at 17th Avenue W and a tunnel alignment to the Ballard station at 15th Avenue NW, conditioned on refinements that provide station access from the west side of 15th Avenue NW, and north and south of NW Market Street. The Ballard station alternative at 15th Avenue NW is preferred because it is the closest to the Ballard Hub Urban Village, which is one of the fastest-growing urban villages in Seattle and where the majority of the station's projected 13,100 daily riders will arrive from. The 15th Avenue NW station alternative would not require pedestrians coming from the west to cross 15th Avenue NW, providing for safer pedestrian access from the Ballard Hub Urban Village consistent with the City's Vision Zero pedestrian safety goals.

The above recommendations are based on the current understanding of the project as described in the DEIS. Subsequent information developed through the environmental process, including additional analysis, evaluation of refinements, development of mitigation plans, and better information on project costs may lead the City to alter its position on a Preferred Alternative.

Section 3. The City recognizes that Sound Transit is exploring potential cost-savings refinements to the DEIS alternatives in response to the 2021 Sound Transit Board action on ST3 realignment, as well as other refinements that strive to avoid impacts, reduce risk, or achieve other benefits to the system. The City supports exploring strategies to control costs overall, but opposes scope reductions that do not bring commensurate benefit to the system and its riders, and that are not consistent with what was committed to voters when ST3 was approved in 2016.

Section 4. The City recognizes that Sound Transit faces tremendous cost pressures in delivering the ST3 program, resulting from a range of local, regional, and macroeconomic factors. To that end, the Sound Transit Board established the concept that certain WSBLE DEIS alternatives may require additional third-party funding to supplement Sound Transit's core funding established as part of the ST3 ballot measure. Since that time, however, the cost difference between the DEIS preferred alternatives and the alternatives with third-party funding has reduced significantly based on more design and cost estimating. The City acknowledges that,

despite the reduction in this cost difference, there may be important project elements that require third-party funding. The City anticipates a role as a partner to address funding needs as well as to assess available opportunities for the City to reduce costs to Sound Transit in other ways, including land acquisition, right-of-way, permitting, and other areas that have been identified as cost drivers to the ST3 Program. The City intends to engage with Sound Transit and other public agency and private sector partners in earnest to identify additional opportunities for third-party funding support as work on the FEIS advances, and anticipates more formal commitments at the time the FEIS and the Federal Record of Decision (ROD) are completed, along with the availability of more complete cost estimates.

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2022, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2022.

_____

President _____ of the City Council

The Mayor concurred the _____ day of _____, 2022.

_____

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2022.

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Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)

Attachments:

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