



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL  
**CENTRAL STAFF**

# Seattle Streetcar – Background and Context

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CALVIN CHOW, SUPERVISING ANALYST

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 17, 2024

# South Lake Union Streetcar

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- Capital cost: **\$56 million**
  - \$25 million Local Improvement District (adjacent property owners)
  - \$13 million Federal grants
- Opened December 2007
  - 1.3 mile segment
    - Westlake & Olive to Fred Hutch
  - 4 vehicles
  - OMF (Harrison & Fairview)



# First Hill Streetcar

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- Capital cost: **\$133 million**
  - \$133 million from Sound Transit
  - Replaced First Hill light rail station
- Opened January 2016
  - 2.5 mile segment
    - Occidental Sq to Capital Hill
  - 6 vehicles
  - OMF (8th Ave S & Dearborn)



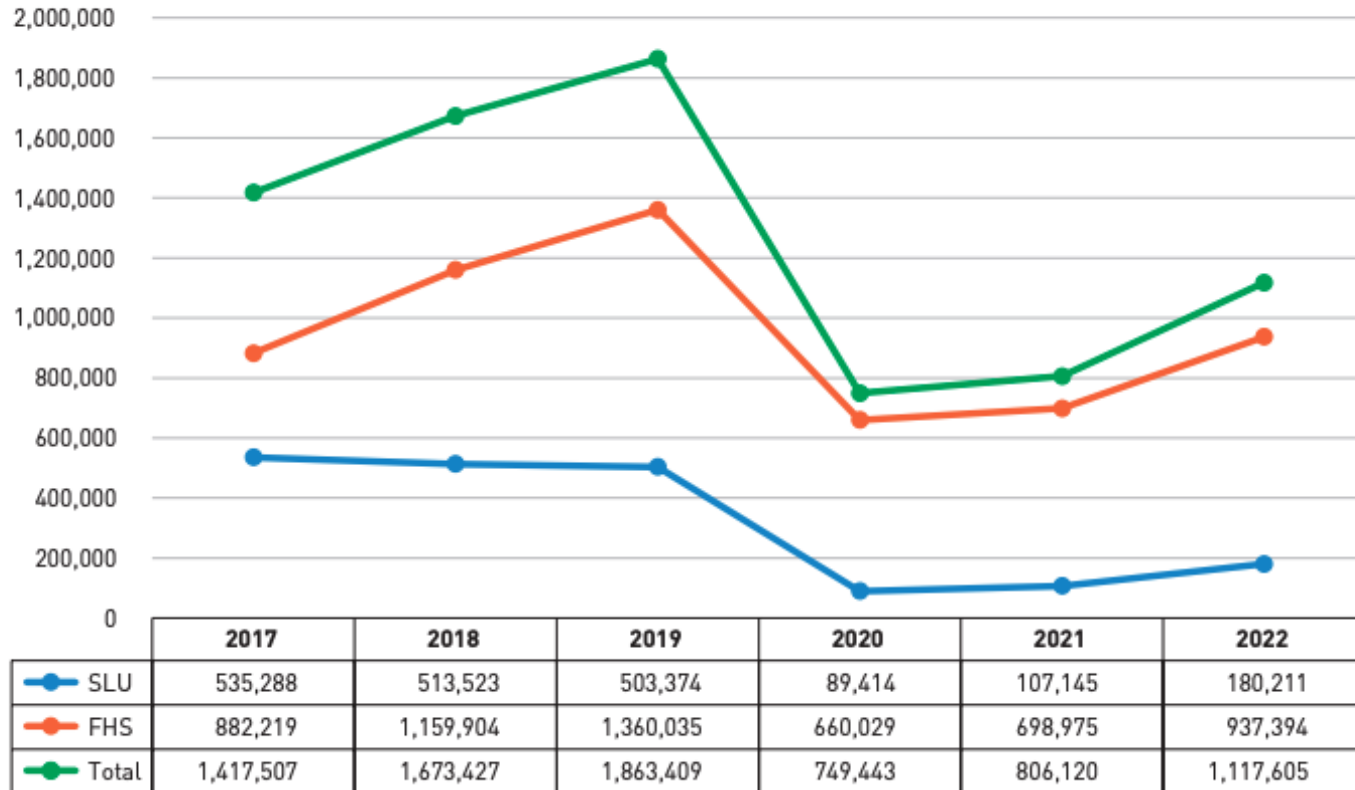
# Cultural Connector – Center City Streetcar

- Cost estimate: **\$410 million**
  - Utility relocation (\$74 million)
  - Structures/areaways (\$90 million)
  - 7 additional vehicles
  - Expand capacity at existing OMF facilities
- Project paused in 2018, reassessed in 2023
  - 1.2 mile segment
  - Efficiency in connecting system
  - Currently unfunded
  - Potentially eligible for Federal grants



# Ridership and Operating Subsidy

FIGURE 4: SEATTLE STREETCAR RIDERSHIP (NATIONAL TRANSIT DATA BASE REPORTED) 2017-2022



Source: SDOT, 2022 Annual Streetcar Operating Report, p.14

## Operating Cost (2024 Budget)

- SLU: \$4,628,688
  - FH: \$9,758,277
  - Total: \$14,386,965
- King County contribution to SLU Streetcar extends through 2029 (\$1.7M/year)
  - Sound Transit contribution to First Hill Streetcar ended in 2023 (\$5M/year)

## City Subsidy (2024)

- SLU: ~ \$1,750,000
  - FH: ~ \$8,450,000
  - Total: \$10,200,000
- Commercial Parking Tax (pre-2023)
  - Seattle Transit Measure (2023-2024)

# SLU and FH Performance Metrics

**TABLE 8: SOUTH LAKE UNION PERFORMANCE HISTORICAL AND ESTIMATED**

	Historical					Estimated				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Ridership <sup>38</sup>	513,523	503,374	89,414	107,145	180,211	383,310	385,967	397,546	409,473	421,757
Farebox Recovery Ratio	20%	20%	5%	4%	7%	14%	13%	13%	13%	13%
Productivity (Riders/Revenue Hour) <sup>39</sup>	36	43	11	9	14	32	32	33	34	35
"Fare Evasion" <sup>40</sup>	9%	7%	3%	11%	16%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Reliability (On-Time Performance)	39%	32%	46%	48%	65%	65% <sup>41</sup>	65%	65%	65%	65%

**TABLE 7: FIRST HILL STREETCAR PERFORMANCE HISTORIC AND ESTIMATED**

	Historical					Estimated				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Ridership <sup>34</sup>	1,159,904	1,360,035	660,029	698,975	937,394	1,423,666	1,466,376	1,510,368	1,555,679	1,602,349
Farebox Recovery Ratio	10%	12%	3%	3%	4%	9%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Productivity <sup>35</sup> (Riders/Revenue Hour)	41	49	31	29	38	51	53	54	56	58
"Fare Evasion" <sup>36</sup>	20%	20%	23%	69%	68%	68%	68%	68%	68%	68%
Reliability (On-Time Performance)	88%	87%	63%	83%	87%	87% <sup>37</sup>	87%	87%	87%	87%

Source: SDOT, 2022 Annual Streetcar Operating Report, p.27

# Comparison with other transit options

2019 Performance Data	Streetcar	Bus	Trolley-Bus	Light Rail	Monorail
Unlinked Passenger Trips	1,863,409	104,362,252	17,373,451	24,761,684	1,939,224
Fare Revenue	\$1,633,354	\$142,881,294	\$23,528,006	\$43,602,193	\$4,151,874
Operating Expense	\$11,522,476	\$621,030,802	\$69,385,308	\$131,216,111	\$4,202,651
Productivity (Trips/Revenue Hour)	43.6 (SLU 43; FH 49)	32.0	41.2	93.2	96.8
Operating Expense per Trip	\$6.18	\$5.95	\$3.99	\$5.30	\$2.17

2022 Performance Data	Streetcar	Bus	Trolley-Bus	Light Rail	Monorail
Unlinked Passenger Trips	1,117,605	53,983,641	9,575,042	23,624,135	1,633,951
Fare Revenue	\$588,495	\$56,846,337	\$10,123,486	\$29,386,480	\$4,319,228
Operating Expense	\$12,511,637	\$671,653,000	\$84,198,937	\$195,822,767	\$4,893,793
Productivity (Trips/Revenue Hour)	29.9 (SLU 14; FH 38)	18.8	24.4	59.4	77.1
Operating Expense per Trip	\$11.20	\$12.44	\$8.79	\$8.29	\$3.00

Streetcar includes SLU and FH streetcar; Bus includes all Metro buses except trolley-bus (King County service area); Trolley-Bus includes Metro's electrified trolley-bus fleet (Seattle); Light Rail includes all Sound Transit light rail service (excluding Tacoma Streetcar)  
 Data from Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database - <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles>

# Recent SLU Streetcar Outage

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- Service suspended August 9, 2024
- Service resumed September 4, 2024
  
- Breakdown of electrical components in traction power substations
  - Media reports cite shortage of available spare parts
  - Causes and long-term implications still under investigation with SDOT and Metro (as operator)



# Questions?