

May 27, 2020 - Sound Transit's Non-Compliant Bus/Rail Interchange 60% Design Does Not Address City Concerns

A Letter to the Mercer Island Community,

The East Link light rail station on Mercer Island is nearing completion, yet there still is much work to do to ensure the community's interests are being met with the final design of the Sound Transit Bus/Rail Interchange that will deliver bus riders to the train.

The City Council understands that the Bus/Rail Interchange is a topic of great interest to the Mercer Island community. Depending on design, the Bus/Rail Interchange has the potential to adversely impact traffic patterns and public safety on the Island. The time for public comment is nearing, and this will be your opportunity to let Sound Transit know what you think of their design.

Earlier this spring, Sound Transit submitted their 60% design plans for the roundabout at 77th and North Mercer Way ([download here](#)) to the City for technical review. These documents identify the construction methods, materials to be used, necessary excavation, landscaping, and other details for the roundabout, as well as plans for the unbuilt 80th Avenue station entry plaza, and sidewalk and curb cut adjustments along North Mercer Way.

To meet the City's governmental obligation as the agency responsible for construction oversight, the City's engineering and building staff reviewed the 60% design and provided comments solely on the technical aspects of construction, which [can be viewed here](#).

We also notified Sound Transit that the 60% design for their Bus/Rail Interchange fails to meet the terms of our [2017 Settlement Agreement](#). The Settlement Agreement between the City and Sound Transit limits how Sound Transit can operate their Bus/Rail Interchange. The 60% design includes curb cuts along the north side of North Mercer Way that are not contemplated under the Settlement Agreement.

While there are many benefits that the completion of light rail provides to the community and region, the City has several significant unresolved concerns about the high volume of bicycles and pedestrians that are expected to mix with cars and buses adjacent to the busy Park & Ride location once East Link light rail is operational. Last October, [we reiterated our concerns](#) to Sound Transit over pedestrian safety, bus layovers, and a proposal to use the north curb frontage of North Mercer Way to drop off bus riders bound for light rail.

Unfortunately, Sound Transit's response to our concerns was met this April by a [letter](#) repeating their unwillingness to accept the limitations imposed by the Settlement Agreement on their Bus/Rail Interchange. Despite this response, the City remains committed to engaging Sound Transit proactively to urge them to comply with the terms of the Settlement Agreement during design, construction, and operation of their Bus/Rail Interchange. The City has also tried to engage King County Metro in a constructive dialog; to date King County Metro has shown little interest in engaging in this dialog.

On May 19, 2020, during the City's presentation on the draft Transportation Improvement Plan ([AB5691](#)), City staff proposed for our consideration and adoption a new project that begins to address public safety concerns. We were also provided with a [conceptual design](#) for this project. This project and conceptual design are consistent with the Settlement Agreement. The City's conceptual drawing

excludes bus drop-off and layover locations on the north side of North Mercer Way, improves sightlines, widens pedestrian paths and crossings, and enhances lighting.

Now is the time for all Islanders to engage in this final stage of light rail planning to ensure the best outcome for the Mercer Island community. Sound Transit has communicated plans to hold an online open house, currently expected to occur in June, on the 60% design depicting the roundabout and related features of their Bus/Rail Interchange. Sound Transit needs to hear from our community. The City Council strongly encourages all interested residents to view and comment on these 60% design plans, and to share any other concerns you may have (open house details will be posted on the City's [Let's Talk page](#) when available).

-Mercer Island City Council

Mayor Benson Wong
Deputy Mayor Wendy Weiker
Councilmember Lisa Anderl
Councilmember Jake Jacobson
Councilmember Salim Nice
Councilmember Craig Reynolds
Councilmember David Rosenbaum