

**From:** [Julie Underwood](#)  
**To:** [Benson, Charles](#); [Kirsten Taylor](#)  
**Cc:** [Hoffman, Jemae](#); [Lamon, Luke](#); [Kari Sand](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Draft Talking Points  
**Date:** Monday, February 04, 2019 3:43:55 PM  
**Attachments:** [Memo to CC re ST Transit Plan.02.01.19.docx](#)

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Charles, thanks for pulling this together. Super helpful. I used a lot of it to pull the attached cover memo together.

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**From:** Benson, Charles <charles.benson@soundtransit.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 31, 2019 6:31 PM  
**To:** Kirsten Taylor <Kirsten.Taylor@mercergov.org>; Julie Underwood <julie.underwood@mercergov.org>  
**Cc:** Hoffman, Jemae <jemae.hoffman@soundtransit.org>; Lamon, Luke <luke.lamon@soundtransit.org>  
**Subject:** Draft Talking Points

Hello Julie and Kirsten,

Please find our draft talking points for your executive session attached. This document also includes responses to a few potential questions you may receive from the Council; this is by no means a complete list of anticipated questions so if any additional come to mind let us know and we will craft responses. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Charles

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# MEMORANDUM

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*City Manager's Office*

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Julie Underwood, City Manager  
Kirsten Taylor, Senior Project Manager

**DATE:** February 1, 2019

**RE:** Sound Transit (ST) Settlement Agreement & Mercer Island Transit Interchange

**CC:** Kari Sand, City Attorney

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## **BACKGROUND**

On May 31, 2017, after nearly 7 hours of intense negotiations with Sound Transit (this was the evening before the two parties had a court hearing and 5 days before the closure of the I-90 center roadway) preceded by years of negotiations and months of litigation, the City Council approved a tentative settlement agreement with Sound Transit. Councilmembers who were directly involved in the negotiations may recall that the main objective was to ensure that the configuration that was identified in the 2017 SEPA Addendum to the East Link FEIS as Sound Transit's and Metro's preferred alternative (80<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE) was not going to be constructed.

Since the Sound Transit Board and City Council approved the agreement in October 2017, the City and Sound Transit have made progress implementing the Settlement Agreement for the East Link Project. To review, we have accomplished the following tasks:

- Implemented two pilot projects for first/last mile solutions;
- Implemented bike and sidewalk improvements at the Mercer Island Park & Ride (P&R);
- Contributed to the Aubrey Davis Master Plan planning efforts;
- Worked together on proposed commuter parking at the Tully's site; and
- Worked collaboratively with King County Metro (Metro) to implement bus/rail Integration on Mercer Island.

Transit is important to Mercer Island, as evidenced by transit ridership and use of the Mercer Island P&R facility. For example, Sound Transit's last license plate study showed that 50% of the P&R users were Island residents. In addition, in the City's April 2018 Community Survey,

residents identified commuter parking as their top transportation priority for the City. Furthermore, Metro data shows that 150-175 people a day on Mercer Island use bus transit to and from Eastside destinations that won't be served by LINK light rail.

### **IMPLEMENTING THE 77<sup>TH</sup> AVE SE CONFIGURATION**

The Settlement Agreement states that the transit interchange will be based on the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration from the 2017 SEPA Addendum to the East Link FEIS, and **not** the 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration, as the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration was preferred by the Mercer Island City Council at the time of the Settlement Agreement.

As the Settlement Agreement was finalized without Metro at the table, the Settlement Agreement required Metro's concurrence for implementation of the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration.

With the above context in mind, and in an effort to study and identify bus/rail integration opportunities for Mercer Island, all three agencies (MI, ST, and Metro) created a joint list of goals and objectives for a future transit interchange.

The future transit interchange will be based on the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration and will satisfy the key tenets of the Settlement Agreement, including:

- Roundabout at North Mercer Way and 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, and no substantial bus operations/layovers along 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
- Future bus volumes less than existing bus volumes;
- No routing of regional buses through Mercer Island Town Center;
- Limited occurrences of long bus layovers; and
- No bus idling.

The proposed roundabout will result in private property impacts adjacent to the North Mercer Way and 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE intersection. Per the Settlement Agreement, ST will manage the entire process to acquire the property necessary for the roundabout and will engage with the property owners using equitable treatment as required by federal and state law. In the coming weeks, ST and MI staff plan to meet with the property owners about the extent of the impacts to their property.

### **OPERATIONAL AND CONFIGURATION STUDY RESULTS**

MI, ST, and Metro developed three potential transit interchange configurations along North Mercer Way that ultimately represent varying levels of transit service for Mercer Island.

ST commissioned an Operational and Configuration Study ("Study") to evaluate these three potential transit interchange options based on the joint list of goals and objectives mentioned earlier. Each configuration can be viewed as building upon the components of the previous, as illustrated in Figure 2 "Existing and Proposed Interchange Configurations" provided on page 3 of the Study Executive Summary.

### The Limited Service Configuration:

- Represents the absolute minimum condition where Metro would be able to provide any service for Mercer Island.
- Most closely resembles existing conditions (in a physical sense) but would allow for additional bus/transit curb space on the south side of North Mercer Way.<sup>1</sup>
- Would require refinement of bus layover limits<sup>2</sup> and allow non-local buses using existing bus stops on the north side of North Mercer Way.
- Anticipated future bus volumes would be 12 during the AM and PM peak hours (about one bus every 5 minutes), a substantial reduction from the existing 36 AM and 39 PM peak hour buses.<sup>3</sup>
- Received the lowest overall score due to the following:
  - Provides the least efficient transfer experience due to limited bus/transit curb space.
  - Very importantly, would result in the loss of transit service for approximately 150 to 175 daily passengers between Mercer Island and other Eastside communities once light rail service begins.
  - Provides for the least amount of transit service, flexibility of transit operations, accommodations for future mobility options, and ability to respond to future needs.

### The Improved Service Configuration:

- Builds upon the Limited Service Configuration and would include one additional bus/transit curb space on the north side of North Mercer Way.
- Anticipated bus volumes of 16 during the AM and PM peaks hours (about one bus every 4 minutes), a substantial reduction from the existing 36 AM and 39 PM peak hour buses.
- Received the intermediate score with the following attributes:
  - Provides flexible layover space that would not be available in the Limited Service Configuration, allowing for some future mobility options, including Metro, micro-transit, and rideshare opportunities.
  - Allows for some coordinated service between transit agencies.

### The Optimal Service Configuration:

- Builds upon the Improved Service Configuration and would include a bus stop to allow for only one bus along 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE in front of the light rail station entrance.
- Would require refinement of bus operational limits along 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.<sup>4</sup>
- Anticipated bus volumes of up to 20 during the AM and PM peaks hours (about one bus every 3 minutes), a substantial reduction from the existing 36 AM and 39 PM peak hour buses.

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<sup>1</sup> Per the Settlement Agreement, which called for layover on the south side of North Mercer Way.

<sup>2</sup> The Settlement Agreement restricts layovers to a maximum of 15 minutes and only during the PM peak; Metro has stated this would prevent them from providing any service to/for Mercer Island. Buses will layover only 15 minutes on average and need layover at more than the PM peak hours consistent with Metro's labor contracts.

<sup>3</sup> Note Sound Transit express buses are not expected to serve Mercer Island once East Link is operational.

<sup>4</sup> Section 4.2(a) of the Settlement Agreement states the following: "There will be no bus drop-off/pick-up or layover area on 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE."

- Received the highest score for the following reasons:
  - Provides for the greatest amount of transit service and flexibility of transit service operations, which would result in fewer single-occupant vehicle trips on Mercer Island from non-Island commuters.
  - Provides the most efficient transfer experience in terms of immediacy and reliability, and the ability to best coordinate service between transit agencies with timed transfers.
  - Provides the most efficient auto experience on local streets with less wait time for transit users crossing intersections.
  - Provides most flexibility for future mobility options, including Metro, micro-transit, and rideshare opportunities.
  - Provides the best ability to respond to future needs and an enhanced Eastside transit network.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends implementation of the Optimal Service Configuration for the reasons listed above. This best meets Metro's operational needs, especially as those needs may shift and change in the future, as well as provides the highest overall quality transit to and from Mercer Island. This also provides the best Mercer Island experience for pedestrians, bikes and autos around the light rail station.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff would like to schedule a study session with Sound Transit and Metro to present the Mercer Island Transit Interchange Operational and Configuration Study and recommendation to the Council on February 26, 2019.<sup>5</sup> In preparation for this study session, the staff would like to know if there are questions or concerns that Sound Transit and Metro staff need to address.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition, Sound Transit staff will provide an East Link light rail project update at the study session on February 26, 2019.