

Q&A OF THE DAY: How Will a Bus/Rail Interchange Operate Safely? 11 July 2019



East Link light rail is currently under construction with service set to begin in 2023. One of the remaining issues under discussion is the integration of the new rail service with existing bus transit at rail stations outside of Seattle. In order not to duplicate transit across the floating bridge, King County Metro and Sound Transit plan to terminate a few Eastside commuter bus routes at the future Mercer Island Station. Riders would then transfer to/from light rail. Other bus routes will terminate at the future South Bellevue Station. This concept has already been implemented at the current northern terminus of light rail in Seattle, at the UW Stadium station, which opened in March 2016.

For many months, the City Council and staff have been discussing how such an interchange would operate here, in order to avoid traffic impacts, protect pedestrian and bicyclist safety in the vicinity, and minimize impacts to neighbors.

Significant amounts of information about the project (maps, FAQ, formal studies, etc.) are available on the City's Let's Talk site here: <https://letstalk.mercergov.org/Transit-Interchange>

However, given misinformation circulating currently, some clarifications may be helpful:

1) How many bus riders per day are expected to transfer from bus to light rail?

There have been unfounded numbers circulating quoting up to 14,000 riders per day. Based on Sound Transit's best current projections (which may adjust as regional demographics change in the coming four years) an estimated 4,200 daily rail boardings (weekdays) are expected upon opening. These boardings include Island residents, Park & Ride users, and bus transfers.

2) How busy will the crosswalk be at North Mercer Way and 80th Ave SE?

Based on independent studies, the busiest single hour (i.e. during the morning commute) might see approx. 1,300 people crossing North Mercer Way (NMW) in one hour, arriving by bus or parking at the Park & Ride. On average, this equates to 32 pedestrians per crossing cycle. This is expected to generate intersection delays for vehicles of approx. 3 seconds per signal cycle at NMW and 80th Ave SE. Other non-rush-hour times of the day would see substantially fewer people crossing NMW. During the evening commute, commuters arriving by train will board an eastbound bus without crossing NMW.

3) How many bus trips per hour will arrive at the Park & Ride during the busiest time of day?

Today, there are 36-39 buses per hour arriving on Mercer Island from off-Island locations during peak morning and evening commuter periods. Under a negotiated agreement, when light rail opens, bus arrivals from off-island locations are anticipated to be 15-20 buses per hour during peak commuter periods (6-9am and 3-6pm on weekdays). These buses will use a new roundabout at 77th to turn around in order to return to the Eastside.

4) Will the City need additional police officers due to the bus/rail interchange?

The Chief of Police is closely involved with interagency planning around security, and at this time, does not forecast requesting any additional officers, but may need to incur some overtime

costs. The MIPD is training with ST security teams and there will be a strong transit agency and police presence (incl. bike patrol) before and during the East Link opening to ensure a smooth and safe transition for all. While not anticipated, if safety issues and crime data indicate a consistent need after station opening, the Chief would then consider requesting more officer funding.

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