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Jemae Hoffman  
East Link Light Rail Development Manager  
Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit)  
401 S. Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98104-2826

Dear Ms. Hoffman:

**1. Summary**

This letter outlines certain refinements that Metro requires in order to concur and agree with the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE configuration referenced in the Settlement Agreement between Sound Transit and the City of Mercer Island. Without these refinements, the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration, as described in the Settlement Agreement, would prevent Metro from meeting mobility needs with fixed route bus service, both on- and off-island. However, Section 4.1 of the Settlement Agreement allows for refinements to address Metro’s operational needs, and to effectively serve the Mercer Island Station.

As further explained in this letter, the 77<sup>th</sup> avenue SE Configuration must be refined to:

- (1) Allow layover at all hours of the day, with the potential for layover to be longer than 15 minutes; and
- (2) Allow layover as well as pick-up and drop-off on the north *and* south sides of North Mercer Way.

**2. Background**

In partnership with Sound Transit and the City of Mercer Island, Metro is committed to providing reliable and convenient mobility options for Mercer Island and Eastside residents and commuters, including future Link riders, as well as people living in communities not served by East Link (2023) or the Downtown Redmond Link Extension (2024). Bus service connecting these Eastside communities to Mercer Island will be a critical component of the regional transit network because that service will efficiently connect them to East Link and destinations on Mercer Island. This service will provide a competitive mobility option to reduce demand for parking at Link stations, including the Mercer Island park-and-ride lot; and to reduce car dependency for people accessing jobs, shopping, and other services on Mercer Island.

The remainder of this letter 1) highlights Metro’s service plan for when East Link opens and 2) documents refinements that Metro requires in order to concur and agree with the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE configuration agreed to by Sound Transit and the City. Those refinements are needed to address Metro’s operational and spatial concerns, and to allow Metro to provide a mobility option that will reduce car trips to Mercer Island, alleviate parking demand, and provide quality regional service, including for Mercer Island residents.

**3. Metro Service at the Opening of East Link**

METRO CONNECTS sets Metro’s vision for service in 2025 - 2040 and is Metro’s guiding document for long-range planning, including service restructures at the opening of East Link. Prior to the Settlement Agreement, METRO CONNECTS identified the following routes and service levels to connect Eastside locations not directly served by East Link to Mercer Island:

METRO CONNECTS Route #	Layover on MI	AM Peak Volume	PM Peak Volume
2012 (Mercer Island to Issaquah)	Yes	16	16
2012 (Mercer Island to North Bend)	Yes	4	4
2206 (Mercer Island to Sammamish)	Yes	8	8
2206 (Mercer Island to Redmond)	Yes	8	8
<b>Total Peak Trips<sup>1</sup></b>		<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>

The 77th Avenue SE Configuration described in the Settlement Agreement prevents this frequency of service. However, robust passenger service between Eastside communities and Mercer Island is and will remain a critical need, especially when East Link opens. Recent data shows between 150-175 daily passenger trips are taken between Mercer Island and Eastside communities (such as the cities of Sammamish and Issaquah) that will not be served by East Link. In addition, service ending and beginning at Mercer Island provides these communities with an efficient connection to East Link. Metro’s competitive travel times will allow people to commute on Link or visit the City without having to drive and park on Mercer Island.

Layover space adjacent to the Mercer Island Link Station will be critical to meet those needs when East Link opens, because a portion of Metro’s service will be restructured to begin and end at Mercer Island (routes indicated above). Layover is needed to provide mandated operator rest periods, provide timely bus/rail transfers, and maintain schedule compliance as buses make the return trip to the Eastside.

**4. The 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration in the Settlement Agreement Does Not Meet Metro’s Operational and Spatial Requirements.**

As noted above, the 77th Avenue SE Configuration would prevent Metro from meeting mobility needs with fixed route bus service, both on- and off-island. There are two primary issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The implementation of the Improved or Optimal Configuration outlined in the Mercer Island Transit Operational and Configuration Study configuration will reduce bus service relative to existing service and the envisioned METRO CONNECTS service indicated in this table.

4.1 The 77th Avenue SE Configuration Places Unworkable Limits On the Duration and Timing of Layover.

Under Section 4.3 (b) of the Settlement Agreement, bus layovers would be limited to no more than 15 minutes, and then only during the afternoon peak period (3:30pm - 7:00pm). However, Metro will need layover throughout the day and not limited in duration to provide any service to Mercer Island Station. First, Metro cannot legally limit bus layover duration because of labor contract requirements mandating operator rest periods. (However, typical layover times range from approximately 10-15 minutes, meaning that in practice the majority of layover would meet the intent of Section 4.3(b)). In addition, longer layover increases Metro's operating costs, so the agency continuously strives to *limit* layover duration rather than extend it.

Second, limiting layover to the afternoon peak period would prevent Metro from providing needed morning peak service to Mercer Island, or all-day on-island service. Therefore, to meet Metro's operational needs, layover must be allowed throughout the day, and must not be limited in duration. Finally, Metro buses do not idle during layover, so bus emissions and noise should not be a concern.

4.2 The Elimination of Layover, Pick-up, and Drop-off on the North Side of North Mercer Way Is Unworkable.

In Section 4.2 (a) and Section 4.3 (a), the Settlement Agreement would limit all bus drop-off and pick-up, and all layover areas (other than for local Mercer Island buses, as indicated in 4.2 (a)) to the south side of North Mercer Way.<sup>2</sup> These restrictions would limit the amount of service that Metro can provide and would complicate operations for customers traveling between Eastside communities and Mercer Island. Metro and Sound Transit buses currently pick-up and drop-off on both sides of North Mercer Way, so these restrictions would significantly reduce space for boarding and deboarding compared to current conditions.

Perhaps more significantly, layover on the north side of North Mercer Way would not function without the active bus bay on the north side of North Mercer Way; without that bay, buses would have to circle back through the Mercer Island town center along 27<sup>th</sup> Street after dropping off passengers on the south side of North Mercer Way. The result would be longer trips for passengers, increased operational costs, and additional impact to the Mercer Island town center (more buses traveling along 27<sup>th</sup> Street). To meet its operational needs, Metro will require active pick-up/drop-off and layover on *both* sides of North Mercer Way as outlined in the Improved or Optimal Service Configuration in the Mercer Island Transit Operational and Configuration Study.

**5. Metro Will Concur and Agree with the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration if These Shortcomings Are Addressed.**

Section 4.1 of the Settlement Agreement states that "the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration cannot be implemented without King County Metro's agreement. The Parties will work collaboratively with King County Metro to obtain its concurrence where necessary and document such concurrence as appropriate." Metro will concur and agree with the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration agreed to by Sound Transit and the City the Settlement Agreement if the above-described shortcomings are addressed.

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<sup>2</sup> Metro noted that 4.2 (a) calls out an exception for local Mercer Island buses, while 4.3 (a) does not.

Specifically, Metro requires the 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Configuration be implemented with the following refinements:

1. Allow layover at all times of day, without a 15-minute or other time limit.
2. Allow pick-up, drop-off, and layover on both sides of North Mercer Way as outlined in the Improved or Optimal Service Configuration in the Mercer Island Transit Operational and Configuration Study.

While even this configuration will reduce bus service relative to existing conditions and envisioned future METRO CONNECTS service, these refinements will allow Metro to provide reliable, convenient, and competitive mobility options for Eastside communities, including Mercer Island, and reduce overall parking demand on Mercer Island.

Sincerely,



Bill Bryant  
Managing Director, Service Development  
King County Metro

cc: Charles Benson III, Project Manager – East Link, Sound Transit  
Luke Lamon, Government & Community Relations, Sound Transit  
David Cantey, Transit Route Facilities Supervisor, King County Metro  
Steve Crosley, Transit Integration Program Manager, King County Metro  
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