



Future Tracks: Light Rail Planning for A Thriving Downtown and Region

As part of the Sound Transit 3 program, construction will begin as soon as 2028 to extend light rail through downtown Seattle to Ballard. When complete, this project will be the largest infrastructure investment in the history of Seattle and Sound Transit and will support a thriving and vibrant downtown and neighborhoods with world-class transit service.

This planned extension includes two new light rail tunnels through downtown Seattle and nine stations, six of which will be within three miles. The close proximity of these stations in downtown Seattle, a dense urban center, and that will be constructed concurrently over 10 to 12 years has the potential to cause irreparable harm to the region and state's economic center.

Downtown Seattle supports more than 337,000 jobs, 106,000 residents, and 3.5 million visitors annually. This area has seen transformative growth over the past two decades — residential population surged by nearly 100% between 2010 and 2020, and business activity has expanded at an unprecedented rate, establishing downtown as the region's and state's economic engine. The City of Seattle's goal is to concentrate most of the expected housing and job growth in this area.

Additionally, downtown foot traffic is steadily rising, with over 90,000 weekday workers as of mid-2024, marking a 14% year-over-year increase. As major employers like Amazon and Starbucks plan to return to a full-time in-office model starting in 2025, this daily influx is expected to grow further. To ensure light rail expansion enhances rather than disrupts this momentum, it's essential to build light rail in a way that avoids, minimizes, and mitigates direct, concurrent, and cumulative impacts on downtown.

The Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) and Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) have launched the Future Tracks initiative to work with partners across downtown, and Sound Transit and the City of Seattle, to plan for light rail construction that reduces and mitigates impacts, prioritizes accessibility during and after construction, and supports downtown Seattle's vibrancy.

Why This Matters Now

Now is the time to engage with Sound Transit and the City of Seattle to make sure the concurrent and cumulative impacts on downtown are carefully managed during the design and planning phases. Without strong oversight and proactive planning, there is a risk of costly and avoidable delays down the line.

Sound Transit is preparing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Ballard Link extension, which will assess station-specific, concurrent, and cumulative construction impacts. Alongside this, the agency is revising engineering plans and seeking ways to contain costs amidst rising inflation and changing market conditions. The draft EIS is set to be published in 2025, with the final EIS and Record of Decision scheduled for 2026. Construction could begin as early as 2028, starting with initial utility relocations.

Our Goals

A Thriving Downtown: A connected, accessible, and vibrant downtown Seattle that remains robust throughout light rail construction is our top priority. Light rail expansion must support the Puget Sound region’s economic growth, but it must do so without jeopardizing downtown’s quality of life or business operations.

Commitment to Responsible Expansion: We support a construction approach and mitigation plans that minimize disruptions and ultimately delivers broad benefits. This project will serve the region for the next century, and we should collectively work towards outcomes that enhance Seattle’s growth and vitality in the near and long term.

Strategic Collaboration: Our coalition includes major employers, arts and cultural institutions, property owners, and community leaders. Together, we are crafting targeted strategies to manage and mitigate disruptions during construction. We will work with Sound Transit and the City of Seattle to ensure that mitigation plans address impacts on transportation, business operations, and overall downtown life.

Our Members

Anthony Auriemma, *Starbucks*

Jared Axelrod, *Amazon*

Brian DeFoe, *Nordstrom*

Erin Goodman, *SODO Business Improvement Area*

Jacqueline Gruber, *Vulcan Real Estate*

Christian Haliburton, *Seattle Mariners*

Lori Hill, *Clise Properties*

Zach Hensley, *First & Goal*

Aaron Hoard, *University of Washington*

Lisa Howard, *Pioneer Square Alliance*

Kirk Hovenkotter, *Transportation Choices Coalition*

Alex Hudson, *Commute Seattle*

Rob Johnson, *Seattle Kraken*

Jared Jonson, *SCIDpda*

William Leedom, *Urban Renaissance Group*

Jane Lewis, *Downtown Resident*

Austin Miller, *Washington Hospitality Assoc.*

Miye Moriguchi, *Uwajimaya*

Natalie Quick, *Natalie Quick Consulting (NAIOPWA)*

Jon Scholes, *Downtown Seattle Association*

Rachel Smith, *Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce*

Jessi Wasson, *Inspire Washington*

Jane Zalutsky, *The Seattle Center Foundation*

Learn about the project: [Sound Transit Ballard Link Extension](#)

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