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Subject: Public Comment – PSRC General Assembly May 28, 2026
Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2026 8:07:38 AM

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Dear PSRC Assembly Members,

As regional discussions continue around housing growth, transportation, and economic development, I'd encourage the region to think about small business support as part of the same conversation — not a separate one.

In communities like Edmonds, small and midsize businesses are a huge part of what makes our cities function and feel alive. They provide jobs, activate downtowns, create gathering places, generate local sales tax revenue, support tourism, and help build the character and identity people are actually moving here for in the first place.

Not every city has a Microsoft campus in its backyard. Many communities rely on restaurants, shops, service businesses, makers, hospitality, and other locally owned businesses as the economic engine that keeps the community running day to day.

As we continue planning for growth, I think we need to make sure we're creating places where small businesses can still survive and succeed alongside new housing and redevelopment. That includes thinking about zoning flexibility, permitting, affordability of commercial spaces, and how we preserve active, walkable business districts that people actually want to spend time in.

Housing, transportation, and economic vitality are all connected. If we want vibrant, livable communities across the region, we need to plan for the businesses that create those experiences too.

Thank you for your work and regional leadership.

Erika Barnett
Edmonds City Councilmember
Small Business Owner

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May 27, 2026

Public Comment from John Niles and Maggie Fimia, Co-Chairs of smartertransit.org

After extensive review of the PSRC 2018, 2022 and Draft 2026 Transportation Plan We Found that: Performance Forecasts Reveal that Full Build Out of the ST3 Light Rail Plan Will Not Counteract Falling Transit Ridership, Increasing Highway Congestion, and Slow Growth of the Population Living Near Transit Stations

This is a research-based commentary from the Smarter Transit technical team to stimulate new questioning of existing plans by the government officials who will vote acceptance on both or either:

(A) The PSRC 2026 update to the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and

(B) The Sound Transit Enterprise Initiative's updating of the ST3 System Plan to make it affordable

Contact John Niles at mobility@johnniles.com or 206-781-4475 for further information and discussion.

On Thursday, May 28th 2026, members of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) are expected to vote in the General Assembly on whether to approve the mandatory 2026 update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This Plan describes the growth path toward 2050 infrastructure and service investments supporting our future mobility in the central Puget Sound region of Washington State.

We've done an extensive review of the performance measures found in the appendices of the 2018, 2022 and 2026 PSRC Transportation Plan and can report the following:

- (a) A trend with each new edition of the Plan toward a shrinking market share of transit riders in 2050, especially light rail riders.
- (b) A parallel trend of increasing delay for drivers in 2050 from highway congestion despite expanded transit service providing opportunities to ride instead of drive.
- (c) The surprisingly slow growth of the future population expected to be living in designated Regional Growth Centers between now and 2050.

Also, these projections challenge the sensibility of the Sound Transit Board to fully fund multi-billion-dollar shortfalls in ST3. Other funding gaps exist across all the other recognized transportation needs of the region, but only Sound Transit's funding gap problem is omitted from the 2026 RTP. The following chart illustrates the PSRC Financial Strategy Summary 2026-2050 (shown in millions of 2026 constant dollars) from page 25 of the [2026 RTP](#). Note in the far right-hand column the revenue gaps totaling \$58.4 billion facing all the regional mobility partners except for Sound Transit.

SPONSOR TYPE	NEEDS				CURRENT LAW REVENUE	REVENUE GAP
	Maintenance, Preservation and Operations	System Improvements		Total		
		Regional Capacity Projects	Other Improvements			
Counties	\$17,900	\$3,600	\$2,000	\$23,400	\$16,600	\$6,900
Cities	\$45,300	\$8,100	\$16,200	\$69,600	\$41,700	\$27,800
Local Transit	\$52,700	\$1,800	\$14,800	\$69,300	\$52,400	\$16,900
Sound Transit	\$49,500	\$41,600	\$24,200	\$115,300	\$115,300	\$0
WSF	\$11,300	\$0	\$4,200	\$15,500	\$11,400	\$4,100
WSDOT	\$23,400	\$13,900	\$4,700	\$42,000	\$39,400	\$2,600
Subtotal		\$69,000	\$66,100			
TOTAL	\$200,100	\$135,000		\$335,200	\$276,800	\$58,400

PSRC top management has informed Smarter Transit that the 2026 RTP to be approved by the General Assembly on May 28th deliberately focuses on the soon to be an obsolete version of the ST3 light rail plan approved by voters in 2016, the one now showing a \$34.5 billion funding gap. By way of comparison, the addition of the ST3 funding gap to the table above would represent a 65% expansion of the combined \$58.4 billion shortfall of all other agencies shown in the table.

To show how far off Sound Transit and the PSRC plans are from what many elected officials and voters think we will get with full build out of light rail, we've extracted a few key performance measures from PSRC's planning work in all three of the Regional Transportation Plans published in 2018, 2022 and 2026.

1. The transit market share of all personal trips in 2040 was forecast to be 6.4% in the 2018 Plan and then was forecast optimistically to reach 8% by 2050 in the 2022 Plan based on hope for a return to the growth trend seen before the pandemic. However, in the current RTP, the transit market share projection for 2050 is 4.7% for all transit modes, including bus, rail, and ferries.¹
2. The 2050 Sound Transit light rail ridership share fell from 3% in the 2022 version of the RTP down to 2% in the 2026 version.²
3. Car trip daily growth beats transit trip daily growth by 18 to 1, assuming the budget deficit problem of Sound Transit can be solved, and the light rail network grows to the full 116-mile build out.
4. The projected growth in congested vehicle hours between the time of each RTP issuance and 25 years in the future becomes steadily worse in each succeeding plan, from 51% in the 2018 Plan, to 54% in the 2022 Plan, and then to 56% in the 2026 RTP.³
5. Despite the hope spawned by the passage of the State Growth Management Act in 1990, the most recent available land use forecast reports that a mere 15% of our regional population will live in regional growth centers in 2050. Yet, the foundation of the region's mobility strategy is to funnel as much future population growth as possible into Regional Growth Centers. PSRC and Sound Transit do

not explain to citizens how that needed land use densification trend is going to scale up sufficiently quickly. Sound Transit claims that its transit-oriented development (TOD) program, creating new homes near light rail stations, to date has built or is planning to build 3,726 homes. This number contributes only 1.4% of the forecast 267,700 household growth near public transit needing achievement by 2035 in the 2026 RTP.⁴

Table 5: Total Population by Centers

Geography	2023	2035	2050
In a Regional Growth Center	279,200	546,700	844,500
Not in a Regional Growth Center	4,076,900	4,451,000	4,944,100
Region	4,356,100	4,997,700	5,788,600

Yes, light rail is attracting ridership between Lynnwood and the International District during peak hours. But most of these train riders are former bus riders who had a one-seat ride but are now required to transfer. Because light rail is called light because of capacity, not weight, many peak-hour commuters experience standing room only. Light rail technology is meant to serve short distances in and between dense urban centers. ST3 will attract few new riders not already riding on buses except those traveling to sports and major events downtown.

Meanwhile, the current \$6.5 million daily local tax collections to Sound Transit compute to a region wide average of \$1700 per year for every regional household.⁵

Good public policy starts with getting agreement on *What’s the problem we are trying to solve?* Then, *what are the viable alternatives to solving it?* Followed by an *objective cost-benefit analysis of those alternatives*. Unfortunately, a benefit/cost analysis has never guided the development of our regional transportation plans. From the very beginning of our regional planning, starting in the early 1990s, the regional mobility problem has been defined boldly and simplistically as the lack of a rail transit system.

The current crisis of an unaffordable \$195 billion Sound Transit expansion plan for 2017 to 2052, documented by its Enterprise Initiative, juxtaposed with PSRC planning documents forecasting poor regional mobility performance, illustrates the result of a planning process that the region needs to understand and fix.

Tracking the gains of those who actually benefit explains why Sound Transit is getting a large share of local taxes when such poor results are visible. Hundreds of construction, engineering, public relations, legal, and environmental firms are making multiple millions in contracts with Sound Transit. And a recent Public Disclosure Request shows that Transportation Choices Coalition, the group that is pushing for completion of ST3, receives \$50,000/year from Sound Transit. Additional documentation can be found in our *Contracts Report* towards the bottom of our smartertransit.org webpage.

Our spectacular region deserves a realistic and affordable transit and transportation plan. For a fraction of the cost and time to implement more train tracks and stations, we could invest instead in flexible, cost-effective, easily accessible mobility options that could be up and running in months, not decades, and without issuing billions in 75-year bonds. Alternative investments available include more frequent and efficient bus service for neighborhoods that are underserved; more bus shelters; more public and private carpools and vanpools and automated, on-demand shuttles in low density zones where higher capacity fixed routes are not affordable. These alternatives are being implemented around the country and the world. For instance, Waymo announced in March that it has reached 500,000 paid robo taxi trips per week and is exploring how to incorporate its driverless vehicles into expanded low-fare public transit service.

Smarter Transit request to state and local elected officials and citizens: Demand full transparency through an independent, objective performance audit of what the PSRC analysis and forecasts in 2018, 2022 and 2026 have revealed about the significant increase in congestion, the insignificant transit share of ridership, and lack of growth in urban centers. We need a plan based on reality not wishful thinking.

If we truly care about having a “world-class city” with great transit options and alternatives to driving alone, let’s start by agreeing on the transportation and mobility problems we need to solve, then work together to deliver affordable solutions to solve them.

The 2026 RTP performance summary is posted at: https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/rtp2026-systemperformance_0.pdf

The 2022 RTP performance summary from PSRC is here: <https://www.psrc.org/media/5942>

The 2018 RTP performance summary from PSRC is here: <https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/rtp-appendixk-systemperformancereport.pdf>

¹ Computation of Mode Splits in Daily Trip Counts in Pg.4 Table 2 in the 2018 RTP Appendix K <https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/rtp-appendixk-systemperformancereport.pdf>

2022 RTP Appendix H Pg.17 Table 14 and Pg.21 Table 19 [HTTPS://WWW.PSRC.ORG/MEDIA/5942](https://www.psrc.org/media/5942);

2026 RTP System Performance Report Pg. 63 Table 68

[HTTPS://WWW.PSRC.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2026-05/RTP2026-SYSTEMPERFORMANCE_0.PDF](https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/rtp2026-systemperformance_0.pdf)

² <https://smartertransit.org/justification-for-smarter-transits-analysis-of-2050-rail-transit-mode-share-for-the-central-puget-sound-region/>

³ 2018 RTP APPENDIX K PG. 4 TABLE 2 [HTTPS://WWW.PSRC.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2022-03/RTP-APPENDIXK-SYSTEMPERFORMANCEREPORT.PDF](https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/rtp-appendixk-systemperformancereport.pdf)

2022 RTP PG. 24 TABLE 24 <https://www.psrc.org/media/5942>

2026 RTP SYSTEM PERFORMANCE REPORT PG. 25 TABLE 18: https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/rtp2026-systemperformance_0.pdf

⁴ 2026 RTP SYSTEM PERFORMANCE REPORT, PG. 15 TABLE 5 AT [HTTPS://WWW.PSRC.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2026-05/RTP2026-SYSTEMPERFORMANCE_0.PDF](https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/rtp2026-systemperformance_0.pdf)

⁵ [HTTPS://OFM.WA.GOV/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PUBLIC/DATARESEARCH/POP/SPECIAL/RTA.PDF](https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/dataresearch/pop/special/rt.pdf);
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