

We Don't Have a Plan

Numbers and observations from the PSRC's 2050 Transportation "Plan."

By Smarter Transit as a statement for attention by the PSRC General Assembly, May 22, 2025

Motivating our population to live in zones of increasing residential density called growth centers connected by light rail transit is the main transportation management policy of PSRC since the Growth Management Act of 1990.

It is not working.

Our regional population grew 10% between 2017 and 2024, from 4.1 million to 4.5 million.

Problems are arising after years of trying to make a concept of tram-oriented development work on a large scale.

After 30 years, PSRC reporting of policy outcomes reveals the following:

- The fraction of our population residing in Regional Growth Centers has risen from 5% to only 7%. Larger households seek more space than urban apartments offer. Homes in the Seattle region are unaffordable, causing families to move further and further out.
- The number of jobs based in the Growth Centers fell slightly from 45% to 43% in the period from 2010 to 2021 and may be further down post pandemic. Fraction of jobs located outside of the King County growth centers like downtown Seattle and Bellevue stood at 67% as remote work patterns were being reversed.
- Annual transit ridership on all the buses and trains in the four counties of the central Puget Sound region has fallen from 189 million in 2017 to 151 million in 2024.
- Projects like the West Seattle stub cost \$7 billion for four miles, requiring expropriating and razing hundreds of homes and businesses for no new ridership.

Quoting the new Sound Transit CEO, are we really on a path to "World Class transit" with ST3? According to PSRC's 2050 Transportation Plan:

-Only three percent of all 24 million trips per day are forecast to be taken in 2050 will be on Sound Transit rail or bus services. Total transit ridership stays at 8%. By design, with every light rail station opening, bus riders who had a one seat ride are forced to transfer to light rail.

-Congestion increases 54%. PSRC is not focused on reducing traffic congestion. Its Congestion Management Program was deemphasized in the 2050 Plan.

- Co2 emissions - While the ongoing rise of electric vehicles reduces carbon from car emissions, PSRC, Sound Transit, and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency join with President Trump's EPA in not recognizing the carbon implications of massive, multi-year civil construction projects that cut down trees and pour concrete for projects that transfer riders from buses to trains. The West Seattle Environmental Impact Statement introduces the concept that amortizing construction-generated carbon over 50 years makes its climate impacts tolerable.

- ST local taxes of \$6.5 million per day compute to an average of \$1800 per year per family.

- There are tremendous budget shortfalls for all other transit and transportation programs, while PSRC regards Sound Transit, with its historically flexible timelines and permanent untouchable tax rates, as fully funded through 2050 and beyond.

SmarterTransit.org Coalition is a non-partisan, all volunteer, nonprofit organization. Leaders and other active members are transit and transportation professionals. Our new Co-Chair does not own a car.

We urge PSRC members to take the following actions for the improvement of our mobility, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability:

1. Require ST to reprogram a fraction of ST3 funds to make the four-county bus network the best on earth. We have 300 miles of HOV lanes—grade separated transit. Let us use them as they were intended for increasingly electric bus transit, vanpools, and carpools.
2. Ask the State Legislature to hold ST accountable, starting with making the Board directly elected by district and with public funding of campaign.
3. Require the Puget Sound Regional Council staff to show their work and not bury numbers. And for them to start holding ST accountable.

Respectfully submitted to participants in the 2025 Puget Sound General Assembly of May 22, 2025 by Smarter Transit | Co-chairs John Niles, Maggie Fimia, and Conrad Cipoletti. | Visit the Smarter Transit web at <https://smartertransit.org> and sign the petition to the Washington State Legislature. Phone 206-781-4475 or email John@JohnNiles.com for further information.