



April 25, 2022

Dear Sound Transit Board of Directors,

On behalf of OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates Greater Seattle Chapter (OCA), I am submitting a public comment in regards to the [West Seattle and Ballard Link Extension – Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#).

Sound Transit describes the Chinatown International District as a “hub of cultural importance for Seattle and its Asian American communities,” but does not acknowledge the historical, systematic displacement and gentrification of the neighborhood by local government agencies. In 1886, anti-Chinese sentiment sparked the Seattle riot, during World War II hysteria fueled the government removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans from the neighborhood to incarceration camps. In the 1960s, the construction of Interstate-5 divided the neighborhood, drastically increased air pollution levels, and eliminated many businesses, homes, and churches. In 1972, after King County and the City of Seattle proposed razing Chinatown in favor of the Kingdome, Asian Americans came together to protest the elimination of our community. Now, 50 years later, King County, City of Seattle and Sound Transit is proposing to shut down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue – displacing longtime Asian American businesses – because it does not want to disadvantage sports traffic.

There is a history of Sound Transit’s differential treatment between Black, Indigenous, and communities of color versus predominately white neighborhoods. For example, when the Roosevelt community pushed and advocated for a below ground alternative, Sound Transit acquiesced. In contrast, South Seattle communities were not offered an alternative that addressed their concerns around retail and residential displacement, traffic congestions, and public safety. Sound Transit’s history of ignoring the concerns of communities of color continues to be seen in proposed segments for the Chinatown-International District regional station.

We support the proposals set forth by the CID Coalition and Transit Equity for All, namely:

- Propose additional alternatives that do not involve any residential or commercial displacement.
- Propose additional alternatives that include the use of Union and/or King Station. Both Union and King Street station have the existing transportation infrastructure and ADA facilities to make the proposed Chinatown-International District station a regional hub that connects the light rail to the Bellevue, Ballard/West Seattle, and the Everett/Tacoma line.
- A 120-day extension in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement public comment period, for Sound Transit to use the summer months to conduct extensive outreach and engagement that includes, but is not limited to:
- Focus groups for those most impacted by the new segment such as elders, youth, immigrants/refugees, small businesses, workers, neighborhood non-profit organizations and clients, and unhoused members of the Chinatown-International District.

*Founded in 1973 as the Organization of Chinese Americans, OCA is a national organization dedicated to the social, political, and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans in the United States.*

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- Work with neighborhood ethnic media outlets and in-language media to promote the new proposed segment options and public comment period.
- Pay community-based organizations to conduct outreach to their membership/clients, as these organizations have existing relationships of trust with those most impacted.
- Create a Community-Benefits Agreement that encompasses:
  - Free Orca Cards to all Chinatown-International District small businesses, employees, and residents.
  - Monetary small business and residential construction impact compensation.
  - Increase the Chinatown-International District tree canopy.
  - A plan to contract Women and Minority Owned Businesses for the construction of both the proposed segment and if there is a potential for transit-oriented development (TOD). As well as working with a construction apprenticeship program that recruits local talent from Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

The history of the Chinatown-International District has been marred by government agencies who displaced residents, small businesses, and communities. We are here to ensure that these “misfortunes” will not be our neighborhood’s future. After two years of a pandemic, economic instability, and anti-Asian hate, current proposed segments will only inhibit the neighborhood from equitable recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Chinatown-International District segment and the creation of the regional station. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Connie So, President

CC: Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell  
 Seattle City Council President Debora Juarez  
 Seattle City Councilmember Tammy J. Morales  
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