

Northwest Progressive Institute

revolutionizing grassroots politics

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Memorandum

TO: Seattle Subway
FROM: Northwest Progressive Institute
DATE: September 13th, 2021
RE: Results of our July 2021 research polling concerning light rail expansion (Question #1)

Introduction

Nearly five years ago, voters across Puget Sound said yes to an ambitious but very necessary plan to expand high capacity transit in the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett metropolitan area. Known as ST3, short for Sound Transit Phase III, the plan authorized extending Link light rail in pretty much every direction — north, south, east, and west — along with expansions to express bus service, commuter rail service, and the creation of a new bus rapid transit system. Two of the new light rail lines would be located within the Seattle city limits, and several new infill stations would be located along the existing Line 1. Now, as Sound Transit grapples with a funding shortfall caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic plus rising costs for land and materials, NPI finds that voters in Seattle are supportive both of a supplementary transit funding measure to accelerate ST3 project delivery and to get more neighborhoods connected to the system.

Summary of our finding

76% of respondents to our July 2021 survey of the Seattle electorate — all likely 2021 Seattle voters — told us that they would support a new transit funding measure, while 19% said they would be opposed. 5% said they were not sure.

Survey language and visualized results of our finding

Here's Question #1 and the responses received:

ST3/light rail question #1:

When all Sound Transit 3 projects are fully built, more than half of Seattle's densely populated neighborhoods will still not have their own light rail stations. Would you support or oppose a new transit funding measure to connect the rest of the City of Seattle with Link light rail?

Responses:

Support: 76%

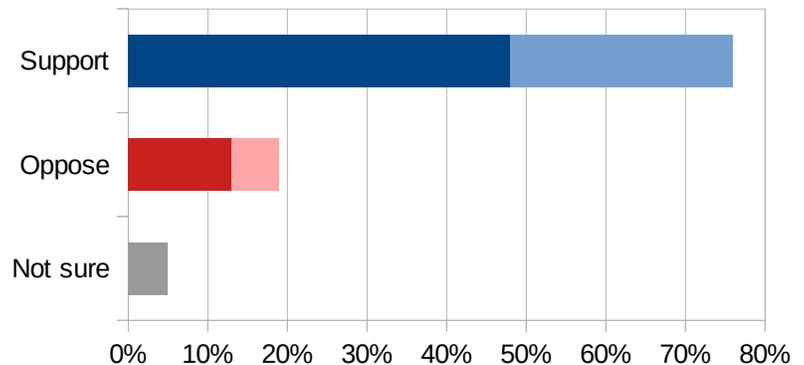
- Strongly support: 48%
- Somewhat support: 28%

Oppose: 19%

- Somewhat oppose: 6%
- Strongly oppose: 13%

Not sure: 5%

Support for light rail funding in Seattle



Net support: 56%

Methodology

Our poll of 617 likely August 2021 Seattle voters was in the field through Monday, July 12th, through Thursday, July 15th. All respondents participated online. The poll was conducted by Change Research for the Northwest Progressive Institute, and has a modeled margin of error of 4.3% at the 95% confidence interval.

Crosstabs

The crosstabs offer more insights. Here is a table summarizing some of the responses sorted by key groups.

Finding →	Support		Oppose		Not sure
	Strongly	Somewhat	Somewhat	Strongly	
Intensity Level →					-----
Base	48%	28%	6%	13%	5%
Voters who identify as female	46%	30%	6%	10%	7%
Voters who identify as male	49%	25%	6%	17%	3%
Ages 18-34	66%	24%	2%	6%	2%
Ages 35-49	55%	25%	5%	12%	3%
Ages 50-64	37%	29%	7%	21%	6%
Ages 65+	36%	35%	10%	12%	8%
White voters	48%	27%	6%	14%	6%
All people of color voters	49%	35%	6%	7%	3%
Voters with a college education	52%	28%	6%	10%	4%
Voters with only a high school education	38%	27%	6%	23%	7%
Democratic voters	55%	27%	6%	6%	5%
Independent voters	26%	33%	6%	27%	7%
Republican voters	9%	27%	6%	58%	0%
Likely City Council District 1	41%	22%	9%	21%	6%
Likely City Council District 2	47%	37%	7%	9%	0%
Likely City Council District 3	51%	23%	9%	11%	7%
Likely City Council District 4	53%	27%	6%	10%	4%
Likely City Council District 5	52%	25%	5%	13%	5%
Likely City Council District 6	43%	43%	3%	7%	5%
Likely City Council District 7	48%	24%	3%	17%	8%

Concluding Remarks

As we can see, Seattle voters overwhelmingly favor a new transit funding measure to connect more of Seattle's neighborhoods to Link light rail. Nearly half are in strong support, more than twice the total number who say they're opposed. Unlike in the 1990s, when our region was debating whether we should even build light rail at all, we no longer have to rely on pictures from other cities, architectural renderings, or hypothetical travel times to make the case for high capacity transit. The system we've already built makes the case for itself.

While voters are sold on light rail as a good investment, there is still the practical matter of delivering it to the neighborhoods that need it. That's why we asked about support for a new transit funding measure in two different ways in our July 2021 survey. Given that we're in the midst of a climate emergency, we just can't wait until the 2050s or 2100s to get Link into more neighborhoods. We've got to figure out how to accelerate our high capacity transit build-out so that we can be the climate action and sustainability leader we aspire to be.