

John Niles speech on ST3 to PSRC General Assembly, Mar. 31, 2016

I'm John Niles, and I live in Seattle.

On Monday, Sound Transit's chairman called the [\\$50 billion ST phase 3 plan](#) "[one of the most important decision our generation will be asked to make.](#)" I can't resist suggesting some questions we should all be asking:

- **Number one, what would a household pay in Sound Transit taxes each year?** 20 years of these taxes already show they'll never go away, so let's have a realistic and independent analysis of the tax burden on we who would vote for more. [Some say](#) the total ST overall household tax burden would rise to over \$1,000 average per year. For lower income families, is that fair? Would ST3 taxes adversely affect the ability to fund public education and other programs? How high does light rail phase 3 push the total household tax load in this region?
- **Question two, how many additional door-to-door transit trips will \$27 billion more taxes for ST3 buy?** Many of the riders on the ST3 add-ons would be those who now take one-seat morning buses routes that would end at train stations. What's the public cost for each *new* transit customer? How would that compare to an expanded and modernized [rapid bus service](#) on [expressway managed lanes](#) where PSRC predicts better flow in 2040? Will those with their bus service shut down save commuting time by having to stand on the train?
- **Third, what IS the impact on traffic congestion just from ST3?** 525 thousand daily boardings in 2040 from all three phases of Sound Transit is only 3 percent of the 19 million daily trips forecast by PSRC in that year, so reducing congestion will be challenging, for sure. [No congestion reduction from trains has ever been confirmed by the environmental impact statements for every rail project going back to 1999.](#) Unlike many, I read them! So despite PSRC's freeway forecast, ST3 plans and marketing are based on future congestion getting worse. [Chairman Constantine said on Monday](#) all of us should support ST3, because "every person who chooses to ride the train is one less driver snarling up traffic..." So we need to ask, just how many cars are forecast to be taken out of traffic by ST3, and is THAT enough to make commuters less miserable.
- Next, obviously, **how many folks will actually have shorter commuting times because of ST3, and, how many minutes on average will be saved?** Modern computer models can determine this.
- **Fifth and finally, beyond the [rail in Seattle already being built](#), does the [technological revolution](#) offer faster, more flexible, less expensive alternatives for mobility and congestion reduction?** The core ST rail planning assumptions were made decades ago, no longer comporting with changes possible from the Internet, smartphones, robotics, and cars people buy today that drive themselves on freeways. Is doubling fixed rail now the best way for the region to achieve a lower cost, lower emissions, faster, flexible, high-tech transportation future?

Thank you for listening to my questions.

John Niles email: John@JohnNiles.com