



The Transit Reader

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Vote YES for Transit, Then Let's Organize

By Katie Wilson

Faced with deep bus service cuts following the failure of King County's Proposition 1 this spring, City of Seattle elected officials are sending a similar measure to the November ballot. If approved, Seattle Transportation Benefit District Proposition 1 will raise \$45 million per year for public transit by means of a 0.1% sales tax increase and a \$60 vehicle license fee.

Originally, this was going to be just about enough to save Seattle's bus service. But on September 29, the King County Council voted to cancel the remaining bus cuts by digging deep into Metro's reserve fund. On the one hand, this is a dangerous gamble: they're banking on sustained economic growth, so if another recession hits in the next few years and sales tax revenue plunges, we're in big trouble. On the other hand, this means that if Prop 1 passes in November, Seattle will be able to not only preserve but expand and improve our bus system.

What are we to make of all this? First, it's still important to vote yes on Seattle Transportation Benefit District Proposition 1. Public transit in our region is chronically underfunded. Unacceptable cuts have already been made, fares are

too high, service is not frequent or extensive enough, and our bus drivers' schedules have been tightened to the point where they don't have time to use the bathroom. Let's pass Prop 1 and then make sure that money goes to restoring and adding service and making public transit more affordable for everyone. Climate change is accelerating, and we need a transit system that gets people out of their cars.

But never forget that this is a compromise. Working and poor people in our state already shoulder more than our fair share of the tax burden, and this measure exacerbates that trend. Before putting Prop 1 on the ballot, the City Council rejected two more progressive funding options: an Employee Hours Tax on business and a Commercial Parking Fee increase. The Transit Riders Union and our allies will continue to push for progressive taxation at every level of government.

Finally, don't think that this is a permanent solution. Expect another economic downturn. Next time, Metro will have even less of a cushion and even fewer local options for new funding. We can't get complacent – we need to get organized. Join the Transit Riders Union and help us take this fight to the state legislature where it belongs!



The Sorry State of the State

By Beau Morton

We're coming up on election season again! By the time you read this your ballots should be in hand. For King County, this is a state-level election only; there are no city or county council members to elect this November 4th, but there are a whole lot of legislators out there, from 17 districts around King County. There's also, as you may have noticed, a very important transit measure (Seattle Transportation Benefit District Proposition 1) at the very bottom of your ballot that will finally, for the first time in years, allow Seattle to expand its bus service to actually meet



ridership levels. Now, why are we constantly having to vote on these endless, tough-to-swallow funding options to provide the necessary services that we need to keep Seattle and King County running? Well, for some time now, our elected officials at the state level have been failing us miserably, especially when it comes to raising revenue.

There are several examples: the state legislature was recently found in contempt of court for not meeting its "paramount duty" to adequately fund K-12 education; we've now

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One Year On, Boeing's Sweetheart \$8.7 Billion "Bargain" Brings up Heartburn

By Yasmin Elbaradie

Less than a year ago, Washington state politicians doled out a hefty \$8.7 billion to Boeing in an effort to entice the aerospace manufacturer to keep jobs in Washington. Perhaps to display their gratitude for the state's willingness to fork over giant fistfuls of cash, the company has announced its decision to move 2,000 jobs to the Midwest, a decision Rep. Reuven Carlyle, the chief architect behind the tax-break bill, described as "frustrating" and "disappointing."

\$8.7 billion remains not only the largest tax break in Washington state history, but in U.S. history. "The silence from Olympia is deafening," said Ray Goforth,

executive director of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA). "Why are Washington taxpayers subsidizing Boeing to move thousands of jobs out of state?" The Aerospace Tax Preference Bill that granted the tax breaks "made no reciprocal requirement that companies enhance or even maintain current job levels in Washington," the Herald Online reported. Every other state that provided tax breaks to Boeing had such a clause.

Also, those plum union jobs we were trying to keep in-state? In addition to demanding a tremendous amount of "financial assistance" to stay in Washington, Boeing also pressured the machinists who build

its airplanes to accept a contract "extension" that slashed pension benefits, drove up the cost of healthcare, and reduced cost-of-living adjustment to a measly one percent every other year, threatening to transfer production of the 777X to a non-union state if either failed to come through.

In an analysis published on their website before the vote, District 751, the local Boeing Machinists Union, summed up the switch from pensions to 401(k)s like this: "You will have to work longer, retire with less, and carefully plan how long you may live. With the new plan, when the money runs out, it's gone,

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We Won a Low Income Fare!

But Don't be Fooled: The Transit System is Not Okay

By Katie Wilson

If you've been paying attention to the transit news this fall, you might conclude that we all have plenty to be thankful for. For one thing, starting next March riding the bus will become more affordable for tens of thousands of transit riders across King County. King County Metro is rolling out a new low income reduced fare, thanks to several years of campaigning by the Transit Riders Union and allied organizations. If your household is below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, you'll qualify for a lower-fare Orca card at \$1.50 per ride.

Not only that, the massive bus service cuts that have been looming over us for several years seem, at first glance, to have evaporat-

ed overnight. If you believe the Seattle Times (*hint: never believe the Seattle Times!*), Metro and the County Executive were more or less lying to us all along about Metro's financial crisis. A few "efficiencies" here and there and suddenly, magically, 75% of the threatened cuts are off the table. Apparently it was all smoke and mirrors, a bloated public agency trying to fool us into paying more taxes.

Don't believe it for a moment! As usual, the truth is more complicated. Where did this "new" money come from? First of all, it doesn't exist yet – the county is banking on a booming economy and optimistic sales tax projections. If the economy takes another dive in the next few years, all bets are off. Second, the County Council has decided to dig deep into Metro's

reserves, changing policy so that less revenue goes to the fund for replacing buses and weathering recessions. This is a dangerous move, making Metro even more dependent on the volatile sales tax, and we can expect it will come back to haunt us. And finally, our hardworking Metro drivers and mechanics are being pressured to make even more sacrifices

200% of the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines

Family Size	Annual	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$23,340.00	\$1,945.00	\$ 449
2	\$31,460.00	\$2,622.00	\$ 605
3	\$39,580.00	\$3,298.00	\$ 761
4	\$47,700.00	\$3,975.00	\$ 917
5	\$55,820.00	\$4,652.00	\$1,073.00
6	\$63,940.00	\$5,328.00	\$1,230.00
7	\$72,060.00	\$6,005.00	\$1,386.00
8	\$80,180.00	\$6,682.00	\$1,542.00
Each Add'l	\$ 8,120	\$ 677	\$ 156

in their pay, benefits and working conditions. This is not the right way to save our transit

Continued as LOW INCOME, page 2

Bus Ticket Shortage: *Call to Action!*

By the SHARE Direct Action Work Group

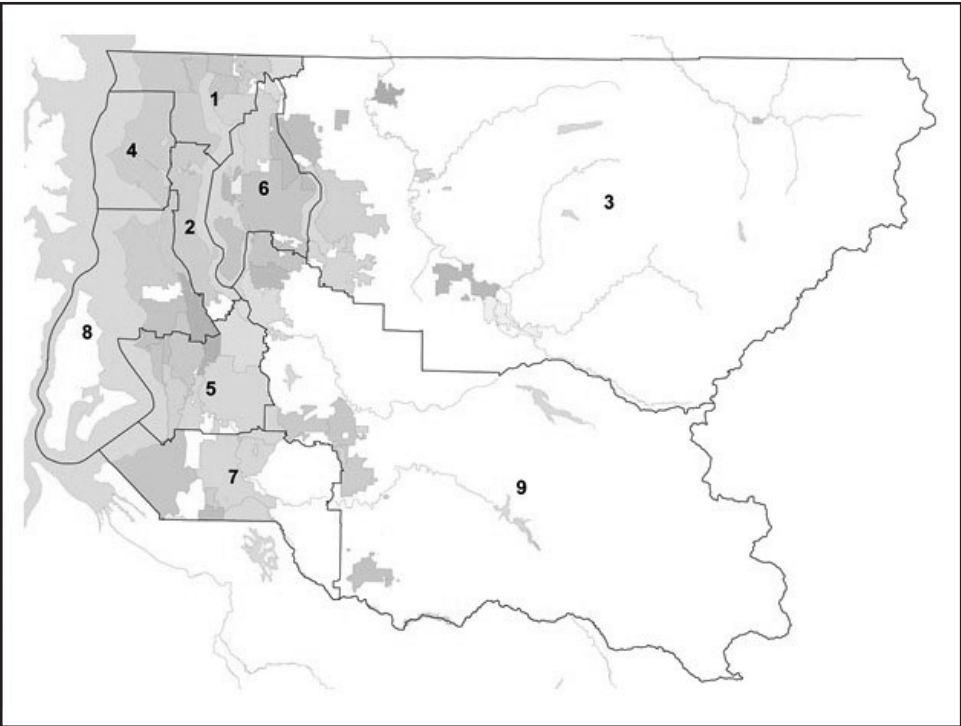
SHARE (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort) is the largest shelter network in Seattle and King County. SHARE operates 15 indoor shelters that are spread throughout the City of Seattle, and 2 Tent Cities.

SHARE's self-managed network of shelters relies on the Human Services Reduced Rate Bus Ticket Program to provide for the transportation needs of its almost 500 members. SHARE participants use the bus tickets to get to appointments, interviews and social service providers to improve their lives. But primarily, reduced Rate Bus Tickets are the only means for most of the members to get to shelter on a daily basis.

Metro started the Reduced Rate Bus Ticket Program in 1993 in response to SHARE's advocacy. Before then SHARE had paid face value for bus tickets until completely running out of money. At that point the entire group of shelter participants had to walk every night from downtown to their shelter.

The Reduced Rate Bus Ticket Program made tickets available at 20% cost to social service providers that serve people experiencing poverty and homelessness. Now, dozens of social service organizations in King County purchase tickets to provide for the transportation needs of their clients, from DESC (Downtown Emergency Services Center) to Operation Night Watch, a night time referral service for people looking for shelter. However, the total number of reduced rate tickets available each year is limited by county ordinance and it is never enough to meet the need.

In 2012, SHARE had to close its shelter doors due to an insufficient bus ticket allocation. This is where SHARE met the Transit



King County and its Districts

Riders Union. Our Sleep Out started in solidarity with the TRU Funeral March for the now-deceased downtown Free Ride Zone. Together TRU and SHARE marched from Westlake Mall to the County Courthouse to mourn the loss of the Free Ride Zone and start the Sleep Out. For 21 days, over 100 homeless people who had nowhere else to go operated a nighttime encampment at the Plaza of the King County Administration building to stay together and safe. SHARE reopened its shelter doors when King County Council increased the total Bus Ticket allocation by \$250,000 – a one-time emergency measure. SHARE thanks TRU for standing – and sleeping – with us in solidarity to achieve this victory.

This year, SHARE's reduced rate bus ticket allocation is considerably less than the total used in 2013. At this point SHARE needs \$36,000

more in purchase value of the Reduced Rate Bus Tickets meet the transportation and survival needs of ALL our members for the year. With the homeless population increasing, more bus tickets are needed. In January 2014, the One Night Count found 3,123 homeless people unsheltered. WITHOUT SHELTER, PEOPLE DIE. In 2013 the Women in Black stood vigil for 57 homeless people who died outside or by violence.

Insufficient bus tickets are a perennial problem faced by many social services providers – not just SHARE. We are urging the King County Council and County Executive to act urgently to find solutions to avert this catastrophe. Please help by calling on the King County Executive and King County Councilmembers to address this crisis immediately.

Call Your King County Representatives!

- **County Executive Dow Constantine**
Countywide 206-263-9600
- **Councilmember Rod Dembowski**
District 1 206-477-1001
- **Councilmember Larry Gossett**
District 2 206-477-1002
- **Councilmember Kathy Lambert**
District 3 206-477-1003
- **Councilmember Larry Phillips**
District 4 206-477-1004
- **Councilmember Dave Upthegrove**
District 5 206-477-1005
- **Councilmember Jane Hague**
District 6 206-477-1006
- **Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer**
District 7 206-477-1007
- **Councilmember Joe McDermott**
District 8 206-477-1008
- **Councilmember Reagan Dunn**
District 9 206-477-1009

What is the Transit Riders Union?

The Transit Riders Union is an independent, democratic, member-run union of transit riders fighting to make public transit better and more affordable for all. Since TRU was founded in 2012, we successfully built a coalition to win a reduced fare for low income riders, which will go into effect in March 2015. We've been fighting tirelessly against bus service cuts, and we will continue to push for the massive expansion of public transit that is necessary to stop climate change.

We believe in progressive taxation. Working and poor people already pay for transit through fares and sales tax, and Washington has the most regressive tax system in the country – we simply can't build a true mass transit system unless corporations and the wealthy begin to pay their fair share.

Do you ride the bus? Then you're a transit rider, and you belong in the Transit Riders Union. As a member, you have a voice and a vote at our monthly meetings. We have power in numbers. Join us today.

Transit Riders Union Membership Meetings

1st Monday of every month, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Labor Temple, Hall #6, 2800 1st Avenue, Seattle, 98121

Join online: <http://transitriders.org/join-us>

Email: contact@transitriders.org

Voicemail: 206-651-4282

Website: <http://transitriders.org>

Our Mission: The Transit Riders Union is a democratic organization of working and poor people, taking control over our own lives, and building up the power we need to change society for the good of humanity and of the planet. We will fight to preserve, expand, and improve the public transportation system in Seattle and beyond, so that every human being has access to safe, affordable, and reliable public transit.

LOW INCOME: *More to do*

Continued from page 1

system. It's an easy, short-term fix that just pushes the day of reckoning another year or two or three ahead. Who really believes the economy is in a stable place, poised for long-term growth? Profits have rebounded, for sure, but median household income still hasn't recovered to pre-recession levels. But instead of requiring under-taxed corporations and the wealthy to pay their fair share, we're yet again placing the tax burden squarely on working and poor people and making Metro even more vulnerable to fluctuations in a consumer debt-driven economy that does not deserve our confidence.

Let's take another look at our big victory, the low income fare. It's a victory, no doubt about that. But think about it. Until 2008, the standard off-peak fare was \$1.25. Since then fares have nearly doubled. The new low income fare is \$1.50, and the costs will be offset by yet another across-the-board fare increase of \$0.25. This will cause hardship for low income seniors, youth, and people with disabilities, as well as nudging "choice riders" back into their

cars. How excited can we really get about this? It's not a good trend.

It's also a familiar trend, one that fits right into the austerity strategy of the corporate elite. When those stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder start making noise, especially if they're getting some sympathy from those a few rungs up, give them a little of what they want, but make those in the middle pay for it. That'll strain their sympathy and solidarity, and they won't all be able to get together to shake the ladder hard enough to shake down some of the wealth that's been accumulating at the top. Or, to use a few more metaphors, the rich are getting off scot-free while we're all tightening our belts another notch and being forced to play roulette with the public services that keep our society working. Enough is enough – let's get organized.

The **Transit Reader** is a publication of the Transit Riders Union, an independent democratic all-volunteer member-run union. If you are interested in contributing to future issues, contact us.

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Tenants in Solidarity with the Transit Riders Union

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A TENANT? CALL THE
TENANTS UNION OF WASHINGTON'S HOTLINE AT:

(206) 723-0500

HOURS AND DETAILED TENANTS RIGHTS INFORMATION AT:

www.tenantsunion.org

HELP, WE'VE BEEN ROBBED!



**Every day, someone gets
cheated by an abusive
employer or landlord.**

**Alone we have no power.
Together, we can fight
back and win.**



JOIN US!

Find out when fellow workers and tenants are taking
action and need you to be there.

Leave your name, number and email:

www.seasol.net/contact



**Seattle Solidarity Network
206.350.8650 www.seasol.net**

**We are a volunteer network of working people who defend
each other through collective action and mutual support.**

Rules for Riding the King County Metro

A Poem

Pay the right fare

Some days, you see it—right out of a movie, a suited man running, briefcase in one hand, waving wildly after a moving bus. If you’re lucky, it’s raining and he’s holding onto a hat. The driver slows the bus and watches like God or a strip club bouncer: Bored but benevolent as a disheveled man fiddles for ones in pants pockets.

Respect other passengers’ privacy

Dear Girl across from me, what are you reading?
Please, just once, lift your book a little higher. I need to know if my crush on you is shallow, if you will forever be someone I wish I talked to.

Do not cause safety problems

Click
“Meet me right at the bus stop.”
Click
She’s got a knife she won’t stop playing with.
Click
“Don’t argue with me, there are a lot of psychos around.”
Click
She is taller than most people, wears a flowered dress and clomping boots.
Click
“I’m almost here. Bring the dogs.”

Use headphones

His music; a steady metronome of clicks, pops and the warp of thumping bass. He pays no mind to jostle as he lip-syncs the words just under-breath, staring out the window.

No eating, smoking or littering

Smuggle your energy bars like pills at a warehouse dance party.
Hide half-chewed pizza in grocery bags.
Suck a last cig-drag as the bus rushes by, become the running man to catch up.
The driver sees, but don’t insult with obviousness.
Furtively finish the Dick’s Deluxe with your chin in your collar, kick the wrapper under the seat. Carefully clear your chin of crumbs.

No alcoholic beverages

It don’t matter. Try to walk on a moving Metro and you stumble like a drunk fool anyway.

Do not harass the driver or other riders

My co-worker, loves his car. A car, he says, is not optional.
He has fought in two wars, survived mountainsides, holds multiple degrees, but public transportation still scares him.
The only way to get him on a bus, he says, is at the end of a bayonet.

Do not lie down on the seats

BUT I AM SO TIRED!

Respect transit property

An AMBUSH PARTY! On a CITY BUS! They are like so totally going to do that get all their friends and some speakers and just party til the end of the line! They twitch and fidget in the back they are NOT 16 they are 18 and have never been to this part of Seattle before they’re coming from Tacoma to go to a party on a boat and now so is the 35 year old man with slicked back hair and darting eyes, he can even give them a ride if they need one, gets their numbers before his stop, they are trembly excited and work at taco bell that’s why the red haired one sounds like a bitch sometimes, it’s all the customer service bitch voice coming out when she doesn’t mean it to sometimes.

Use metro services and facilities for transportation purposes only

At 3rd and Union after midnight, there is that fear that I’ve missed the last one. That for one night only, they’ve changed the schedules and I must walk home in the dark. I dread the federally mandated time changes, that come on all at once, fear mornings when busses arrive early, I become the running man, panting and waving, the surly face of the driver is like Mother Theresa.

This is getting from the place I am to the place I need to be. Past the murals of Rainier, whole streets of shimmering glass banks, past cute new cafes on Eastlake; all the different worlds within a city’s limits. Rolling wheels carry me tired, bleary-eyed and wondering, a crumb of a story next to stories I catch crumbs of, a trip in starts and stops, the creaking, swinging stuff of everything lurching toward its destination.

Please, report any problems to your driver.

— Graham Isaac

Ask a Bus Driver

By Sam Smith

Hello Metro riders! My name is Sam Smith, and I’ve been a Metro driver since early 2013. I hear all sorts of questions from passengers, friends, and fellow TRU members on a range of topics related to my job. This column is going to be dedicated to answering some of those questions. Anything you want to know – Why do the poles come off the wires so often? Where do you use the bathroom? Where do you pick up the bus? – just ask! Send questions to sam@transitriders.org.

Because this is my first column and I don’t have any questions, I’m going to answer a question that I have heard many variations on: **Why did the driver not stop for me?**

It is one of the worst feelings: you’re trying to catch a bus. Maybe you’ve been waiting at a stop for 20 minutes, maybe you’ve been walking for that long just to get to your stop. Finally you see it approaching, and your stress level suddenly drops as your wait time and travel time has suddenly become a lot less vague and unknown. And then – oh no! – the bus drove right past me without stopping! Why???

There are many reasons that this might happen, and I’ll try to name the more common ones.

• **We didn’t see you.**

I’ve had passengers hop out from behind a tree just as I was about to drive past an otherwise unoccupied bus zone. Had one more second gone by before I saw them, I would have driven past without stopping. I cannot stress this enough: Make yourself visible! If no one else is around, wait in an unobstructed area near the curb. If it is dark, with minimal or no street lighting, wave a flashlight or your cell phone so we can see you. Or at least wear bright or reflective clothing.

If you’re at a busy zone on a busy street, like 3rd Ave in Downtown Seattle, there’s an entirely different visibility problem. As bus drivers, our eyes have to be on about a dozen places at once: checking all doors and mirrors for loading and unloading passengers, checking our left side to see if it’s safe to pull back into traffic, etc. Meanwhile we are usually under pressure to service a zone as quickly as possible to keep the flow of bus traffic running smoothly. We are good at scanning the sidewalk for people trying to catch our bus, but we are not good at reading your minds. We depend on your body language to communicate that you want our bus. Make yourself stand out from the dozens of other pedestrians walking along the sidewalk or waiting for their buses. Walking casually and making partial eye contact alone is not a clear signal. Running and waving your arms are the most effective, so don’t be shy! If you’re coming from behind us, try to run about two feet away from the curb so that you’re in view of our mirrors (but please be safe! No bus is worth dying for).

• **There’s another bus right behind us.**

When we’re running behind schedule, sometimes the next bus of the same route, called our “follower,” will catch up to us. It is in everyone’s interest for boarding passengers to get on the follower’s bus. If you were to board mine, then all of my passengers and I would be delayed further, and often so would my follower, who would be forced to sit behind me while I stop to load you. If you board my follower, then I can speed up for all of my already quite late passengers, and you can board what is likely to be a much emptier bus.

I would only skip over a passenger at a stop if I know that my follower is less than 60 seconds behind me, and I will usually try to give a hand gesture – like pointing my thumb behind me – to indicate that you’ll be picked up very shortly.

• **We need to go!**

We are under a lot of pressure to get in and get out, especially at busy corridors like 3rd Ave and the Tran-

sit Tunnel. Sometimes we see you running for us but we simply can’t wait for you. We need to clear the zone to make room for the line of buses behind us. If you just missed me and you’re feeling adventurous, catch the next bus behind me. With any luck, it will meet us at the next stop.

• **We’re filled to capacity.**

I know that you’re used to squeezing into a crowded bus, but sometimes we cannot safely fit another person on board and must skip all stops until passengers start exiting. Usually this happens when I’m running late enough that I am picking up my passengers as well as those planning on catching my follower. This is a good sign that an empty bus will be arriving shortly. So you may have to wait a tiny bit longer, but your ride will be much more pleasant!

• **We’re out of service.**

Often in places where passengers aren’t accustomed to reading the destination sign on the front of the bus (zones served by only one route, passengers boarding RapidRide), passengers curse me out for not picking them up. What they fail to notice is that the bus reads “To Terminal” or the name of a Metro base. This means that we are essentially out of service. If I happen to know where a passenger wants to go, and that’s where I’m headed, then I’ll stop and pick them up, but otherwise, chances are good that I’m not going where you want me to go.

• **This route doesn’t service your stop.**

This is a common problem for me when I’m driving the express version of a route that has a local version with the same route number, like the 7 or 21. Passengers waiting at a 21 local stop see me pull up, without realizing it’s an express, and then give me the finger for skipping over them. Tip for route 21 riders: if the destination sign reads “Arbor Heights” then it’s an express. Tip for route 7 riders: if it’s a weekday, and you see a diesel bus (instead of an electric trolley) pull up, chances are good that it’s an express.

This is also a problem with temporary bus stop closures. If there is road construction along a route, sometimes it requires a reroute. And sometimes it requires a stop closure, even though we still drive right past the zone. When a stop is closed, it is usually for safety reasons. Metro will post signs at the zone when a stop is closed.

• **We are mean, nasty, evil people who want you to suffer.**

Just kidding. But this is definitely the sentiment I hear from passengers. “The driver looked right at me and closed the door in my face.” I’m sure this happens now and again. I mean, we are people. We make mistakes, and sometimes we just have bad days. Some drivers have shifts that last over ten hours, with barely enough time to take a bathroom break, let alone eat a healthy meal and mentally refresh.

More likely, however, is that it wasn’t intentional or malicious, but because of one or more of the other reasons listed above. Thanks for reading and thanks for riding!

BOEING: State Puts Profits Before People

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and you might still be living.” They summed up the changes thusly: “By the end of the contract my total compensation and spendable income will be less than it is today.”

Funny that we demand so little of corporations, despite providing them with such sweetheart deals.

When Boeing asked Olympia to jump, legislators responded only with “how high,” but when it came to actually serving citizenry, they failed to come through.

The transportation package that King County desperately needed from Olympia to keep transit operational failed to materialize, blocked

by an effort largely spearheaded by Senator Rodney Tom and his cohorts (by trying to ‘starve’ King County into accepting what many deemed a doomed road-heavy transportation package). This forced King County to turn to local, regressive taxation options like sales tax and car tab increases to fund transit—two of only

a handful of funding sources available to King County in lieu of funds from the state capital.

While we as individuals are coerced into accepting the rhetoric of tightening our belts and “making do with less”, the giant corporations just get “more,” and a free ride to boot.

SHA to Residents: GTFO

By Randy Whitelock

A disaster may be coming to Seattle next year. The Seattle Housing Authority has devised a plan that would act as a laser sighted wrecking ball aimed straight at the heart of the city’s working poor. Never has the city of Seattle seen, delivered with total shamelessness, such a devious affront to thousands in public housing by bureaucrats trying to shore up the bottom line. The result will be more new homeless, families torn apart, and working immigrants barred from a better life. The name of this nefarious plan, set to create poverty where there was once opportunity? It’s called “Stepping Forward.”

Here’s how it works. Currently, all households in SHA low-income housing pay a standard 30% of their income in rent. Some of these households receive income from Social Security Disability and Retirement benefits. Other households, the ones directly affected by this plan, are supported by working members, ages 25-61 years, just trying to make ends meet for themselves and their families in a post-recession economy.

The first step is to divorce income from rent for these “work-able” households, meaning SHA would be free to raise rent regardless of a household’s income. The next step is to dramatically raise the rent. According to the plan, a three bedroom apartment that now costs a low income working family \$170 a month would go up to \$400 in the second and third years, and to \$970 in the sixth and seventh years. This is regardless of whether the “work-able” members of the household find a higher paying job or not. Soon, families may be faced with the dilemma of eviction or paying 50%-75% of their income in rent, in some cases choosing between clothes for their children or a roof over their head.

According to the Seattle Housing Authority, this will motivate these folks to just go out there and get a better paying job (after five years, a tenant would need to earn \$20 an hour to comfortably afford a two to three bedroom unit), as if high paying jobs in this economy were like so much fruit waiting to be plucked. The reality is, most of these tenants will struggle, or be forced back out into the shelter systems they waited years to get out of, a cruel trick played on them by a program that they rely on to supply their basic human need of housing.

Andrew Lofton, Executive Director for the Seattle Housing Authority, sells this by saying the displacement of tenants will “open the door for the thousands of families that are currently on waiting lists,” thus creating a revolving door policy that looks more like a Ponzi scheme than a human services proposal.

So who benefits most from bilking the working poor in this fashion? Federal sequestration has decimated HUD funding to SHA in recent years. In order to recoup lost revenue, the agency has decided to orient itself to the private market, partnering with corporate investors like



V. Straub

Vulcan Inc. and JP Morgan Chase to develop billion dollar “market rate” properties such as Yesler Terrace. With Seattle in the middle of yet another housing bubble, the potential profits to be made from these market rate units are just too much to resist, and the results are proposals that keep the working poor out, and bring wealthier people in. Further exploitation of a human right for the sake of a greasy buck.

This can be stopped. The Tenants Union has worked hard to organize a strong resistance from tenants within the Seattle Housing Authority, turning out hundreds to protest. Seattle Mayor Ed Murray has come out publicly against this proposal, and has the support of city councilmembers like Kshama Sawant

and Nick Licata. But the fight is not over. “Stepping Forward,” may begin implementation early next year. Every citizen concerned with the health and prosperity of Seattle should get involved. Please visit <http://stopsha.wordpress.com/> or contact The Tenants Union (206-723-0500) to inquire how you may contribute to the protection of our city from this avoidable disaster.

Problems with Fare Enforcement? Tell us about it.

The Transit Riders Union is considering a campaign to make fare enforcement fair. We want to know about transit riders’ experiences with fare enforcement on Rapid Ride and Link Light Rail – both good and bad. Send your stories and observations to contact@transitriders.org with “Fare Enforcement” in the subject line, or mail them to Transit Riders Union, P.O. Box 20723, Seattle, WA 98102.

Ode to the 48

By Sophie Glass

In twilight, I board the 48 at the Mount Baker Transit Station. Seattle can’t pretend to be the melting pot that is New York or L.A., but on the seats of its buses, you can hear a dozen languages. As the bus pulls out into traffic, a woman in a purple jacket begins speaking Chinese to the man behind her. While I don’t understand a single word that passes between them, I can pick up on the meaning of their sighs and smiles. Across from me are two men who speak Spanish and I follow the gist of their teasing exchanges.

When we reach Capitol Hill, I start to hear more English. A young white woman with bright blue headphones enters and sits next to a full-hipped woman. A man wearing neon spandex hoists his bike onto the front of the bus and wipes his brow as he pays his fare and finds a seat. There is room for every type on the 48 and over time, our lives get braided together. We are public beings: we carry our groceries; lug our toilet paper; we take phone calls from doctors; we catch our breath from running up the hill to the bus stop (you never know when the next will arrive). We carry our loads with us, our burdens and blessings.

The 48 thunders down the hill and students begin filling the vacant seats as we approach the University District. All kinds of students: students from Korea with stylish hair-

cuts; students from the East Coast with nervous expressions; students whose parents dreamt of sending their kids to college growing up in China; students with heavy make-up masking their baby cheeks. A few stops later, the students exit and hurry to their dorms while the 48 marches forward, now carrying an older crowd with salt and pepper hair. One man with pale skin works intently on a sudoku puzzle.

When we round Green Lake, the last light of the day reflects off the water onto the faces of the grandmother and her grandson sitting by the window. They sit in silence, both carrying on their public solitude. On the far side of the lake, the bus kneels for a white man in his 40s with a cane and noticeable limp. Unquestionably, the people in the front move back a row and give him a seat. And this is the bus ethic in action.

By the time we reach Loyal Heights, there are only a few passengers remaining on the bus, none of whom started the journey with me 12 miles ago. I get off at the last stop after over an hour of seeing languages, faces and landscapes change. When I step out into the sidewalk, I notice that the rain had let up and the camellia trees are in bloom. I walk home knowing that in the morning I will board the 48 again, take the trip in reverse and once more experience the comfort of being alone together.

STATE: Needs Change

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gone two years without a new transportation package while our roads and bridges crumble and our buses grow ever more crowded; Washington state’s tuition rates are among the fastest growing in the nation at 37% over the past five years, while state dollars going to higher education dropped by 28%. At the same time, many college and university staff and faculty have gone without any cost of living adjustment over the same time.

Our state legislators are failing us, full stop. Seattle is the fastest-growing city in the country, and the Puget Sound region and Washington State as a whole show no signs of slowing growth. Whether it’s the booming economy, the scenery, or the possibility Washington is likely to be a prime spot for climate refugees in America, people will continue to come. It’s time that our state legislature faced the facts and the future with clarity and honesty. Funding the things that we need will require new revenue. I repeat: It. Will. Require. New. Revenue. What’s not new revenue? Giving Boeing \$9 billion dollars during a panicky and hastily-called special session, the entire point of which seems to have been to get the state to pay for Boeing’s most recent attempt to move jobs anywhere but here.

Our state legislators can’t hide from the needs of the citizens of Washington State behind rhetoric and magical economic thinking; we can’t pretend that all we need to do is cut here and there, and then we’ll somehow have enough to fill the cavernous gaps in the most important parts of the state budget. We can’t pretend that we don’t need an income tax; we can’t pretend that being the state with the most regressive tax structure is sustainable, or that it’s good for the citizens of Washington; we can’t pretend that the issues that affect Seattle and the Puget Sound aren’t also vitally important to the rest of the state, and vice-versa.

So please, research, read up, and vote this fall, in the boring, low-turnout midterm election. Midterm, state-level elections may not be sexy, but they are vital to the health and future of Washington and its citizens. And once the elections are over? Get truly involved and organized so we can put real pressure on our elected officials, because without better, braver state politicians, without the people of Washington making our voices heard, without getting organized, things will continue as usual in Olympia and all we’ll get is more of the same.

Destinations: Alki Beach and the Seattle Landing Site

Rapid Ride C, Route 50

In early April 1851 the Denny and Boren families set out from Cherry Grove, Illinois, headed west on the Oregon Trail. They arrived 134 days later at Portland, Oregon, where some of the party chose to stay. The rest decided to move on. David Denny and John Low, later joined by Lee Terry, were sent to find suitable land on Puget Sound. They traveled overland to Olympia, then by boat to Elliot Bay. They were greeted by a friendly party of natives led by Seattle, Tyee (chief) of the Duwamish people. They also ran into other settlers who were in the process of founding Georgetown, on the Duwamish River. Duwamish Head was chosen for their first cabin, and John Low was sent to fetch the rest of their party. Lee Terry soon left to get a tool needed to finish the cabin, leaving David Denny all alone, except for his new friends among the natives. Poor David cut his foot with an axe and lost his food to a family of skunks. The rest finally arrived at the Alki landing site on November 13, 1851, on the Schooner Exact. It was soon decided to relocate to what is now Pioneer Square. New York and Alki (“by and by” in the local jargon) were considered as names, but Seattle was chosen in honor of Chief Seattle. Land was donated to Henry Yesler for a sawmill and Seattle was off and running.

Today you can walk on the same Alki Beach (2.5 miles long), check out the memorial at the landing site, and also a replica of the Statue of Liberty donated by the Boy Scouts of America in 1952. If you are feeling adventurous, head back up the hill to Schmitz Park, 53 acres of virgin forest very nearly just as it was in 1851 and realize that back in the day, this was what all of Seattle looked like! Sitting outside on a recent warm evening with a new friend, munching subs, I could feel the “away from it all” feeling that is uniquely West Seattle. Only the Space Needle beyond Duwamish Head and passing ferry boats reminded me that I was still in Seattle.

GET THERE: Rapid Ride “C” to Alaska Junction, transfer to Route 50 at Bay 4. Note you will pass Schmitz Park (5551 SW Admiral Way) on the way to Alki Beach. At the last stop, walk back to find the Seattle Landing Site (61st Ave SW). The same stop is also the first stop going back.

— Pauline Van Senus