

Members of the Sound Transit board of directors:

The membership of the Transit Riders Union writes today to express our significant concern over the potential consideration of Dow Constantine as CEO of Sound Transit. In the past, Dow has been a supporter of transit and TRU has supported his efforts. However, we believe better candidates from outside of Sound Transit and Puget Sound exist and that the process for his consideration and possible hiring would be insurmountably tainted.

First and most importantly, considering Dow comes with a very large conflict of interest. As King County Executive, he was directly or indirectly responsible for appointing ten of the eighteen people who will conduct the hiring process. While we expect and believe that people can act impartially, humans are subject to all forms of influence, intended or not. The public would likely feel the same way.

Referring to the public brings up our second concern, that Sound Transit has not announced a public feedback or engagement process for this selection. Further, the names of the other candidates are not known or rumored and the public cannot be sure of knowing before hiring. This puts Dow at an unfair advantage and keeps the public in the dark. A transparent, thorough vetting process is crucial for public trust and transparency as Sound Transit enters its next phase of major construction.

In regards to construction, Dow already has another conflict of interest: it is under his leadership of King County that the proposals for the King County government complex near Seattle's International District were put forward. As potential CEO, he would be asked to evaluate his own project on supposedly independent merits and make a balanced recommendation to the Board, something that would challenge the most scrupulous of minds.

Finally, we are concerned that the CEO of Sound Transit is an administrative leadership position, akin to the General Manager of Metro, not a political one. This experience does not align with the positions to which Dow has been elected and held. He has stood for election and won voter support on the strength of his positions, which is laudable but also a different skill set and different approach than being the administrative leader of a major agency.

We urge Sound Transit to, at a minimum: provide the names of the candidates, conduct public hearings and meetings for feedback on potential candidates especially if a noted politician is in consideration, and establish a formal recusal process for addressing conflicts of interest in particular board members. Ideally, Sound Transit will do what it has done for the last two leaders, and seek fresh experience from outside to reinvigorate the planning and construction of our major expansion, and provide renewed focus on passenger experience.

Thank you,

Members of the Transit Riders Union