



February 13, 2018

Regional Transit Board of Directors
Henry Li, General Manager/CEO
1400 29th Street
Sacramento, CA 95816

Re: Oppose Closing of the Watt/I-80 Station

Dear Board of Directors and Mr. Li:

The Sacramento Transit Riders Union (Sac TRU) has participated in the Watt/I-80 Station reimagining project for the past several months and recommends that the elevators be repaired and station enhancements be pursued. We oppose the closing of the Watt/I-80 and Watt/I-80 West stations and relocation of services to the inaccessible Roseville Road Station because the closure would disparately impact persons with disabilities and low-income communities of color who are transit dependent. We urge that any long-term changes be done in conjunction with the ongoing Route Optimization Study, not as a stand-alone project. We urge the board to request specific project details including time lines, detailed project budgets, and rider impacts before any decision is made to close the Watt/I-80 Station.

We support SacRT and Walk Sacramento's extensive community outreach and urge that public input be carefully considered. We oppose planning around predetermined outcomes that do not consider impacts to riders and the transit system as a whole. Below we outline comments from our membership on aspects of the proposals that we support and several proposals that we have serious concerns about.

What we would like to see happen at Watt/I-80 Station:

- **Elevator Repair:** We urge the Board to direct staff to make this urgent, necessary, and long overdue repair as soon as possible, while long-term solutions are discussed. Staff has repeatedly said it would cost approximately \$1 million to replace the elevators, which would solve the most immediate access problems that have been plaguing the station for years. We have not seen this item put out for RFP and would urge the staff to solicit and present qualifying bids for the elevators to the Board so that the Board can make an accurate and informed decision.
- **Improved Cleanliness:** We support more resources and staff dedicated to routine maintenance and cleanliness. Many of our members have expressed concern over the unsanitary conditions they experience while using the station and feel that simply keeping the station clean would improve it significantly.
- **Enhancements:** Riders who use this station as a transfer point often make long commutes. Families, students and the elderly have repeatedly asked us why there are no water fountains or bathrooms available when they have 1-2 hour long commutes. We urge staff to consider making station enhancements that improve rider experiences and impressions in long-term planning.

Problems with the Roseville Road station:

- **Inaccessibility:** It is not possible to walk or bike to the station safely. Currently, about 23% of 3,500 daily riders at Watt/1-80 are walk ups/bicycle. These riders would have to access Roseville Road station by bus transfer, severely impacting their access and commute times.
- **Increased Cost for Necessary Transfers:** Direct access to light rail from Watt Avenue would be replaced by taking a bus to the Roseville Road station; non-pass holders would need to buy additional fare to transfer. What percentage of riders who currently access the station will need to buy the additional transfer fare? Has a Title VI analysis been done to show how this would affect protected class riders? How is RT planning to mitigate this added cost for disadvantaged riders?

- **Safety:** Much of the emphasis coming for relocating to the Roseville Road station is improved safety. We urge the Board and staff to provide detailed analysis of how safety will actually be impacted and improved. We ask that the following information be provided for the Watt/I-80 Station and Roseville Road: the current costs for enforcement by the sheriff's department and the police departments; current statistics on total incident reports; emergency response times to both stations (is there a significant difference in dispatch and response times?); paramedic incidents reports; the level of services currently provided at both stations and the costs associated with the recommended changes. We are concerned that simply moving the station will not remove the illegal activity seen at Watt/I-80 and that moving to a more isolated station will only intensify the problem.
- **Increased Transit Times:** Buses would no longer stop at Watt/I-80 station. There would be major changes and increased travel time to bus service in the area that should be considered and studied as part of the Route Optimization Study before any commitments are made:
 - Riders transferring from Route 19 to Route 1 would likely miss their current bus and have to catch the next Route 1 bus.
 - Riders connecting to Route 19 or northbound Route 80 would likely miss their current bus due to changes in timing.
 - Riders transferring from Route 1 or 15 to Route 19 would likely miss their current bus. Shifting the Route 19 schedule to address these problems would cause similar or worse problems where Route 19 connects with light rail at Arden/Del Paso station.
 - Route 26 service north of I-80 would be discontinued in order to connect to Roseville Road. Existing Route 26 riders passing through Watt/I-80 would be forced to transfer at Roseville Road station to/from Route 19, 80, 84, or 93. This would add 20-30 minutes of delay, between extra mileage and transfer time.
 - Route 80 would be rerouted to cover part of the current Route 26 in McClellan Business Park that is not currently served by any other routes. These stops would go from Route 26 service every 30 minutes to Route 80 service every 60 minutes.
 - In addition to the rerouting to Roseville Road station, Route 80 would also be rerouted off of Watt Ave., from Peacekeeper Way to James Way. For riders currently riding through this segment of Route 80, this extra detour would add 6 minutes of extra time. For Route 80 passengers currently riding through Watt/I-80, the detour to the Roseville Road station would also add 7-9 minutes in each direction.
 - For Route 84 passengers currently riding through Watt/I-80 the detour to the Roseville Road station would add 7- 9 minutes in each direction.
 - Outbound Route 93 schedules would likely shift 5-6 minutes later, to maintain connections with light rail and other buses, but adding 5-6 minutes to all Route 93 riders' trips.
- **Questions about cost estimate:** The consultant's \$5 million cost estimate for demolition and construction of a new station seems artificially low to our members given the bike/ped enhancements that would be needed to make the station more accessible. Estimate should also include the cost of closing down the other 2 stations in a safe and effective way.
- **Negative Impact on Ridership:** Have the impacts to ridership been studied? What is the impact on the transit system as a whole that would result from closing Watt/I-80 and Watt/I-80 West? What will the impact of increasing wait times, number of transfers, and total commutes by 5-10 minutes each way will be? What will be the impact of requiring additional transfer costs on low income riders or those who do not have access to smart phone apps or the connect card?

Concerns that closing the Watt I-80 Station would result in:

- **Increased Commute Times:** 3500 riders use this station each day. 60% do a rail to bus connection, 25% walk ups/bicycle/car drop-offs; 30% bus to bus transfers; bus riders would be negatively affected by tighter connection time.
- **American River College:** ARC is one of the region's most heavily traveled by bus, Route 1 is the busiest route to ARC. Moving bus traffic from Watt to Roseville Road disproportionately impacts every single one of those commuters who rely on transit.
- **Paratransit:** Paratransit riders to/from Placer County could be impacted if fixed routes are relocated.
- **Ridership loss:** Relocation of services to the inaccessible Roseville Road Station would disparately impact persons with disabilities and low-income communities of color who are transit dependent. Riders who previously accessed Watt/I-80 would potentially face increased costs from transfer fare purchase, increased commute times, and the loss of the ability to easily access transit by walking or biking from their nearby community.
- **Demolition by neglect:** What would the maintenance of the abandoned property cost RT? Would these properties still need to be patrolled to prevent crime and illegal activity from happening on the premises?

We urge staff to present a detailed line item budget proposal, identify funding sources for all plans, and present long-term project timelines for each recommendation. We think that major decisions on this project should not be made until this rout optimization study findings are completed and included.

We appreciate SacRT's commitment to soliciting public input for improving the station and look forward to continuing this discussion with the Board and staff throughout the project. **We oppose the proposed closing of the Watt/I-80 Station because it limits accessibility for riders and would disparately impact persons with disabilities, and low-income communities of color who are transit dependent. We support repairing the elevators at the Watt/I-80 Station in the short-term while long-term enhancements are discussed.** Please include this letter in the public record.

Sincerely,

Sac TRU