

The Stranger, 7/25/08

We, In Fact, Told You So

posted by [Erica C. Barnett](#) on July 25 at 16:27 PM

Yesterday I [Slogged](#) about the Sound Transit board's vote to put light-rail, bus and commuter-rail expansion on the ballot in 2008. At the end of my post, I wrote, "We told you so." As in: At a time when the consensus among transit supporters was that last year's roads-heavy Prop. 1 was our "last chance" to get light rail in the region, we at the Stranger said Sound Transit would be back in 2008 with a smaller, smarter transit-only ballot measure.

Well, I really meant it: **We told you so.**

Me, [June 13, 2007](#):

No big deal, RTID opponents say—a **"no" vote would allow Sound Transit to come back to the ballot on its own**, unlinked to the environmentally damaging roads-expansion projects included in RTID. "Some people think we need to defeat bad roads right now and get light rail," O'Brien says. "We'd rather kill it all now and come back with light rail really soon."

Me, [September 26, 2007](#):

[I]f the roads and transit package failed, pressure from groups like the Cascade Bicycle Club could make a re-vote on Sound Transit in 2008 a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Me, [September 28, 2007](#):

Proponents of the ballot measure say if we reject it now, it'll be years before we have another chance to vote again on light rail. They say the governor "won't allow it" on the ballot in an election year and predict the following year will be too soon. **Feh.** First of all, the governor would be wise not to alienate transit-loving King County voters, who provided her slim margin of victory last time. Moreover, the last time Sound Transit was rejected, in 1995, it came back the very next year—and won.

ECB, [October 9, 2007](#):

[Transportation Choices Coalition Director Jessyn] Farrell: [...] "The governor doesn't want to run on a tax measure, [House Speaker] Frank Chopp doesn't want a bunch of Democrats running on a tax measure, and there are a lot of legislators who just don't like Sound Transit." [...]

It's interesting to me that TCC and other environmental groups that support roads and transit assume nothing is set in stone about the roads side of the package ("Sure, we're voting for roads, but only because we'll take them out later!") but are absolutely 100% rock-solid certain that

Sound Transit will never be back on the ballot if this fails. **Seems like serious cognitive dissonance to me.**

Stranger Election Control Board, [October 17, 2007](#):

Supporters of the roads and transit package love to talk about all the light rail we'll be giving away if we don't vote for the \$17.8 billion package. The SECB sees it differently. If we turn roads and transit down, **the invaluable transit side of the package can come back next year** (which would be great given that Democratic Party turnout will be huge), or else in 2009, when the light rail track from Sea-Tac Airport to downtown will be rolling out and making the on-the-ground case for expansion. True: Voters turned down a rail package in 1968. But this isn't 1968. This is 2007. Global warming is an international crisis, Al Gore just won the Nobel Peace Prize, and Sound Transit is already building a \$5.7 billion line that will demand expansion in its own right.

Josh Feit, [November 9, 2007](#):

Here's Mayor Nickels in today's Seattle Times in an article about polling that shows voters would have passed a transit package on its own:

"I recounted to (the Sound Transit Board) what happened in 1995 when the first Sound Transit plan was turned down, and I think that it offers us a pretty good lesson," Nickels said. "We went back to the ballot in 1996, in a presidential election, with the second Sound Transit plan and it was very different than the first one ... and we won going away." [...]

The fact that Nickels is saying bold stuff like this also confirms what the Sierra Club was saying before the election—that this vote could reject conventional wisdom about political "reality" and let voters set the agenda. It also gets the ball rolling on the option we've been pushing all along: Expanding transit, not roads, transit.

Me, [November 14, 2007](#):

The sudden show of support [among elected officials] for light rail is (promising) anathema to the conventional wisdom pushed by many environmental groups before the election, which said that this was the last possible chance transit advocates would ever have to get light rail in this region, and that Gregoire and the state legislature would "never" let light rail move forward on its own.

Josh Feit, [December 13, 2007](#):

Light Rail is Dead. Long Live Light Rail.

Sound Transit obediently went along with the moronic marriage Gov. Gregoire and the legislature forced on them—going to the ballot with roads this year. Olympia's harebrained idea was supposed to neutralize anti-transit and anti-roads opposition, but instead it compounded that opposition.

Sound Transit believes the legislature owes them. They're right.

And just last night, one of the strongest proponents of the this-is-the-last-chance-ever-for-transit point of view, Horse's Ass blogger David Goldstein, printed a sweet mea culpa:

During their frequent appearances on my radio show, I routinely locked horns with The Stranger's Erica Barnett and Josh Feit over last year's "Roads & Transit" package. They opposed Prop 1, arguing that Sound Transit would come back the next year with a better package, sans roads. **I thought they were being politically naive**, and argued that the powers that be would never allow ST to come back with a transit-only package in 2008, and would be picked apart by the "governance reform" vultures well before 2009. **I am not at all unhappy to admit that they were right and I was wrong.**

Sound Transit's on the ballot in 2008—a presidential election year when young and progressive voters will be turning out in greater numbers than any year in recent history. Nothing's certain, but I think it stands a solid chance in November.