

US Senator Maria Cantwell
Link Light Rail Federal Way Grand Opening

December 6, 2025

[\[AUDIO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thanks for that introduction -- what a great crowd here in Federal Way. I said, I really want to be here because I've been to a few parties lately. I've been to Bellevue, I've been to Redmond, I've been to Lynnwood, I've been to Hilltop, and now we're in Federal Way to have a great celebration.

I want to thank the Sound Transit Board Chairman, and King County Executive, [Girmay Zahilay], definitely want to thank Dow Constantine for his leadership. I want to thank the transportation chair in the House, Jake Fey. Obviously, I want to thank President Sam Hem from the Seattle Building and Construction Trades Council. Thank you so much. I want to thank Mayor Backus, who is here as a board member of Sound Transit, and obviously Mayor Angela Birney, she knows what the party is about -- she's come from Redmond to party here.

And my two colleagues, you know, I don't think people really understand in the United States Senate, we have Patty Murray, the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, so we got the appropriation side covered. And myself and Rick Larson are the key [authorizers] on the two transportation committees in the House and the Senate. And we couldn't get it done without Marilyn Strickland. She's a great partner, great partner.

So we're here today to thank everybody for their hard work, that Transit Board, the construction workers, our council members and Peter, I don't know if you remember, but we came here on a rainy day. How many years ago was that? A decade ago. And we toured the parking lot, right? It was raining cats and dogs. And we said, this is going to be the future site, and that's how long we've been working on this.

The extension of this is a \$2.5 billion investment, 40% coming from the Federal Transit Authority, over a billion dollars. This \$1 billion did not come easy. During the first Trump administration, the Department of Transportation was obstructing \$790 [million] of capital investment for the project, and we had to make it clear to then Secretary Elaine Chao that this was the top priority for the Washington delegation. And got that grant through in 2020.

The next year we had to push against opposition for the American Rescue Plan, which provided [over] \$150 million for the project, and we got that done.

And obviously we're here to celebrate that this fast, traffic-free, affordable transportation infrastructure is going to pay dividends for generations to come. Just 15 minutes from Federal Way to Sea-Tac, providing affordable options for the airport workers who live in this region to get to work, and certainly another option for South Puget Sound residents to travel to the airport without having to drive.

So we want to enjoy our vibrant region, not to spend time in I-5 traffic. We don't want drivers to lose 68 hours a year to traffic. Can you believe that that is the average of what we think we are losing? So 40% more than drivers in any other city in the United States.

So Link will get you from Federal Way to Downtown in 50 minutes. That's much faster than the rush hour commutes that we've been seeing -- 80 minutes. So literally, opening this up is going to save commuters 30 minutes a day in their transportation commute.

This Link light rail isn't just a way for people to get to work. It's helping us build new affordability in the region. Mercy Housing plans to start construction on 250 affordable units in the Kent Des Moines station next year, and more affordable housing with our new county exec working in the downtown Federal Way area.

So South King County, as my colleague on the council said, is a major economic hub. 232,000 jobs and about \$45 billion to our state economy. This includes 200 aerospace advanced manufacturing companies, 35% of our state's aerospace economy right here in the South end.

Right in the middle of this aerospace hub, just across the street, we have Highline College, which provides a pathway for those students to prepare for those careers in advanced manufacturing. We have a world demand for 40,000 airplanes. We want to hurry and get ready building those planes.

And transit investment makes that life more affordable for those workers to live here, to reach the communities in their workplace, and that is why we fought so hard for the infrastructure bill that had a transit investment increase by 50% in the last surface transportation bill.

So that is what we do as authorizers. We authorize the money and we ask our appropriators to meet the task. So today shows that a federal payoff works. It is getting people to work faster, spending less on transportation, encouraging more economic development, and now all we have to do is get all this ready for the World Cup so we can have another big party next year when we welcome the world visitors here to show what modern transportation and efficiency looks like.

Thank you all very much.