

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**Hilltop Link Extension Ribbon Cutting**

**September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Sen. Cantwell Remarks**

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Good morning, everybody what a great day in the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma. This truly is a celebration of community, of people, of connecting each other, and certainly giving our transportation system the connections that it deserves to make this a more livable community.

Brendan, thank you and thank you to the Tacoma Urban Performing Arts Center. I want to thank Congresswoman Strickland, who I know you're going to be hearing from. Mayor Woodards who I tell you I have her on speed dial. Maybe she has me on speed dial, we talk a lot.

Also FTA Administrator Susan Fletcher, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for the federal dollars. I'll get into that in a minute. And Julie Kim and the Pierce County Labor Council, thank you guys so much for all the hard work on this project.

Tacoma and the Hilltop neighborhood is on the rise and you can see that from all the construction around here and the extension of the T-line and now opening seven news stations along the 2.4 mile track that is going to go from the Tacoma Dome to St Joseph's and connect people where they live, work, and play into the amenities that they need in their everyday life.

This is life changing to an area where 27% of households don't own a car. If you are a student at Stadium High, or SOTA, or Evergreen, now you have another way to get to school. If you have an appointment at Tacoma General or St. Joe's you also have an easier way to get there. If you want to take your family to the stadium district or down to Wright Park or just have dinner in Hilltop or downtown you now can take the T-line.

So the Hilltop expansion will run every 12 minutes. During the peak hours right now about 1,700 Tacoma residents ride that T-line. But guess what, growth is coming and Sound Transit it expects that ridership to grow to 4000 daily riders. That's because there is going to be continued growth in this neighborhood.

Now just a little bit of history about why somebody said to hard working Senators, "you're right. You're right about that." Because this project was a lot of fighting all the way back to 2015.

Believe it or not and as you may know from the transportation agency, we had to fight hard for that 2015 transportation FAST Act bill. And one of the things that some of our colleagues wanted to do was leave out all the money for transit, literally when it came to the floor of the Senate because they wouldn't pass it out of committee. The Democrats said we're not bringing up that bill unless it has money in it for transit and we were successful.

We got \$11.5 billion for what was called the Capital Investment grant program and why that became so important is because once we passed that the first thing that Patty and I did was write a letter to then Secretary Chao and say we want money for this Hilltop project in Tacoma, Washington. And that ended up helping us eventually get an award of \$75 million for this project right here.

We were able to secure another \$15 million out of the RAISE grant program which was also so critical and something Patty and I have fought for for a long time.

A little secret. I'm on the authorizing committee, she's the head of the appropriations committee and it's working out pretty well so far.

But also part of today's success wouldn't have been without the Transportation Infrastructure Finance Program and that also allowed the community to get a subsidized loan to complete this. So all told, more than [64%] of the project is from these federal dollars.

So make no mistake when people say fight for something like the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill or the previous infrastructure bills, we are always fighting to make investments because these investments connect communities and you are the best example in America of how well that is working out for us.

And just to thank the labor community over 1,800 workers, including 460 different workers of diversity are part of this project. We think it'll be about a \$320 million impact to the community to have this investment to spur more community activity and diverse investment and to give us better places to live work and play.

Thank you Hilltop for persevering. Thank all of you who are here to celebrate a great community investment that is exactly the way America should grow. Thank you all very much.