

# Long-awaited Tacoma light rail extension finally has an opening date



Image: Sound Transit

The 2.4-mile extension will bring Tacoma's light rail line to a total of 4 miles.

SOUND TRANSIT

Sound Transit's \$283 million Tacoma Link light rail extension will open Sept. 16, the transit agency announced this week.

The 2.4-mile project was initially expected to be complete in May 2022 at a cost of \$217 million, but project delays and rising construction costs boosted the price tag by tens of millions of dollars.

The extension will bring Tacoma's light rail line, called the T Line, to a total of 4 miles.

"Connecting more of Tacoma to our transit network, the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension represents another step toward building a truly regional rail system," Sound Transit Board Chair and King County Executive Dow Constantine said in a news release.

The new track will include six new stations and a relocated one, and will run from the St. Joseph's Medical Center at Martin Luther King Jr. Way and South 17th Street in the Hilltop neighborhood to the Tacoma Dome neighborhood.

One of the stops will be Tacoma General Hospital, which means both of the city's major hospitals will be accessible by light rail. It will take 23 minutes to go from one end of the line to the other.

The existing 1.6-mile line began operating in 2003 and runs from the Dome District to Commerce and South 11th streets.

With the new extension in place, the line is expected to serve up to 4,000 riders per day by 2026. Tickets will be \$2 per trip for adults or \$4 for a day pass. It will be free for those 18 and under.

The opening of the T Line extension "marks the first of a series of light rail openings scheduled over the next several years that will connect more people within their local communities and the greater Puget Sound region," Sound Transit CEO Julie Timm said in the release.

Planning for the extension began in 2013 and construction started in 2018. At the time, the extension was hailed as a [driver of economic development](#) by U.S. Rep. Derek Kilmer, who said it would bring \$250 million in economic development to the region's economy. In 2021, commercial real estate brokerage Kidder Mathews [released a report](#) showing hundreds of apartment units were under construction along the planned line.

The extension was key to attracting developments like Sai Group's 289-unit Aspire 11 mixed-use project at 1023 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, said Patricia Beard, business development manager at the city of Tacoma, [to the Business Journal last year](#).

Other new and planned multifamily projects in the surrounding Hilltop neighborhood include Horizon Housing Alliance's Hilltop Lofts and Koz on MLK. Forterra is planning a mixed-use project that will bring 300 units to a former Rite Aid property. And Tacoma Housing Authority is planning to develop 231 units at South 11th and South L streets.