

Property acquisition and relocation process: One homeowner's journey

Major public transportation projects sometimes require the purchase or use of private property. At Sound Transit, we work hard to keep our project footprints as small as possible.

But when impacts to private property are unavoidable, our dedicated and experienced support agents work closely with owners to address their unique needs, minimize hardships and answer all their questions along the way. Throughout property acquisition and relocation, a process that covers many conversations and interactions with property owners, Sound Transit follows all state and federal regulations.

You may have heard about Sound Transit's property acquisition process, or this might be a new concept for you. The timeline and details look different for every property owner based on individual circumstances, but the process often involves similar steps overall.

To shed light on the experience, we're following one homeowner's journey through Sound Transit's property acquisition process along the SR 522/NE 145th Street corridor.

Meet Sofia, a homeowner in the project area.

Sofia lives with her cat in a house along SR 522.

1. Voter approval



In 2016, Puget Sound voters approved a new SR 522/NE 145th Bus Rapid Transit project as part of the ST3 initiative.

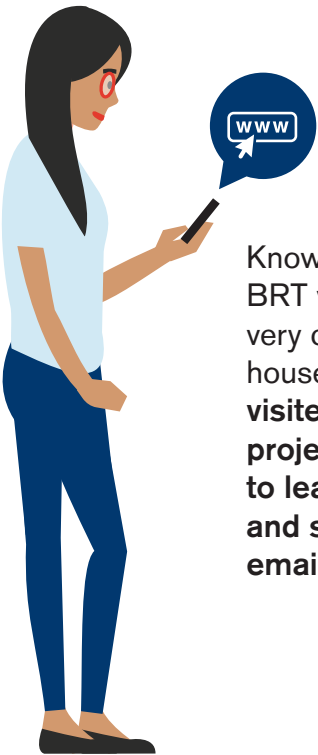
Sofia heard about BRT in her local newspaper shortly after the 2016 election.



2. Planning begins



With voter approval, Sound Transit began planning the BRT project in 2018. In this phase, they made initial plans for the route as well as preliminary station and roadway improvement designs to support buses.



Knowing the BRT would run very close to her house, Sofia visited the project website to learn more and subscribe for email updates.



She also chatted with Sound Transit staff at a few summer festivals and stayed up to speed on project news.

To better understand the area around the planned route, Sound Transit needed to gather information about the properties along the corridor.



In spring 2019, they sent "Right of Entry" requests to many property owners, including Sofia. She gave Sound Transit permission to come by and learn more about her property. They took some measurements—including the distance from her house to the current road—to help inform their early designs.

SR 522/NE 145th Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

3. Design begins



In early 2020, Sound Transit began the formal design phase of the project. **As the team finalized their route and station designs and obtained land use and construction permits, they began to understand what impacts might look like for nearby property owners.** The team identified Sofia's home as one of the properties the project might impact.



Sound Transit sent a letter to Sofia inviting her to discuss their early designs and potential impacts to her home. **Sofia signed up online for a meeting with the project team, and they met with her at her house.**

The team showed her maps of the early design and talked her through what she could expect in the coming months. They also answered her questions, listened to her concerns and asked about her needs, to inform the final design.



Sofia learned that once they finalized the project design, the team would confirm if it would impact her property and what the impacts might be, including the amount of property the project would need to acquire. At that time, the team would begin the formal property acquisition process.

The first step would be the Sound Transit Board approving the acquisition of properties for the project.

4. Acquisition process begins



After meeting with Sofia, the project team finalized the project footprint and ultimately determined they'd need to acquire most of Sofia's property. They submitted the request to acquire Sofia's property to the Sound Transit Board and sent Sofia a notice and invitation to the Board meeting. **Sofia attended, and the Board granted the project team the authority to acquire her property.**

Soon after, Sofia met with Toshiko, a Sound Transit acquisition agent assigned to support her through the process. Toshiko walked Sofia through the next steps:

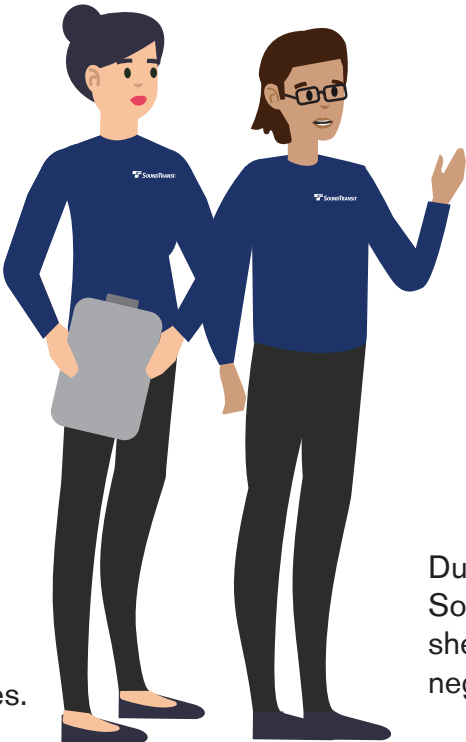
First, Sound Transit would hire an **independent appraiser** to produce a fair market analysis of Sofia's property value.



Sound Transit would then hire a **second independent firm to review the first appraisal** and determine just compensation.

Next, Toshiko would make Sofia an in-person offer. Sofia would then have time to consider, seek her own appraisal and any legal or financial advice, and respond to Sound Transit's offer. Sound Transit would reimburse Sofia for some or all these expenses.

Because the project footprint impacted Sofia's house and relocation was necessary, Toshiko also introduced Sofia to Theo, the Sound Transit relocation agent assigned to help her with the relocation process.



Theo and Toshiko explained:

"We know this experience can be difficult and daunting, but we're here to address your needs. Our team works to minimize hardships, ensure property owners and tenants are treated fairly, and keep you informed every step of the way."

During this time, Theo helped Sofia find a new home, and she moved in shortly after negotiations concluded.

5. Construction starts



Soon after Sofia moved, Sound Transit began construction on the bus route near her old house.

6. BRT service begins



Sound Transit launched its fast, high-capacity BRT service along the SR 522/NE 145th corridor in 2024, bringing reliable transit to communities north of Lake Washington.

Remember: no two properties are the same.

Sofia's story illustrates steps many property owners may experience as they move through the process.

Sound Transit recognizes that acquisition and relocation is different for everyone. Experienced agents work hard to address property owners' unique needs and minimize hardships.