

December 2014

2015

Service Implementation Plan



 **SOUNDTRANSIT**
RIDE THE WAVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of customers boarding Sound Transit trains and buses increased steadily during 2013 and the first half of 2014. Over 30 million boardings took place in 2013, an increase of 8 percent over 2012. During the first half of 2014, total Sound Transit ridership was up almost 9 percent compared with the same period in 2013. This trend is occurring against a backdrop of regional economic growth and increased public awareness of transit as an attractive option for a wide variety of trips. The expanding market for transit is evident by greatly increased special event ridership on all Sound Transit modes, particularly light rail. More transit riders also reinforces the need for expanded Sounder and Link light rail service that Sound Transit is developing as part of the voter-approved ST2 Program.

Until the expanded light rail network begins to replace segments of ST Express routes, Sound Transit faces challenges in meeting the existing demand for bus service. ST Express bus ridership grew by 7.6 percent between 2012 and 2013, while service hours increased by less than 2 percent. Since the express bus network connects major employment centers throughout the region, ST Express is more commuter oriented than most transit systems. An expanding economy means increased commuter demand during peak time periods, particularly in those centers where employee parking is limited and expensive.

In early 2014, the Sound Transit Board adopted updated Service Standards and Performance Measures that include new passenger load guidelines for ST Express. The guidelines recognize that standing passengers during peak hours are an ongoing reality, and lists priorities for corrective action based on the severity of overcrowding and the amount of time passengers have to stand. Sound Transit staff continually monitors service and uses several service management tools to reduce overcrowding, including schedule adjustments to balance loads, assigning larger buses and adding extra bus trips if the budget allows.

Increased Transit Integration

In June 2014, King County Executive and Sound Transit Board Chair Dow Constantine announced a new initiative to better integrate the projects and services of the region's transit agencies. In particular, the Executive recommended that Sound Transit and King County Metro take immediate steps to provide transit options for riders affected by impending cutbacks in Metro service. To accomplish this, Metro and Sound Transit have partnered to increase coordination of service changes, share detailed information on ridership and operations, and exchange ideas for increasing transit capacity and quality of service. The higher level of coordination extends to phasing strategies for major service changes, joint public outreach and identifying efficiencies that can be used to offset the impacts of service reductions. Sound Transit and King County Metro are also jointly applying for grants that would fund service additions and expand bus system capacity in corridors where the agencies share responsibilities for providing service.

While the initial focus is on increased integration between King County Metro and Sound Transit services; ongoing work will bring in additional transportation partners including other transit agencies, private transportation providers, the state Department of Transportation and local cities in the Central Puget Sound region.

Service Implementation Plan Amendment

The extension of Link light rail from downtown Seattle to Capitol Hill and the University of Washington is scheduled for early 2016. To improve service integration and generate operational efficiencies, King County Metro and Sound Transit will develop proposals for an integrated bus-rail service network in this corridor that enhances overall mobility while making optimum use of the large investment in the U Link project. The deadline for final approval of these proposals occurs well before Board action can be scheduled on the 2016 Service Implementation Plan (SIP). As a result, staff is developing an amendment to the 2015 SIP that will be presented to the Board during the September-October 2015 timeframe. The SIP Amendment will include Link service levels with the UW extension and proposed changes to ST Express bus service that will integrate with light rail. These changes will be coordinated with King County Metro service proposals and the agencies will conduct a joint public outreach process to reach transit riders and community stakeholders.

Quick Guide to the 2015 SIP

The 2015 SIP includes a detailed performance analysis of each bus and rail route, along with performance objectives for the coming year and an updated 5-year ridership forecast. Ridership and operating data for the last full calendar year (2013) is used in the analysis to eliminate the effect of seasonal variations.

Only one major service change has been approved for 2015, a new ST Express bus route connecting Lakewood with Puyallup Station. The new Route 580 will operate during weekday peak periods only, making timed connections with Sounder trains at Puyallup. A full description of this new service is included in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes a Title VI evaluation of the proposed Route 580.

Chapter 4 includes a look into preliminary plans for Sound Transit service between 2016 and 2020. During this period, Link light rail extensions will be under construction in three regional corridors, and three additional Sounder round trips will be implemented on the South Line. Construction impacts of the Link extensions on current bus service will be discussed in this section.

Chapter 5 includes ridership forecasts through 2020, both system-wide and by mode, together with projected fare revenue and operations costs. The appendices provide information on Sound Transit operations, including platform hours and miles, fleet plans, passenger boarding data, and detailed information on the performance of each Sound Transit route.