



Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting April 11, 2024

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Committee Chair Balducci.

The meeting was recorded and can be found at <https://www.soundtransit.org/get-to-know-us/board-directors/livestream-video>.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor

Board Members	
(P) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(P) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) Jim Kastama, Puyallup Mayor
(P) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor	(A) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
	(A) Dan Strauss, Seattle Councilmember

Alejandro Monzon, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the System Expansion Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Revised Agenda

Chair Balducci announced that the presentation on the Ballard Link Extension South Lake Union area feasibility study results was removed from today's agenda and postponed until the full Board meeting on April 25th. She added that under the Committee's public comment rules, individuals would still be able to comment on it, even though it is not an agenda item today.

Agency Progress Report

In addition to the materials in the meeting packet, Board members received links to the February agency progress report and the Project Performance Tracker.

CEO Report

Chief System Quality Officer Moises Gutierrez provided the report.

Lynnwood Link Extension Opening Date

Last week, Sound Transit announced that the Lynnwood Link Extension would open for revenue service on Friday, August 30. Mr. Gutierrez thanked the Snohomish County delegation for their efforts in preparing their communities for light rail expansion.

Redmond Technology Station Pedestrian Bridge Opening

Mr. Gutierrez announced that the Pedestrian Bridge at Redmond Technology Station is scheduled to open on April 22nd, kicking-off the opening week of the 2 Line. Details on the Ribbon-cutting events were being finalized with local partners, and more information would be available soon.

Design-Build and GC/CM Contracting Recertification

Sound Transit recently presented before State of Washington's Capital Advisory Review Board project review committee for agency recertification to use Design-Build and General Contactor/Construction Manager delivery methods. The agency was unanimously recertified for the next three years.

Public comment

Chair Balducci announced that public comment would be accepted via email to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted verbally.

Written public comments:

Uptown Alliance
Jon Kiehnau for the South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

King County Council member Teresa Mosqueda
Betty Lau
Brien Chow
Ashley Holland

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

Joe Kunzler

Project Performance Tracker Update

Moises Gutierrez, Chief System Quality Officer, shared that the information for the most recent update to the online Project Performance Tracker is from the end of February 2024 and was updated on April 5, 2024.

Beginning with Projects in Planning, Mr. Gutierrez reported that there were no status changes to report this month.

For Projects in Construction, Mr. Gutierrez noted that there were two status changes. For the Downtown Redmond Link Extension project, the schedule risk status has shifted from yellow to red, due to the reallocation of schedule float needed for System Integrated Testing. The project is still on track for a Spring 2025 opening date, and the schedule is compared against the previously established December 2024 baseline service date. For the I-405 Stride BRT project, the contingency cost risk has shifted from green to yellow, due to updated cost estimates for the final design of the Tukwila International Boulevard Station, station finishes, and other aspects of the I-405 BRT project. The project team expects for this metric to trend back to green over time.

Mr. Gutierrez noted that there could be potential budget and schedule status changes for the West Seattle Link Extension. He also noted that further enhancements to the Project Performance Tracker were being developed and the Committee would be made aware of how those improvements would be presented in the coming months.

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: March 14, 2024 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Board member Kastama, seconded by Board member Roscoe, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the March 14, 2024, System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2024-19: Authorizing the chief executive officer to enter into an interlocal government agreement with the City of Bothell for transfer of development rights from Bus Base North, and to execute and record a transfer of development rights covenant for the Bus Base North property.

Bernard van de Kamp, Stride BRT Program Executive, and Rick Capka, Deputy Program Executive, gave the staff presentation for this action. They were joined by Thatcher Imboden, Director of Community Development.

Board member Backus asked if the Floor Area Ratios are being taken into consideration across all projects.

Mr. Capka noted that his experience is limited to the work on the Stride BRT program in Bothell. Mr. Imboden noted that the Board meeting will feature an action to declare the relevant Development Rights as surplus and committed to providing an answer prior to the Board meeting and during that presentation. Chair Balducci asked that the information provided to Board member Backus is also circulated to the other committee members.

Chair Balducci asked if the outcome is satisfactory to both Sound Transit staff and the City of Bothell. Mr. Capka noted that the city staff are in lock step with agency staff and will be bringing the agreement to the City Council this month. Chair Balducci thanked the staff for their amicable resolution.

It was moved by Board member Backus, seconded by Board member Roscoe, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-19 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Status of Implementing the Technical Advisory Group recommendations

Moises Gutierrez, Chief System Quality Officer, began the presentation and noted an updated version of the tracking table was included in the member's packets.

For Recommendation 1, Mr. Gutierrez highlighted that staff had included "Staff Recommendations" in the staff report for the actions selecting the improvements to be built at the South Tacoma and Lakewood Sound Stations. He added that upcoming work includes the development of a programmatic Board workplan and further steps are being reviewed to delegate the CEO's authority to the appropriate levels.

For Recommendation 2, Terri Mestas was recently hired as the new Deputy CEO for Mega Capital Projects Delivery. Mr. Gutierrez added that there is additional work relating to the overall structure of the agency that relates to the organizing of the deputies that will report to her.

For Recommendations 3 and 4 (related to internal improvements), work over the past month has centered on expectations of a nominal 60-day turnaround for change order processing and closing out contracts within a 120-day window. By the end of the quarter, it is expected that adjustments to project tracking systems and implementation of appropriate workflows will enable achievement of these

benchmarks. Later this month, staff have scheduled workshops with the TAG members to review the ongoing work to empower Resident Engineers and other project staff, as well as to receive feedback on the governance reform work.

For Recommendation 5, Mr. Gutierrez deferred to the next presentation, which will focus on work to update the agency's Betterments Policy.

For Recommendation 6, Mr. Gutierrez highlighted that CEO Sparrman is returning from Washington D.C. where he had numerous opportunities to build relationships with FTA headquarters and the State of Washington's Congressional Delegation. Additional efforts are underway to strengthen and remap the relationship with the FTA Region X leadership.

In concluding, Mr. Gutierrez touched-on a recent communication from CEO Sparrman detailing the first phase of restructuring the agency. The first phase includes the creation of the CEO's Cabinet, and future phases will involve functional analyses to develop proposals for department and division realignment within the new Cabinet framework.

Chair Balducci noted that there were several key pieces of good news that reflects meaningful progress on the implementation of the recommendations.

Presentation on System Expansion Project Scope and Betterments Policy updates

Alex Krieg, Director of Access, Integration, and Station Area Planning, began the presentation by noting that the work being done is in response to Recommendation 5 from the Technical Advisory Group. The presentation is informational, with no action expected by the committee. He briefly recapped the full Recommendation 5 from the Technical Advisory Group.

In the pursuit of the agency's mission to connect more people to more places, Mr. Krieg noted that goals of the updated policy are to implement state/regional land use and transportation policies/plans, maximize regional transit benefits as efficiently and affordably as possible, and partner with jurisdictions and other parties to develop and deliver projects that maximize transit benefits and control project costs. Mr. Krieg noted that part of the Board feedback is whether these goals are in alignment with drafting of an updated Betterments Policy.

To support the betterments aspect of the policy, Mr. Krieg stressed the importance of defining the scope of projects. Scope is initially developed in accordance with the voter-approved plans and the agency seeks to employ standards and guidelines to define project scope consistently and equitably across the system so that projects meet operational needs and support passenger success. Mr. Krieg highlighted a key question for Board consideration regarding the balancing of set standards with local input and needs.

Mr. Krieg briefed covered the instances in a project lifecycle during which the Board makes affirmative definitions of scope, including through the Environmental Review process, selecting the project to be built (which includes required mitigation), and the project baseline to formally establish the scope, schedule, and budget for the project. Mr. Krieg noted a key consideration is how much deference to staff should be afforded after the Baseline of a project, as developments after that point tend to have outsized impacts to schedule and budget.

In interacting with local jurisdictions, Mr. Krieg explained that Sound Transit needs regulatory and permitting approval from authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) to deliver the baseline scope set by the Board. Early collaboration with AHJs is essential to advance projects consistent with their associated schedules through various strategies to proactively reach early and durable decisions. Mr. Krieg highlighted the question of how strong the agency should assert its role in meeting regional goals when interacting with local AHJs.

Regarding betterments, Mr. Krieg noted that the policy being drafted would carry forward the previous definition of betterments, as well as the requirement that betterments be funded by the requesting party.

While Sound Transit will make every effort to incorporate a project betterment, it may decline to do so if it jeopardizes the delivery of the baseline scope within the schedule and budget. Noting that the main cause of delays in this field is when the project team does not agree with the incorporating a betterment and local AHJs attempt to impose scope beyond the baseline through permit conditions and other mechanisms. When such a dispute arises, the new policy would direct staff to initiate a dispute resolution process.

The outline of the dispute resolution process includes the escalation path from project teams, agency leadership, the CEO and key board members, and up to the full Board potentially. Mr. Krieg stressed that the agency expects most disputes to be resolved at the lower levels of the escalation path, in pursuit of the TAG recommendation to drive down decision-making authority. Mr. Krieg put forth the question on whether the escalation path seems sufficient to manage these disputes.

Chair Balducci noted that today's presentation has shined light on many of the policy details that are key to both maintain the agency's focus on delivering the voter-approved program as efficiently as possible and critical collaborative relationships throughout the region. She also highlighted a key tension between correcting issues from the past and not shortchanging future jurisdictions from the collaborative process.

Board member Backus echoed the need for balancing Sound Transit's and local jurisdiction's goals and needs. She stressed the importance to not bully other jurisdictions and to build upon the existing partnerships. She also asked for a definition on what is meant by "Key board members" in the dispute escalation path. Mr. Krieg responded that Board members may be excellent dispute mediators between jurisdictions in their subarea and Sound Transit.

Board member Franklin supported the concerns from Board member Backus. She noted that she supports the general outline of the policy draft but cautioned on the change of Sound Transit policy and its effect on the later parts of the system.

Vice Chair Roscoe appreciated the key questions presented by Mr. Krieg during the presentation and the subsequent discussion from fellow Board members. She has found Sound Transit staff to be very receptive of Board feedback and is excited to see the debate during the final policy debate. She noted that she shares the same concerns as Board member Backus. She added that it may be key to have one of those key Board members during the dispute process to be from a different subarea to complement the local Board members.

Board member Harrell asked a clarifying question on the dispute resolution process as to whether the process would engage in legal activities. Mr. Krieg clarified that the dispute resolution process, as envisioned, would be to avoid those costly legal interactions. Staff would develop internal policies to guide staff to run disputes up the chain of command as necessary. Board member Harrell expressed concern about resolving larger disputes, such as station siting, when Sound Transit leads the conversation on cost and schedule.

Board member Franklin noted that the model of Elected Leadership Groups which help with refining the station alternatives could be a good way to set the guidance on key board member involvement.

Chair Balducci agreed with Board members Franklin and Roscoe on having both local and regionally minded Board members engaged in the dispute resolution process, as needed. In agreeing with a point made by Board member Harrell, Chair Balducci summarizing the direction as being both clear and flexible in the policy. She also noted that the previous policy does have some very good key components, particularly mentioning the inclusion of mitigation identified during the environmental review. She noted it would be helpful to see where good and bad decisions were made in the past regarding betterments.

Chair Balducci closed discussion by referencing the Board's retreat and the key balance to strike between regionalism and local partnership. She also highlighted that the recital clauses in the final Resolution approved by the Board will be key in setting out the Board's vision for the policy.

Mr. Krieg briefly responded that while jurisdictions with projects later in the plan will bear the brunt of this policy change, while also benefitting from lessons learned through previous projects. He summarized the next steps for policy which includes a presentation at the full Board meeting in April and the action is expected to be considered as early as the May 2, 2024, Executive Committee meeting.

Presentation on Projects in Activation

Carrie Diechl, Director of Activation, Jon Lebo, Executive Project Director of the East Link Extension, and Joe Gildner, Deputy Executive Director of Project Management, provided an overview about upcoming service openings, the pre-revenue phase in preparation for revenue service, and the role of the Asset Transition Office.

The 2 Line was previously referred to as the East Link Starter Line and would be messaged as the 2 Line moving forward as it continued to extend further west and east over the next few years. On Saturday, April 27, 2024, eight stations would open. Ms. Diechl noted there were at-grade crossings in this section of the 2 Line and the team was actively working with the community, including schools, to raise awareness about rail safety. She thanked Chair Balducci for her involvement in bringing local partnerships to heightening safety awareness. They were also partnering with regional and Eastside organizations like the Pacific Science Center, Bellevue Downtown Association, Eastrail Partners, Meta, Wright Runstad, the BelRed Arts District, Move Redmond, Centro Cultural Mexicano, One Redmond, Microsoft and many more. Starting April 27, 2024, service would run every 10 minutes between 5:30 am to 9:30 pm, seven days a week until the full 2 Line connects. It will start with two-car train consists, and as the line extends, it would grow to the four-car train consists that was seen on the 1 Line.

As recently announced, the 1 Line Lynnwood Link Extension would open on Friday, August 30, 2024. The teams were actively finishing testing and in Spring 2024, King County would take control to ensure their staff was ready to support safe and reliable service. This opening extended current 1 Line service beyond the Northgate Station northbound to include four new stations. Upon opening day, there would be continued 1 Line service through normal service times with peak service headways between 8 to 10 minutes until the 2 Line fully opened across Lake Washington. Combined with this opening this fall, the team would also implement several additional systemwide changes, including the beginning of flat fare for light rail across the system. The new fare would be \$3.00 per trip for adults. Low-income and senior and disabled fares at reduced rates would still be offered. Youth 18 and under would continue to ride free. In addition, the University Street Station in Downtown Seattle would also be renamed to Symphony Station, and the team would update station codes to make the system more accessible for all passengers, including those who do not read English.

Ms. Diechl noted most of the infrastructure for these new stations had already been built and shared context about the “pre-revenue” service, which was the period between construction and passenger service. Pre-revenue service was a critical phase of the project when the team transferred care and custody of the new assets from the project contractor and ensured the agency’s readiness to enter passenger service. She likened the “pre-revenue” phase as an extended dress rehearsal. This was done through a variety of safety and quality checks, conducted training and familiarization for operators and maintainers, and ensuring compliance with internal and external processes and approvals such as receiving the State Safety Oversight approval based on demonstrated conformance with the agency’s safety certification requirement.

This work was taken on through collaboration between many including the project team who was responsible for completing the project scope, Operations, Facilities, Safety, Passenger Experience, Information Technology, partners at King County who operate and maintain the assets, and many others. Joining that landscape was the newly formed Asset Transition Office (ATO), which was formed late 2023 to bring more focused attention and resources to the work that must be done through the project lifecycle to prepare for operational readiness. In creating ATO, the agency consolidated teams who were focused on transitioning assets into operations under one group. ATO was part of the System

Quality team under Chief Program Management and Oversight Officer Moises Gutierrez. The goal in making this change was for ATO to serve as the single source of truth regarding advancement of activating new assets and holding accountability for managing and deciding the priorities and activities that supported achieving activation timelines across the various projects reaching this phase over the next few years. ATO would be involved in a project from early initiation all the way through project close out.

Chair Balducci noted that with openings usually coming in waves, how will the Asset Transition Office adjust its scope as project activation needs lull after the coming years. Ms. Diechl noted that ATO is directly engaging with those questions as it develops itself for long-term support of projects. Chair Balducci asked about when a parcel from the East Link Extension project's construction staging needs, which is now a park, would be conveyed to the City of Bellevue. Ms. Diechl responded that she would send over the information offline, as she would need to confirm those details with other staff.

Presentation on Projects in Planning

Don Billen, Executive Director of Planning, Environmental, and Project Development, and Chelsea Levy, Deputy Executive Director of Capital Project Development, began the presentation noting that this is a trial run of this planned quarterly presentation, which was introduced as a mechanism to keep the Board aware of Projects in Planning, especially as not all are regularly in front of the Board with actions.

Mr. Billen briefly recapped the projects that have advanced through planning since the passage of ST3. He asked Ms. Levy to continue with the project-specific updates.

The Sounder South Strategic Plan Update is updating the plans that were developed in 2019 and issued in 2020, just as the COVID-19 Pandemic was beginning. Sounder has historically been a peak commute focused service, and the Strategic Plan analyzes how best to meet evolving passenger demands. Staff expect to bring a report to the Committee later this spring.

The Board selected the projects to be built for the Lakewood and South Tacoma Sounder Access Improvements in March. Staff are now preparing information to baseline the project budgets and schedules in Q3 and finalizing negotiations with the local jurisdiction on funding agreements for the delivery of the selected improvements.

The King Street Station Access Improvements project seeks to enhance areas of the passenger experience and is occurring concurrently with planning for the Ballard Link Extensions project and the Hub improvement plan. Staff are working to complete the conceptual engineering designs for investments that will improve circulation and access to the station.

Planning for the Sounder Double-Track and Signal Projects was accelerated due to the receipt of a federal grant last year. Completion of the planning work now will hopefully set up the agency for being competitive for design and construction grants later on in the project.

The Operations & Maintenance Facility South project is working with the FTA to issue the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) this summer. Since the update last quarter, staff have completed the public engagement related to an application for a street vacation needed to support the preferred alternative for the project. The project team will provide a further project update on cost and schedule management next month.

The Board has taken actions to identify preferred alternatives and direct additional feasibility work for the Ballard Link Extension. Staff continue to advance preliminary engineering and additional environmental review and community engagement. Staff will present the results of the South Lake Union feasibility study at the Board meeting later this month, with a potential action to confirm or modify the alignment in May. Mr. Billen highlighted Chinatown/International District engagement regarding the Downtown Hub activation idea that would complement all the alternatives.

For the West Seattle Link Extension, the Program Management Support Services contract was awarded in January. In Mid-2024, the agency intends to publish the Final EIS and ask the Board to select the project to be built. Following that selection, staff will initiate procurement on the Civil Final Design contract.

In Q4 2023, the Board approved the start of project development for the Graham Street and Boeing Access Road Infill Stations. Staff recently began alternatives evaluation for the stations, and coordination with the Cities of Seattle and Tukwila, as well as initial stakeholder engagement, is underway. The team is expected to return near the end of the year with an update on the alternatives analysis and public engagement and ask the Board to identify preferred alternatives for study.

Staff expect to publish the Draft EIS for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension in late summer/early fall to prepare the Board to confirm or modify the preferred alternatives later this year for the Final EIS. Staff continue coordination efforts with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and four cities in the corridor.

Last year, the Board selected alternatives for study in the Draft EIS for the Everett Link Extension. Staff are also conducting environmental review of the three potential sites identified for the Operations and Maintenance Facility North. Publication of the DEIS is expected in 2026.

Mr. Billen concluded the informational portion of the presentation by touching on challenges and opportunities the agency is facing.

Executive session - None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, May 9, 2024
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room &
Virtually via WebEx

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

Claudia Balducci
System Expansion Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, AJM.