

2026 Service Plan

Rail Service Plan



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Introduction

2026 Service Plan process

The Service Plan is Sound Transit's annual planning process for managing our regional transit network that informs our operating budget. The Service Plan evaluates and proposes changes to coordinate with the opening of high-capacity transit projects, improve performance, respond to ridership trends, and optimize our operating resources. The Service Plan is also the vehicle for the Sound Transit Board of Directors (Board) to approve any “major service changes,” as defined by Sound Transit-adopted policy.

This year's plan looks a bit different, as we are delivering the Service Plan in two parts:

- Part one, the **Rail Service Plan**, proposes minor service changes for Link light rail and Sounder commuter rail. The Board reviewed this portion in October 2025; Board action is not required for these minor rail changes.
- Part two, the **Bus Service Plan**, will propose minor and major ST Express bus service changes. We hosted public engagement on these changes in fall 2025. Board consideration will occur in early 2026. Board action is required for the major service changes proposed in the plan. The bus changes will come in fall 2026 at the earliest, after the 2026 Men's FIFA World Cup.

We will implement the plans during our regionally coordinated service changes in spring (March) and fall (August) of 2026.





2025 Service Plan Amendments and new project opening sequence

In summer 2025, two Board resolutions amended the 2025 Service Plan:

1. **Resolution No. R2025-12:** Amended the 2025 Service Plan to include the major service change of extending the 2 Line to Lynnwood City Center Station.
2. **Resolution No. R2025-17:** Amended the 2025 Service Plan to include the major service change of extending the 1 Line to Federal Way Downtown Station. This resolution also changed the order of Link light rail openings to allow the 1 Line Federal Way Link Extension to open for revenue service before the 2 Line Crosslake Connection (2 Line to Lynnwood City Center Station).

Therefore, these two major service changes are not included in the 2026 Service Plan.

Timeline and Board pathway to approval

2025

SPRING

Develop draft rail changes & annual budget

- Collaborated with operating partners to develop updated regional network.
- Set planned service levels within affordability targets.
- Engaged riders to better understand how they use Sound Transit services and what is important to them.

MAY

2 Line extends to Downtown Redmond

SUMMER

Inform the public about rail changes coming in 2026

- Shared minor service changes.
- Engaged with passengers and the public to collect input.

FALL

Engage the public on ST Express bus changes

- Presented draft changes to Sound Transit Rider Experience & Operations Committee.
- Shared draft major service changes and Title VI service equity results.
- Engaged with passengers and the public to collect input.
- Prepared Rail Service Plan.

DECEMBER

1 Line extends to Federal Way

2026

EARLY

Incorporate public input and Board priorities into bus changes

- Review input from public engagement.
- Revise service changes as needed to align with public feedback, Board priorities, & any new operational information.

SPRING

Recommend bus changes for Board approval

- Publish draft Bus Service Plan.
- Present to Rider Experience & Operations Committee.
- Present to Board of Directors for approval.

2 Line extends to Lynnwood City Center Station

SPRING/
FALL

Implement approved service changes

- Coordinate with operating partners and implement service changes that were approved in the 2026 Service Plan.
- Monitor ridership, service performance, and passenger feedback.

Overview of recent ridership trends

The Lynnwood Link Extension leads to increased ridership on the 1 Line

The Lynnwood Link Extension extended the 1 Line from Northgate to Lynnwood City Center on August 30, 2024. Ridership on the 1 Line has increased substantially since the completion of the Lynnwood Link Extension project. May 2025 had the highest monthly ridership for any month in Link history, with 3,091,000 boardings, an average of 105,600 daily boardings. Since the 1 Line began serving the new stations north of Northgate, monthly ridership has experienced an average year-over-year growth of 25%.

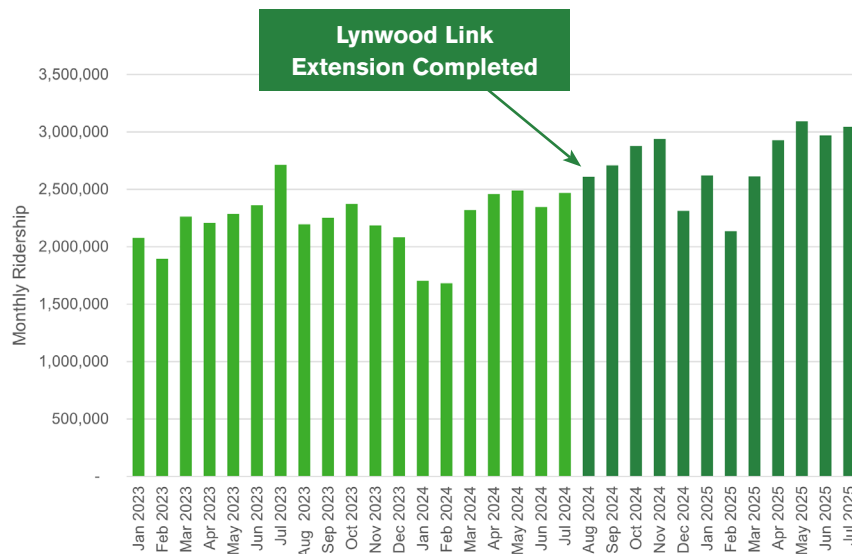


Figure 1: 1 Line Monthly Ridership, January 2023 - July 2025

2 Line ridership grows after service extension to Downtown Redmond

Monthly ridership on the 2 Line has fluctuated since service began in April 2024. Initial months saw rapid growth, with ridership peaking at over 186,000 boardings in May 2024 before declining in winter, reaching a low of about 69,600 boardings in February 2025. This variability in ridership is most likely due to seasonal changes in ridership demand, with most services having decreased ridership during the winter months. A significant increase in ridership occurred in May 2025 when service extended to Downtown Redmond. That month, ridership increased to over 214,000 boardings, followed by similarly high figures in June and a record high of more than 306,000 boardings in July 2025, indicating that the extension had a substantial effect on demand.

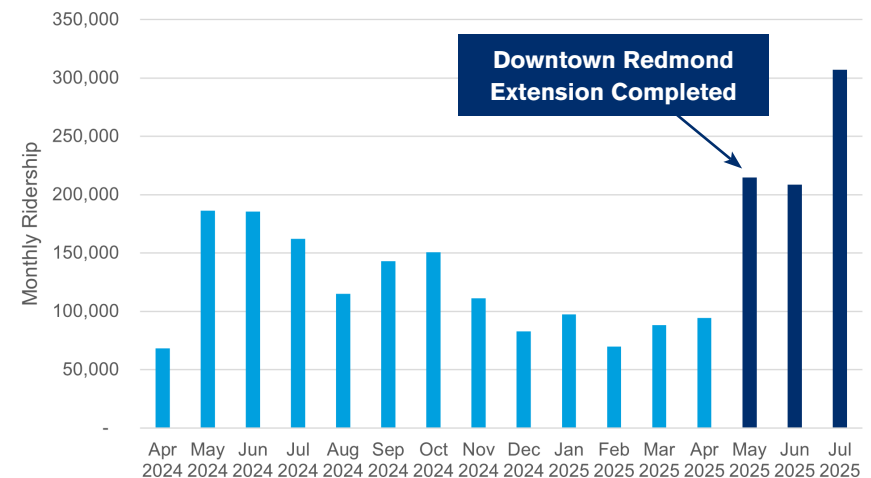


Figure 2: 2 Line Monthly Ridership April 2024 - July 2025

Ridership increased on the Sounder N Line and remained stable on the Sounder S Line

Since January 2024, monthly S Line ridership generally ranged between 130,000 and 170,000 boardings, with higher levels of ridership in the spring and fall and lower ridership during the summer and winter months. N Line ridership was typically between 7,000 and 9,000 boardings per month, though it experienced a notable peak in July 2025 at nearly 11,800 boardings. When indexed to January 2024 levels, both lines display similar seasonal fluctuations, with the N Line growing in ridership from April 2025 onwards. The S Line generally stayed within 5–15% of its January 2024 baseline, peaking modestly in April and October 2024 and reaching a low point in December 2024 at about 78% of the baseline. Both lines saw declines through late 2024, rebounds in early 2025, and gains in ridership beginning in spring 2025. Relative increases in N Line ridership were notably larger than that of the S Line due to an increase in the N Line’s service levels in fall 2024, with daily round trips added.

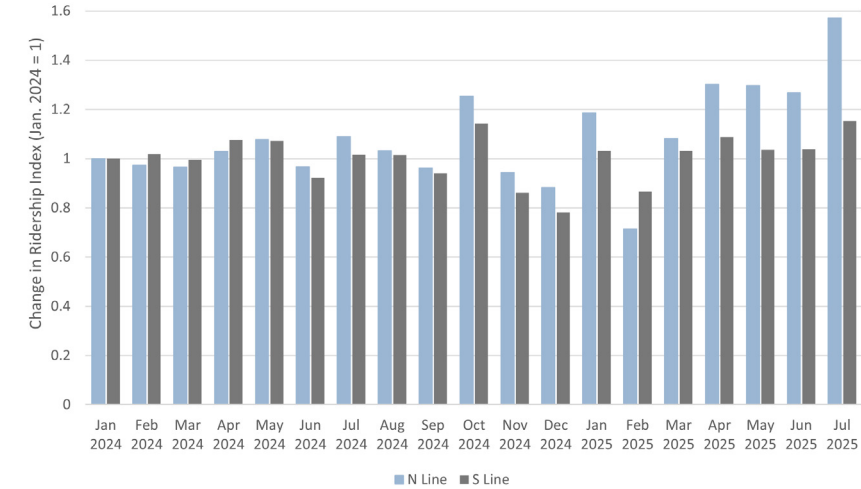


Figure 3: Change in Monthly Ridership on the N Line and S Line, January 2024 - July 2025, Indexed to January 2024

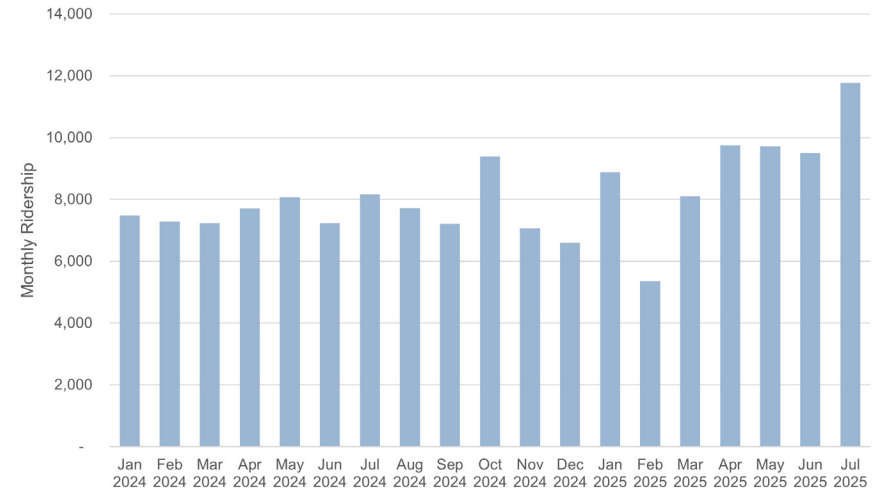


Figure 4: Sounder N Line Monthly Ridership, January 2024 - July 2025

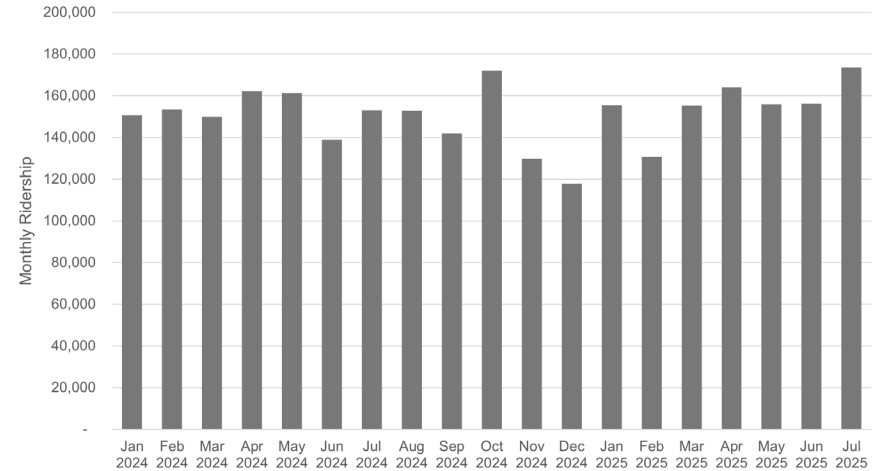


Figure 5: Sounder S Line Monthly Ridership, January 2024 - July 2025

T Line ridership grew in early 2025

T Line ridership rose steadily through the first half of 2024 following the opening of the Hilltop Link Extension in September 2023. Ridership peaked at nearly 89,000 boardings in May before dipping in the summer, then increasing to over 106,000 boardings in October. In 2025, January saw a 67% increase compared to the prior year, the largest year-over-year gain in the period. February ridership was slightly lower than the previous year (-5%), but growth resumed in March (+26%) and April (+46%), with both months exceeding 94,000 boardings. May and June 2025 saw more modest increases of 12% and 7%, respectively, followed by a smaller 4% gain in July. The trends suggest strong underlying growth along the corridor, particularly in the spring months, despite recurring seasonal dips in summer and winter.

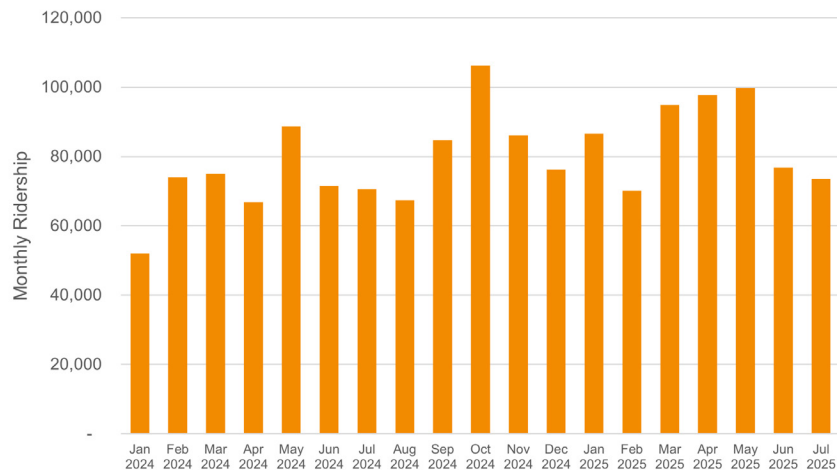


Figure 6: T Line Monthly Ridership, January 2024 - July 2025



Rail service changes

None of the proposed rail service changes in this plan are major service changes. Therefore, these service changes are not subject to Board action and Title VI service equity analysis.

What is a major service change?

Sound Transit Board of Directors' policy defines a major service change as any single change in service on an individual bus or rail route that would:

- Add or eliminate more than 25% of the route's weekly revenue service hours, and/or;
- Permanently move the location of a bus stop by more than a quarter mile, or rail station by more than a half-mile, and/or;
- Close or eliminate a bus stop or rail station without a replacement of any kind within a quarter mile of bus stops or a half-mile of rail stations.

2025 Service Plan rail changes

The 1 Line Extension to Federal Way Downtown Station and the 2 Line extension to Lynnwood City Center were added as amendments to the 2025 Service Plan. The 1 Line extension to Federal Way will open on December 6, 2025. The 2 Line extension to Lynnwood opening date has not been set but is forecasted for early 2026.



Proposed minor rail service changes

Pinehurst Station service change

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Link light rail (1 and 2 Lines) will begin serving Pinehurst Station in North Seattle.

WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THIS CHANGE?

This station will increase transit accessibility in North Seattle and aligns with Sound Transit's goal of delivering more regional high-capacity transit service.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PASSENGERS?

Passengers could travel to and from Pinehurst Station via Link light rail.

SERVICE LEVELS

Trains will arrive approximately every 4–5 minutes for most of the day, and about every 8 minutes in the early mornings and late evenings. Link light rail operates from approximately 5 a.m. to 12 a.m.

New Pinehurst Station!

Soon, the 1 and 2 Lines will stop at Pinehurst Station, located between Northgate and Shoreline South/148th. This new station will make it easier to get around, bringing the community closer to destinations throughout the region.

TITLE VI

Although this service change is not considered a major service change and does not require a Title VI analysis, it does add a new stop on the 1 Line and 2 Line and increases accessibility for passengers.



Figure 7: Pinehurst Station

Sounder S Line weekday afternoon trips service change

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

An afternoon southbound Sounder S Line Train (1507, 2:35 p.m. trip) will depart Seattle 10 minutes earlier at 2:25 p.m. and will be extended from Tacoma to Lakewood.

An afternoon reverse-peak direction/northbound Sounder S Line Train (1520) will leave from Lakewood (3:52 p.m.), arrive at South Tacoma at 3:57 p.m., and then continue to serve the rest of the northbound S Line stops.

This change would go into effect on March 30, 2026.

WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THIS CHANGE?

The afternoon train extension will serve additional passengers who are traveling between Lakewood and other Sounder stops to the north in the afternoon. Passengers have shared an interest in this additional Lakewood service.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PASSENGERS?

Passengers can expect a trip extension to/from Lakewood in the afternoon.

SERVICE LEVELS

Sounder S Line service levels are not changing. Currently, the Sounder S Line operates every 20 minutes during the PM peak. The afternoon trips are primarily southbound trips with three northbound/reverse-peak direction trips.

TITLE VI

This is not a major service change, so Title VI analysis is not required. However, this service change does extend a roundtrip to Lakewood, which will benefit passengers traveling to and from Lakewood.

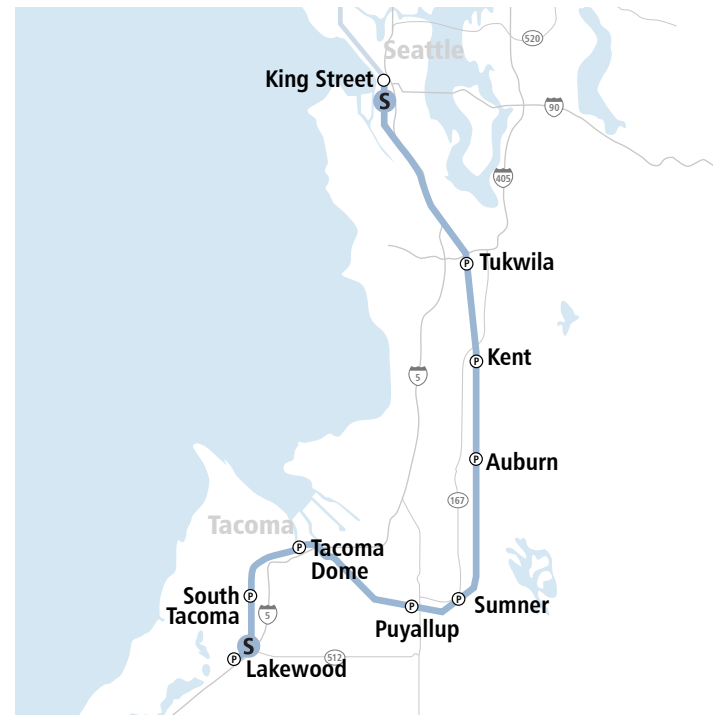


Figure 8: Map of the Sounder South S Line, which travels between Lakewood and Seattle with regular weekday service and special event trains.

Afternoon S Line Trips Extended

During afternoons, one northbound and one southbound trip will reach Lakewood, connecting more riders beyond Tacoma.

Sounder N Line weekday northbound service change

WHAT’S HAPPENING?

Three of the N Line’s four northbound afternoon trips will have scheduled departure adjustments. The first northbound afternoon train, Train 1700, will depart 20 minutes earlier at 3:45 p.m. The full list of changes includes:

- Train 1700 – 3:45 p.m. (20 minutes earlier).
- Train 1702 – 4:30 p.m. (3 minutes earlier).
- Train 1706 – 5:45 p.m. (4 minutes later).

This change would go into effect on March 30, 2026.



Figure 9: Map of the Sounder N Line, which travels between Everett and Seattle with regular weekday service and special event trains

WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THIS CHANGE?

The earliest afternoon northbound train, Train 1700, currently has the highest ridership. In July 2025, the trip averaged 106 boardings per day. Riders have also been inquiring about leaving the city earlier. These departure time changes also ensure that the N Line afternoon schedule is a clockface schedule, making it more accessible to passengers.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PASSENGERS?

Passengers who take the 4:05 p.m. train have the option of taking Train 1700 at the earlier departure time, 3:45 p.m., or taking the later train at 4:30 p.m.

SERVICE LEVELS

Service levels will not change.

Spring 2026	AM Peak	PM Peak
Hours of Operation	6:15 - 7:45 a.m.	3:45 - 5:45 p.m.
Frequency	30 min.	30 - 45 min.

Table 1: Sounder N Line service levels spring 2026

TITLE VI

This is not a major service change, so Title VI analysis is not required. However, the span of service will increase for the Sounder N Line, which could benefit passengers who want to travel northbound earlier in the afternoon.

Public engagement summary

The 2026 Service Plan has four phases of engagement.

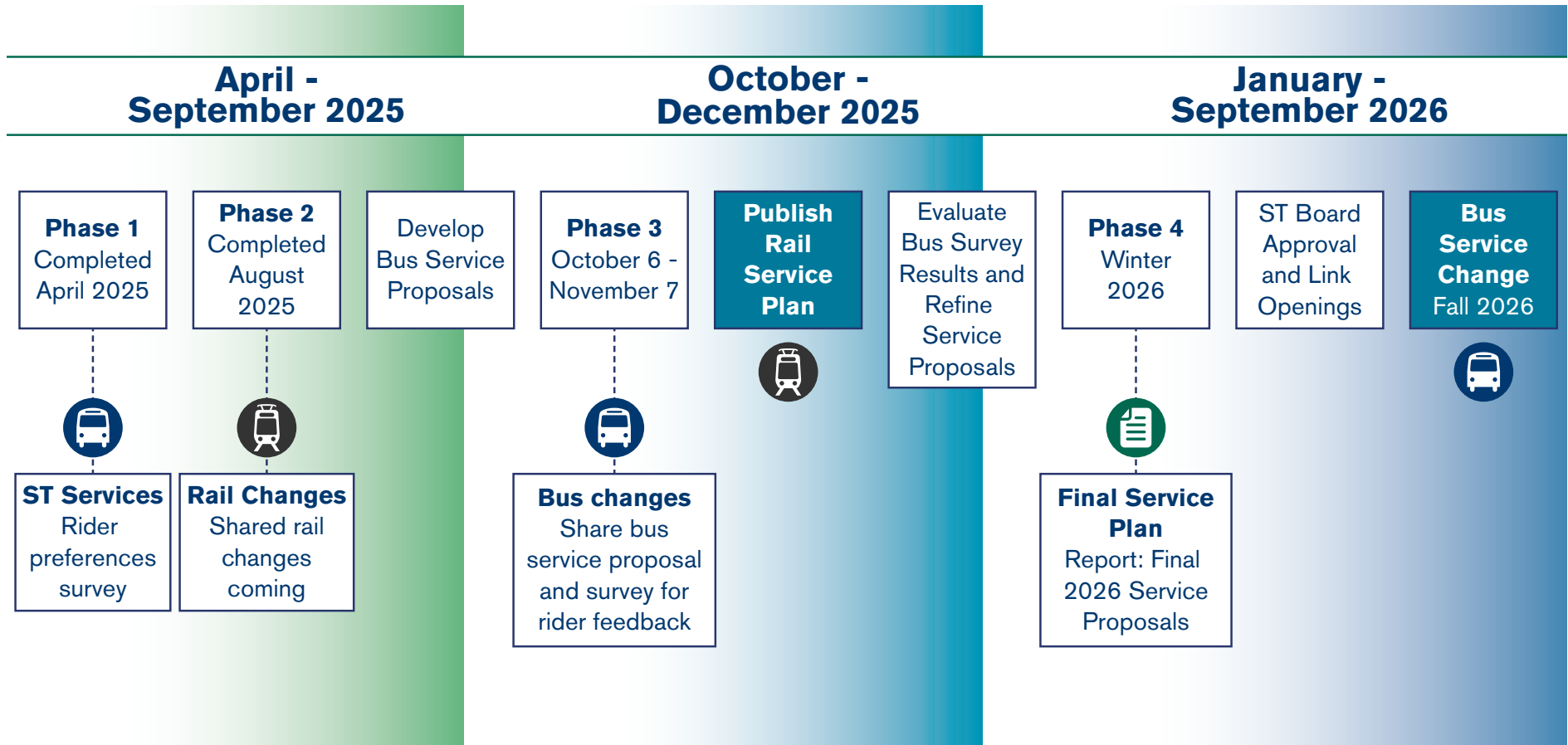


Figure 10: 2026 Service Plan engagement timeline

The first phase, which included a survey that asked the public about service priorities, was completed in April 2025.

Key takeaways from the survey included:

- Respondents reported that they used Route 545, 550, and 594 the most.
- The most popular trip purpose was to commute to/from work, followed closely by recreational trips.
- About half said they would be able to use the 1 Line or 2 Line for all or most of their trips after the Link extensions open.
- Several riders expressed concerns about changes to bus service that could increase travel time or add transfers to trips.

The second phase of engagement, which informed the public about rail changes coming in 2026, was conducted between July 28 and August 11, 2025. Sound Transit shared upcoming rail changes through a variety of engagement methods, including:

1. Website updates.
2. Social media posts.
3. Email alerts.
4. Rider alerts.
5. Tabling at fairs and festivals.

For the new Pinehurst Station, construction engagement has been conducted since 2023. In fall 2024, a survey collected public input on a station name. The station name was adopted in January 2025. Staff informed the public about the Pinehurst service change through phase two engagement.

In September 2025, we also asked riders about shifting the southbound Sounder N Line schedule to earlier (removing 7:45 a.m. trip and replacing it with 5:45 a.m. trip). The Sounder N Line survey received 780+ responses. About 70% of respondents said they preferred the current southbound schedule. Currently, a change to the southbound Sounder N Line schedule is not recommended.

The third phase of engagement focused on collecting feedback on the proposed 2026 ST Express bus service changes. This phase of engagement occurred between October 6 and November 11, 2025. During phase four, in winter 2026, Sound Transit will share the final 2026 ST Express bus service proposals.

The full public engagement report will be published with the 2026 Service Plan (Part Two – ST Express Plan) in early 2026.