

Sound Transit Community Oversight Panel Hybrid Meeting Summary

Date: December 10, 2025

Time: 5:30 – 7:50 p.m.

Location: Hybrid/Teams/In-person (Union Station)

Attendees

Present:

- Charlotte Murry
- James Peyton
- Linda Dorris
- Lorenzo Frazier
- Mark Lewington
- Paul Thompson
- Scott Lampe
- Tina Pierce
- Tom Norcott

Absent:

- Donia Zaheri
- Zak Osborne

Staff

- Adam Montee
- Katie Flores
- Love Lee

Meeting Overview

The Community Oversight Panel (COP) heard presentations by Sound Transit's Regional Planning Council, Sustainability Director, and Deputy Executive Director regarding the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) update, Sustainability Plan update, and Enterprise Initiative update. The panel also discussed collaboration barriers and adopted the previous meeting's minutes.

Meeting Summary

The chair began the meeting. The COP administrator took roll. The chair introduced and welcomed the Puget Sound Regional Council staff.

Presentation:

Puget Sound Regional Council Update

The Director of Regional Planning introduced himself and gave an overview of their presentation. Topics introduced included the Regional Planning Framework and the Regional Transportation Plan Update. The presentation began with background on the Central Puget Sound region, which currently includes more than 4.5 million people, 2.2 million jobs, four counties, and 82 cities and towns. Staff noted that the region is projected to grow by approximately 1.3 million people and add 1.1 million jobs by 2050, which drives the need for coordinated long-range planning.

The Director covered the purpose of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and who it is comprised of. The PSRC is responsible for developing regional growth and transportation policies, distributing federal transportation funding, maintaining regional data and forecasts, and convening jurisdictions and agencies to address regional issues. The next slide showed contextual information on population growth from 1960 to the present, for both Seattle and for the entire region. A following slide showed peer cities and how Seattle's population growth compares to

Boston and San Francisco. The regional 2050 growth forecast shows that the region is projected to grow by about 1.3 million people and 1.1 million jobs by 2050.

To accommodate that growth, the PSRC has adopted Vision 2050 (October 2020) as the region's long-range policy framework. Currently, the agency has finished reviewing local comprehensive plans and is beginning to look at regional transportation and economic plans and strategies. The vision plan will be updated in 2030.

Key elements of the Regional Growth Strategy include:

- Concentrating the majority of future population (65%) and employment growth (75%) in mid-to large-sized cities with regional growth centers and high-capacity transit (HCT).
- Decreasing growth in rural areas, unincorporated areas without transit, and smaller cities.
- Increasing job and housing balance in the region.

The Director then shifted to the Regional Transportation Plan, which is a long-range plan that identifies transportation investments across all modes and jurisdictions. The RTP is built from local, county, transit, and state plans and must demonstrate how planned investments can be funded over time. It will be implemented locally.

Recent data shows that transit ridership continues to recover from the pandemic. Seattle's transit recovery is comparable to other cities in the nation, ranking 12th out of 27 among the largest metro areas. Traffic-related fatalities (335 deaths in 2024) reinforce the need for the plan's emphasis on safety, system preservation, and multimodal investments.

Board priorities for the RTP include:

- Maintaining and preserving the existing system
- Creating a multimodal transportation system that works for everyone
- Promoting a safe and healthy transportation system
- Addressing the region's climate goals
- Ensuring system performance for the region
- Developing a practical financial strategy

The total cost of the RTP is \$335B, with 83% being covered by current forecasted revenues. However, the Director emphasized that the PSRC region has a strong history of demonstrating willingness to tap into different avenues to meet unmet funding needs. He also noted that the financial strategy is not an adopted budget but rather a general plan with reasonable assumptions for any new or increased revenues.

The panel was introduced to an interactive map described as a transportation system visualization tool. The purpose of the tool is to identify gaps, help PSRC and local governments plan ahead, and help people understand what is currently being planned. PSRC staff committed to sending a link to the tool and encouraged panel members to check it out.

The plan will be released December 15 for a 40-day comment period. The PSRC will review comments and finalize the plan by April 2026. Final adoption of the plan is May 2026.

Questions:

Panel member: Why are regular bus lines not included in the Regional Growth Strategy?

Presenter: We anticipate that areas around regular bus lines will grow, but in terms of overall focus, we want to think about how we are using land realistically. These are expensive investments, and we want to focus on high density areas that are benefiting from these services. Places that rely on regular bus lines are usually smaller cities that cannot realistically accommodate growth. We want to focus on areas with High Capacity Transit.

Panel member: How do you measure congestion?

Presenter: It has to do with posted speed and operating speeds. It's calculated using the percentage of operating speeds that fall below the posted speed. We essentially look at volume and delays.

Panel member: In 2013, PSRC published a map showing where growth had occurred in the region. Based on the scattergram, much of that growth was outside of those regional growth centers. Will PSRC be publishing any data to support that statement?

Presenter: The 60% figure I mentioned includes some growth outside of those areas. We don't quite plot that in an x-y axis way. I can follow up with you on how to access that data.

Panel member: I was in Los Angeles over Thanksgiving and noticed a large number of Waymo vehicles. How does the plan account for emerging technologies such as driverless cars, or trends like remote work?

Presenter: The plan does acknowledge that new technologies will affect the way people make decisions. Driverless cars are not currently included in the plan, but we do recognize that they will become an option for people, similar to how scooters and e-bikes have changed travel behavior. Driverless cars are on our radar but are not yet recognized as a mode of transportation.

In terms of working from home, we know that during the pandemic, over 50% of workers in the region were working remotely. That has since decreased dramatically. This region is not comprised solely of tech workers, and currently only about 20% of workers are working remotely. While that is an increase compared to pre-pandemic levels, we are still in a recovering period from the pandemic. PSRC is tracking these trends as well. I can follow up with more precise data regarding those percentages.

Panel member: Is there a loopback process to verify the accuracy of the PSRC's forecasted numbers and KPIs? If they are off by a certain index, do you finetune the methodology?

Presenter: To clarify, we do not forecast deaths; we document them so local jurisdictions can prioritize those areas. For other forecasts, we do have a process in place. We calibrate our model, which is developed using a wide range of factors. PSRC conducts an annual regional household survey that collects travel diaries. We use the travel behavior in these diaries to incorporate into the model. The data department is the largest department at PSRC.

The speaker directed COP members to send follow up questions to the contact information included at the end of the presentation.

The Vice Chair introduced the next speaker, the Sustainability Director.

Presentation
Sustainability Plan Update

The Director introduced the purpose and agenda, which was to introduce the new sustainability plan. The COP is the first externally focused stakeholder receiving the presentation, which will be followed up with additional outreach and subarea briefings.

This phase of the timeline includes reviewing the plan with internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders and administration have already approved the plan. Now, the department is seeking input from external stakeholders such as the COP.

Sound Transit defines sustainability using a holistic approach. It is not only about improving quality of life in the region, but also about addressing social, economic, and environmental issues. The sustainability plan serves as the workplan for the group.

The Director reviewed accomplishments from the 2019 Sustainability Plan, noting that by the end of 2024, approximately 84% of the short-term goals had been completed. Key outcomes included launching the fully electric bus service with Stride, developing zero-emissions feasibility studies for Sounder and ST Express, launching equity-focused programs, and launching safety and asset management programs.

The recently proposed sustainability plan was drafted using a new format. Six themes that reflected the agency's goals were selected:

1. Grow ridership and strengthen communities
2. Continually improve agency governance and business practices
3. Advance equity
4. Protect and restore the environment
5. Build sustainable infrastructure and operate resiliently
6. Reduce air pollution and GHG emissions

Using these themes as an organizing principle, each theme is accompanied by a set of goals, with each goal including a metric and corresponding action items. All goals are intended to be completed by 2030 unless otherwise stated.

1. Goal: Achieve zero emissions facilities by 2050

Action items:

- Identify opportunities to reduce carbon intensity of refrigerants
- Develop plan to eliminate natural gas usage at Sound Transit owned facilities

2. Goal: Achieve zero emissions fleets by 2050

Action items:

- Design a zero-emission locomotive pilot project (Sounder)
- Sunset purchases of diesel revenue fleet vehicles by 2026
- Convert 25% (at minimum) of non-revenue fleet to zero emissions by 2030.

3. Goal: Expand multimodal access to Sound Transit stations.

Action items:

- Revise the Nonmotorized Station Access Allowance and Station Access Funds' criteria to identify the highest value projects
- Create a coordinated, cross-country paratransit system for riders with disabilities
- Advance public electric vehicle charging access at Sound Transit facilities and participate in regional collaboration.

4. Goal: Provide support and resources for small and disadvantaged contractors

Action items:

- Connect small and disadvantaged contractors to resources to upgrade their equipment to reduce construction related emissions.
- Implement the Equity and Infrastructure Pledge.

5. Goal: Reduce environmental impact of construction materials and products and reduce environmental impact of construction.

Action items:

- Assess and incorporate embodied emissions limits for core materials of concrete, steel, glass, asphalt, insulation, and masonry.
- Establish building deconstruction, salvage and relocation practices.

6. Goal: Refine and formalize the agency's community engagement vision and priorities

Action items:

- Update the Operational Engagement Strategy to ensure flexibility and responsiveness for neighbors and partners near the growing system.
- Refine the Youth Engagement Program Strategy to strengthen responsiveness and relevance.

Next steps include finalizing metrics, document text, and graphics, followed by a communications review for external audiences. The plan is to present to the Board in Q1 2026.

Questions:

Panel member: The Centralia Power Plant is going to be converted to burn methane, with PSE providing energy. I'm curious how that affects your greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Presenter: Any changes would be reflected in our inventory. I do know that PSE is working really hard to meet their goals. By 2030, the energy they provide to us will be carbon neutral. Until we hear otherwise from PSE, we trust that this is the trajectory they are on.

Panel member: I looked up PSE and their fuel mix. I know electric demand is increasing. As we reduce natural gas use, demand for electric will increase. Removing dams will reduce hydropower. Is ST doing anything to generate more electric power or are we only on the demand side?

Presenter: I would recommend Adam invite Jessica, as she can answer that question more thoroughly than I can. I believe, in good faith, that PSE will meet its 2030 goal. Additionally, part of Jessica's job involves working with utilities to ensure there is enough electricity to support our fleets. We coordinate with utilities years in advance in order to meet our infrastructure needs. We work closely with our utility partners to ensure adequate power for our facilities. Our largest energy consumer is the Link light rail.

Panel member: Can you talk more about the homes that you relocate?

Presenter: If there is an opportunity to relocate a building, we want to take it. The greenest building is the one you already have. During the Roosevelt building project, we arranged to relocate three townhomes to the neighborhood. We've done this work before. For a mobile-home park, the sustainability planner on the project explored whether any of the homes could be relocated. ST would have had to pay \$30,000 per home to dispose of them, so three were relocated, and we are hoping to relocate an additional three to five homes.

Panel member: What is the cost of moving a home?

Presenter: I don't have that information at the moment and would need to follow up with you. We estimate saving about \$10-30,000 per mobile home, depending on the condition of the home.

Panel member: Wasn't there a story about the type of concrete being used by Sound Transit? ST is a large consumer of concrete, did they switch to a type that is less impactful on the planet?

Presenter: Our specifications focus more on performance, which gives contractors flexibility on what to use. We were able to reduce the carbon footprint of the cement mix by 32%, without making changes to our design requirements.

Panel member: Sound Transit doesn't tell contractors which cement to use?

Presenter: Contractors are required to use certain mix types, but there's flexibility within that. As long as it meets performance standards, they have that flexibility.

The Chair called for a break and the COP reconvened at 7:15 p.m.

Presentation

Board Retreat Recap and Enterprise Initiative Update

The Deputy Executive Director was introduced to recap the recent Board retreat and provide an update on the Enterprise Initiative (EI). He explained that the main objective of these retreats is to inform and align Board members on key challenges.

The November retreat brought the educational component to a conclusion. M225-36, which established principles to guide the Enterprise Initiative (EI), directed staff to develop a framework on how they will deliver the EI and various updates by fall.

One segment of the Board retreat focused on reviewing that comprehensive framework. It includes:

- Planning and policy
- Capital delivery
- Service delivery
- Finance

Overall, the work effort is overseen by the Board of Directors. Staff outlined key activities, outputs, and the tradeoffs the Board will need to consider. The Board requested a workflow showing how all of this work fits together.

In addition, staff are beginning to think through different approaches to capital programs in light of affordability challenges, and what that may mean for design and service functions.

Concurrent with this work, staff are continuing to evaluate recommendations related to larger-scale service and resiliency investments. This includes direction from the Board to conduct feasibility assessments for long-term and higher-scale options. The finance team is exploring enhancements to increase the agency's financial capacity, as well as policy changes that could be pursued to support that goal.

A graphic was shown to the COP illustrating how the four focus areas work together.

The retreat included breakout groups that allowed Board members to learn about different subareas. This gave staff the chance to articulate high priority items, help Board members understand what their communities care about, and build a better capacity for shared understanding.

Board members directed staff to begin developing plausible and affordable scenarios. There will be another retreat in late winter, at which time staff will begin to share these scenarios.

The Vice Chair also attended the retreat and provided his recap. He noted that the retreat was very well attended by the members of the Board. He also noted the absence of suggestions to remove expense items from the structure, which will make it difficult for the agency to close the budget gap without doing so.

Questions:

Panel member: Has the Board given any guidance on items to take off the table?

Presenter: Not explicitly. They provided guiding principles, and we discussed how to turn those principles to criteria. We need to develop scenarios which will likely involve hybridizing different pieces and options. The scenarios will help illuminate tradeoffs.

Panel member: Could you review the timing for the next steps in the process?

Presenter: There is still a significant amount of work occurring within the various workstreams. An Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for December 11, where we will discuss the downtown Seattle tunnel question, provide an update from the capital delivery team on cost-saving scenarios, and review how we are identifying the feasibility of cost-saving measures.

There is ongoing work at the workstream level, with the primary focus on scenario development. Internally, we have begun to outline the process we expect to follow. We are targeting the January Board meeting to provide an update on EI scenario development. At that time, five new Board members will be joining, and we will need to begin orienting them in the coming weeks—covering what the EI is and what work has already been completed.

The next major milestone is the Board retreat in Q1, where we will begin to see how the pieces come together. We won't have the answers, but we will have more information. We're kicking off in earnest with efforts like the long range update and engagement.

Panel member: How is that going to affect the new board members in terms of what has already been decided?

Presenter: That's a great question and I wish I had an answer. We're in a linear process and we can only move forward. Nearly a third of the Board is turning over. It may require additional time, and if that is necessary, we'll make it work. We had an interim King County Executive and now we have a new one. Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. We will also have a new mayor, and new representation from North King County. Despite these changes, there's enough continuity that we can hopefully make it work. It'll be a priority to engage new Board members and bring them up to speed. One foot in front of the other.

Panel member: I hope the new Board members meet ST for that crash course during the off-time so they are prepared to have these difficult conversations. I would hate for the process to be delayed further simply because they are not ready, especially if that leads to the dollar amount going higher.

Presenter: I know the board is moving with a sense of urgency. Our approach is to be extra available and proactive.

Adoption of previous meeting summary

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes, and it passed unanimously.

Member Reports

The Vice Chair and the panel representative for Pierce County attended the Fife City Council meeting and invited members to the Federal Way preview ride. They recapped the ride and noted the importance of being present in the community. They look forward to having more people in attendance in the future. The Vice Chair asked for outstanding items of business.

Questions:

Panel member: Do we know when Chair Constantine will return to provide an update?

Presenter: He has a busy schedule for the next few months. We'll work with staff to carve out time so he can return with an update.

Panel member: There was feedback from someone about how they were expecting more development along the Federal Way Link. It's either behind schedule or it's not happening. I didn't see any development, nor did it seem like there were any big apartment buildings near sections of the rail.

Panel member #2: There was open space but not anything being developed.

Presenter: At least one parcel near the downtown station was recently awarded for two transit-oriented affordable housing projects. These will be located in downtown Federal Way. While development may be progressing more slowly than in Redmond, it is moving forward.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.