

Sound Transit Community Oversight Panel Hybrid Meeting Summary

August 13, 2025

COP Members Present: Tina Pierce, Scott Lampe, Linda Dorris, Mark Lewington, Paul Thompson, James Peyton, Tom Norcott, Trevor Reed, Zak Osborne, Lorenzo Frazier, Lucas Simons

COP Members Absent:, Diana Cambronero Venegas, Charlotte Murry, Donia Zaheri

Others Present: Adam Montee

Conversation with CEO Constantine

- Dow Constantine – Chief Executive Officer

CEO Constantine introduced himself to the panel. He addressed a question submitted in advance regarding (tina's question about attracting people to the system). He disagreed with the premise that people ride the system because they need to. He pointed to increasing ridership as evidence that people prefer to ride the system at an increasing rate, because it's more convenient than driving through town. Additionally, security incidents and violence on the system were decreasing while security presence and cleanliness were on the rise. The agency still has room to improve, and that will be an area of focus in the coming years.

He addressed a question submitted in advance regarding keeping service affordable in light of regional price increases, noting that the agency established a flat fare of \$3.00 to ensure fares are simple and easy to understand. A monthly pass has remained around \$100. Additionally, the agency helps with housing affordability by supporting transit oriented development through its TOD program.

A question submitted in advance asked about CEO Constantine's response to an article published by Martin Prestrud in the Washington Policy Center. CEO Constantine advised that it was an unfortunate reality that construction costs have inflated dramatically across the entire country, and especially in the Puget Sound Region. When he was King County Executive, the Harborview Medical Center measure was passed around \$1 billion, but after the Covid pandemic increased to around \$3 billion. This is only one example of the trend experienced by all major construction projects in the state. WSDOT, Sound Transit, and other jurisdictions are facing it together. He asserted that while there is still opposition to light rail in the region, the voters have consistently re-affirmed their support for high capacity transit in the form of light rail.

A member advised that he spent time with the author of the article in question. He advised that in Pierce County, his experience was that people were unhappy with the agency. CEO Constantine advised that 80% of the district supported light rail, and offered to provide that data. He acknowledged that people would be unhappy about property acquisitions, or that it was taking too long, which the agency was committed to resolving, but that there was region-wide satisfaction.

A member noted that delayed decision making on projects have impacted project costs. CEO Constantine agreed that it was a challenge. He was working with Deputy CEO Mestas to advance projects. He noted that he was willing to push decision-makers to get the program built. A member, using WSLE as an example, asked why more alternatives were not advanced through preliminary engineering to mitigate any unforeseen issues that would then delay the project. CEO Constantine noted that it was a worthy consideration to advance more alternatives through around 30% design.

CEO Constantine addressed a question regarding designing stations. He noted that staff, as part of their exploration to reduce costs, are looking at making stations more appropriately sized. They would not necessarily mirror international station design, but that is certainly one tactic the agency was interested in employing to reduce project costs.

A member asked about express-style trains. CEO Constantine advised that he was having very preliminary discussions about that with staff. They weren't to the point of developing plans, but he was curious about whether the agency could institute service like that. The member noted that the agency is competing with cars. CEO Constantine agreed and noted that the agency was looking at methods to supplement service with buses. A member noted that many riders in Pierce County wanted bus service to remain, since it was more convenient. CEO Constantine agreed, and reiterated the agency's work on reviewing previous assumptions about bus connections, especially in light of the World Cup.

CEO Constantine discussed a question pertaining to permitting. He noted that two bills passed by the state legislature during the 2025 session to help in that area. The first clarified that high capacity transit is an essential public facility, which should help ensure local permit and mitigation fees are reasonable. A second bill gives the agency similar permitting authority to WSDOT when building within WSDOT right of way. A member referred to the Bellevue Tunnel as an example of a city imposing restrictions on the agency. CEO Constantine noted that he didn't have a great answer to that, but he would look into how the advance work with the City of Seattle would reduce the likelihood for conflict.

Regarding a question from a member on the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), he clarified that the agency retained four members of the group. . There are still some rough edges as the agency is re-organized and key staff are assigned to the correct roles. As an example of how the agency is taking advantage of them, the Ballard and West Seattle Link extension teams were discussing project approaches with those TAG members.

A question submitted in advance by a member asked what CEO Constantine believed the panel's role should be. He advised that he is fond of the panel because it has, over the years, brought oversight to the agency with helpful recommendations, critical or otherwise.

He addressed some members' previous concerns about him being appointed as the CEO, and noted that he believed he belonged in the position because of the value he brings the agency. He has been around the agency for longer than many of the senior staff, and can bring perspective on both the region and the past actions the agency took.

A member asked about paid parking. CEO Constantine advised that an action was upcoming regarding the parking program.

Audit Division Mid-year Check-in

- Patrick Johnson – Director, Audits
- Kamran Hazini – Director, Enterprise Risk Management

Staff reviewed the audit division's structure, noting that the division underwent organizational change. The audit division and Agency Controls, which is housed within the Agency Oversight Department.

Staff noted that Enterprise Risk Management was not a new concept to the agency, but it was escalated to a dedicated matter, with Kamran Hazini as the only staff member at the moment. Staffing would increase as the work continued.

A member provided his experience with risk management. They asked if mitigation was part of the program as well. Staff said yes, once risks were identified, mitigation owners would be assigned and follow-on mitigations would be addressed.

Staff were developing the ERM framework and establishing an enterprise risk register to capture and track high-level risks. A member asked if a risk register was available. Staff advised that it was not ready yet, but the goal was that a draft would be ready by the end of the year. Staff continued noting that they would define impact and categories, consistent assessment scales, scoring criteria and risk rating methodology.

A member asked how many categories there were. Eight categories were defined. Cost and schedule were project side risks at the moment. The ERM would capture both operational and project level. A member was grateful that the agency was taking this on.

Staff reviewed the Internal Audit division's progress since it was reestablished in 2020. When the agency was re-organized through Project MOST, the Agency Oversight Department was created and the Audit Division was brought within. It has two key goals: to serve as the central point of coordination for all audit activity and to enhance transparency and accountability.

66 percent of the audits fell under the Agency Oversight Department, 28 percent under the Finance and Business Administration department, and six percent under the Strategy and capital delivery departments. Any audit which was performed externally are owned by the department responsible for the subject of the audit, with Agency Oversight Department awareness.

Staff were planning on joining the panel twice a year, once to review the previous year's performance audit, and later to review the full year and discuss the upcoming year's performance audit. The previous audit was for Capital Project Time-coding. There were six findings.

A member asked what the budget impact for the findings were. Staff would provide those details. The member thought the audit was relatively minor, in the scope of the agency's work.

A member asked if estimations for future projects would be influenced by the inaccurate time charging found in the project time charging audit. Staff advised that it could be, and that could be a topic for a future audit.

Staff reviewed the newly released audit plan dashboard, which is available on the Sound Transit website. He reviewed the data as of the meeting. Approximately 25 percent of the year's audits were complete. There were 2 findings which were open at the time. All were planned for completion by the end of the year.

A member asked about the 2025 audit topic, about disaster preparedness. Staff advised that the audit was currently in progress.

Special Audits are directed to staff by the CEO or a Board member. There is currently one special audit underway on the agency's Non Revenue Vehicle program, by former Interim CEO Goran Sparrman. That audit was underway.

A member asked about the East Link Construction Certification Audit and why there were no findings. Staff advised that the certification was focused on safety certification, where an audit on quality would likely address the construction concerns. A member asked how the various audits were coordinated. The program seems compartmentalized and that a comprehensive audit should be conducted. Staff agreed that

the question as fair. A member asked if audits would be incorporated into the Enterprise Risk Management. They shared concerns about the overall program audit.

A member asked about the organization. Staff advised that Agency Oversight was a department, and the Audit division was a division within that department. They also acknowledged the concern about the fragmented manner of audits in the agency were attempting to be addressed by reorganizing safety, quality, and internal audit. The member asked if there could be a report back on the progress of implementation of rolling out enterprise-wide policies. Staff would work with agency oversight leadership to determine the best way to report.

Seven audits currently in progress would be reported at the September Finance and Audit Committee meeting while five would be reported at the October committee meeting. Those not yet begun were not presented on the slide but would begin soon.

From 2026 to 2028, the division would be shifting its performance audit resources toward advisory consulting services. A member asked about audit findings and how they were addressed. Staff would not require certain actions, but advise or assist while corrective actions with the most efficient outcomes were undertaken.

A member asked if project change-order processes were reviewed. Staff advised that it would be a good audit to undertake. The audit plan was revisable, and some attention on that topic was given and could be elevated. The member was interested in what the implication of change orders would be if an audit on the practices were, especially in relation to permitting. Staff advised that permitting was a topic of interest and he would likely be back to the panel with information on future audits.

Information Security Update

- Alex Di Giacomo – Chief Information Security Officer

Staff thanked the panel for their time and reviewed their experience. New Chief Information Officer, Brandi Levin, introduced herself.

Information Security is broader than just IT security as an example, the presentation provided had a data classification, which is a non-IT component of information security. The three primary goals of the program are confidentiality, integrity, and availability. Three components within those goals are people, process, and technology. People are the agency's greatest asset and also their greatest information security liability. Within that larger context is the full scope of the program, encompassing all of the agency's facets.

The function of the program was to provide enterprise oversight, governance, and assurance services. Those functions are in the interest of preserving confidentiality integrity and availability of information assets, with agencywide purview and scope. All of that is based upon the framework provided by ISO 27001 international standard for Information Security. Following this international standard allows staff to use the same language and standards across the industry. This was internalized by internal agency policy. On the slide was a graphic that summarized all of the components of information security and how they fall within it.

The information security management system is based on the plan, do, check, act cycle. This system manages the risks facing the agency. A functional management system will not guarantee safety, but it will identify the risks and allow the agency to determine how to best mitigate them.

When Mr. di Giacomo joined the agency in 2016, information security was not explicitly addressed, leading to several gaps. This was common across the transportation industry. The Information Security function was then formally established under the IT department, under sponsorship of the Chief Information Officer at the time. The program was developed and ramped up since then based on resources available. Third party assessments have been conducted each year to review the maturity of the program. Challenges over the years have been constant. Funding was a consistent challenge, as was incorporating legacy systems. Strategies are constantly evolving to match even faster evolving threats.

A member asked how the agency's maturity score compared to other agencies. When the program was stood up in 2016, only 4 other agencies had an equivalent staff position. Besides the New York area's MTA, Sound Transit is substantially ahead of other agencies, likely in the top five percent.

Program Maturity is generally measured in a five point scale. Advancing from one level to the next is increasingly harder. To do so, an agency must demonstrate that it was performing the level below over time consistently. Very few organizations ever reach level 5 of the scale. Many organizations in the world often decide that a certain level is satisfactory for them.

A member asked where Sound Transit would feel comfortable, given that it was currently at a rating of 3.9. Staff advised that the reason the agency had not progressed to level 4 was that there were some processes which were not yet implemented, but in the works over the following years to likely advance it into the 4 rating.

An effective program also encompasses elements from many functions and areas. Identity and access management was an area in which the agency was weak. Staff began work to improve that in the last couple of years and would likely be complete soon. This area is very challenging because it isn't only a technology matter, but also a policy matter.

There are four main objectives for the program: risk control, best in class for transit, being comparable to top performers like New York's MTA, and taking an enterprise approach. Staff reviewed the functional organization comprised of four primary functions: security engineering and infrastructure security, security operations, governance risk management and compliance, and finally technology resilience, which is often better known as disaster recovery. A member asked whether cloud storage would be considered to be under the disaster recovery pillar. Staff advised that it was more a general IT question than an information security question; although it gives more options for the information security space.

Staff must have situational awareness of the risks in the world. Staff works closely with law enforcement to maintain that awareness. A member asked who the most dangerous risks would be. Staff advised that hacking groups, sponsored by governments are high on the list.

Among the many challenges are a low level of maturity from vendors. Transit does not have regulations compared to other industries like energy, and so the vendors are not required to improve their products. Competing priorities are another, which will likely never be resolved given resource constraints. A member asked if security by using defunct technology was a consideration. Staff advised that it did not take that approach because the availability of the information would then be compromised.

Staff reviewed the ongoing efforts and key success factors. To enable success, firm and continued commitment from the CEO and Board leadership is required.

Adoption of Previous Meeting Summary

Motion to adopt July notes, seconded, and approved.

Nominations for Community Oversight Panel Chair and Vice Chair

Charlotte Murry was nominated for the Chair. No members were nominated for the Vice Chair position. The panel agreed to consider over the following month and make a nomination at the September meeting.

Member Reports

Panel leadership continued to search for an administrator to replace the recently departed Administrator Nancy Thai.

A member asked if staff could bring a presentation forward on the Everett Link Extension.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 10, 2025, 5:30 – 8:15 PM

- 2024 Passenger Experience Survey
- Agency Resiliency Update
- Enterprise Initiative – Program Affordability