

## Sound Transit Community Oversight Panel Hybrid Meeting Summary

**April 9, 2025**

**COP Members Present:** Tom Norcott, Linda Dorris, Charlotte Murry, Mark Lewington, Tina Pierce, James Peyton, Diana Cambronero Venegas, Lucas Simons

**COP Members Absent:** Zak Osborne, Trevor Reed, Paul Thompson, Lorenzo Frazier, Scott Lampe, Donia Zaheri

**Others Present:** Adam Montee, Katie Flores, and Nancy Thai

### **Club World Cup and World Cup Preparations**

- Juan Higuera – Executive Strategic Advisor

Staff presented on how the agency is preparing for the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup. FIFA (translates to International Federation of Association Football in English) is a global governing body for international soccer. The 2025 Club World Cup is for club teams, including the Seattle Sounders, and is being hosted in the US for the first time, with the largest number of participating club teams to date. The 2026 Men's World Cup (World Cup) features the best national teams from 48 countries and will be hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico. It is the most widely viewed sports tournament in the world and is expected to draw over 3+ billion viewers, just for the tournament final. Tournament details, including schedule and expected number of visitors, help staff understand upcoming demand for regular users and visitors. The 2025 games will be like preparing to host Seahawks games every other day. The 2025 Club World Cup games last up to 2 hours, while two of the six games in the 2026 World Cup games have the potential for games to go longer. The length of games is relevant for staff to appropriately plan and have enough capacity in the system to serve riders. In 2026, there will be 10 FIFA sponsored Fan Zones in Washington. Staff expect details to be finalized in the late fall. The agency's goal is a great ride for everyone, existing riders and visitors alike. The agency is striving for the system to be clean, safe, reliable and resilient, redundant, be cost efficient, and for riders to be informed.

The 2025 Club World Cup will have six games on both weekend and weekdays and differing start times in June. There will also be Mariners games on the 15th and 17th. The agency's initial plans are to develop game day and demand specific plans for each mode, for example add gap trains, increase staffing, plan for standby support for facilities and vertical transportation, provide temporary wayfinding and signage, and share pre-event messaging and communications. Staff are testing three pilots ahead of 2026 – planning a station activation partnership with an existing station, the International District/Chinatown (this was also done for the Lynnwood Link Extension opening), wayfinding and signage around Lumen Field and surrounding Link stations, and weekday special event Sounder trip adds and schedule change.

Staff are engaging in 2026 world cup coordination through local organizing committee (LOC) SEAFWC26, which was created after Seattle was awarded the games. As the agency plans, it is sharing those plans with regional partners and providers for greater regional coordination. Staff are being mindful of how the agency shows up during the games that coincide with Juneteenth (June 19th) and Pride weekend. Four games are anticipated to be the highest demand days: the first two group matches, round of 32 match, and the round of 16 match (dates on slide 12 of the 2025 Club World Cup & 2026 World Cup Update presentation).

The FIFA Fan Festival will be similar to a tailgate and hosted at Seattle Center, with an expected capacity of 20 -30k people. Staff will need to prepare the system for multiple waves per day. FIFA Fan Zones have

a focus on regional engagement at a smaller scale. There will be two in the district (Everett and Tacoma) and staff will again need to prepare for multiple waves and for the system to provide capacity to move people. There will also be city specific festivities that could be FIFA sponsored as well.

The focus areas for the 2026 World Cup include completing link extensions to Federal Way, 2 Line across Lake Washington, and Sounder capital projects; service levels and capacity plans; passenger experience and communications plans; fare approach and media opportunities; resiliency, state of good repair, and vertical transportation improvements; and safety and security planning.

There are several external coordination efforts underway with national and international agencies and groups. The 16 host cities for this event are also coordinating and planning together. LA Metro is one of these partners as they are preparing for the Super Bowl and Olympics and are sharing their best practices and documentation.

Staff will finalize plans over the next few weeks for the 2025 Club World Cup. They will continue planning and coordination with the LOC and coordination meetings to inform internal planning for the 2026 World Cup.

One member asked whether staff are connecting with prior game hosts to learn from their experiences and lessons learned from greater demand on their transit systems. Staff are getting insights from previous hosts, as well as attending workshops with UITP (International Association of Public Transport), learning from Paris, London, and other cities about their large-scale events (e.g., hosting the Olympics), and workshops with the National Operations Center of Excellence focused more on the safety and security side. The member also asked if staff are communicating with the stadiums about ticket sales to anticipate attendance. Yes, all three Sounder games are expected to be sold out and the stadium is expected to be fully open with 68,000 seats. Other non-Sounder games are anticipated to be close to selling out as well, though staff are planning as if the stadium will be fully sold out. The member commented that trains are already crowded now after games and wondered what the agency can do to support even larger crowds and demand. FIFA games at Lumen Field will not be at the same time as Mariners games at T-Mobile Park which will help with spacing crowds. Staff also have some levels, such as adding additional frequency and gap trains where there are surge crowds. This year is an opportunity to learn ahead of 2026 crowds.

Another member asked where the final games will be held. They will be in New Jersey in 2026. The member also asked how many other cities are hosting games like Seattle. There are 16 host cities in 2026, most hosting a minimum of six games.

A member asked about the plans in case of an issue with facilities and vertical conveyance / transportation. There will be staff on standby, especially for these large events, to take care of vertical transportation and custodial support.

Another member asked about the budgetary impact on the agency. Staff are conducting the analysis now. The agency is hoping for some funding support from the federal level. The 2026 games are expected to be a large cost to the agency, potentially up to \$10-15 million. The agency is expecting revenue as well from the games, with potentially a \$1 billion regional impact from the event. The agency is analyzing what to anticipate from projected revenue and costs; they expect analysis around fall after seeing ticket sales.

One member asked if the state would help subsidize the cost of the games. No, the state would not subsidize the games but may provide support in some other way, like grant funding.

Another member asked if there is a risk analysis on potential policy impacts for international travelers. Yes, staff have raised the question, though they are currently planning as if restrictions will not be in place. Staff will track the possibility and could look to other countries for lessons learned (like from Qatar).

### **Asset Transition Office**

- Kerry Pihlstrom – Executive Director, Asset Transition Office

Staff presented about the Asset Transition Office (ATO). The ATO is part of agency oversight, which works across the agency to deliver a transit system that meets the growth and demand of the region. It works to cascade expectations of how to build and operate the system throughout the agency. Agency oversight promotes accountability, transparency, and effective governance by providing progressive analysis for capital and service delivery, including agency reporting, compliance, quality management, inspections and safety, requirements and standards, and asset transition facilitation. The ATO scope includes planning, designing, and constructing assets that can meet delivering commitments. Staff review planning stages and work to see if there are solutions when challenges arise. They look at issues and potentially changing policies and procedures when working with other agency staff to understand different components and elements of the system during the operational readiness phase. ATO staff monitor and witness system testing. They run trains pre-opening in normal conditions and then stress the system and train operators on how to respond in different situations. The ATO is responsible for recommending station readiness to open; that the asset is functioning as planned and partners and staff are prepared and trained. Additionally, the ATO is also responsible for decommissions.

The ATO measures operations readiness across the agency. It verifies project key activities, such as completed maintenance training, complete asset data, completed construction and punch list work, and signed user agreements, in order to transition to operation. Next, operations key activities are completed, such as hiring and onboarding operations and maintenance staff, fare collection equipment is installed, operating processes are updated for the new extensions and facilities, and vendor contracts are reviewed. ATO also verifies other key agency activities, including IT readiness, passenger communications, internal safety audit is completed, fare ambassadors are hired and onboarded, and security staff are ready to go.

The ATO is guided by north stars – purpose, mission, and value. The purpose is to drive the agency in delivery of new assets and overhaul of existing assets and clear accountability. Staff's mission is to ensure a smooth transition of new or modified service delivery assets into operations. The vision is to help the agency take an integrated, objective, and collaborative approach from concept to operations. Sound Transit is the first transit agency to incorporate Operational Readiness Asset Transition (ORAT) principles, a global framework that other industries employ, such as the aviation industry. The ATO is responsible for driving projects to completion, system expansion, project deliver through operational readiness, and efficiency in delivery of assets. This leads to reducing owner directed change orders, providing lessons learned, and database creation.

The activation framework is used to launch a new service and promote collaboration across the agency. All agency departments are involved, and ATO staff run scenarios to prepare and practice for the opening of a new service. Unique situations, like connection to East Link over the I-90 floating bridge, take longer to prepare for. Activation requires coordination and clarity across people, tools, processes, and reporting. An activation manager is assigned to each extension, and there is a monthly executive peer meeting to address programmatic risk. The ATO executive director reports once a month to the CEO and cabinet to share programmatic risks, lessons learned, and close out status.

The new ATO team structure creates clear lines of decision-making authority and accountability. The transition to operations group is detailed oriented, the operational readiness group relies on the operational expertise of staff, and the third group focuses on activation and commissioning.

Three strategic objectives are paired with associated metrics (see slide 20 of the Asset Transition Office presentation). The first objective is to integrate ORAT principles across all ATO functions to foster a culture of continuous improvement and enhancing resilience through operational readiness and compliance with standards. The second objective is to foster greater collaboration across planning, design, construction, and operations teams throughout all project phases. The final objective aims to improve accountability and transparency across internal and external partners.

Staff shared that the Downtown Redmond Link Extension is opening on May 10, and the safety certificate has been submitted.

One member asked where in the process the ATO team would have come in to identify the issue with the plinths on the I-90 floating bridge. Staff would start with data analysis; looking at project quality data, how long those issues were open, and look at non-conforming reports. The member asked who from the ATO org chart would have looked at that data. It would be the operations readiness team. Staff would hear about these issues coming up as these staff are in the field.

Another member commented on the many projects going on at the same time and asked how the ATO team is handling the immense workload. The ATO team led a quantitative risk assessment last year, looking at all projects stacked up and took a deeper dive in each subarea. Staff reviewed the risk range for each project, if there was enough time to complete all tasks, and identified mitigation strategies. Staff reviewed resource capacity and whether there was ample staff. Where there were gaps, additional staff were hired. Operating partner King County Metro is providing monthly updates on their operations and maintenance and staff completing data analysis and working in the field are coordinating together.

The member followed up to ask about the cost effectiveness of using consultants versus staff. Projects are at a peak right now, but staff are not anticipating that kind of demand after 2026. The industry consultants coming in to support staff often have seen more than Sound Transit staff and the agency can't afford this expertise full-time compared to what industry can pay. The member asked if there have been federal impacts to pay for this consultant work. Currently, no, funds that were allocated have been re-imbursed and staff are right sizing the team to meet needs.

Another member asked if the plan was to have the Federal Way and East Link fully open by the 2026 games and if so, what happens if those openings are delayed. Yes, the plan is to have those stations open by the games, but staff are monitoring risks and planning contingencies if a station doesn't open. An option could be to open a piece of an extension if not the full section.

A member asked about ATO's involvement on Tacoma Dome Link Extension. That project is in the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) phase, and ATO staff are considering spacing needs and analysis with the rest of the system. For example, what response time does the agency need for staff to respond. Depending on the desired response time, the agency might need to build additional facilities to meet those response time goals. ATO staff also document system limitations and decisions, like if it is not feasible to include a tail track somewhere. Staff are establishing agency governance structure now, including the operational side and all modes – ATO is involved in Sounder and BRT and BRT construction as well.

## **Review and Adopt 2024 Annual Report**

- COP members

Several members commented that they liked and preferred the condensed version of the annual year-end report that was shared out. Members commented that they felt the COP did want to acknowledge the agency's successes, but have a focus on areas of concern and improvements.

A member noted a strong desire for more structure to which areas of the agency are audited and would like to encourage the agency to develop an enterprise risk management and have an external comprehensive audit completed. The member also suggested the group read through the ST3 commitments made and better track those to provide oversight on what was promised.

Another member provided a suggestion to create a spreadsheet to track presentations to the COP. Staff followed up with a suggestion to use a tool similar to the Board's programmatic work plan that was backwards looking to track presentations and topic areas. Staff will work to share that tool and modify it for the COP to potentially use.

Staff will also have an updated Board resource book later this month and will share it with the COP members.

One member requested two additional edits to the 2024 annual year-end report. For the *Leadership Vacancies and Reorganization Impacts* section of the condensed version, add an asterisk that this letter was written before the confirmation of the new CEO Dow Constantine. Add "substantial" back to "completion" in the introduction. With these edits, add the condensed version into the formal letterhead with the same first page.

Motion to approve the 2024 annual year-end report with noted edits, seconded, approved.

The administrator will update the annual report and send the final out to all members.

## **Adoption of Previous Meeting Summary, Member Reports**

Motion to adopt March notes, seconded, and approved.

One member shared they spoke with Board Chair Somers at an event and had a conversation around the CEO search process. While the process was not as transparent as the member would have liked, they understood why the Board made their decisions and the outcome of the decisions.

Two members were pleased to report they were able to take the Link to the COP meeting with no issues.

One member took the Link to a Mariners game just fine, but the train was crowded getting back home. This experience prompted questions about the agency's capacity during the FIFA presentation.

Another member requested that staff from the Asset Transition Office return to the COP, either before or after an extension opening.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, May 14, 2025, 5:30 – 8:15 PM

- TBD, awaiting finalized areas of interest