

## **Sound Transit Citizen Oversight Panel Meeting Summary May 16, 2019**

**COP Members Present:** Fred Auch, Chris Karnes, Sharon Grader, Scott Lampe, Phil Lovell, Dan Parker, James Peyton, Bill Roach, Marie Rogers, Dan Santon, Larry Sauvé, Paul Thompson

**COP Members Absent:** None

Others Present: Shelly Brown, Kathy Albert, Jane Emerson, members of the public

### **Federal Way Link Extension**

Linneth Riley-Hall, Deputy Project Director, Department of Design, Engineering and Construction Management (DECM), Brian Barson, Project Manager Federal Way Link Extension, and Zach Eskenazi, High Capacity Transit Project Manager DECM, gave an update on the Federal Way Link Extension. The \$2.4 billion project is a 7.8-mile line from Angle Lake Station to the Federal Way Transit Center that includes three stations and is scheduled to open for revenue service in 2024. Sound Transit has submitted an application to the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program for \$719 million, and hopes to execute an agreement with the FTA by the fall of 2019. The project is also in line for the final of four loans that Sound Transit has received through the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act.

At the time of the briefing, proposals for the design build project had been evaluated and negotiations with the highest ranked team were underway. Kiewit Infrastructure West has since been awarded the contract. The project is on schedule and the Agency is working closely with its partners, including King County Metro and the Washington State Department of Transportation, to proceed with final design work. Under the FTA's requirements, heavy civil work cannot begin until a full funding grant agreement through the CIG program has been awarded.

### **Next Generation ORCA**

Brittany Esdaile, Next Generation ORCA Regional Program Manager, gave an update on the next generation ORCA project. ORCA is a regional smart card for paying transit fares on seven operators: Sound Transit, Community Transit, Everett Transit, Pierce Transit, Kitsap Transit, King County Metro and Washington State Ferries. The program is managed through a joint board that meets monthly and a joint steering committee that meets bi-monthly.

ORCA fares have grown to 65 percent of all trips and generated \$265 million in revenue in 2018, more than half of which was from employers. The original, proprietary contract for this very successful program was signed in 2003 and has been extended to 2022. Replacement of the system is needed for several reasons. Existing technology and equipment is aging, the proprietary system prevents competition, new technology and payment methods are coming online, and significant transit system expansion is underway.

Customer surveys developed as part of the next generation ORCA project show that users most liked the convenience of the card, the speed of boarding, and the regional mobility offered. Least liked were delays in reloading the card, inadequate numbers of locations to reload, inadequate website interface, and lack of a mobile solution. These concerns will be addressed in next generation ORCA through instant account updates, more than doubling the number of current retail locations, improved website access for individual and business customers, and a customer mobile application that will include mobile account management and payment functions.

Major planning and procurement tasks for the next generation ORCA project have been completed. Next steps include system design, development, and deployment, and some reorganization of the ORCA management function. Transition to the new system, which includes 7800 devices across the region, is expected to begin in October 2021, and be complete by October 2022. While each of the seven ORCA agencies has unique needs, all are committed to a successful transition that will ensure solid security for customers and their data and improve upon the original, visionary program.

## **Discussion**

Panel members appreciated the presentations. Some concern was expressed about the reliability of federal funding for the Federal Way Link Extension. It was noted that business support for the ORCA program has helped make it such a success.

The summary of the May 2, 2019, COP meeting was approved.

## **Member Reports**

Chris Karnes reported that the City of Tacoma is creating a transit oriented development (TOD) task force apart from other City committees and hiring a consultant to evaluate TOD opportunities around the Tacoma Dome station area.

Scott Lampe noted findings of a recent study that showed transit ridership has declined across the country in every state other than Washington. He speculated that strong support for the ORCA program from the region's business community may contribute to the strong ridership here.

Dan Santon reported that King County Metro is using a portion of its proceeds from the Volkswagen settlement to purchase electric buses as replacements for older diesel models.

Bill Roach reported that the University of Washington's Board of Regents has voted to provide free UPasses to all classified staff beginning in July 2019. Union members were given the free passes beginning in the fall of 2018. The benefit has not been extended to faculty and professional staff at this time.

## **2019 Focus Areas**

- Adequacy and appropriateness of system access to stations
- Ridership on Sounder North
- Social equity
- Awareness of emerging technologies and their impacts
- Labor costs and labor supply
- Publicizing of peer comparison data
- Asset management
- Reliability and availability of federal, state, local and third party funding sources
- Customer experience focus that includes the entire region and all of the transit agencies within it
- Customer experience metrics that focus more specifically on the customer experience

Next Meeting: June 6, 2019, 8:30 – 11:00 AM, in the Santa Fe Room at Union Station