

Sound Transit Citizen Oversight Panel Virtual Meeting Summary August 19, 2020

COP Members Present: Fred Auch, Brett Johnson, Scott Lampe, Dan Parker, James Peyton, Helen Powell, Bill Roach, Larry Sauvé, Joe Scorcio, Paul Thompson

COP Members Absent: Hally Bert, Daniel Santon

Others Present: Shelly Brown, Kathy Albert, Katie Flores

Equitable Engagement and Racial Equity Tools

- Jonte Robison, Deputy Director, Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion
- Alison Smith, Deputy Director, Equity, Inclusion and Culture
- Nicole Hill, Manager-Equity & Inclusion

Jante Robinson and Alison Smith discussed their work within the Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion (the Office). The Office was created following an equal employment opportunity (EEO) compliance review to focus on civil rights and equity, in accordance with Sound Transit's strategic priority to equity and fairness, internally and in the communities it serves. An equity steering committee comprised of departmental leadership and supported by equity subcommittees helps shape the Agency's equity strategy. Among the goals of the subcommittees is the development of a consistent baseline approach for equitable community engagement that can be customized across business lines and used to assess the benefits and impacts of proposed policies and procedures. Several pilot projects have been created, many of which are related to the impacts of fares, enforcement, and major service changes. While the Office has the lead in developing these programs, they will be communicated through other departments within the Agency responsible for communications and outreach.

Conversation with Peter Rogoff, CEO

Peter Rogoff began by noting the extraordinary changes that have occurred at Sound Transit in the five years since he assumed his position. He commended the Agency's staff for their exceptional work, particularly in such currently challenging circumstances. Keeping morale high during the past six months has been difficult, and will likely become more so in the fall as the days become shorter and parents face several more months of trying, from home, to juggle their own work and that of their children.

In spite of the obstacles, including halting 80 percent of construction for a several week period beginning in March, remarkable progress continues on six major construction projects, which together comprise the biggest transit program underway in the U.S. in this decade. The Northgate Link extension will likely come in under budget when it opens in 2021. Tacoma Hilltop is experiencing cost pressures, but will open on schedule in 2022. East Link will open in 2023, and Downtown Redmond, Federal Way, and Lynnwood will all open in 2024.

Similar to the recession of 2009/2010, the Agency is evaluating scheduled delivery dates of ST3 projects not yet under construction and monitoring them against projected revenue shortfalls. This realignment process will continue over the next several months and is expected to result in a final Board action in September 2021. At the same time, close attention is being paid to what post-pandemic ridership and commute patterns may look like. Previous business models based on five days a week ridership to central business districts will likely be displaced for the foreseeable future. The pandemic has also highlighted

the reliance of essential workers on public transportation and reinforced the importance of meeting the needs of that critical workforce.

Discussion

COP members noted the importance and complexity of developing racial equity tools. Creating a more clearly defined mission statement was recommended, as was a focus on more specific, real world applications. At this early stage, it isn't clear what information is being gathered and analyzed. Keeping the tools as simple as possible and making sure they're operationalized should be a focus of work going forward. The Office should also articulate how it works with other departments that engage in the actual outreach work for which the tools are being developed.

Peter Rogoff's candid discussion was informative and appreciated. COP members asked for more frequent opportunities to speak with the CEO, while recognizing that his time is limited.

The summaries of the March 5, 2020, COP meeting and the August 5, 2020, virtual COP meeting were approved.

Member Reports

None

2020 Focus Areas

- Adequacy and appropriateness of station access
- Monitoring and review of social equity, racial equity, fare enforcement, and inclusion policies
- Implications and impacts of emerging technologies
- Workforce development and measurement of outcomes
- Uses of peer comparison data
- Asset management plan progress
- 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
- Safety performance and function
- Contingency planning and disaster preparedness
- Cost management for the System Expansion Implementation Plan
- Impacts of Covid-19 on system operations and program realignment
- Program realignment, interagency cooperation and interoperability

Outstanding Questions

- 1) Follow up regrading mask enforcement: although direct enforcement would be too difficult and expensive, would it be possible to conduct spot enforcement, particularly at stations where compliance is known to be low?
- 2) Is it possible to record COP comments for potential feedback to presenters?
- 3) Update on the bike/pedestrian bridge at Northgate Station, and service adjustments planned for the Northgate and Roosevelt Stations.

Next Virtual Meeting: Wednesday, September 2, 2020, 8:30 – 11:00 AM