

Sound Transit Community Oversight Panel Hybrid Meeting Summary

Date: March 11, 2026

Time: 5:30 – 8:18 p.m.

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

Attendees

Present:

- Charlotte Murry
- Mark Lewington
- Paul Thomsson
- Scott Lampe
- Linda Dorris
- Lorenzo Frazier
- Tina Pierce
- Trevor Reed
- Tom Norcott

Absent:

- Zak Osborne

Staff

- Adam Montee
- Katie Flores
- Love Lee

Meeting Overview

The Community Oversight Panel (COP) heard a presentation on the System Expansion Cost Savings Workplan. The panel discussed the 2026 annual retreat, ideas for the annual tour, 2026 topics of interest, and the 2025 year-end report. Members also adopted the previous meeting's minutes.

Meeting Summary

The chair began the meeting. Sound Transit staff member took roll.

Presentation:

Enterprise Initiative Update and Board Retreat Preview

The presenter shared an overview of the Enterprise Initiative, including an update on scenario development, a preview of the Board retreat, and key policy questions and trade-offs.

The presenter explained that the goal of scenario development is to help the Board make decisions by showing clear options and trade-offs. Each scenario is designed to highlight meaningful differences, focus on the most important changes, and stay simple enough to understand. The scenarios build on existing cost-saving ideas and technical work. The presenter noted that the final plan will likely combine parts of multiple scenarios.

The presenter walked through the scenario development process. This includes defining the scope, developing key “building blocks,” creating draft scenarios, and bringing those scenarios to the Board retreat for review and discussion. The retreat will be an important step for gathering Board input and refining the scenarios.

The presenter described the main building blocks used to create scenarios:

- Capital delivery: finding cost savings, changing project timing, and possibly delaying some projects
- Finance: updating financial assumptions, looking at policy changes, and exploring new funding sources
- Transit operations: updating operating costs and considering investments to improve system reliability
- Policy and planning: identifying policy changes that could reduce costs or speed up delivery, and adjusting service plans based on updated assumptions

The presenter also described what to expect at the Board retreat. The retreat will start with a review of capital program scenarios. Board members will then break into small groups to discuss trade-offs, followed by a larger group discussion to give direction on how to refine the scenarios.

The presenter highlighted several key policy questions that are coming out of this work. At the system level, these include:

- How to make the overall plan affordable
- How to balance investments across Link, Sounder, ST Express, and parking
- How to prioritize which projects move forward first
- How to share costs for systemwide assets
- Whether changes to financial or policy tools are needed to support delivery

At the subarea level, the presenter noted that each area has different funding levels and priorities. The Board will need to balance these local priorities with overall system goals.

Questions and comments:

Panel member: You indicated that you all have various scenarios at the retreat. At the last COP meeting, we had a presentation about various costs, and if I add it all up, it's about \$10 billion that we're saving, but you have a \$34 billion hole to fill. My question is, when you present scenarios, do you anticipate ones that meet that affordability?

Presenter: You're correct that earlier discussions identified cost savings on certain light rail projects. Those savings come from activating different cost-saving levers. After that, the next steps are scope reduction and phasing. Scope reduction can achieve moderate savings, while phasing can achieve larger savings because it involves delivering only portions of projects. The scenarios will include some combination of these approaches, including project deferrals and cost-saving measures.

Panel member: If I heard you right, there's less focus on the subareas and more about the overall program?

Presenter: Correct. This is not just a numerical problem, but also a timing issue. Debt financing and project sequencing play a role, so adjusting when projects are delivered is another tool being used to address affordability.

Panel member: Is the Senate bill dead?

Presenter: Yes. But we have three bills in Olympia. We have a lot of right-of-way to acquire and sometimes those last parcels take a while. Being able to submit in advance can save a lot of time and money, so one of our bills proposes that.

Panel member: Will the agency keep moving forward with environmental review for the full Ballard alignment, even if only part of it can be built?

Presenter: Yes, that has been done before. The agency has advanced full project alignments through environmental review and early design, even when only part could be funded at the time. This helps move faster later if more funding becomes available.

Panel member: Why did some past projects need a new environmental review while others did not?

Presenter: It likely depends on how much the project changed from what was originally studied, as well as timing.

Panel member: Thank you for your presentations and willingness to take some of the tough questions. When people ask, one of the things I have the hardest time providing an answer to, in relation to Everett, is how long Everett residents are on the hook for taxes. Do the taxes continue past construction and into operation?

Presenter: The presenter noted that this is a good question for the finance team to address in more detail when they return. The financial policies adopted as part of the ST3 plan make tax rollback more complex. Taxes are intended to support both construction and ongoing operations of the system. Once major capital construction is complete and the agency has a clearer understanding of debt levels and long-term operating costs, a rollback could be considered. However, there is no automatic sunset, meaning if the Board does not take action, the taxes will continue. The presenter noted that while there is some speculation about what a future Board may do, the current focus remains on delivering the voter-approved program.

Panel member: Is the board thinking about resiliency in regards to stabilizing the revenue coming in for capital projects?

Presenter: The board in August adopted a set of principles to guide the work, the four principles are:

- Advance regional connectivity
- Support regional growth
- Prioritize the passenger experience
- Protect public investments with fiscal integrity.

This is where we begin to think about system resiliency and fiscal integrity. One thing we'll be doing at the board retreat is how these scenarios perform against the criteria we have derived from those different principles.

Panel member: Sound Transit went through a reorganization, with the idea that directors would take on more responsibility. As scenarios are being developed and brought forward by staff, has the table been set so the Board understands that these scenarios have been developed by experts?

Presenter: The Technical Advisory Group report's first recommendation was around trust. If the Board doesn't trust that we're here to deliver, it's going to be challenging. Building, repairing, and maintaining that trust is an ongoing effort.

Panel member: Is this really suggesting that Sounder and ST Express could be put on the chopping block to save money?

Presenter: No. For Sounder, additional trips are a high priority. There is both a capital and a service component to this. On the service side, it's really about how these services complement each other. We see this a lot with ST Express as we've been expanding, and the assumption was that as light rail opens, ST Express service would reduce. In practice, some Board members are having a hard time committing to that because the service is valuable. It's a policy choice. If you make that choice, you may not be able to do as much of your capital program. A lot of this service is also delivered by our partners.

Panel member: Are they sharing that information with their partners?

Presenter: Yes. The 2026 service plan includes changes to ST Express and reflects a lot of engagement across the district, especially in South King and Pierce Counties. That work included understanding trade-offs and what people liked and didn't like. We're also coordinating closely with partner agencies, since a lot of service is delivered through them.

Presentation

Enterprise Risk Management Introduction

The presenters provided an update on Sound Transit's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) program. The purpose of the presentation was to align on ERM fundamentals, share progress since the August 2025 COP meeting, review current risk themes, and discuss next steps.

The presenters explained that ERM is a structured approach to identifying, assessing, and managing risks that could affect the agency's goals. They clarified that ERM focuses on risks (future events that may happen), rather than issues (events that have already occurred). Risks are evaluated based on their likelihood and impact across areas such as safety, financial performance, passenger experience, and operations.

The presenters also explained how ERM supports the agency. This includes bringing together risks from across departments, helping leadership focus on the most important risks, and connecting risks to action plans. ERM is intended to improve decision-making, support proactive planning, and provide a more complete and transparent view of risks across the organization.

The presenters shared that ERM was formally established as part of the agency's reorganization in 2025 and is now part of the Executive Department. This change allows for closer coordination with leadership and better integration of risk into decision-making processes.

Since the last update, the presenters noted several key accomplishments:

- Continued development of the ERM framework and system plan
- Creation of an integrated risk register that aligns risks across the agency
- Development of a dashboard to improve visibility into key risks
- Ongoing coordination with staff across the agency to identify risks and assign ownership

The presenters noted that this work has involved broad engagement across the agency, including regular meetings with risk owners and working sessions to identify and assess risks.

The presenters then shared the current major risk themes facing the agency. These include:

- Long-term financial stability: managing funding for planned expansion and operations
- Asset management and resiliency: maintaining aging infrastructure and ensuring system reliability
- System expansion: managing project schedules and upcoming openings amid the added visibility and operational demands of high-profile events such as FIFA 2026
- Role clarity and workforce needs: addressing changes following the agency reorganization
- Third-party coordination: working effectively with partner agencies
- Safety and security: responding to increased ridership and major events

The presenters noted that efforts are underway across the agency to address these risks, including work tied to the Enterprise Initiative, resiliency planning, and coordination improvements.

The presenters also reviewed the agency’s progress in ERM maturity. They explained that in early 2025, the agency was in an “initial/ad hoc” phase, where risk management was inconsistent. As of March 2026, the agency has moved into a “managed” phase, where risk management is more structured and consistent across functions. The goal is to continue progressing toward a more defined and fully integrated approach over the next several years.

Looking ahead, the presenters outlined next steps for 2026, including:

- Finalizing and publishing the ERM system plan
- Integrating ERM into agency performance reviews
- Identifying technology to support risk tracking and reporting
- Establishing regular ERM reporting to the COP
- Developing training materials for staff
- Implementing key risk indicators and trend-based reporting

Questions and comments

Panel member: Is the Cascadia subduction zone one of the risks?

Presenter: To the extent that we can influence it, yes. We want to capture risks where we can reduce either the probability of the risk happening or the impact if it does happen.

Panel member: This is still a pretty young program. Was there something that really birthed this?

Presenter: ERM is still fairly new for other agencies too. Part of what informed this was seeing how risks can cascade across the organization. Before, there was more focus on risks at the project level without always looking at how those risks rolled up to the agency level. Before 2025, the agency did practice ERM, but it was more informal. Through the reorganization, there was a sense that, as a more fully developed agency, we needed to do better and create a more formal program.

Panel member: The COP selected disaster recovery as the 2025 performance audit topic, but never really got an update. Where do natural disasters and cybersecurity fall in your risk themes?

Presenter: The themes shown in the presentation do not capture every risk in the system. We do have multiple risks related to cybersecurity, and it is already something that is being managed.

Panel member: Is there any movement in the agency toward more comprehensive audits instead of picking random topics?

Presenter: We are moving toward a broader agency performance review approach that takes a more holistic view.

Panel member: Are any of these ERM resources being used as a filter for the scenarios at the retreat?

Presenter: The EI team does have access to the risk dashboard. Once the scenarios are selected, we will look more closely at the risks tied to those scenarios and assess them in greater detail.

Panel member: So there won't really be a risk assessment happening at the retreat itself?

Presenter: As part of the scenario development already underway, staff are inherently identifying and discussing risk. As we get closer and the scenarios become more defined, we will be better positioned to pick up those risks and assess them more directly.

Panel member: You would think you'd want to do that risk assessment early on. It sounds a little like the cart before the horse.

Presenter: The financial risk is already being evaluated by finance, along with system risk, resiliency risk, and other considerations. At this stage, the scenarios are still broad, so we can identify the risks at a high level, but we cannot fully articulate the trade-offs or levers until the scenarios are more developed. The issue is really the depth of the risk assessment, not whether risk assessment is happening at all.

The group called for a break at 7:03 pm and returned at 7:13 pm.

Presentation:

Project Management Information System

The presenter provided an update on Sound Transit's Project Management Information System (PMIS), including what the system is, why it is being implemented, current progress, and next steps.

PMIS is a cloud-based system used across the industry to manage large and complex capital programs. It is designed to make project processes faster, more consistent, and more efficient by standardizing workflows, improving reporting, and automating routine tasks.

The presenter shared that Sound Transit is implementing PMIS to improve data quality, transparency, and decision-making. The system will allow for on-demand reporting, better coordination between teams and partners, and more efficient project delivery. The implementation also responds to recommendations from the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and supports cost-saving efforts across the agency.

The presenter noted that PMIS will integrate with other agency systems to create a more connected and consistent project management environment. The goal is to reduce reliance on multiple disconnected tools and improve how project data is shared and managed across the agency. Stage 1 of the PMIS implementation is complete and included:

- Establishing standard project structures and processes
- Deploying the system to agency users with dashboards for real-time visibility
- Integrating project data with financial systems
- Replacing manual and ad hoc tools with automated processes

The program is currently about 20% complete and remains on track in terms of scope, schedule, and budget. Of the \$22 million total budget, \$9 million has been committed and \$3 million has been spent to date.

The presenter also shared early benefits of the system, including improvements to reporting. For example, the System Expansion Monthly Status Report (SEMSR) now requires less manual effort, has improved accuracy, and allows for better tracking of project performance and trends.

Looking ahead, Stage 2 of the implementation will begin in 2026 and will focus on migrating ST3 projects into the new system. This phase will expand functionality to include contract management, payment tracking, document management, risk management, and schedule integration.

The presenters also outlined a phased rollout schedule, with different projects transitioning into the system throughout 2026.

Questions and comments:

Panel member: What you're doing here seems like it would be very applicable to a lot of what AI is offering these days. Any thoughts on AI capabilities as they relate to what you're doing?

Presenter: AI capabilities are a big area in this industry right now. This first year is really about setting the foundation and getting integration in place. Next year, the team plans to look at next-generation technologies.

Panel member: How is the reporting? Are there canned reports you can use, or do you have to build your own? And how are you managing all the input into the system with so many people entering data and still making sure the reporting is clean?

Presenter: There are useful out-of-the-box reports, but like any reporting system, the agency will still want to modify them to match its own language and needs. The underlying dashboards are strong and usually only need minor changes. The agency is trying to always use the source-of-record version of data. For example, if another team owns a data set, we would pull from that source instead of maintaining a separate list. The presenter also said required information has to be entered for processes like payments or changes to move forward, which helps keep the data clean.

Panel member: Are you doing a lot of the modifications yourselves in-house, or do you need consultants to do that work?

Presenter: It is a mixture. The long-term support plan is for the system to be supported in-house. Right now, during implementation, the agency is working with our vendor and with implementation partners because the scale is so large. Bringing in outside experts is helpful not only for capacity but also because they bring industry perspective beyond just the Sound Transit view. Over time, the plan is for staff to handle things like new apps and reports internally, with the vendor only needed for very large items.

Panel member: Where is all this data hosted? Is it one of the big cloud hosting services?

Presenter: Yes, it's AWS.

Panel member: And it's all data located in the United States?

Presenter: Yes.

Adoption of Previous Meeting Summary

A motion was made to adopt the previous meeting summary, it passed unanimously.

Discussion: 2025 Year-end Report

The panel discussed key accomplishments to highlight in the annual report, focusing on areas where Sound Transit demonstrated strong performance, effective delivery, and positive outcomes for riders and the broader system.

- Federal Way Link Extension (FWLE)
- Passenger Experience and Event Management
- Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and Organizational Changes

The panel also identified several areas of concern to be addressed in the annual report, focusing on opportunities to strengthen transparency, improve processes, and enhance overall agency performance.

- Enterprise Initiative and Financial Forecasting
- Board Engagement
- COP Membership and Selection Process
- Panel Vacancies

The COP administrator will create a first draft to support further discussion at the next COP meeting. The annual report will be finalized at the April COP retreat.

Discussion: COP Retreat Planning

The Chair facilitated a discussion to identify objectives for the upcoming COP retreat on April 15. Staff noted that two new panel members are expected to join around the time of the retreat. The Chair also reminded the panel that the retreat is fully within their control in terms of how it is used, and that it can serve as an opportunity to step back and reflect on how the panel is operating, in addition to any formal agenda items.

Staff also noted that the COP may revisit or revise its guiding principles, as the document is developed and owned by the panel.

The panel discussed identifying key areas of interest for the year, which would help inform and guide staff in coordinating presentations.

Panel members discussed the potential value of inviting outside voices as presenters, including subject matter experts. Additionally, to support the COP's objectives of overseeing Sound Transit's relationships, inviting transit partners to come and speak about their experiences. While there may be budget considerations, it was noted that some individuals may be willing to participate on a voluntary basis.

The group also considered whether to include a discussion about a potential field trip as part of the retreat agenda.

The group will also debrief the cross-lake opening at the retreat.

Sound Transit Board Retreat

Staff provided an update on the Sound Transit Board retreat scheduled for March 18 at the Tacoma Art Museum. Doors will open at 9:30 a.m., with the meeting beginning at 10:00 a.m. The agenda will be shared and posted online in advance. The retreat will be held in person only, with no virtual option; however, meeting minutes will be made available afterward. Staff noted that Alex is expected to attend a future COP meeting in April to provide a recap.

Staff also shared that there has been visible interest from community members, including individuals from Issaquah, who have raised concerns related to the Enterprise Initiative and potential impacts to future light rail service. These groups are expected to attend the retreat, and panel members were advised to arrive early due to anticipated attendance.

The Tacoma Art Museum is accessible via Tacoma Link, with a station located nearby.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.