

Executive Summary:

Each year, Sound Transit prepares an annual update on the development of its express bus, commuter rail and light rail services. The 2010 Service Implementation Plan, or SIP, describes service additions and revisions proposed for September 2010 and February 2011, together with preliminary service proposals and financial projections for 2011 through 2015. It also includes a detailed report on the status of each bus and rail route and performance objectives for the coming year, including ridership and productivity targets.

The 2010 SIP comes at a very challenging time for public transit. The most severe economic recession since the 1930's has increased unemployment and reduced tax revenues available for transit operations. In addition, retail gasoline prices have dropped considerably compared with 2008, providing fewer incentives for transit use. These factors are reducing transit ridership at Sound Transit's partner transit agencies and in other metropolitan areas nationwide. Sound Transit is bucking this trend with the total number of ST boardings (rail and bus combined) continuing to increase during the first half of 2009, although at a lower growth rate than in previous years. Area voters expressed confidence in the future by approving the Sound Transit 2 (ST2) program in November 2008, which will greatly expand the light rail network and provide near-term funding for expanded express bus and Sounder service. There is good reason for optimism in 2010 and beyond as improvements to Sound Transit services, together with a gradual economic recovery, should continue to produce ridership growth.

ST Express Bus

The highlight of the 2010 SIP is implementation of the remaining express bus service improvements in the ST2 program. ST2 called for 100,000 additional platform hours of bus service per year, a 17 percent increase. About 42,000 hours have already been implemented or committed, and approval of the 2010 SIP authorizes the implementation of the remaining 58,000 hours. The proposed improvements are based on work conducted during the ST2 planning process, updated to reflect more recent schedule analysis and ridership trends. Other considerations that guided plan development include the opening of Sound Transit's Mountlake Terrace Freeway Station, changes to partner agency service during 2010-2011 and the start-up of vehicle tolls on the SR 520 Bridge. The ST Express service improvements will be implemented in two phases, September 2010 and February 2011.

Express bus improvements will be coordinated with changes to partner agency routes to develop attractive, cost-effective service in key freeway corridors. For example, ST Express **Route 511 (Ash Way-Downtown Seattle)** will be modified to serve Sound Transit's new Mountlake Terrace Freeway Station in South Snohomish County, with service increased from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes during peak periods. The freeway station is adjacent to Community Transit's 870-stall Mountlake Terrace Park-and-Ride garage. With its new HOV direct access ramps, buses can serve the freeway station very efficiently with little increase in travel time for through riders. During weekday peak periods, **Route 511** service at Mountlake Terrace will be supplemented by ST Express **Route 513** and Community Transit's Seattle commuter routes to provide very frequent combined service to and from downtown Seattle.

Transit demand on the Evergreen Point Bridge (SR 520) is forecast to increase by 15 to 30 percent following the start-up of vehicle tolls. Under an Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) with the federal government, the Washington State Department of Transportation plans to implement tolls beginning in early 2011 to improve traffic flow and generate revenue for bridge replacement. As part of the UPA, the U.S. Department of Transportation will provide grant

funding to both King County Metro and Sound Transit for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) capital improvements on the corridor. The 2010 SIP includes a new SR 520 route, **Route 542** that will provide two-way, 15-minute peak period weekday service between downtown Redmond, Overlake, the University of Washington and the I-5/65th Park-and-Ride in Seattle. Serving major educational and employment destinations on both ends, the new route will address overcrowding on existing ST Express **Route 545 (Redmond-Seattle)** and help address construction impacts when work begins on replacing the existing SR 520 Bridge. Other East King County improvements include added peak service on ST Express **Route 522 (Woodinville-Seattle via SR 522)**, ST Express **Route 554 (Issaquah-Seattle via I-90)**, and an off-peak extension of **Route 566 (Overlake-Auburn)** from Overlake Transit Center to downtown Redmond. Enhanced service levels on these routes will be coordinated with changes to parallel King County Metro services to optimize ridership and productivity.

No bus service changes are proposed for Pierce County and South King County at this time. The Sound Transit Board approved ST2 bus service improvements for these areas with the 2009 SIP, and they will be implemented with the Feb. 6, 2010 service change.

Until now, ST2 bus service improvements have been largely limited to midday, evening and weekend time periods since the existing Sound Transit bus fleet is fully utilized during peak commuter hours. However, the Board approved the purchase of 13 new articulated buses for delivery in mid-2010, and staff is seeking Board approval for an additional 24 articulated buses for delivery by the end of 2010. These buses would bring the total ST Express fleet to 280 vehicles, completing the fleet expansion needed for the ST2 improvement package.

The day-to-day management of ST Express includes regular reviews of productivity and schedule efficiency. Within limits set in the Board-approved Service Standards and Performance Measures, Sound Transit staff may implement schedule changes administratively to improve these performance measures. For 2010, staff is evaluating potential schedule efficiencies and trip management actions on several ST Express routes, including **Route 540 Kirkland-University District**, **Route 550 Bellevue-Seattle** and **Routes 590-594 Lakewood-Tacoma-Seattle**.

Proposed changes to ST Express service requiring Sound Transit Board approval are listed in Chapter 1.

Central Link

Central Link began passenger operations with a grand opening weekend July 18-19, 2009. Initial light rail service operates from Westlake Station in downtown Seattle to Tukwila International Boulevard Station with 10 intermediate stations. Construction is underway on Airport Link and by the end of 2009, light rail service will extend directly to the SeaTac/Airport Station, which will be connected to the airport terminal via an overhead pedestrian bridge and walkway through the airport garage.

The start-up of Central Link represents a dramatic increase in transit capacity along the corridor. Service operates seven days a week between 5 a.m. and 1 a.m. (6 a.m. to midnight on Sundays). Two-car trains operate every 7 to 10 minutes most of the day, with 15-minute service provided early in the morning and late at night. Ridership is expected to increase gradually over time, and initial passenger counts are consistent with predictions of just under 16,000 average weekday boardings during the first six months of operations. Light rail boardings increased following the first phase of King County Metro bus service revisions in September 2009 that increased access

to Link stations in Seattle and Tukwila. This will be followed by a second phase of bus service revisions in February 2010 that will improve local connections to light rail in the Burien/SeaTac/Tukwila area. The restructure of King County Metro's SR 99 bus service will be particularly significant as the current Metro route between Federal Way and Tukwila International Boulevard will be truncated at the light rail station rather than continuing through to downtown Seattle.

Once light rail begins operating to the airport, changes to Central Link service levels over the next several years will generally be limited to minor schedule adjustments and extra trains added for major events. However, the opening of University Link in 2016 is expected to increase demand on Central Link dramatically, requiring both longer trains and more frequent service.

Sounder Commuter Rail

After several years of steady growth culminating with record passenger boardings in fall 2008, ridership on Sounder's South Line began to decline during the first half of 2009. Lower gasoline prices and the economic recession are clearly impacting commuter ridership in this corridor more than on other Sound Transit services. However, average weekday boardings on the South Line are still well ahead of comparable 2007 figures. On the Sounder North Line, ridership growth between Everett and Seattle has slowed but average daily boardings have remained relatively stable. No changes to Sounder service are proposed for 2010.

Staff predicts that South Line ridership will recover with a gradual increase in total boardings between 2010 and 2012, with a larger increase in 2013 following the opening of the Lakewood extension (see Chapter 4, Projected Ridership and Fare Revenue). Capital projects are under development that will provide more park-and-ride capacity near the Puyallup Sounder station by the end of 2010.

Looking farther ahead, the ST2 program includes expanded service on the South Line, including two new round trips and longer trains. Up to 14 additional passenger cars and four more locomotives will be acquired. Negotiations are underway with the host railroads to determine what time slots could be available for additional Sounder trains, and staff is evaluating alternatives for acquiring additional rolling stock. The uncertainties associated with these tasks make it difficult to predict the exact start-up dates for added trains; thus, the "out year" information on Sounder service shown in Chapter 3 is preliminary and assumes a very conservative implementation schedule that starts in 2013. Chapter 3 will be updated as progress is made on each task.

Tacoma Link

Tacoma Link has recently shown a healthy increase in total boardings even as ridership growth on the rest of the Sound Transit system has slowed. Event-related activities at the Tacoma Dome, Tacoma Convention Center and Freighthouse Square have generated new customers. Another new visitor attraction is the LeMay Auto Museum, the largest museum of its type in the country, being developed near the Tacoma Dome Station. No changes are proposed for Tacoma Link service at this time, but construction of the D-to-M Sounder project during the next two years may impact the ability to continue the current 10-minute base frequency due to traffic signal changes. Frequent service has been a key feature of Tacoma Link's success, and staff will review plans for this project to see if these impacts can be mitigated.

Preliminary Service Plans for 2011 - 2015

Chapter 3 of the SIP describes preliminary 2011-2015 service plans. These “out year” plans were updated following voter approval of the Sound Transit 2 (ST2) program, and reflect the Board-approved schedule of ST Express bus service expansion and expected completion dates of the remaining Sound Move projects and services. Service levels, ridership and fare revenue estimates shown for 2011-2015 are used to develop the agency’s Long-Range Financial Plan; however, the actual implementation of service changes is still subject to Board approval of the annual SIP. Here is a preliminary summary of “out year” service proposals:

2011 (September)

- Potential changes to Route 513 service on Highway 99 in South Everett to avoid duplication with Community Transit Swift service between downtown Everett and South Everett.
- Potential service improvements on Routes 540, 542, 545, 555 and 556 during SR 520 bridge replacement, pending availability of state or federal construction mitigation funds.
- Potential changes to Route 560 at White Center or Fauntleroy to avoid duplication with King County Metro’s new “Rapid Ride” bus rapid transit service in West Seattle.

2012

- Potential improvements to Route 550 coordinated with the start-up of King County Metro’s “Rapid Ride” bus rapid transit service between Bellevue and Redmond.

Late 2012/Early 2013

- Sounder South Line extended from Tacoma to South Tacoma and Lakewood.
- First new ST2-funded trains on the Sounder South Line
- Temporary bus routes 593 and 599 discontinued with extension of Sounder service to Lakewood.

Preliminary plans for 2014 through 2015 are still under development. Additional details are included in Chapter 3.

Accessible Services

With the start up of Central Link service, Sound Transit now has a paratransit obligation under provisions of federal regulations. This service, operated for Sound Transit under contract with King County Metro, provides transportation for eligible persons with disabilities within ¼-mile of the Central Link alignment. The 2011 SIP will include operating results for the first full year of Central Link paratransit service. Projected paratransit operating and maintenance costs are shown in Appendix A-7. Annual trips are estimated to be 69,000.

Sound Transit will continue to plan and implement actions and programs under *United We Ride in Puget Sound*, the Regional Special Needs Transportation Plan. The complete Plan is available at: <http://www.soundtransit.org/x1873.xml> or by e-mailing accessibility@soundtransit.org.

Sound Transit will continue to provide funding for the special needs transportation coordinating coalitions in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. The agency will also provide partial funding for a legislatively mandated special needs project in Pierce County.

Quick Guide to the 2010 SIP:

Chapter 1 summarizes the September 2010 and February 2011 service changes approved by the Sound Transit Board.

Chapter 2 includes a description and performance summary of Sounder, Link and each ST Express route, with detailed background information for each 2010 SIP service change.

Chapter 3 describes preliminary plans for 2011-2015.

Chapter 4 includes estimates of ridership and fare revenue for all three transit modes through 2015, and a description of the modeling and assumptions used to develop the estimates.