

Executive Summary:

Each year, Sound Transit updates the development of its express bus, commuter rail and light rail services through its Service Implementation Plan (SIP). The 2013 SIP describes service changes planned for 2013, together with preliminary service proposals and financial projections for 2014 through 2018. A detailed report on the status of each bus and rail route and performance objectives for the coming year, including ridership and productivity targets, is also included.

Sound Transit ridership was up significantly during the first half of 2012, with total passenger boardings increasing by 11 percent compared with the first half of 2011. Service levels were essentially unchanged, so productivity measures such as boardings per vehicle hour and boardings per trip showed improvement. All modes experienced ridership growth except Link Paratransit, where a change in how Sound Transit passengers were counted resulted in a decline in boardings. In general, the systemwide increase during the first half of 2012 can be attributed to the start of tolling on the SR 520 corridor, higher gasoline prices, increased employment and a gradual improvement in local economic conditions.

Sound Transit's ability to accommodate increasing ridership varies by mode and by the time period when growth is occurring. Currently, the heaviest-used ST Express bus routes are approaching overload conditions during peak periods. As a result, the key recommendations in the 2013 SIP focus on near-term strategies for addressing ridership growth on ST Express, together with the implementation of a new round trip on the Sounder South Line included in the ST2 Plan. No changes to the Sounder North Line or Link Light Rail service are planned for 2013.

Following a 2008-2010 decline in boardings caused by the economic recession, Sounder South Line ridership made a comeback with selected peak period trains now nearing seated capacity. The Lakewood Extension, which opened in fall 2012, is expected to further increase ridership. To address this growth, a new South Line round trip will be implemented in fall 2013 as part of the ST2 Plan. A discussion of the factors affecting the scheduling and operations of this new round trip is included in Chapter 2.

ST Express bus ridership also increased significantly, particularly in the I-5 north and crosslake corridors. Average weekday boardings during the Second Quarter of 2012 were up 11 percent, marking five continuous quarters of double-digit growth. Most of the growth is occurring during peak commuter times. But lower-than-expected tax revenues, together with the need to complete the most critical elements of the ST2 capital program, limit the resources available to expand ST Express service. The 2013 SIP assumes no increase in annual vehicle hours compared with 2012. To address ridership growth, these key strategies were employed:

- Reduce service levels or restructure service where productivity is below the system average.
- Minimize duplication with partner agency service.
- Use the savings from these actions to add service where ridership growth is occurring or to make connections with partner agency service that improve overall system productivity.
- Defer the retirement of some older buses to provide capacity for ridership growth.

ST Express Bus

In keeping with the strategies for addressing bus ridership growth, these changes to ST Express service were approved by the Sound Transit Board as part of the 2013 SIP. During the Board review process, two amendments were incorporated into the original SIP proposals; these are described below in *italics*.

- **Seattle-Snohomish County Restructure: Route 510 (Everett-Seattle), Route 511 (Ash Way-Seattle), Route 512 (Everett-Seattle) and Route 513 (South Everett-Seattle)**
This change will consolidate off-peak service between downtown Seattle and Snohomish County to improve productivity and provide resources for expanded peak period commuter service. Routes 510 (Everett-Seattle) and 511 (Ash Way-Seattle) will combine into one route (512) that provides all Seattle-Snohomish County service during midday, evening and weekend times. Route 512 will also provide off-peak direction service during weekday rush hours (northbound morning service and southbound afternoon service). Route 512 will operate every 15 minutes on weekdays, every 15 to 20 minutes on Saturdays, and every 30 minutes at night and on Sundays. *The original proposal discontinued all Sound Transit service between Everett Station and downtown Everett; however, the final plan retains downtown trips before 6 a.m. and after 10:30 p.m. on weekdays. Also, a new bus stop will be added to Routes 510 and 512 near the intersection of Broadway and 33rd on the eastern edge of downtown Everett.* The savings from these changes will fund 10 new one-way trips on Route 510 and/or Route 513 during morning and afternoon peak periods. While off-peak travel time between Everett and Seattle will increase with this proposal due to added stops, the frequency of service will increase from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes during the midday and most of the day on Saturday.
- **I-405 Corridor: Route 560 (Bellevue-West Seattle), Route 566 (Auburn-Overlake), NEW Route 567 (Kent-Overlake)**
New "super express" Route 567 will operate from Kent Station to Overlake Transit Center during peak periods, making just one intermediate stop at Bellevue Transit Center. Buses will be scheduled to connect with all peak period Sounder trains at Kent Station. Route 567 will use existing Route 566 hours and vehicles, but will provide a much faster trip than Route 566 between Kent and the Eastside by using the I-405 HOV lanes through Renton. Remaining Route 566 service and Route 560 will be coordinated to provide frequent service between downtown Renton and Bellevue. *The original proposal discontinued most midday service on Route 566; however, the final plan retains hourly midday service between Auburn and Renton, with a timed connection with Route 560 at Renton for continuing service to Bellevue.* The savings from these changes will fund additional peak period commuter trips on Eastside-Seattle crosslake routes and on Route 577 between Federal Way and Seattle.
- **West Seattle-Airport Connection: Route 560 (Bellevue-Westwood Village)**
The objectives of this restructure include avoiding duplication with King County Metro service, improving ST Express productivity and providing a convenient full-time connection between the West Seattle/Highline areas and Sea-Tac Airport. King County Metro has developed a major transit hub at Westwood Village Shopping Center, located on Southwest Barton Street near the south Seattle city limits. ST Route 560 currently duplicates Metro's RapidRide C Line between West Seattle Junction and Westwood. The change establishes Westwood Village as the new full-time terminus for Route 560, eliminating this duplication and providing all-day, seven-day-a-week connections between Westwood and the airport.

Further details on the service changes and an ST Express route-by-route performance analysis is included in Chapter 2.

Central Link Light Rail

Ridership on Central Link continues to increase steadily, with total boardings for the first half of 2012 up 10 percent. Link continues to exhibit different seasonal ridership patterns than other Sound Transit modes, with a large ridership surge in late summer when airline travel is heaviest and special events and festivals are reaching their peak. However, weekday commuter ridership has clearly increased during the first half of 2012, and some p.m. peak trains are regularly carrying standing passengers. With the elimination of the downtown Seattle free ride zone, Link ridership is expected to increase further within downtown since there is no financial advantage for passengers to use buses, and the intra-downtown fare on Link is less than the base bus fare on both ST and Metro buses. Sound Transit staff will continue monitoring both total ridership and trip-level boardings on Link to see if minor service adjustments may be appropriate to address these trends.

No specific changes are planned for Central Link service in 2013. Chapter 3 describes the planned extensions to the University of Washington and South 200th Street planned for late 2016.

Sounder Commuter Rail

The extension of Sounder service to Lakewood began on Oct. 8, 2012. Chapter 2 discusses the ridership forecast for the Lakewood extension and the factors staff will consider in planning a new round trip train on the South Line approved for implementation in fall 2013.

No specific changes are planned for Sounder North Line service in 2013; however, staff will be evaluating North Line recommendations developed by the Citizens Oversight Panel's North Shore Area Task Force. Further details on North Line service are included in the Sounder section of Chapter 2.

Tacoma Link

Tacoma Link ridership increased 9 percent during the first half of 2012 compared with the same period a year earlier. The added service has improved performance metrics such as passengers per hour and cost per passenger. The new station stop at 11th and Commerce, opened in September 2011, has clearly increased ridership. No changes are planned for Tacoma Link service in 2013.

Additional information on Tacoma Link service and ridership is provided in Chapter 2.

Preliminary Service Plans for 2014 - 2018

Chapter 3 of the SIP describes preliminary 2014-2018 service plans. These “out year” plans were updated based on the most recent vehicle hour estimates and capital project schedules. Service levels, ridership and fare revenue estimates shown for 2014-2018 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.

2014

- Potential changes to Route 540 in conjunction with opening of SR 520 HOV direct access ramps at 108th Avenue NE.

2015

- Potential service adjustments on Routes 545, 550, 566 and 567 due to the temporary closure of South Bellevue Park-and-Ride and Overlake Transit Center for East Link construction.

2016

- Two additional round trips added on the Sounder South Line.
- Central Link extended to South 200th, Capitol Hill and the University of Washington.
- ST Express Route 586 (Tacoma-U District) restructured with U Link opening.

2017-2018

Proposals still under development.

Title VI Assessment

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the 2013 Service Implementation Plan includes an impact assessment of the 2013 service changes on minority transit users and communities, low-income populations, and persons with a limited ability to speak, understand, read and write English.

The service changes are expected to have limited negative impacts on Title VI populations, since the changes are mitigated by the availability of alternative bus or rail service in the same corridors. For example, the deletion of most Sound Transit bus service between Everett Station and downtown Everett is mitigated by the availability of frequent Everett Transit and Community Transit service between these points.

The complete Title VI assessment of the service changes is in Appendix D.

Accessible Services

Sound Transit’s cost for complimentary paratransit services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are expected to continue to rise as more people are granted eligibility for the program. Ongoing Federal and State cuts for non-emergency medical transportation continue to drive new users to the paratransit service. The estimated annual growth for this service is 8 percent.

Sound Transit will continue to provide funding for the special needs transportation coordinating coalitions in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Due to ongoing budget shortfalls, the level of support will be reduced.

Quick Guide to the 2013 SIP:

Chapter 1 summarizes the 2013 service changes approved by the Sound Transit Board and the public outreach process for the 2013 SIP proposals.

Chapter 2 includes a description and performance summary of Sounder, Link and each ST Express route, with background information on each 2013 SIP service change.

Chapter 3 describes preliminary plans for 2014-2018.

Chapter 4 includes estimates of ridership and fare revenue for all three transit modes through 2018 and a description of the modeling and assumptions used to develop the estimates.