

Sounder South Strategic Plan Update

Overview Survey Learn more

A new future for the Sounder train?

Tell us how the S Line can work better for you



The Sounder South/S Line train provides dependable, congestion-free travel between Seattle and Lakewood every weekday. Most trips run northbound to Seattle in the mornings and southbound in the afternoons.

Travel patterns have changed significantly since we completed our Sounder South Strategic Plan in early 2020. More hybrid and work-from-home schedules have reduced travel demand during peak periods, which gives us an opportunity to explore a new future for Sounder South. That's why we are updating the Strategic Plan this year.

Would new Sounder trips midday, in the evenings, or on weekends work better for you than the current plan to prioritize longer trains that add more capacity during peak periods? We'll consider your input, along with research on travel patterns and ridership forecasting, to decide whether to prioritize negotiating new trips with BNSF Railway, which owns most of the tracks Sounder runs on.

A new future for Sounder South begins with you. We're listening. Tell us about your travel patterns in our survey open until Oct. 29, 2023 so that we can make the S Line work better for you in the years ahead.

Visit us in your community to learn more about Sounder South Strategic Plan Update. [Find an event](#)

Chance to win!

A completed survey enters you for a chance to win two tickets to the **Nov. 12 Seahawks game** versus the Commanders, a \$100 gift card (five available), and Sound Transit swag bags (ten available).

- P** Seattle (King Street Station)
303 S. Jackson St.
- P** Tukwila
7301 Longacres Way
- P** Kent
301 Railroad Ave. N.
- P** Auburn
23 A St. S.W.
- P** Sumner
810 Maple St.
- P** Puyallup
131 W. Main St.
- P** Tacoma Dome
424 E. 25th St.
- P** South Tacoma
5650 S. Washington St.
- P** Lakewood
11424 Pacific Hwy S.W.

Click to enlarge

Survey

Please review the current Sounder schedule to help you answer this survey.

Current Sounder Schedule

■ Regular service
 ■ Limited service
 ■ No service

| | Early morning (5-8am) | Mid-day (8am-2:30pm) | Afternoon (2:30-6:30pm) | Evening (6:30-10pm) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Northbound to Seattle | 9 trains* | 1 train | 3 trains** | No service |
| Southbound to Tacoma/Lakewood | 3 trains* | No service | 10 trains** | No service |

*Early morning service to South Tacoma and Lakewood: 7 northbound and 1 southbound
 **Afternoon service to South Tacoma and Lakewood: 0 northbound and 7 southbound

WEEKENDS

No regular service: Sound Transit currently runs 20-25 weekend Sounder event trains each year to support special events at Lumen Field and T-Mobile Park, typically on Sundays.

The full list of survey questions begin on page 4 of this pdf archive.

Visit us in person

- **Sept. 28, 6-8 p.m.** [Sumner High School](#) football game
- **Sept. 30, 2-7 p.m.** [Southcenter Mall](#)
- **Oct. 7, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.** [Puyallup Farmers Market](#)
- **Oct. 11, 2 - 6:30 p.m.** [Seattle King Street Station](#)
- **Oct. 14, 12 - 5 p.m.** Tacoma LatinX Festival at [Tacoma Armory](#)
- **Oct. 14, 12 - 3 p.m.** Lakewood Truck and Tractor Day at [Fort Steilacoom Park](#)
- **Oct. 19, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.** [Broadway Farmers Market in Tacoma](#)
- **Oct. 21, 2 - 5 p.m.** [Harvest Fest at STAR Center in Tacoma](#)
- **Oct. 22, 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.** [Tacoma Dome Sounder Station platform](#)
- **Oct. 22, 9:45 - 10:45 a.m.** [Puyallup Sounder Station platform](#)
- **Oct. 22, 10:15 - 11 a.m.** [Auburn Sounder Station platform](#)
- **Oct. 24, 3 - 6:30 p.m.** [Sumner Station platform](#)
- **Oct. 28, 1 - 5 p.m.** Auburn Halloween Harvest Festival at [Les Gove Park](#)
- **Oct. 28, 2 - 5 p.m.** [Kent Street of Treats](#)

Questions? Contact Melanie Mayock at [\(206\) 689-4877](tel:(206)689-4877), melanie.mayock@soundtransit.org.

Subscribe for project news

Sign up for the Sounder South Capacity Expansion email list.

[Sign up for updates](#)

More about Sounder South

The Sounder is a train that provides dependable, congestion-free travel between Seattle and Lakewood. Thirteen round-trip trains run every weekday between Tacoma and Seattle, including seven round trips that also serve South Tacoma and Lakewood. Sounder makes interim stops in Puyallup, Sumner, Auburn, Kent, and Tukwila

Powered by clean-burning, ultra-low sulfur diesel, the trains run mostly on freight tracks owned by the BNSF Railway. Sound Transit owns the stations and supplies security. Sounder trains are operated by BNSF and maintained by Amtrak.

[View full schedule](#)

Sounder South quick facts

- Sounder trains can reach speeds up to 79mph. There are sections of track they run slower.
- The trip between Lakewood Station and Seattle's King Street Station takes approximately an hour and 15 minutes.
- Each comfortable, climate-controlled, restroom-equipped Sounder car has seating for 148 passengers including up to four passengers in wheelchairs.
- Sounder trains offer free wireless internet access, worktables, high back cloth upholstered seats, surge-protected outlets for laptop computers, overhead storage, bicycle storage and cup holders.

Background

2016

- Voters approved the ST3 ballot measure to expand public transit in our region. This included the Sounder South Capacity Expansion, with longer trains and potential new trips to add capacity and meet growing demand.

2019-2020

- Sound Transit developed the Sounder South [Strategic Development and Implementation Plan](#) to define the program and implementation schedule. Because Sounder trains were running at capacity, the Plan prioritized longer trains to carry up to 40% more passengers by 2028. Potential new trips were planned for the 2030's.

2021

- The Sound Transit Board adopted a [realigned capital plan](#) in response to rising land and construction costs. This action shifted Sounder projects to 2036 (longer trains) and 2046 (potential new trips) .

2023

- Because of new travel patterns resulting in reduced ridership on Sounder South, Sound Transit is updating the Strategic Plan to explore if potential additional new trips should be prioritized over longer trains.

Strategic Plan update process

We're working this year to update the Strategic Plan through research that explores travel trends, ridership estimating, peer agency assessments and public outreach. We're also coordinating with BNSF and WSDOT Rail. In Spring 2024, the Sound Transit Board may shift from prioritizing adding capacity with longer trains to adding potential trips on Sounder. Any new trips require negotiation and ultimate approval from BNSF.

Track ownership

BNSF Railway has an extensive freight railroad network, including owning much of the track Sounder runs on. Unlike with Link light rail, where Sound Transit owns the tracks and can run trains all day, adding a single Sounder trip requires BNSF approval and comes at a significant investment.

Adjusting today's schedule

Today Sounder provides [13 roundtrips every weekday](#) between Tacoma Dome and Seattle, with eight of those trips serving South Tacoma and Lakewood. Most of these trips travel northbound in the mornings (4:30-8a.m.) and southbound in the afternoons (2:30-6:30p.m.). Ridership has been much lower on Mondays and Fridays than mid-week, likely because of hybrid work schedules.

With lower peak ridership, Sound Transit may explore reducing frequency of trips during peak times, to accommodate more trips throughout the day. In this scenario, the number of trips would be the same, but departures during peak times could shift from every 20 minutes to potentially every 30 minutes. Any changes to the current Sounder schedule would require approval from BNSF.

Sounder South Strategic Plan Update

New trips? Longer trains?

1. In the updated Strategic Plan, Sound Transit can continue to prioritize longer trains. Prioritizing longer trains means moving from the capacity to run 7-car trains to 10-car trains, including extending platforms and buying new rail cars. Sound Transit is currently running 5-car trains due to reduced ridership and financial constraints, and we will monitor when to move back to 7-car trains. (add more cars on existing trains) or we can switch the priority to adding new trips. Which would you value more:

*

Longer trains to add more capacity to the current schedule

Adding new trips to expand travel time options

2. Have you ridden Sounder South in the last three months?

Yes

No

3. Adding more trips would require agreement from BNSF Railway, which owns most of the tracks that Sounder travels on. If we can add more trips to the schedule, when would you ride?

on weekdays

on the weekend

4. If we can add more weekday trips to the schedule, which of the following options would you use the most? (select your top two)

- Midday (8am - 2pm) northbound
- Midday (8am - 2pm) southbound
- Evenings (6-10pm) northbound
- Evenings (6-10pm) southbound

5. Which days of the week would you ride **weekday** Sounder train service?

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

6. If we could add more **weekend trips** to the schedule, which of the following options would you use the most? (select up to two)

- Mornings (6am-12pm) northbound
- Mornings (6am-12pm) southbound
- Afternoons (12-5pm) northbound
- Afternoons (12-5pm) southbound
- Evenings (5-10pm) northbound
- Evenings (5-10pm) southbound

7. How often would you ride if this change were made?

- Less than once per month
- 2-3 times per month
- 1-4 times per week
- 5 or more times per week

8. If we could add more trips to the schedule, which Sounder station would you normally depart from?

- Lakewood
- South Tacoma
- Tacoma Dome
- Puyallup
- Sumner
- Auburn
- Kent
- Tukwila
- King Street (Seattle)

9. Which station(s) would you normally ride the Sounder to? (select up to three)

- Lakewood
- South Tacoma
- Tacoma Dome
- Puyallup
- Sumner
- Auburn
- Kent
- Tukwila
- King Street (Seattle)

10. If these new trips were added, what activities would you access through Sounder?

- Work, business appointments, or looking for work
- School, education, or training for myself
- Childcare, child's school, or child's activity
- Shopping or errands
- Fun, recreation, or social events (meeting friends, visiting parks, religious function, etc.)
- Special events (including concerts, sporting events, festivals, etc.)
- Medical/ healthcare appointments
- Social Services (DSHS office, shelters, food banks, etc.)
- Judicial services/court/jury duty
- Other - Write In (Required)

*

11. If this change were made, how would it affect your current ridership frequency?

- I would be a new Sounder rider
- I would ride Sounder more
- I would ride Sounder about the same amount I do now
- I would ride Sounder less

12. Adjusting today's schedule

Sound Transit may explore spreading trips throughout the day or week by spacing out the time between trips during the peak. In this scenario, the number of trips would not change, but trains during peak times could shift from approximately every 20 minutes to about every 30 minutes. Any changes to the current Sounder schedule would require approval from BNSF Railway.

Which do you value more:

The current schedule with train frequency focused on peak commute travel

Lower frequency during peak periods (such as trains coming every 30 minutes rather than every 20 minutes) to expand the train schedule to other times (such as weekends, weekdays midday, or weekday evenings).

(untitled)

13. Sounder ridership

How often have you ridden Sounder South in the past three months?

- Less than once per month
- 2-3 times per month
- 1-4 times per week
- 5 or more times per week

14. What activities do you access through Sounder South?

- Work, business appointments, or looking for work
- School, education, or training for myself
- Childcare, child's school, or child's activity
- Shopping or errands
- Fun, recreation, or social events (meeting family or friends, visiting parks, religious function, etc.)
- Special events (including concerts, sporting events, festivals, etc.)
- Medical/ healthcare appointments
- Social Services (DSHS office, shelters, food banks, etc.)
- Judicial services/court/jury duty
- Other - Write In (Required)

15. Which station do you normally depart from?

- Lakewood
- South Tacoma
- Tacoma Dome
- Puyallup
- Sumner
- Auburn
- Kent
- Tukwila
- King Street (Seattle)

16. Which departing train(s) do you use most often?

- Northbound in the morning (5-8am)
- Northbound (midday)
- Northbound in the afternoon (2:30 - 6:30pm)
- Southbound in the morning (5-8am)
- Southbound in the afternoon (2:30 - 6:30pm)
- Event trains

17. What station do you normally travel to?

- Lakewood
- South Tacoma
- Tacoma Dome
- Puyallup
- Sumner
- Auburn
- Kent
- Tukwila
- King Street (Seattle)

18. Is this normally a round trip?

- Yes
- No

19. What time do you travel the most often for your return trip?

- Northbound in the morning (5-8am)
- Northbound (midday)
- Northbound in the afternoon (2:30 - 6:30pm)
- Southbound in the morning (5-8am)
- Southbound in the afternoon (2:30 - 6:30pm)
- Event trains

20. **Travel patterns**

What are the reasons you rarely or never ride Sounder? (check all that apply)

- The times the train runs don't work for me
- Station stations are not convenient to my home, or my final destination
- Other transit options (bus, Link light rail) are faster or more reliable for where I need to go
- I prefer to drive, or need my car for my job
- Safety concerns
- It is difficult to walk, bike, or take transit to get to the Sounder station from my home
- I'm worried I won't easily find parking at the station
- Sounder is too expensive to ride
- I don't know enough about where Sounder goes, the fares or schedule and need more information
- Other - (please specify)

*

21. Which Sounder station do you live the closest to?

- Lakewood
- South Tacoma
- Tacoma Dome
- Puyallup
- Sumner
- Auburn
- Kent
- Tukwila
- King Street (Seattle)

22. Do you regularly travel to any of the following areas? (select up to three)

- Lakewood
- South Tacoma
- Tacoma Dome
- Puyallup
- Sumner
- Auburn
- Kent
- Tukwila
- Seattle
- East King County
- North King County or Snohomish County
- I do not regularly travel to any of these areas

23. What mode(s) of transportation do you use the most to travel outside of your neighborhood? (select up to three)

- I drive my car
- I use another form of transit (light rail or bus)
- I ride my bike or scooter
- I walk
- I carpool
- I use a rideshare service like Lyft or Uber
- Other - Write In (Required)

*

24. Use the box below to share any additional thoughts you have about Sounder South (optional).

25. More about you

These optional questions are completely anonymous. By answering, you'll help our engagement team make sure we're reaching and hearing from everyone in the community. You can answer all or just some questions – whatever you're most comfortable with.

Would you like to answer a few more questions about who you are?

- Yes
- No

26. What ZIP code do you live in? [Select one]

- My ZIP code is (please write-in here)
- Currently unsheltered/no home ZIP code
- I don't know
- I prefer not to say

27. Do you consider yourself to have one or more disabilities that affect your use of public transportation?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

28. What is your household's total annual earnings?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$14,999
- \$15,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$34,999
- \$35,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more
- I prefer not to say

29. How old are you?

- 18 or under
- 19-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65 or older
- I prefer not to say

30. Do you identify yourself as (Please check all that apply):

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black, African or African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White
- Two or more races
- I prefer to self-identify as:
- Unknown or unsure
- I prefer not to say

*

31. Do you identify as Latino, Latina, Latinx or of Hispanic origin?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

32. What languages are regularly spoken in your home? (select all that apply)

- English
- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Cantonese
- Mandarin
- Russian
- Ukrainian
- Arabic
- Amharic
- Somali
- Korean
- Tagalog
- Other (please specify)

33. Please enter your contact information (email address or phone number) if you want to be entered to win one of the prizes for completing the survey. Prizes include two tickets to the Nov. 12 Seahawks game versus the Commanders, \$100 gift cards (5 available), and Sound Transit swag bags (10 available). Winners drawn and notified on Oct. 30. Tickets to Seahawks game are non-transferrable.