



Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting February 6, 2020

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m. by Committee Chair Paul Roberts, in the Ruth Fisher Boardroom, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Paul Roberts, Everett Councilmember	(P) Joe McDermott, King County Councilmember

Board Members	
(P) David Baker, Kenmore Mayor	(A) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor
(A) Kent Keel, University Place Mayor	(P) Nicola Smith, Lynnwood Mayor
(P) Debora Juarez, Seattle City Councilmember	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember
(A) Ed Prince, Renton City Councilmember	

Chair Roberts, announced that a quorum of the Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Chair Roberts welcomed new Boardmembers Nicola Smith and Ed Prince to the Committee.

Chair Roberts announced that immediately following the CEO Report, the committee would take up Motion No. M2020-08 due to Boardmember time constraints. There were no objections to the change.

Chair Roberts announced that he approved Boardmember Nicola Smith's request to participate in the meeting via phone in accordance with Board rules, and that the CEO Monthly Contract Report was available for review.

CEO Report

Chief executive officer Peter Rogoff gave the CEO Report.

Connect 2020 Update

Mr. Rogoff announced that the Connect 2020 process was in its fifth week, marking its half-way point. The second of three weekend closures would take place the following weekend beginning at 9:00pm that Friday evening. King County Metro would support Sound Transit by supplying shuttle bus service between SODO and Capitol Hill Stations beginning at 8:00pm that Friday evening and lasting through the weekend.

After the closure single track operations would switch to the opposite track. Ambassadors and updated signage would aid passengers with the change. Trains would continue to operate at the 13 to 15 minute headways as they did before the platform switch.

While the project was on schedule, the upcoming closure would represent the most challenging phase for remaining on schedule during Connect 2020. The project team needed to certify brand new track and overhead power before bringing it online by Monday.

Souder North Service Disruption

Souder Northline service from Everett to Seattle was severely delayed the morning of February 4, 2020 after a BNSF freight train struck an automobile in Edmonds. Thankfully, the driver was able to walk away from the collision, but all four trains from Everett to Seattle were delayed between 20 and 60 minutes. Two trains already in route to Seattle were advanced to Mukilteo station and some passengers were assisted to connecting bus routes. Service was finally restored around 7:15am.

Mr. Rogoff added that the agency found it necessary to cancel Souder North Service on February 6, 2020 and February 7, 2020 due to an increased chance of landslides along the rail line following heavy rains. The agency was working on preparing a bus bridge but passengers were encouraged to take regularly scheduled bus routes which stopped at the Souder stations.

Boardmember Baker arrived at this time.

Olympia Update

On February 4, 2020 Mr. Rogoff and Chair Roberts attended a hearing of the Senate Transportation Committee to testify on several bills which posed significant concerns to the interests of the Board as outlined in the legislative agenda adopted in December 2019. Their testimony focused on Senate Bill 6606 and echoed previously articulated interest in continuing to work with the state legislature to identify solutions related to MVET collections while ensuring that any changes were equally offset by cost reductions and/or new revenues that maintained the agency's financial capacity for completing voter-approved transit expansions on time.

Mr. Rogoff addressed references at the hearing which referred to Sound Transit revenue collections exceeding previous assumptions by explaining that the regions challenging construction market drove costs further above expectations than the revenue growths. That pressure required the agency's Long Range Plan to assume increased borrowing to enable on-time completion of voter approved projects. He added that any reductions to the agency's financial capacity posed great concerns for that priority.

2020 Annual Progress Report

Beginning around Presidents Day, residents throughout the Sound Transit taxing district received the 2020 Annual Progress Report in the mail. Each subarea received a version which highlighted local projects, though all five included agency-wide project and financial information. This report was Sound Transit's second, and the goal was to keep taxpayers informed about progress over the year and upcoming milestones. Direct mail was the best way to reach all district residents, regardless of their access or comfort levels with technology.

Encouragement to read the report in physical or electronic form were provided through digital ads and on social media, lasting approximately three weeks. Nearly one-third of the ad buy was directed to non-English language speakers, for which translated content was made available online.

Black History Month at Sound Transit

Through the month of February, Sound Transit was honoring Black History Month. Sound Transit's Blacks Empowering Success in Transit employee resource group hosted a full line-up of events throughout the month, beginning with a kickoff celebration which occurred the day before the meeting. The events were a testament to the power of the employee resource groups to bring the agency together and celebrate its employees.

Public comment

Joe Kunzler
Alex Tsimerman

Business Items

Items for Committee final action

January 16, 2020, Rider Experience and Operations Committee minutes

It was moved by Boardmember McDermott, seconded by Boardmember Baker, and carried by unanimous vote that the minutes of the January 16, 2020, Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting be approved as presented.

Items for Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2020-08: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a four year labor agreement with the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 758 covering Tacoma Link Light Rail vehicle operators.

Ian Coleman, Senior Human Resource Business Partner, provided the staff report. Mr. Coleman explained that Amalgamated Transit Union Local 758 represents Sound Transit's nine Tacoma Link Light Rail operators. The Previous collective bargaining agreement expired in September 2019. The agreement covers three additional operators expected to be hired in 2020 and any additional operators hired in the four-year term.

Changes to the agreement include addressing the 2018 U.S. Supreme Court case Janus vs AFSCME, which outlawed union security clauses in the public sector, improvements and modification to the operational language, an extending the term to avoid further negotiations at the same time as completion of the Tacoma Link Extension. The agreement also establishes a new salary rate with an average 3.5 percent increase per year, keeps the provision requiring members to participate in the same benefit and cost containment measures implemented during the contract as all other Sound Transit employees, retains the retention award of \$2,000, and increases the lost personal property reimbursement for cell phones and eyeglasses by \$100 respectively.

Negotiations went smoothly and amicably and the agreement about is within the 2020 Operations Budget. In response to a question posed by Boardmember McDermott, Mr. Coleman confirmed that the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 758 membership ratified the agreement on January 13, 2020. Chair Roberts asked if the new Labor Liaison, Mark Riker, was informed of this agreement. Mr. Rogoff assured the committee that he had been in communication with Labor Liaison Riker regarding this agreement, and that negotiations were amicable.

It was moved by Boardmember Baker, seconded by Boardmember McDermott, and carried by unanimous vote that Motion No. M2020-08 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the committee

Fare Enforcement Survey Results

Carrie Avila-Mooney, Director of Regional Government and Community Relations, Jackie Martinez-Vasquez, Chief Equal Employment Opportunity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, and Brian Brooke, Deputy Director of Innovation and Performance, provided the presentation.

Ms. Avila-Mooney provided an overview of the policy update process to-date. She explained that the next steps in the process following the meeting would be to continue external stakeholder engagement

through a meeting scheduled for February 19, 2020, to roll out administrative actions following the March Executive Committee meeting, and to advance associated Board actions and budget amendments at the March Board of Directors meeting. She reviewed the work group's vision and mission, and outlined its objectives. She then provided a brief overview of the outreach process. 1,100 onboard surveys and 8,000 completed online surveys were received, and staff held six listening sessions in Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties. A draft report was provided to Boardmembers containing a summary of the findings as well as detailed results of the surveys and listening sessions. She emphasized that the findings which were going to be presented were preliminary, so analysis would continue through the process.

Mr. Brooke provided the onboard and online survey objectives and results. He explained that the goal in conducting the survey was to determine the primary reasons for non-payment, to measure customer experience of fare enforcement, and to identify any differences in customer experience across demographic groups. After detailing the onboard survey methodology, he discussed the demographics first.

Survey results were structured to be random and unbiased, with riders interviewed as Fare Enforcement Officers encountered them. The sample was representative of Link and Sounder ridership as compared to the last large-scale rider survey conducted in 2018, although respondents tended to skew slightly whiter and higher income.

Regarding the results themselves, the percentage of riders without proof of payment was highest with Hispanic or Latinx riders, followed by African American or Black riders. It was also highest for riders below the age of 25. Other demographic groups with relatively high rates without proof of payment were those with incomes below \$50,000, those with disabilities, and those with no working vehicles. Household income was the primary demographic characteristic that differentiated those surveyed who were able to provide proof of payment and those who were not able to do so. The high rates within other demographic groups were coincident with income. The top reasons for not having proof of payment were related to issues with payment processes and logistics rather than inability to pay. As such, there was no obvious connection between the top reasons for non-payment and the primary factor driving the demographically disproportionate outcomes. Riders were also asked to rank the encounters they just had with fare enforcement officers on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for three factors regarding the professionalism and fairness of the officers. While differences existed between riders who did and did not have proof of payment, respondents overall felt that officers were professional and fair.

The online survey provided information on the perceptions of fare enforcement and preferences for proposed changes. An important caveat, however, was that the survey was made available to anybody who wished take it, so the results were based on self-selected responses and not random response. Therefore they should not be considered statistically representative. Compared to the 2017 Sound Transit District census, the demographics of this survey showed an underrepresentation of people of color, lower income, and younger age groups.

A list of six potential program changes was presented to the survey respondents and they were asked to pick their top three. The most selected was to reduce fines from \$124, followed by increasing the number of warnings. Both options received a majority of support from respondents at 82 percent and 57 percent respectively. 40 percent of respondents preferred reducing the warning period from 12 months to six months. Reducing the amount of time for citations to accumulate, reducing the number of warnings to no warnings, and increasing the fine from \$124 were all preferred by 11 percent or fewer respondents. When asked about Sound Transit fare enforcement practices, 85 percent of respondents agreed that the agency should help riders who cannot afford to pay, 76 percent agreed that Sound Transit should expand outreach to hard-to-reach communities, and 72 percent agreed that Sound Transit should forgive fines if the rider enrolls in the ORCA LIFT program. Questions regarding fare enforcement officers' interactions with riders received support for offering on the spot information about

reduced fare programs. Little support, only 33 percent, was provided for less intimidating uniforms, though. When asked if fare enforcement should be suspended during severe weather, 90 percent of respondents gave their support. Similarly, 77 percent supported suspending fare for students on the first day of school. Major construction or service disruptions received 67 percent support and suspending enforcement for individuals experiencing homelessness and needed to get out of the cold received 60 percent.

Comparing answers to the questions between riders and non-riders provided useful data as well. When asked about offering alternative means of resolving fines for non-payment of fare, non-riders were consistently less supportive of doing-so. Non-riders were also less certain whether people may be unaware of programs which could help them afford to pay fare and were much less supportive of measures to help those who could benefit from the programs.

Ms. Martinez-Vasquez explained that the six listening sessions conducted by the agency were intended to seek community input from those who were usually marginalized in conversations, to identify any differences in attitudes and preferences across demographic groups, and to ask for opinions about program priorities. Six standard questions were asked in each of the sessions which included, how often they rode; if they usually paid; if it was easy to navigate; how they would improve the experience; their perception of the current program; and how they would prioritize program goals. Demographically, the sessions were able to reach their target audiences. Community participants asked that staff emphasize the importance of centering humanity as the conversations were reported.

Throughout the conversations, perceptions of fare enforcement officers uniforms, conduct, and recommendations were received. Challenges with transfers was a common response across all three counties. Better alignment between agencies was requested along with increased transfer windows. Participants reported the need to increase access for reloading ORCA cards, expressing frustration with the 24-hour wait period after reloading and the closure of the Westlake Station booth.

Conversations at the listening sessions validated some of the feedback received through the online surveys regarding changes to the program. Involvement of law enforcement and the manner in which identification is requested were some concerns voiced at the sessions. An unexpected and previously unreported concern was lack of awareness in how one could file a complaint or report issues to Sound Transit. Young riders were present in most of the conversations and provided valuable input and perspectives. Much discussion was had regarding creation of a separate program, procedures, and consequences for younger riders.

Ms. Avila-Mooney reviewed the proposals to change the program which were under consideration at that time. Proposals were categorized to best address the findings gathered from the surveys and the listening sessions. The first category were proposals to address the differences in demographics of riders without proof of payment, which focused on informational outreach, improved fare enforcement officer training and potential participation in a very low income fare program. To address reasons for riding without proof of payment, proposals like outreach, increasing the number of warnings, and altering modal transfer procedures were under consideration. To address public support for policy and program updates, proposals like suspension of inspections under certain circumstances, reduction of fines, and new methods to resolve citations were under consideration. To address perceptions of fare enforcement officers, proposals like modifying the fare enforcement officer role to become more customer service oriented and expanding fare checks onto platforms was under consideration. New proposals under consideration included renaming "enforcement" to "monitoring" or "customer service", and promotion of Title VI programs which investigate complaints about enforcement and security.

The agency work group would evaluate each proposal for consideration based upon several criteria developed directly from its vision, mission, and objectives. It would come to the committees and Board in March to present and roll out the proposals it chose and to advance required actions.

Boardmember McDermott asked if moving fare enforcement responsibilities away from contracted services, and into a Sound Transit operated service was under consideration. Ms. Avila-Mooney acknowledged that this was under consideration, but the work group was reviewing state statutes regarding the nature of the citations as civil infractions. She clarified that all proposals under consideration were reviewed to determine whether policy, statutes, or budget amendments would need to be altered as well.

Executive session

None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, March 5, 2020
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.

Paul Roberts
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

ATTEST:

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, AM.