



Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting May 13, 2021

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:39 p.m. by Committee Chair, Claudia Balducci virtually on WebEx.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor

Board Members	
(P) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(A) Kent Keel, University Place Mayor
(A) David Baker, Kenmore Mayor	(P) Nicola Smith, Lynnwood Mayor
(P) Jenny Durkan, Seattle Mayor	(P) Dave Upthegrove, King County Councilmember

Katie Flores, Board Administrator, announced that a quorum of the System Expansion Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Monthly Contract Report and Agency Progress Report – Chair Balducci noted that the meeting packets included the monthly contract report and the February agency progress report.

CEO Report

Chief Executive Officer Peter M. Rogoff provided the CEO Report.

East Link Tie-in work complete – CEO Rogoff reported that the East Link systems tie-in work was completed successfully. The work took place over five weekends starting in April, and staff coordinated closely with numerous contractors to tie the overhead power and signal systems for East Link to current Link service. Staff ambassadors were in place to help passengers navigate the partial closures and board the Link shuttle buses. The planned closures also allowed for state of good repair and maintenance in downtown Seattle stations, most prominently the removal of the center platform constructed for Connect 2020. The closure also allowed a window for Northgate Systems Integrated Testing. The completion of the systems connection is a significant milestone for East Link leading to revenue service in 2023.

Point Defiance Bypass Update – Sound Transit's Chief Safety Officer, David Wright, gave the go ahead to start crew qualification runs on the Point Defiance Bypass beginning as early as May 24, 2021. Dynamic testing with an Amtrak train will take place in the corridor on May 16, 2021. City leaders in the corridors and JBLM have been notified that this milestone has been approved and these activities will run numerous weeks to ensure Amtrak engineers are fully trained on the alignment.

Progress Update on Light Rail Vehicle Fleet Expansion – In March, staff successfully completed testing of the new Siemens cars and certified the car design as safe and ready for passenger use. CEO Rogoff noted that progress on commissioning the cars delivered to the Seattle maintenance facility continues to

go well. Six of the new Series 2 vehicles have been accepted and the first train will go into revenue service tomorrow. New trains will continue to be phased into service regularly over the next three years. Based on the progress, Sound Transit is in good shape to deliver Northgate Link service as planned on October 2, 2021. The vehicles have larger windows, efficient lighting, improved passenger information, more bike storage and more floor area dedicated to the accessible seating area. The Board approved the purchase of 152 of these vehicles to accommodate not only Northgate service, but also East Link, Lynnwood, Federal Way and downtown Redmond. Once all in service, these vehicles will represent nearly three quarters of the overall Link fleet, running alongside the familiar Kinkisharyo vehicles that have run on Link since its inception in 2009.

Federal Update – Yesterday, President Biden met with House and Senate leadership to talk about an infrastructure package, and today, he is meeting with Senate Republican members. Later this month, the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee is planning to start marking up legislation to reauthorize the surface transportation programs. We are fortunate to have two members from this region on the Committee – Congressman Rick Larsen and Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland. The Speaker of the House has indicated she would like the House to finish its work on infrastructure legislation by July 4, 2021. Work is also getting underway in the Senate. Sound Transit staff remain in close communication with all members of the delegation to underscore our continued interest in a provision that would authorize an increase of federal funding for our two projects with Full Funding Grant Agreements, Lynnwood Link and Federal Way Link.

State Update – CEO Rogoff noted that this year’s regular legislative session adjourned on April 25, and the session included a few items of note for Sound Transit. Lawmakers came to an agreement on two carbon-reduction bills, both a low carbon fuel standard and a cap-and-invest program for the State of Washington. Full implementation of the policies within these bills is contingent on passage of a transportation spending package, which was not agreed to during the legislative session. There has been speculation about the possibility of a special session for transportation spending. The agency will be monitoring and continuing to push for investment in regional transit as part of any agreement. Sound Transit is seeking a veto by the Governor of two provisions that are included in the final transportation budget: One provision precludes Sound Transit’s ability to negotiate on land leases for property in WSDOT right-of-way, and another that adds an exorbitant cost to Sound Transit’s contract for collection of MVET with the Department of Licensing. CEO Rogoff noted that in addition to the letter sent by Chair Keel and Vice Chairs Constantine and Roberts urging the Governor to veto these provisions, he and Alex Soldano, Director of State Relations met with the Governor’s staff to underscore the financial impact of both provisions. The Governor is scheduled to sign the final budget in the next week.

Public comment

Chair Balducci announced that public comment would be accepted via email to emailtheboard@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted verbally.

The following people provided written public comment:

Arvia Morris

There was no verbal public comment for this meeting.

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: April 8, 2021 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Boardmember Smith, seconded by Boardmember Roscoe and carried by unanimous vote of the four Boardmembers present that the April 8, 2021 System Expansion Committee minutes be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2021-34: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a Transfer of Development Rights Program agreement with the City of Bothell for Sound Transit to reimburse the City for services provided for the Bus Base North in the amount of \$105,000, with a 10 percent contingency of \$10,500, for a total authorized agreement amount not to exceed \$115,500.

Paul Cornish, Project Director, provided a project overview and a staff presentation for this action. In response to a question from Boardmember Roscoe, Mr. Cornish noted that Sound Transit has talked to the Puget Sound Regional Council and the City of Bothell about this approach and all parties are interested in working towards a creative solution.

Motion No. M2021-34 was moved by Boardmember Roscoe and seconded by Boardmember Smith. Chair Balducci called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Kim Roscoe
Nicola Smith
Dave Upthegrove
Claudia Balducci

Nays

It was carried by unanimous vote of the four Boardmembers present that Motion No. M2021-34 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the committee

Boardmember Durkan joined at this time.

Construction during COVID-19

Ron Lewis, Executive Director of Design, Engineering and Construction Management, provided the report covering Sound Transit's construction projects during COVID-19. Mr. Lewis reviewed collaborations and partnerships with government agencies and industry organizations. Sound Transit has facilitated a communication and collaboration forum across all project at least weekly (initially daily during the 1st months of the pandemic in 2020), coordinated by the Director of Construction Management and home office team. The agency also monitored changes in regulations and protocols and communicated strategies to see how Sound Transit could effectively adapt.

Robert Taaffe, Director-Employee & Construction Safety, provided examples of initial crew safety training at the end of the April 2020 suspension of work period, including jobsite worker screening and temperature checks, having a COVID-19 supervisor and a COVID-specific work plan. He noted that Sound Transit has been tracking confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the capital program construction workforce. He noted that the goal is to track and communicate progress so that the agency can adjust its approach as needed.

Mr. Taaffe reviewed the COVID-19 trends over time, he noted that Sound Transit experienced 4 different peaks, closely following the same timeline of similar peaks in the general population. The 2nd and 3rd peaks occurred within about 2 weeks of major holiday events.

Finally Mr. Taaffe noted that Sound Transit is exploring whether it could partner with other agencies to provide a pop-up vaccination site for project workers, and reviewed the observations and challenges experienced so far. Through diligent communication and auditing of COVID-19 compliance rules, the vast majority of worksite cases were not a result of virus transmission within the worksite. He shared that steps toward "culture change" have been successful and that contractors and staff have adhered to new safety requirements.

Boardmember Backus arrived at this time.

System Expansion Cost Review Process

Kimberly Farley, Chief System Officer, provided the report. She noted that the COVID-19 recession has impacted agency revenues and project cost estimates have increased. This has resulted in an affordability gap that the agency is looking to address through the realignment process.

Ms. Farley reviewed staff's next steps towards addressing capital projects estimates now that the third-party independent review found that most of them are within reasonable range for approximately 10 percent design. Staff will identify potential capital cost savings using a three tier framework focused on projects that are in the planning process. These tiers have not been baselined with a specific scope, schedule or budget. This three tier framework will provide a multi-faced approach to examining capital costs. The first two tiers will build on efforts that Triunity is already scoped to examine by looking at potential improvements to our cost estimating process as well as focusing on possible improvements to our project management controls. The third tier will look at specific opportunities for capital cost savings. Ms. Farley noted that this work will take place over many months and will extend beyond July 2021.

The first tier of the framework will explore potential changes to ST's cost estimating methodology for construction and right-of-way estimates. It will use Triunity's Task 2 and lessons learned from coordination with regional partners on their respective cost estimating process. The first tier will provide the answer to why the project estimates increased from 2020. The deliverable for this effort will be a list of potential changes to the cost estimating methodologies, including when and how those changes could be applied to existing and future projects, and a cost range for estimates that reflect a given project's level of design. Staff will be able to incorporate recommendations from this process by the end of Q4 2021.

The second tier focuses on exploring improvements in two areas. The first one is ST's focus on controls at the project level to improve how overall projects are managed and enhance transparency, oversight and ensure proper staffing levels. The second level is to look at how to bring early attention to project changes that substantively impact scope, schedule, or budget. This is a lesson learned in light of the level of changes to estimates from 2019 to 2020. This work will build on work that Triunity will do this summer and any changes to our current processes will be implemented on an on-going basis this year.

The third tier effort will develop actionable options that identify capital cost estimate reductions from current project estimates for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extension, Tacoma Dome Link Extension, Operations and Maintenance Facility South and the Bus Rapid Transit program as well as the NE 130th infill station. Staff will focus on the best opportunities for cost reductions by making smart choices and avoiding unrealistically low estimates. This will result in options with decision points at the project, agency, and Board level. First will be at a project-level, Ms. Farley provided examples of savings in project level design and construction, such as looking at horizontal and vertical guideway alignments, bridge and structures types, and drainage options. The next area is looking programmatically at agency requirements placed on projects such as station design elements and looking to maximize ways to standardize station plans and parts. Another example is looking to calibrate agency requirements across projects to help prioritize system needs to best enhance the experience of passengers and achieve operational efficiency. The next area, and the one with the largest opportunity for cost savings, is looking at potential project definition changes for consideration by the Board. This could include looking at alignment changes or scope consolidation, as well as looking at how the agency provides parking-whether we defer it, look at surface options, or remove it altogether.

The timeline for this work will be tied to the specific project schedules and their planned outreach timelines as the planning process continues. To continue validating project estimates process, staff will amend Triunity's contract to include review of this work. Staff will also engage the Board through this

process, with regular updates. At the May Board meeting, the Board will receive more information on this work as well as review of Triunity's task 2 report.

Ms. Farley also provided an update that staff have begun coordination with regional partners regarding their own cost estimate processes and will continue this dialogue. King County staff shared that they face similar estimating challenges and are eager to see the results of the independent assessment and recommendations. City of Seattle staff were interested in the independent reviewers' confidence that the current cost estimates will not increase further. Triunity confirmed their confidence that the majority of future project adjustments should be covered by the current contingencies and allowances without major scope changes or other external factors.

Boardmembers discussed how the Board will be engaged in guiding this work. Ms. Farley noted that the System Expansion Committee could be a good place for future discussions, but that staff would follow the Board's direction on how to engage with the Board on this work. Chair Balducci was supportive of having future conversations at the System Expansion Committee.

Boardmembers expressed concern about the cost estimate increases seen on projects such as the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions and Tacoma Dome Link Extension and asked whether the updated cost estimates would increase in the future. Ms. Farley noted that Triunity felt the updated cost estimates are in range, and through this effort staff will look for areas where there may be cost savings. Chair Balducci and Board member Backus expressed support for looking at opportunities to standardize elements without impacting rider spaces in a way that may affect the rider experience.

Boardmember Durkan asked that the Board continue reviewing why cost estimates increased and ensure that there are guardrails in place to catch any future cost estimate increases. She asked that the independent consultant continue to review cost estimates to inform the Board's realignment decisions.

Executive session

None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, June 10, 2021


1:30 to 4:00 p.m.

WebEx Virtual Meeting

Committee Chair Balducci noted that if the committee is not able to have an in-person meeting, a virtual meeting will be held. Information will be provided on the Sound Transit website.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.



Claudia Balducci

System Expansion Committee Chair

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores

Board Administrator

APPROVED on 7/8/2021, TW