



Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting December 1, 2022

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Chair Walker.

The meeting was available in person and streamed on:

<https://soundtransit.webex.com/soundtransit/j.php?MTID=m12130170a47eeb1b52d65e9bbd89280c>

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Kristina Walker, Tacoma Councilmember	(A) Ed Prince, Renton Councilmember

Board Members	
(P) David Baker, Kenmore Councilmember	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor
(P) Christine Frizzell, Lynnwood Mayor	(P) Dave Upthegrove, King County Councilmember
(P) Debora Juarez, Seattle City Councilmember	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember

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

Report of the Chair

Free Fares on December 31, 2023

Chair Walker noted that in concert with King County Metro and Community Transit, Sound Transit would be running fare free on New Year's Eve. This was an opportunity to promote mobility safety in collaboration with the agency's regional transit partners. The closure would be promoted on social media and with a joint press release.

Monthly Contract Report

The monthly contract report was included in members meeting packets for review.

CEO Report

CEO Julie Timm provided the CEO Report.

Update on Future Ready work

Three of the Future Ready projects that were planned to perform this year had been completed. The first was the Columbia City Station Platform project in Summer 2021, the second was replacing the overhead wires on a section of track in Tukwila, and the third one concluded in November 2022 as the agency divided the electrical system at the four downtown Seattle stations in order to give more operational flexibility and reduce service disruptions going forward. Each project was completed successfully, and staff continuously learned from each disruption on how to improve the passenger experience. The next project would be in downtown in the latter half of Q1 2023. CEO Timm would provide an update once more information became available.

Potential Rail Strike update

Staff continued to monitor the possibility of a national rail strike that could occur the following week. While Congress was working to avert a strike, if it occurred, a strike would curtail all Sounder commuter rail service, beginning Friday, December 9, 2022, and potentially cancel Seahawk game day trains on Sunday, December 11, 2022. The agency would continue to communicate with riders about the potential disruption and alternative transit options. The agency was also working with its partners to add additional bus service on existing ST Express routes that overlapped with Sounder where possible, given the ongoing bus operator shortage.

Boardmember Frizzell asked if the closure would take place on two separate days, the 9th and 11th, or if Saturday the 10th was included. Suraj Shetty, Director of Operations, replied that the strike would impact the commuter Sounder rail service which does not operate over the weekend. Sunday service was brought to attention as it would be a special service train for the Seahawks game, but Monday service would be affected if the strike was to occur.

Public comment

Chair Walker announced that public comment would be accepted via email to emailtheboard@soundtransit.org, in person, and would also be accepted virtually.

The following people provided written comments:

Emily Kitamura

There were no in-person, or virtual public comments submitted.

Business Items

For Committee final action

November 3, 2022, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Boardmember Baker, seconded by Boardmember Roscoe and carried by unanimous consent that the minutes of the November 3, 2022 Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2022-87: Recommending that the Finance and Audit Committee forward the Enhancement, State of Good Repair, Administrative and Transit Operations portions of the Proposed 2023 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Ryan Fisher, Deputy Executive Director of Financial Planning, Analysis and Budget, provided the presentation.

Chair Walker asked about operator shortage to confirm if there were enough dollars to fund the number of operators to keep the system moving forward. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Shetty confirmed the budget included funding for the operators. She then asked about funding for the fare ambassador program. Russ Arnold, Chief Passenger Experience Officer, confirmed the budget included funding for ambassadors and was in the hiring process. Mr. Shetty noted that for Future Ready work, internal staff volunteer as ambassadors, not only staff from the fare ambassadors team. Lastly, Chair Walker asked about tunnel maintenance, and if the budget included funding for improvements and if there were ways to accelerate the improvements from a budget standpoint. Mr. Shetty confirmed the funding and noted the DSTT conveyance replacement wouldn't take place in 2023.

Motion No. M2022-87 was moved by Boardmember Baker and seconded by Boardmember Frizzell.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

David Baker
Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of six committee members present that Motion No. M2022-87 be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2022-88: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a five-year contract with ten one-year options to extend with Woojin IS America, Inc. to upgrade the electronic systems for 62 light rail vehicles and provide maintenance services in the amount of \$31,844,776, with 13 percent contingency of \$4,104,560, for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$35,949,336, plus applicable taxes, contingent upon Board approval of the Proposed 2023 Budget through Resolution No. R2022-35.

Harry Demarest, Director of Operations Engineering and Technology, provided the presentation.

Boardmember Frizzell asked how long the structural term of life was for the systems. Mr. Demarest responded fifteen years.

Motion No. M2022-88 was moved by Boardmember Baker and seconded by Boardmember Frizzell.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

David Baker
Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of six committee members present that Motion No. M2022-88 be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2022-89: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a one-year contract with four one-year options with Plantscapes Incorporated to provide systemwide landscaping and irrigation maintenance and on-call services for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$3,309,083 plus applicable taxes, contingent upon Board approval of the Proposed 2023 Budget through Resolution No. R2022-35.

Marc Reeves, Senior Program Manager for Landscape, provided the presentation.

Motion No. M2022-89 was moved by Boardmember Baker and seconded by Boardmember Juarez.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

David Baker
Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of six committee members present that Motion No. M2022-89 be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2022-90: (1) Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute an amendment to the Joint Operating Agreement with the City of Tacoma for the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension; and (2) ratifying the Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Tacoma for waiver of mutual non-payment for services under the Joint Operating Agreement.

Cristina Fonseca, Activation Manager for Hilltop Tacoma Link, provided the staff presentation.

Motion No. M2022-90 was moved by Boardmember Roscoe and seconded by Boardmember Frizzell.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

David Baker
Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of six committee members present that Motion No. M2022-90 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Motion No. M2022-91: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute an amendment to the Tacoma Link Right of Use Agreement with the City of Tacoma for the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension.

Cristina Fonseca, Activation Manager for Hilltop Tacoma Link, provided the staff presentation.

Motion No. M2022-91 was moved by Boardmember Juarez and seconded by Boardmember Baker.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

David Baker
Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of six committee members present that Motion No. M2022-91 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

REO Metrics Performance Report

Raj Cheriell, Director of Essential Data and Analytics, and Ken Cummins, Director of Public Safety, provided the report. Mr. Cheriell reminded the committee of the three reasons of continued metrics presentations, namely to give the committee a picture of performance, show how internal review of data has highlighted areas to improve the passenger experience, and provide examples of how the agency acted upon data and the impact.

In October 2022, ridership data showed its ninth consecutive month of growth from all services, but primarily due to Central Link ridership. In September 2022, Central Link average weekday ridership was 2 percent greater than pre-covid September 2019 ridership levels. As ridership levels increased, it showed greater use of the systems, but simultaneously meant crowding. This meant the staff would research how to help with crowding, such as number of cars running and reducing headways.

Mr. Cheriell reviewed customer responses and explained the ribbon chart that was used to display the data from subjects within responses, such as facility cleanliness. In November 2022, there were a high number of complaints about general disturbance and general security presence.

Mr. Cheriell demonstrated how to explore security incidents by location and type through the Security metric. Mr. Cummins explained the security data was all the activity reported to, or by, security, such as criminal activity, activity reported by passengers, graffiti, vandalism, maintenance issues, or biohazard events. He noted not all security incidents were crimes, but all crimes fall under security. The data was collected from the 24 hour a day 7 day a week security operations center. The data was primarily collected from security officers around stations and on board trains but was also received from communications to the "Say Something, See Something" phone lines from passengers and employees. The information received at the security operations center was the data presented on the dashboard, if information was received through other channels, such as the customer service line, did not always make it to the data set. In November 2021, the Mount Baker community raised concerns about safety in, and around, the Mount Baker station. The data did not show any concerns, but working with the community, staff was able to validate the concerns that would not have been made using data alone.

Prior to February 2020, the data was more consistent and reliable primarily due to recent challenges with low security staffing. In March 2020, COVID brought on several impacts to security data. Mr. Cummins spoke to the actions that would take place to address security data numbers. Staff was in procurement cycle for a new contracted security vendor that would address issues regarding paid benefits, training supervision, and expectations to increase availability to resources and reduce turnover. Mr. Cummins would present the vendor contracts to the committee in January 2023 for discussion and to request contract authorization. Another action being taken was establishing an internal public safety field activity program which would eventually operate 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This unit would be responsible for all contracted safety and security resources to ensure expectations were being met. Hiring for this unit was underway and Mr. Cummins expected completion within six to nine months. Another action being taken was staffing the security operations center with contract security providers and internal superintendents to ensure expectations were being met and data was being collected and documented by contracted security. Lastly, Mr. Cummins expected data collection would improve in 2023 to include inputs from customer complaints, data from law enforcement, ridership, facilities, and new field unit.

Chair Walker thanked staff and noted the importance of staff addressing concerns that would be brought through these performance metrics presentations.

Update on Fare Ambassadors Program

Russ Arnold, Chief Passenger Experience & Innovation Officer, and Katie Drewel, Government and Community Relations Officer for the South Corridor, provided the report. Mr. Arnold reviewed highlights

of the program. He noted that the majority of the feedback from passengers had been positive, staff developed standard operating procedures for Fare Ambassadors, there was added presence and assistance during service disruptions, and the agency saw an increase in ID compliance. A few challenges the program faced included the current inspection rate being at 2 percent, which was less than the 10 percent goal. Other challenges included working on improving efficiency in interactions, the new ORCA transition introducing inconsistency in ORCA card validation results over the summer, increased negative interactions with Fare Ambassadors, and an increase in feedback from riders as Fare Ambassadors shared details of the upcoming fare compliance policy. Mr. Arnold reminded the committee that when the term compliance rate was used, it meant the total fare inspections conducted by a fare ambassador compared to the total boardings for a given mode.

Mr. Arnold provided an update on staffing. Staff totaled 21 persons and the goal was 28. The team continued to advance a blended staff model of Sound Transit full time employees and contracted staff to mirror how security was deployed. Each fare ambassador had undergone 92 hours of the updated training program, ranging from de-escalation, anti-bias/implicit bias, and disabilities sensitivity training.

Mr. Arnold briefed the committee on the teams' fare inspection rate and the fare engagement compliance rate during October 2021 through October 2022. Overall, ridership on Link and Sounder was at 20.9 million. Out of that, 220,962 inspections were performed, roughly covering 1 percent of ridership. Nearly 26,000 warnings were documented, and the average compliance rate was at 88 percent. Mr. Arnold reminded the committee of the different warnings with ID. Warnings with complete IDs meant enough information was provided for fare ambassadors to verify who the rider was. Warnings with incomplete ID meant riders provided information on who they were verbally or through means of another identification, such as a library card. Warnings with no ID meant riders were choosing to not provide any information or choosing not to engage with the fare ambassadors.

Passengers currently self-identify their race or ethnicity and an origin and destination survey was planned to take place at the end of 2023 so information could be compared with overall rider demographics and to highlight that there was a significant portion of passengers that were choosing to not disclose their race or ethnicity. This information was only collected when there was a violation and did not represent all riders inspected.

There were notable themes in fare ambassador feedback regarding passenger interactions and system comments. Passenger interactions included assistance with ORCA usage, such as when or where to tap off, information on ORCA LIFT and fully subsidized cards, providing information on crisis resources and emergency service resources to riders requesting them, and answering questions how to travel around the Seattle area. Another passenger interaction subcategory was de-escalation. The team continued to de-escalate contentious interactions between fare ambassadors and passengers without proof of payment. Under System comments, the subcategory safety included feedback such as continued requests for more visible public safety personnel and cleanliness of the vehicles. Another subcategory included fare access, such as riders still having challenges with tapping on and off, inconsistent validator locations within the system, and confusion on negative balance and the importance of tapping off. There were over 500 responses to the agency onboard survey.

The internal resolutions department was 75 percent completed with the steps needed to resolve fines for customers. It was targeted to go live Q1 2023. The last 25 percent to be completed was the software program update and upgrade from a third-party vendor.

Ms. Drewel reviewed the ORCA LIFT enrollment update. After continuous growth in ORCA LIFT participation through early 2020, the enrollment declined with COVID-19. The decline coincided with the decline in ridership and the closure of enrollment offices. It was estimated that the likely market for ORCA LIFT across Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties was about 105,000 low-income riders who do not qualify for the senior or disabled reduced fare programs or for other Passport or U-Pass programs. The agency reached a high of about 60 percent of enrollment in January 2020 and a low of about 39

percent in June 2021. Currently, enrollment was at about 50,000. The Board set a goal of 80 percent enrollment of the likely market of low-income transit riders to be achieved over the course of the next several years. Based on Sound Transit's experience and that of partners, that effort would require a multi-faceted approach, including, the formation of a cross-departmental working group. The working group had started with strategic planning that would inform the development of a work plan to guide efforts to achieve the goal set by the Board. There were also several activities already underway, including the direct engagement work of fare ambassadors, and enrollment events at tiny house villages, the Columbia City farmers market, and the Odessa Brown Clinic.

In setting the goal to enroll 80 percent of the likely ORCA LIFT market, the Board identified a number of barriers facing potential participants. In many cases, these barriers were systemic, and staff was working with agency partners to navigate them while also developing the agency strategy and work plan.

Ms. Drewel reviewed the two categories of barriers and the activities that were underway to begin addressing them. The first barrier was navigating the enrollment process. These include language and technology access, navigating the eligibility check and providing documentation, constraints on accessing in-person enrollment opportunities, mental health or substance use issues and more. To address these issues in accessing and navigating the enrollment process, staff was coordinating agency partners, supporting new enrollment agencies in Pierce and Snohomish Counties, and making improvements to the materials about reduced fare programs that were shared with customers and offered to enrollment partners. Staff made sure the regional message was simple, clear and consistent.

Another set of barriers was related to a lack of program awareness or institutional trust. This included the fact that some traditional communications strategies were not effective in reaching the intended audiences. To address these issues, staff was building on existing research about how best to reach riders. The agency and its partners were also working to promote the \$1 LIFT fare and do other direct engagement events.

Next steps for the ORCA LIFT enrollment included finalizing strategy and begin implementing work plan, supporting existing and three new enrollment agencies in Pierce and Snohomish counties, and continue coordination with ORCA partners and community agencies on best practices and system-level efforts.

Next steps for Fare Engagement included implementation of the Fare Paid Zone inspection pilot, onboarding contracted staff, the full rollout for the permanent program with citations, and returning to the Rider Experience and Operations Committee in Q1 for another progress update.

Chair Walker asked about the ORCA LIFT outreach and working with new agencies meant there would be multiple sources of outreach or if it would be directed to one hub and resource. Ms. Drewel committed to providing more information to Chair Walker about the process. Ms. Drewel spoke to the process in Pierce County in that outreach was through community health care. Passengers can enroll in health care centers rather than the Tacoma Dome location, as well as online and at outreach events.

Presentation on ORCA 2.0

Brittney Esdaile, Director of Regional Fare Systems, provided the presentation. ORCA was being replaced to improve customer experience, update technology, and transforming the ORCA experience towards future innovation. Ms. Esdaile reviewed the launch phases from a customer vantage point. The Legacy ORCA existed from 2009-2022 with the classic payment method of the ORCA card through card readers and could be purchased at stores and vending machines. In May 2022, a new website and mobile app was launched and transitions towards new ORCA equipment began. In October 2022, all equipment was transitioned, legacy equipment was no longer present, and a new card was introduced.

On May 16, 2022, the new customer website and new mobile app was launched, over 9,000 devices transitioned, 5 million customer accounts were transitioned, and data reported 7 million ORCA card taps

each month. The launch supported free youth fare roll out and was seamlessly integrating ORCA into ST system expansions.

On October 5, 2022, retail network stores were launched. There were 205 stores currently online and continued expansion was expected over the coming months throughout King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. Ms. Esdaile reviewed which stores passengers could visit to reload or purchase a new ORCA card. QFC and Fred Meyer had the technology to reload onto new and legacy ORCA cards, whereas Albertsons, Safeway, and Haggen stores were only able to reload onto new cards. Passengers were still able to visit stations and buy through vending machines, mobile apps, or customer service locations.

Finally, in 2023, there would be a new tap to pay option launched. Tap to pay was of significant customer interest. Teams were working towards delivery, but the launch required equipment to full transition, it was dependent on several large third parties, and there were rapid changes in payment technology. The rollout would likely start first half of 2023 and staff wanted to ensure the solution worked well and had a long lifespan.

Executive session – None.

Other business – CEO Timm acknowledged that senate passed the bill to avert the rail strike discussed at the beginning of the meeting.

Next meeting

Thursday, January 19, 2023
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via WebEx

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

APPROVED on _____, JG.

ATTEST:

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator