



Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting March 14, 2024

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Committee Chair Balducci.

The meeting was recorded and can be found at <https://www.soundtransit.org/get-to-know-us/board-directors/livestream-video>.

Roll call of members

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

Board Members	
(A) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(P) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(A) Jim Kastama, Puyallup Mayor
(P) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor	(P) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
	(P) Dan Strauss, Seattle Councilmember

Alejandro Monzon, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the System Expansion Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Welcoming New Committee Members

Chair Balducci welcomed Redmond Mayor Angela Birney, Seattle Councilmember Dan Strauss, and Puyallup Mayor Jim Kastama to the Committee.

Agency Progress Report

In addition to the materials in the meeting packet, Board members received links to the January agency progress report and the Project Performance Tracker.

CEO Report

Interim Chief Executive Officer Goran Sparrman provided the report.

Activation Update

CEO Sparrman reported that King County Metro completed simulated service along the 2 Line which confirms that the system is ready to operate under a variety of anticipated scenarios, and the project team is working to complete the tire repair work in preparation for the April 27th opening day. The Ribbon cutting event will take place at 10 a.m. at the Bellevue Downtown Station Plaza, with festivities at all eight new stations from 11 a.m. to 4p.m. Sound Transit will be partnering with several regional and Eastside organization to host the event.

Next month, the agency plans to start pre-revenue testing along the Lynnwood Link Extension to prepare for the opening later this year. Mr. Sparrman noted he has directed the Asset Transition Office to provide a more in-depth update of both the 2 Line and Lynnwood Link Extension at a future meeting.

Federal Funding

Late Friday night, Congress approved an appropriations bill that includes the final payment of the Lynnwood Link Extension Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA), 3 years ahead of schedule. When paired with last year's early pay-off of the Federal Way Link Extension FFGA, this will result in more than \$40 million in finance cost savings. Mr. Sparrman thanked Senator Patty Murray for her aid in delivering the funds as the Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Additionally, \$7 million in Congressionally Directed Spending requests were secured by the Agency. Senator Murray secured \$3 million, each, for the project development for the West Seattle Link and the Ballard Link Extensions. Congressman Smith secured \$500,000 in funding for early construction activities at the South Renton Transit Center, and Congresswoman DelBene secured \$500,000 to advance the design of the Everett Link Extension's Ash Way Station.

With the release of President Biden's FY2025 budget, the agency will continue to work closely with the congressional delegation. Additionally, Sound Transit was recently notified of an award of approximately \$70 million under the Neighborhood Access and Equity Federal Grant Program. This is a new program at the US Department of Transportation, and the funds will go towards building Stride BRT Stations in Tukwila and South Renton.

Public comment

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

Written public comments:

Paul Bucich for the City of Lakewood

Sara Kiesler

Jan Roberts, Gale Sketchley, Matt Larson, Joan Jansen, Marilyn Kennell, Aaron Broyde, Maggie Fimia, and John Niles

Michele Smith for the Museum of Pop Culture

Leslie Parrott

John Ho

John Hogan

Prem Subedi

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

Betty Lau

Brien Chow

Marilyn Kennell

Ashley-Nichole Holland

Marykate Ryan

Erin Rubin

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

Joe Kunzler

Phillip Gustavson



Project Performance Tracker Update

Moises Gutierrez, Chief System Quality Officer, shared that the information for the most recent update to the online Project Performance Tracker is from the end of January 2024 and was updated on March 5, 2024.

Beginning with Projects in Planning, Mr. Gutierrez reported that there were no status changes to report this month.

For Projects in Construction, Mr. Gutierrez noted that there was one status change. For the East Link Extension project, the budget risk status has shifted from green to yellow, due to uncertainty of contractor claims and the potential of those costs to exceed the budget. The agency continues to evaluate received claims for merit. The Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension's schedule risk continues to show in red as project close-out and claims work continues, even as the project has entered revenue service.

Chair Balducci asked if it is possible for there to be a budget risk even after opening a project. Mr. Gutierrez confirmed that as claim work draws out after the project opening, there continues to be risk to the project budget, that staff would surface once confirmed.

In concluding, Mr. Gutierrez noted that there could be potential budget and schedule status changes for the West Seattle Link Extension. He is working with CEO Sparrman and CFO Henry to proactively work on solutions to develop a plan to confront challenges as they arrive.

Chair Balducci asked for clarification on the budget risk highlighted for East Link. Mr. Gutierrez responded that the risk stems from received contractor claims when compared against the project budget.

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: February 8, 2024 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Board member Roscoe, seconded by Board member Strauss, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the February 8, 2024, System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2024-12: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract with Titan Earthwork, LLC to construct the East Link Extension Mitigation in the City of Mercer Island at 76th Ave SE and 80th Ave SE project in the amount of \$3,070,644, with a 15 percent contingency of \$460,597, for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$3,531,241.

Chad Brown, East Link Extension Deputy Executive Project Director, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci asked a clarification question on whether this contract is needed to mitigate the effects of the East Link Project on Mercer Island. Mr. Brown confirmed that the work under this contract is to mitigate the effects on traffic flow around the Mercer Island portion of the project. Chair Balducci further asked to ensure that this is not related to the HOV lane access on I-90. Ron Lewis, Executive Director of Design, Engineering, and Construction Management, confirmed that this work is not associated with HOV Lane access and is to mitigate impacts to traffic flows around the station.

Chair Balducci noted that while this is a smaller contract in terms of dollar value, the reason it is before the committee is due to the variance above the Cost Estimate. She asked about lessons learned and what improvements are being considered.

Mr. Brown responded that the cost estimate conducted to support the procurement of this contract was completed last year and additional necessary work pushed the procurement period further out from the initial analysis. Moreover, the cost estimate undervalued the operational aspects needed to work through active traffic in the area.

Vice Chair Roscoe asked which of the major cost factors was the largest contributor. Mr. Brown stated the signal pole and the traffic control costs were the two main contributors.

It was moved by Board member Roscoe, seconded by Board member Franklin, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-12 be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2024-13: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract modification with Hatch Associates Consultants Inc. (formerly known as LTK Engineering) to (1) extend engineering consulting and inspection services for the 152 Series 2 Light rail vehicles (LRVs) in the amount of \$5,499,667 with a 10 percent contingency of \$549,966, not to exceed \$6,049,633 and (2) support the purchase and delivery of 10 additional Series 2 LRVs from Siemens, contingent on Board approval of Motion No. M2024-14, in the amount of \$3,509,917, with a 10 percent contingency of \$350,992, not to exceed \$3,860,909, for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$30,853,185.

Shankar Rajaram, Executive Project Director for Revenue Vehicles, and Tracy Reed, Deputy Executive Director for Project Management and Program Strategy, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci asked for additional information on the vehicles themselves to provide context to this contract's scope. Mr. Rajaram stated that there are currently 152 total vehicles to be manufactured by Siemens to support the ST2 Link Extensions. Of those 152, 40 were procured and ready to support the opening of the Northgate Extension. To date, 107 of the ST2 vehicle have been received, commissioned, and are in service. Twenty vehicles are currently at the Operations and Maintenance Facilities in Seattle and Bellevue for commissioning work, and the remaining vehicles are being manufactured.

Ms. Reed noted that this is not a maintenance contract, but instead supports the commission of received vehicles. Mr. Rajaram clarified that the first part of the contract modification is to continue funding the work for the current 152 vehicle order due to delays encountered during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The second part is to support the 10 additional vehicles that the Board may authorize the procurement of in the following motion.

Chair Balducci inquired if staff believe that the requested amount in the motion would carry the project to close out for the work of the 152-vehicle order. Mr. Rajaram answered affirmatively.

Chair Balducci asked about the experience with the contractor and whether they have been satisfactorily completing the work. Mr. Rajaram said he does believe the teams have been working well.

It was moved by Board member Harrell, seconded by Board member Roscoe, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-13 be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2024-14: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a sole source contract modification with Siemens Industry, Inc. to (a) procure 10 additional Light Rail Vehicles and additional spare parts in the amount of \$76,000,000 and (b) increase the contract contingency by \$2,000,000, for a combined total of \$78,000,000, for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$763,491,565.

Mr. Rajaram and Ms. Reed continued with the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci noted that seeing the system's vehicle fleet grow from the initial 60 vehicles has been exciting.

It was moved by Board member Franklin, seconded by Board member Harrell, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-14 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2024-04: Selecting the non-motorized and transit improvements to be built to improve access to the Lakewood Station as part of the Lakewood Station Access Improvements Project, amending the ST2 Plan.

Chelsea Levy, Deputy Executive Director of Capital Project Development, and Zachary Eskenazi, High-Capacity Transit Development Manager, gave the staff presentation for this and the following actions.

Board member Strauss asked for confirmation that two reasons supporting the staff recommendation to not pursue additional parking structures at the stations are the current ridership expectations and the parking structure costs making the project unaffordable. Mr. Eskenazi confirmed the affordability piece and clarified it's not the ridership numbers, but rather the low parking utilization rate at the current parking sites.

Board member Strauss, citing his experiences as a transit rider, questioned the staff recommendation to forgo additional parking as he has just recently seen increased transit ridership with more return-to-office practices. Mr. Eskenazi responded that while ridership has fallen from the 2019 figures at both stations, the parking utilization rate fell by comparable or greater rates, showing that parking and ridership are not inherently tied. Board member Strauss posed the question of how staff can know the need for parking will not return.

Chair Balducci noted that this is a frequent question that pops up with these projects. She emphasized that while modeling influences the decisions, there is no real way of knowing future travel patterns.

Don Billen, Executive Director of Planning, Environmental, and Project Development, concurred with Chair Balducci and stated that staff have been monitoring the return-to-office decisions and their impact to ridership. In short, Mr. Billen summarized that shorter, urban trips are returning faster than longer commutes. He also stated that with the current projections, it is likely that newly built parking structures at these stations would go unused for some time.

Chair Balducci asked when the access improvements could be constructed. Mr. Eskenazi stated the goal is to be complete by 2030, and Ms. Levy added a clarifying point that the Cities would be delivering the improvements over the years, while aiming for a final completion date in 2030.

Vice Chair Roscoe noted her excitement for these projects in Pierce County. She also opined on the idea that even if parking utilization doesn't rise and drive higher ridership, ensuring that the growing population of the region has additional transit-oriented access to these stations is important. She asked if there are any Sound Transit policies that obligate the agency to construct parking at facilities, noting the abundance of private lots and garages in Seattle.

Mr. Billen responded that the agency is not obligated by internal policy to provide parking at any facilities. He added that parking improvements or structures were included in voter-approved plans, which the Board has the authority of amend to account for new information and changes over time. These actions do include an amendment to the ST2 Plan.

Board member Strauss stated that is in favor of the amended suite of improvements recommended by staff. His previous line of questions was to get at the rather limited set of data currently informing these decisions, since the agency is building for the future growth of the region.

Chair Balducci inquired into the local communities' responses to these improvements. Mr. Eskenazi responded that, through engagement work, the communities have expressed support for the access improvements that better integrate station access with the surrounding neighborhood.

It was moved by Board member Roscoe, seconded by Board member Strauss, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-04 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2024-05: Selecting the non-motorized and transit improvements to be built to improve access to the South Tacoma Station as part of the South Tacoma Station Access Improvements Project, amending the ST2 Plan.

Chair Balducci noted that the information for this action was included in the previous presentation.

It was moved by Board member Roscoe, seconded by Board member Birney, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-05 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Motion No. M2024-15: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute funding agreements at the not-to-exceed amounts and with the local jurisdictions identified in Attachment A and Attachment B to come from the budgeted station access allowance funding included as part of the Stride Program.

Alex Krieg, Director of Access, Integration, and Station Area Planning, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci asked for additional information on the improvements for the Bellevue Transit Center. Mr. Krieg responded that it includes updated trip signage, repainting, and decluttering to better passenger flow through the area.

It was moved by Board member Franklin, seconded by Board member Strauss, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-15 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Motion No. M2024-16: Authorizing the chief executive officer to increase certain Lynnwood Link Extension contract contingencies and existing intergovernmental agreement amounts as necessary using contingency available within the Lynnwood Link Extension Baseline budget, for a total authorized cumulative contingency expenditure not to exceed \$15,000,000.

Randy Harlow, Lynnwood Link Extension Executive Project Director, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci noted that she had to ask a few additional questions in advance to understand the action and feels that an action such as this captures the essence of the Technical Advisory Group's recommendation to accelerate project delivery but pushing decisions to the appropriate levels.

It was moved by Board member Somers, seconded by Board member Franklin, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-16 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2024-06: Authorizing the chief executive officer to acquire certain real property interests, including acquisition by condemnation to the extent authorized by law, and to reimburse eligible relocation and reestablishment expenses incurred by affected owners and tenants as necessary for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension project.

Faith Roland, Real Property Director, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Board member Balducci noted that this action is similar to previous early acquisitions items brought to the Board.

It was moved by Board member Roscoe, seconded by Board member Somers, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-06 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2024-07: Authorizing the chief executive officer to acquire certain real property interests, contingent on receipt of any necessary federal approvals, including acquisition by condemnation to the extent authorized by law, and to reimburse eligible relocation and reestablishment expenses incurred by affected owners and tenants as necessary for the West Seattle Link Extension project, and as applicable for the Ballard Link Extension project.

Faith Roland, Real Property Director, and Ron Endlich, Project Manager, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Board member Strauss asked for clarification on the parcels needed for the West Seattle Link Extension and for the Ballard Link Extension. Ms. Roland responded that there are three parcels included in the package that could be needed for both projects, and those have been indicated in Exhibit A accompanying the Resolution.

Chair Balducci inquired into the screening criteria to determine that these parcels be included in this action. Mr. Endlich responded that due to staff workloads at the Federal Transit Administration and Sound Transit, the properties with the most complex acquisition scenarios were identified for this action. Ms. Roland added that as these are all full parcel acquisitions, they are typically easier to identify earlier than partial acquisitions which really rely on decisions in final design to complete.

Chair Balducci noted that the presentation stated that while tenants would not be displaced, they could take advantage of the rights conferred by the Intent to Acquire. She asked when the agency would be in a place to begin displacing tenants or pushing harder on the acquisition process. Ms. Roland answered that forced displacements cannot occur until the Record of Decision is filed with FTA, following the selection of the project to be built.

Chair Balducci asked about the differences between benefits for owners and tenants. Ms. Roland responded that the agency buys real property and moves personal property. Services are available to help tenants determine new locations as needed for their purposes.

Chair Balducci asked what would occur if the agency acquired a parcel that ends up not being needed. Ms. Roland answered that the property would be subject to the normal surplus and disposition process.

Chair Balducci asked for a timeline of when these project decisions for the West Seattle Link Extension are expected. Mr. Endlich responded that the Final Environmental Impact Statement is set to be published in mid-2024, with staff planning to bring an action to select the project to be built shortly thereafter.

It was moved by Board member Roscoe, seconded by Board member Somers, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-07 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Report from the Technical Advisory Group

Ken Johnsen, with the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) provided the presentation and shared key takeaways. Takeaways included a new and improved implementation plan, good collaboration between TAG and agency staff, there was more work to do but the agency was on the correct track and needing to prioritize projects over process to meet budgets and schedules. He reiterated the TAG's recommendation.

For recommendation 1, trust, progress updates included raising CEO delegates authority, a Board retreat, staff recommendations to the Board, and quantifying the impacts of project delay. TAG's feedback included that trust should be the underlying focus, continue to assess what actions were brought to the Board using this meeting as an example of an action-heavy agenda, and the need for a regional perspective. For recommendation 2, Capital delivery staff, progress updates noted the Deputy CEO candidate selection was moving forward; TAG's feedback was for the agency to begin moving on the ST2 and ST3 Deputy Director positions. For recommendation 3, decision-making, progress updates included identifying barriers to faster decision-making and reviewing the change control board (CCB); TAG's feedback was for the agency to continue seeking industry expertise and feedback, limit CCB role, prioritize projects over process, have faster decision making while still documenting, and staff training and recognition.

For recommendation 4, owner of choice, progress updates included improving invoice processing timelines and data management and baselining; TAG's feedback for the agency was to focus on payments, change orders, and project closeout, pursue early wins, prioritize projects over process, pay attention to outliers, and continue to seek industry and fellow owner feedback. For recommendation 5, betterments, progress updates included updating and consolidating existing policies and engaging Board members in strategic discussions; TAG's feedback for the agency was to address betterments at all phases of project delivery, quickly escalate unresolved issues, and explore use of essential public facility designation and additional legislative authority. Mr. Johnsen noted betterment issues was a common difficulty across many agencies. For recommendation 6, FTA, progress updates included continuing CEO/DCEO/FTA relationship building and inventory of FTA/staff touchpoints; TAG's feedback for the agency included continuing the building of those relationships and exploring pilot projects.

Next steps included ongoing collaboration with staff through monthly check-ins between TAG leadership and agency staff and ad-hoc implementation progress check-ins. TAG will return to the Executive and System Expansion Committees at least quarterly throughout 2024.

Chair Balducci thanked the TAG members for their report and expressed excitement in the progress being made in implementing their recommendations.

Report from the Board Independent Consultant Dave Peters

Dave Peters, the Board's Independent Consultant, provided the presentation. His current activities included engagement with the Ballard Link Extension team to receive briefings on the South Lake Union/Harrison station alternative feasibility study. The engineering was well along, and the team was moving forward to assessing the implications with constructability, maintenance of traffic, transit integration, utility relocations, and cost and schedule. Mr. Peters will return and report back as the team furthered the study. He also received an agency staff briefing on the procurement of 10 additional Series 2 LRVs. He observed cost for LRVs were increasing nationwide and was a result of COVID-19. He mentioned this because it presented a concern for the next procurement for over 240 Series 3 LRVs.

Mr. Peters reviewed the status of previous recommendations including changing the project delivery method for parking, pre-purchasing long lead-time equipment and materials and system-wide contracts, implementing technical standards for repetitive design elements, embracing a culture of urgency for the agency, Board, and stakeholders, and establishing an independent megaproject delivery team.

Chair Balducci thanked Mr. Peters for his work on reviewing agency work and meeting with Board members to provide additional clarity on technical aspects.

Status of Implementing the Technical Advisory Group recommendations

Moises Gutierrez, Chief System Quality Officer, began the presentation and noted an updated version of the tracking table was included in the members' packets. Citing the previous reports from the Technical Advisory Group and Dave Peters, he stressed that he will focus-in on a few slides.

For Recommendation 1, Mr. Gutierrez noted that significant activity has been underway to support the implementation of rebuilding trust with the Board and Agency. CEO Sparrman implemented additional delegations of signing authority to staff, raising the dollar value threshold under which the CEO's signature would be required on contracts. Additionally, the Board Retreat held two weeks ago was a successful opportunity for the Board and staff to collaborate and align on a shared vision for regional decision-making. There are still actions to follow-up on from the Retreat, and staff are working on developing those responses.

Citing the TAG's previous report, Mr. Gutierrez quickly reviewed Recommendation 2, related to the hiring of the Deputy CEO for Megaproject Delivery.

For Recommendations 3 and 4, which are both related to internal improvements, Mr. Gutierrez shared that guidance in line with input from TAG members was issued last week, taking effect immediately, to streamline contract change management processes. Additional work continues on improvements related to more timely processing of payments, change orders, and contract close-out.

Noting that the next presentation will cover work to update the Agency's betterment policies, Mr. Gutierrez deferred his overview of Recommendation 5.

For Recommendation 6, CEO Sparrman has taken on the effort to continue to build the Agency's relationship with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Key areas of priority in this workstream includes streamlining existing meetings with FTA, clearly defining agency points of responsibility with the FTA, and establishing a stronger relationship with the FTA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

In closing, Mr. Gutierrez noted that staff have taken the TAG's direction to not let perfection halt progress on this work.

Chair Balducci remarked that she feels like the Agency is on an upward trajectory in not only implementing the process-related recommendations, but also regarding increased collaboration between leadership and the Board as well.

Presentation on Scope Control Policy Updates

Alex Krieg, Director of Access, Integration and Station Area Planning, provided the presentation. As a reminder, TAG's recommendation 5 was to strengthen and enforce an agency betterments policy. Per the Board's Scope Control Policy, a betterment was defined as project elements that were not clearly: 1) included in the initial project scope, 2) necessary in the normal course of completing the initial project scope, 3) included in the project definition, or 4) among the mitigation measures indicated in the final environmental documentation for the project. Examples of agency betterments included the bus layover at Kent Station for King County Metro as part of the Kent Station Parking and Access Improvement project authorized through Motion No. M2023-88, constructing a sanitary sewer line for City of Shoreline as part of the Lynnwood Link Extension project through Motion No. M2022-80, and upsizing wastewater pipe for King County Wastewater as part of the OMF East project through Motion No. M2018-07. Betterments were discreet capital elements that were required to bring forward for Board approval above a certain cost threshold to incorporate into a capital project.

Betterments were not part of the core capital project scope. Better clarity about project definition would give staff the ability to address and respond to betterment requests. Projects were not developed in a vacuum and the agency must engage in local, state, federal, and tribal regulatory processes. Adopted Sound Transit standards, guidelines, and requirements supported agency ability to clearly state what was necessary for operational and passenger success.

There were existing policies related to betterments such as the scope control policy, reimbursement policy, and the policies to guide permitting activities of Sound Transit staff. Mr. Krieg referred to Mr. Johnsen's TAG presentation which stated that if there was a full policy related to betterments it was not

widely known or understood. Staff agreed with that statement in that the listed policies were insufficient and were not consistently applied by project teams. Staff proposed to consolidate and strengthen them.

Major policy topics staff planned to address included clarifying and emphasizing that Sound Transit was an essential public facility, solidifying definition of project scope throughout project development, formalizing incorporation of Sound Transit standards and requirements, defining betterment outside of core scope, Sound Transit standards and requirements, and required mitigation, clarifying Sound Transit status and standing in regulatory processes, and improving enforcement of and accountability to an updated policy. Staff plan to share and enforce accountability by creating pathways to resolve disputes at all levels including project staff and management, government relations, legal, agency leadership, and the Board. Project decisions could and would impact the regional system and this policy update would support systemwide thinking.

Staff was drafting a policy update and would incorporate Board input, engage regularly with TAG, and present a policy update for potential Board action at the April 2024 Executive Committee meeting.

Vice Chair Roscoe asked if it would be possible to show what impact non-adherence to the patchwork of betterment-related policies has had on the projects constructed by the Agency. She noted that a full accounting write-up is not necessary, but seeing projects elements that perhaps should not have been included would help to increase transparency on the information when the Board is asked to review the updated Policy. Chari Balducci noted that Mr. Gutierrez and Mr. Krieg were both nodding in response to Vice Chair Roscoe's request.

Chair Balducci spoke to the difference between the Agency mitigating the impacts of its projects on the surrounding area and community and local jurisdictions using permit requirements to extract concessions from the Agency.

Board member Somers agreed with the sentiments expressed by Vice Chair Roscoe on wanting to ensure that the eventual line drawn between necessary mitigation efforts and betterments is carefully placed so as to not short-change the areas that will be having major projects constructed in the future.

Presentation on At-grade Crossing

Braden Porter, Acting Chief Safety Officer, and Anna Huntington, Director of Safety, provided an update on the Rainier Valley at-grade crossing. Service opened in 2009 in the Rainier Valley corridor with approximately 4.5 miles of semi-exclusive right of way. There were 3 at-grade stations: Columbia City, Othello, Rainier Beach stations and 27 at-grade crossings, including 9 pedestrian-only crossings. The program's priorities included reducing collisions and near misses with trains, vehicles and pedestrians, providing a consistent and safe passenger experience system-wide, supporting reliable service, mitigate impacts to operational performance, increasing community perception of safety of Sound Transit's service, building positive, proactive relationships with surrounding communities that foster trust, increasing ease of access within the immediate community, and increasing accessibility of the Sound Transit network for all.

There were two phases of community engagement efforts. Phase 1 took place in winter 2022 and phase 2 began in 2023 and was ongoing. The engagement summary for phase 1 included reaching out to over 30 community-based organizations, receiving responses from 13 organizations and community leaders, circulating a survey created by the Accessibility Services Division, surveying Link operators, and a partnership agreement signed with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) in August 2022. Phase 2 included continuing to engage and maintain established relationships, sharing internal efforts underway to address community concerns, and utilizing the Equitable Engagement Toolkit.

For screening safety enhancement ideas, the evaluation process overview included collecting all safety enhancement ideas, team research and discussion, prioritizing efforts based on screening, and further research and planning. Mr. Porter shared a table of safety enhancement ideas organized by three categories: administrative controls, engineering controls, and roadway design. Administrative controls

touched on safety education, encouragement, and operations procedures. Engineering controls touched on audible, visual, and physical infrastructure, technology, and vehicle. Roadway redesign included consolidating crossings, eliminating crossings, grade separate, amongst others. Safety enhancements that were scored highly were prioritized and others with lower scores were placed on hold. Mr. Porter noted that some of the potential enhancement ideas may come through the System Expansion Committee, such as when infill stations are being planned and designed.

CEO Sparrman noted that he is committed to elevating the importance of safety across the system, especially regarding at-grade crossings in the Rainier Valley.

Ms. Huntington briefed on the safety education that took place before, during, and after construction but mentioned the Rainier Valley community felt abandoned after the station opened in 2009. As part of the at-grade program, the agency enacted community engagement in the community in order to hold to values to being responsive and transparent and engage in two-way conversations. Mr. Huntington shared the community events the team actively participated with. The Rainier Valley area had Sound Transit security staff that were trained to communicate and encourage riders to safely interact with the trains. This practice would be implemented once East Link was in service and was also happening on the Sounder service.

Ms. Huntington reviewed completed engineering projects such as adjusting the light rail bell volume. Through various partnerships, the following projects were completed: LOOK pavement markings, RxR pavement markings in left turn pockets, refreshing all crosswalk and lane line markings, updating static signs, upgrading "No Left Turn" dynamic warning sign, and upgrading "Another Train Coming" dynamic warning sign. Sound Transit, in partnership with SDOT, applied and was awarded \$2 million in grant funding (SMART grant) with \$465,000 Sound Transit local contribution to demonstrate innovative emerging technologies to enhance safety. This pilot would test real time multi-modal detection for 24/7 365-day awareness. Technologies included video analytics, touchless pedestrian push buttons, vehicle to everything (V2X) communications, smart technology traffic signals, and signal system battery backup. The traffic signals along Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Way south corridor between S Walden and S Henderson St currently allowed for full prioritization of light rail vehicles (LRV). The current corridor was designed in a way that a LRV placed a call to the traffic controller then the traffic controller would adjust the signal operations to minimize the stops between the stations. The current agreement with SDOT, east/west pedestrian places were allowed to be skipped once. However, due to limitations of traffic controllers, it was skipped more than once. Northbound and Southbound movements were allowed to be skipped multiple times which could result in long wait times for vehicles and pedestrians. The Signal Reprioritization Pilot would change how the signal system prioritized the 1 Line service through the corridor. The goal was reducing pedestrian wait time and north/south left turning vehicle wait time. Phase 1 of this pilot had already begun and phase 2 would complete in Q2 2024.

Ms. Huntington reviewed exploring pedestrian gates at stations. Through engagement work and idea screening efforts, gates or some sort of barrier treatment to prevent pedestrians from entering intersections when a train is approaching was recommended for further development. The team took this feedback and formed data collection activities, consulted regulatory standards, interviewed peer agencies, coordinated with partners at SDOT, and coordinated a feasibility study which concluded late 2023. Based on the study, it was feasible to install gates at the crossings that were adjacent to Columbia City and Othello stations. Other locations were constrained by auto traffic lanes and installations would have tradeoffs with impacts to the corridor such as removal of automobile lanes. This project was moving forward with 30 percent design and safety analyses traffic studies and service impacts and expect to begin early fall 2024. This summer, the team planned for community engagement, activities to collect stakeholder feedback. The team will report back with findings in fall 2024.

Mr. Porter reviewed next steps for 2024 showed how the team would advance safety enhancement projects, begin design of potential gates and collecting community feedback, and coordinating with the

Graham Street station project team. Mr. Porter emphasized that strong community involvement was crucial to these steps.

Board member Harrell thanked the staff and leadership for their renewed engagement and effort to raise solutions for this serious issue. He also asked for more information on the causes so that he can ensure that the solutions being pursued are directly addressing the issues.

CEO Sparrman responded that staff will include that additional information when they return, and a large portion of the issue is general inattention.

Chair Balducci noted that with the East Link opening, lessons learned from Seattle’s Rainier Valley can be critical to ensuring safe operations on the 2 Line. She added that part of her reasoning for asking staff to present this report at the System Expansion Committee was to elevate the potential longer-range and more-costly improvement that may be options should the more attainable fixes not provide the relief needed.

Executive session - None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, April 11, 2024
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room &
Virtually via WebEx

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

ATTEST:

Claudia Balducci
System Expansion Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, AJM.