

Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting April 3, 2025

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m. by Committee Chair Walker and was available for viewing in person and online.

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

Roll call of members

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

Board Members	
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) De'Sean Quinn, King County Councilmember
(P) Christine Frizzell, Lynnwood Mayor	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County
(P) Hunter George, Fircrest Councilmember	(P) Councilmember Girmay Zahilay, King County Council Chair

Hunter Rancipher, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Chair Walker introduced new members of the committee: Hunter George, Fircrest Councilmember, and De'Sean Quinn, King County Councilmember.

Chair Walker also provided brief remarks regarding Link service reliability, noting that the agency's riders deserve and expect higher levels of reliability and service. She highlighted that a joint presentation from agency staff and partners from King County Metro would be given later during the meeting and encouraged Board members to jump in and be heavily engaged in the topic as future reports are given.

CEO Report

Interim CEO Sparrman provided the CEO Report.

Link Intergovernmental Agreement Update

CEO Sparrman provided updates on ongoing work on the renegotiation of the Link Intergovernmental Agreement the agency has with King County Metro. He identified key priorities that agency and partner staff are addressing and noted that a joint presentation by King County and Sound Transit staff will be given to the committee in the coming months detailing further details on the work being done.

Public Safety Data Presentation

CEO Sparrman discussed the subject matter of the public safety presentation on the agenda. He encouraged board members to ask any questions and to reach out with any additional requests they may have after the presentation.

Public comment

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

Written comments were submitted by the following person:

Erica Cifra

There were no in-person or virtual comments given.

Business Items

For Committee final action

March 6, 2025, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince, seconded by Board member George, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that the minutes of the March 6, 2025, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Reports to the Committee

2025 Club World Cup and 2026 World Cup Update

Marie Olson, Acting Service Delivery Deputy CEO, and Juan Higuera, Executive Strategic Advisor, provided the report.

Mr. Higuera provided information on the details of the 2025 Club World Cup and 2026 Men's World Cup. He described that the 2025 Club World Cup consists of six games over a period of 10 days, taking place on both weekdays and weekends. The event is expected to attract 100,000-150,000 visitors to the region and that the event would have a similar impact on the system as the MLB All-Star game or the Summer 2024 Taylor Swift concert. The 2026 Men's World Cup consists of 6 games over a period of 22 days, all taking place on weekdays. There will be an expected 750k-1 million visitors for the 2026 World Cup and will have an impact similar to several major sporting events and concerts happening simultaneously. It was also noted that the 2026 World Cup will also include 10 FIFA sponsored Fan Zones, which include Seattle Center, Everett, and Tacoma.

Mr. Higuera provided additional detail on scheduling of games during both events, as well as noting the key priorities of the agency's Great Ride strategic goal: providing a clean, safe, reliable, redundant, cost efficient, and informed service throughout the events.

Mr. Higuera detailed initial plans for 2025 Club World Cup games, including demand specific plans for each mode, increased staffing to support security and other system elements, standby support for facilities and vertical transportation, deployment of staff ambassadors to provide customer support, temporary wayfinding and signage, and pre-event messages on the agency's website. He also detailed three confirmed pilot programs to support the 2025 Club World Cup: A station activation partnership at International District/Chinatown station, pilot wayfinding and signage similar to that seen at the Paris Olympics, and weekday special Sounder service and additional schedule modifications.

Mr. Higuera noted the different coordination levels that exist to support the 2026 World Cup, noting that Sound Transit is heavily involved at both the local and regional level. He provided additional detail on the 2026 World Cup schedule and other festivities planned to accompany the games.

Mr. Higuera highlighted key focus areas for 2026 World Cup preparations, such as completing Link extensions and Sounder capital projects, confirming service levels and capacity plans for all modes, developing robust passenger experience and communication plans, confirming fares approach and identifying fare media opportunities, completing key resiliency and state of good repair projects, and developing safety and security plans to support moving large crowds.

Board member Quinn asked about how visitors will be informed about specific wayfinding opportunities that are not readily apparent, such as riders being able to easily reach the stadiums from both Stadium and International District/Chinatown Stations. Mr. Higuera responded that the agency will be closely monitoring and assisting riders during the 2025 Club World Cup, and that crowd control during the 2026 World Cup will be done in coordination with FIFA and local law enforcement.

Board member Quinn also asked about language access for foreign visitors during these events. Mr. Higuera responded that conversations are in the early stages, noting that additional information will be shared as planning develops.

Chair Walker asked if track times have been confirmed for providing additional Sounder service during the 2025 Club World Cup. Mr. Higuera responded in the affirmative.

Chair Walker noted the difficulty of addressing recent resiliency challenges on Link, and asked how the public will be informed about progress being made and how public trust will be developed. CEO Sparman responded that the agency is turning a significant amount of attention towards resiliency issues for each individual asset class. He further noted that DCEOs Marie Olson and Moises Gutierrez are leading this work and ensuring that service is dependable and reliable come these major events. DCEO Olson also added that agency staff have attended conferences to learn about key takeaways from the Paris Olympics to assist in preparing the agency's services for these large-scale events.

Chair Walker asked for additional information on potential fare opportunities. She noted that ORCA's work is ongoing but was curious if specific timelines have been established to ensure proper fare access for these events. Mr. Higuera responded that conversation have begun to align regionally around specific fare topics. He specifically noted that the ORCA system is moving towards an open payment model for credit card usage at payment points, currently slated for completion of Q1 2026. He also highlighted that the agency is also looking at creating multi-day passes that could allow visitors to pay for one piece of fare media for their entire stay during the games.

Board member Quinn noted that a regional fare forum has started meeting and asked if it would be reasonable for the committee to receive a report on the progress of those discussions soon. Chair Walker shared her agreement with the idea and noted that it would be added to the agenda for a future meeting.

Chair Walker noted the importance of ensuring that regular riders are considered in planning for these events, highlighting that people will still rely on transit for commuting to work or other needs while visitors are utilizing the system for access to the Club World Cup and 2026 World Cup.

Passenger Impact Program

Pamela Wrenn, Link Right-of-Way Access Senior Program Manager, provided the report.

Ms. Wrenn provided information on future work at Pinehurst station scheduled for Q2 of 2025. She noted that the construction of stairwells at the station would take place from March 24, 2025 to April 13, 2025, and from April 26, 2025 to May 30, 2025. She noted that this work would result in single tracking from 5:30 p.m. to the end of service on weekdays during those periods, with 12-minute headways

system-wide. She further noted that this will occur on weekends as well, except for days with major events.

Ms. Wrenn described a major disruption from April 14, 2025 to April 23, 2025, where the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT) will be partially closed to allow the replacement of 600 feet of rail. She noted that passengers will see headways of 25-30 minutes in the tunnel, with trains running every 12 minutes both north and south of the tunnel. Passenger seeking to travel through the tunnel will have two forced transfers: one at Westlake and another at Stadium Station. Ms. Wrenn noted that passenger impacts will be significant, and that alternative service via local and express bus services will be emphasized to minimize passenger disruption. She also reported that additional resiliency projects are being planned to piggyback on the major disruption to expedite important Link reliability improvements.

Ms. Wrenn noted that the last weekend of closure for 2 Line integration into the DSTT is tentatively scheduled for the last weekend in May but may be delayed. She noted that this weekend work will not delay pre-revenue service if it needs to be rescheduled to a later date.

Board member Quinn asked for additional detail on the piggyback resiliency projects for the DSTT. Ms. Wrenn noted that a sewer survey and cleanout project in the sewer systems under the trackway is planned, as well as a fiber optic study which takes place above the Overhead Catenary System.

Chair Walker asked for additional clarification on alternative bus routes during the disruption, asking if bus routes denoted with a dotted line on a graphic represented weekday peak-hour only routes. Ms. Wrenn responded in the affirmative.

Public Safety Presentation

Moises Gutierrez, Agency Oversight Deputy CEO, and Brian de Place, Passenger Success Deputy Executive Director, provided the report.

Mr. de Place provided information on how public safety resources are being deployed on the system to benefit passenger and employee safety system wide. He noted recent public safety investments, including the authorization of the Fare Ambassador program in 2022, the authorization of three additional safety security contracts in 2023, budget authorization to establish the Field Activity Special Team in 2024, and ongoing budget authorization to support a variety of law enforcement and field team activities to enhance public safety.

Mr. de Place described the approach the agency takes towards public safety, or the deployment of various safety elements that specialize in specific areas to create a blanket of security when used in tandem. He described the utilization of King County Sheriffs, Security personnel, Fare Ambassadors, Station Agents, Field Activity Specialists, and Staff Ambassadors in various roles to effectively cover the system.

Mr. de Place gave additional detail on initial trends, risks, and opportunities seen in recent public safety data. He noted the definitions used by the FTA for physical, non-physical, and physical with weapon assaults. He also highlighted that year-over-year comparisons will not be available until 2026 due to recent reporting guidelines, with peer agency comparisons not being available until 2027.

Mr. de Place described 2024 assault data, noting that approximately 85 percent of all assaults did not include a weapon. He further noted that reports from operators and security staff indicate that most assaults occur between passengers who know one another, making random assaults on riders extremely rare.

Mr. de Place provided assault data by mode, noting a decreasing trend in assaults over the 2024 year. He also reported that preliminary data from early 2025 shows a further decrease in assaults across all modes. Expanding on Link assaults in particular, Mr. de Place noted that assaults range from .4 to 2.6 assaults per 100k Link riders, with the trend falling throughout the year.

Mr. de Place described ongoing efforts the agency is participating in to increase passenger and employee safety. He noted the agency's participation in a regional safety task force, monthly reviews of incident data, shifting positioning or deployment of field security staff based on data in real time, additional de-escalation and safety awareness training for field staff, participation in a behavioral health partnership program with King County, and station activation initiatives.

Chair Walker asked for additional detail on station agent deployment. Ms. Olson responded that each Sounder station has one dedicated Station Agent, and there is one additional Station Agent deployed at SeaTac Link Station. Chair Walker further asked if there were plans to expand station agent deployment or if that service was being covered by other employees. Ms. Olson responded that there are options to expand Station Agent deployment, but that they are considered less dynamic than other resources.

Board member Quinn asked if recent FTA reporting requirements have had an impact on how the agency analyzes safety trends and its deployment of security personnel. Branden Porter, acting deputy chief safety officer, responded that there are additional opportunities available for the agency to collect and analyze data regarding passenger-on-passenger assaults to allow for better deployment and usage of public safety resources.

Chair Walker noted that the agency has a contract with King County sheriffs for law enforcement services and asked how local law enforcement coordination occurs in other jurisdictions like in Snohomish or Pierce County. Mr. Porter responded that coordination between local jurisdictions has been difficult, but that the agency has been working in close partnership with local law enforcement to ensure that agency safety needs are being met.

Chair Walker asked for clarification on what law enforcement responses look like for Sound Transit in Snohomish and Pierce Counties. Mr. Porter responded that local law enforcement has primary jurisdiction, so if 911 was called from Lynnwood City Center Station, Lynnwood Police Department would be the first responder. Chair Walker asked how this contrasts with responses in King County. Mr. Porter responded that local police would still be the first to respond, but that Sound Transit-contracted King County Sheriffs would have the ability to assist with investigations or take over from local law enforcement if assistance is required. CEO Sparrman added that while the agency only currently has this contracted additional assistance with King County Sheriffs, there are ongoing conversations on acquiring similar services from other jurisdictions.

Chair Walker asked if the contract for additional services with King County Sheriffs also provides coverage to Link in Snohomish County, or only if the King County portion of the system is supported in this way. CEO Sparrman clarified that local police is always the primary responder to any incidents in the agency's system and that King County Sheriffs are deployed as Sound Transit police as a preventative measure, patrolling the system. He noted that King County still does aid at Lynnwood, but that long-term better solutions are needed as the system expands. Mr. Porter added that there is close coordination between the Sound Transit Police Chief and the Chief of Lynnwood Police to ensure that Lynnwood is properly supported but noted that it is a unique situation now that the Link system spreads between two county jurisdictions. Board member Frizzell noted her appreciation for staff's close coordination with the Lynnwood Police Department as impacts to both the Link system and local jurisdictions are developing and being monitored.

Executive session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, May 1, 2024
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.

ATTEST:

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, HRR.