

Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting June 5, 2025

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 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	
(A) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) De'Sean Quinn, King County Councilmember
(P) Christine Frizzell, Lynnwood Mayor	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember
(P) Hunter George, Fircrest Councilmember	(P) 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 provided some initial ridership data from the Downtown Redmond Link Extension, which opened on May 10th, 2025. She noted that over 30,000 riders boarded trains on the 2 Line during the opening weekend, and that the full first week of service saw 47,000 boardings, representing a more than 100 percent increase in ridership over the weeks prior to the opening. She congratulated staff and the community for the success of the opening, noting that staff will return to the committee in the future with more data once the extension has been running for a longer period.

CEO Report

CEO Dow Constantine provided the CEO Report.

East Link / I-90 Update

CEO Constantine shared that on May 21st, the first light rail vehicle was towed across the I-90 floating bridge, representing the completion of a critical milestone towards the opening of the full East Link Extension. He noted that this test went well and served as a great morale boost for staff as other testing, inspections, and adjustments are underway. CEO Constantine highlighted that several remaining project risks are being monitored to allow for the extension to open as soon as possible, while sharing that an upcoming disruption to conduct additional 2 Line integration testing will occur on the weekend of June 7th – 8th. During that time, a bus bridge will run from Capitol Hill to SODO station.

Testing 4-minute Headways on June 13th

CEO Constantine noted that on Friday, June 13th, between 5:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., out of service trains will run in between each normally scheduled train. These single car trains will be running to test the system's ability to handle the additional capacity that will be in service once the full 2 Line is opened. He noted that passengers should expect to see extra trains between Lynnwood City Center and Stadium that will stop at each station for about 20 seconds, without opening doors or accepting passengers.

Regional Fare Forum

CEO Constantine reported that a new fare forum has been convened and has been progressing discussions on the next phase of ORCA implementation, as well as considering policy changes to support fare capping and reduced fare program simplification. He thanked Board member Shannon Braddock for stepping into the role that CEO Constantine served as the Sound Transit representative to the forum, as well as Board members Walker, Frizzell, and Quinn for serving on the forum as representatives of Pierce Transit, Community Transit, and King County Metro respectively. He noted that the forum started its work in February, and most recently held a meeting last week to discuss fare simplification.

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.

Virtual comments were given by the following person:

Joe Kunzler

There were no in-person or written comments received.

Business Items

For Committee final action

May 1, 2025, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Board member Quinn, 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.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2025-11: (1) Adopting the 2025-2029 At-Grade Crossings Program Master Plan and merge existing TIP projects to create one program and (2) amending the adopted 2025 Budget to allow the At-Grade Crossings Program to continue progressing current project work through implementation by a) increasing the authorized program allocation by \$70,800,000 from \$18,379,900 to \$89,179,900 and b) increasing the program's 2025 annual spend by \$3,300,000 from \$9,806,416 to \$13,106,416.

Moises Gutierrez, Agency Oversight Deputy CEO, provided opening remarks on the action, with Victoria Morris, At-Grade Crossing acting Project Director, Andrea Trepadean, acting Chief Safety Officer, and Hughey Newsome, Chief Financial Officer, providing a staff presentation on the action.

Board member Quinn asked if additional information could be shared on the design and planning elements of accessibility improvements as part of the Master Plan.

Ms. Morris noted that the Master Plan references specific disabilities, such as wheelchair users, those with physical impairments, and those who have visual impairments or are deaf-blind.

She noted that there is ongoing engagement with those communities, noting a 2022 accessibility survey that asked about different riders' experiences with crossing tracks. She also noted that a tour of crossing safety improvements along the 2 Line was conducted about three weeks ago with members of different disability groups to collect their input as part of the planning process.

Chair Walker noted that on one slide of the presentation, projects were displayed by category (pedestrian, vehicle, light rail) and asked for clarification on what those categories were meant to describe. Ms. Morris responded that the identified categories for each project would be those that would see a benefit. For example, the dynamic envelope pavement markings were categorized as Sounder, pedestrian, and vehicle, as each of those groups would see benefits from that project.

Chair Walker noted that pedestrian gates were mentioned as having an expected completion date of 2028 and asked for further details on why that seemingly straightforward project would take so long to complete. Ms. Morris responded that while those projects appear straightforward, they require more time as new technologies are required and are in development to integrate the train signaling system seamlessly with the vehicle traffic signal system.

Board member Quinn asked what processes, workgroups, or other measures are taking place to streamline the implementation of the projects when working with agency partners. Ms. Morris responded that agency staff has regular collaboration meetings with partners at the Seattle Department of Transportation for all projects in the Rainier Valley. She noted that those discussions include talks on implementation, streamlining, permitting needs, and alignment on long-term maintenance goals.

Board member George asked for clarification on whether the spending that was being included in the budget amendment portion of the resolution was the moving up of previously anticipated spending or if new funding will need to be explored. CFO Hughey Newsome responded that the 2025 allocation would be covered due to lesser-than-anticipated spending in the agency's Service Delivery Projects, and that there are sufficient funds in the Service Delivery Projects and State of Good Repair program to cover the other funds requested for the overall program timeline.

It was moved by Board member Quinn, seconded by Board member George, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-11 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2025-12: Amending the 2025 Service Plan to include the major service change of extending the 2 Line to Lynnwood City Center Station.

Emily Yasukochi, acting System and Service Planning Director, and Adrian Mejia, Title VI Program Manager, provided a presentation on the action.

It was moved by Board member Frizzell, seconded by Board member George, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-12 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Motion No. M2025-27: Approving the East Link Extension Service and Fare Equity Report.

Chair Walker noted that information on this action was contained in the presentation on the previous action.

It was moved by Board member Quinn, seconded by Board member Frizzell, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2025-27 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Motion No. M2025-28: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a third amendment to the lease agreement with 705 Union Station, LLC to lease the second floor (20,942 square feet) of the 705 Union Station building beginning on July 1, 2025, with a lease term ending on March 31, 2028, to coincide with the term of the agency's existing lease of floors one, four, five, and six, for a new total of 196,685 rentable square feet of space in the 705 Union Station building, in the amount of \$2,700,000, for a new total authorized lease agreement amount not to exceed \$66,249,313.

Hughey Newsome, Chief Financial Officer, and Ahmad Bilal, Workspace Solutions Director, provided a presentation on the action.

It was moved by Board member Quinn, seconded by Committee Vice Chair Prince, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2025-28 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2025-13: Authorizing the chief executive officer to increase Sound Transit staffing levels to transition the operations of the Sound Transit Security Operations Center from contracted staff to full-time employees, within the existing budget approved by the Board for contracting these services.

Brian de Place, acting Security and Fare Engagement Executive Director, provided a presentation on the action.

Board member George asked if currently contracted staff would have any overlap with new internal staff. Mr. de Place responded that overlap will exist as Security Operations Center staff are transitioned to internal staff.

Board member George asked for clarification on the current makeup of contracted and internal staff in the Security Operations Center. Mr. de Place responded that all seven Security Operations Center Superintendents are internal staff, with all 34 dispatchers currently being contracted staff through the agency's security contracts.

It was moved by Board member Quinn, seconded by Board member Frizzell, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-13 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Link Resiliency Quarterly Update

Marie Olson, acting Service Delivery Deputy CEO, provided the report.

Ms. Olson gave information on current trends of unplanned disruptions across the system, field work completed in the last quarter, and current plans to complete remaining resiliency work.

Ms. Olson noted that Q1 2025 saw a decrease in the average hours the alignment was disrupted, down to 20 hours per month on average from 38 hours per month in 2024. She also noted that the start of Q2 was also trending positively, with the average dropping further to 13 hours per month in April.

Ms. Olson provided further detail on the different root causes of disruptions, noting that both traction power and signals caused disruptions have decreased, although light rail vehicle caused disruptions have remained relatively unaffected.

Ms. Olson noted that there were significant disruptions in May 2025 due to several issues, including two overhead catenary system power loss events, multiple signals issues, and brake faults on light rail vehicles. She reported that staff have identified actions and are currently working with partners at King County Rail to integrate lessons learned into future operating practices.

Ms. Olson provided a list of work that has been completed since March 2025 to enhance system resiliency. Rail work included the replacement of worn rails to prevent unplanned disruptions due to breakage and the expansion of signal inspections to catch issues earlier.

Traction power improvements included improving the monitoring from the Control Center to traction power switches along the Lynnwood Link Extension, the recalibration of power settings to reduce outages, and the institution of a validation period to establish system reliability prior to revenue service in the Downtown Redmond Link Extension. Improvements to operational response included the establishment of an IT operations Center for faster response to network issues, the reallocation of King County Rail staff for quicker response times, and the establishment of new King County Rail positions to support faster response to power outages.

Ms. Olson provided details on the future work that is required to enhance system resiliency and reliability. She noted that 80 recommendations have been reviewed, with six recommendations already being implemented. There were a further 42 near-term recommendations and 32 long-term recommendations, over half of which are expected to be complete within the next four years.

Ms. Olson provided information on future steps to be taken to advance the resiliency program. She noted that smaller projects will be undertaken to complete near-term State of Good Repair projects expeditiously, and feasibility studies are underway to inform capital investment needs for long-term projects.

Ms. Olson gave an outline of the currently progressing State of Good Repair projects. She noted that of 22 projects identified, two have been completed, 13 are in-progress, with three new projects identified for 2025 and a further four anticipated to begin in 2026. All projects are scheduled to be complete within the next four years.

Ms. Olson noted that feasibility studies are needed to determine the cost-benefit of long-term projects such as adding additional track crossovers, making changes to the signaling system, and the construction of a unified control center. She further noted that once the studies are complete, staff will return to the Board for review and potential next steps.

Board member Quinn asked how the agency is aligning its resiliency program with industry best practices. Ms. Olson responded that former executive level staff from other transit agencies have been contracted to work with Sound Transit to assist in implementing best practices and lessons learned from other transit agencies.

Board member Frizzell asked for additional context regarding light rail vehicle brake faults. Ms. Olson responded that Series 2 Siemens vehicles have experienced brake issues when there are crush loads, as those vehicles require longer dwell time for the adaptive suspension of the cars to adapt to the new, heavier passenger load during large-scale events. She noted that changes in operational procedures, software updates, and replacing faulty parts in the brake systems are underway to address those problems.

Board member Quinn asked whether data exists for where disruptions occur along the alignment. Ms. Olson responded that the data does exist and is used during conversations with agency partners. She noted that traction power issues are typically seen between downtown Seattle and Lynnwood, signals issues being seen sporadically across the system, and brake faults being concentrated in the downtown core. Ms. Olson also noted that new data recorders have been installed that allow for real-time monitoring and review of issues as they arise in the field, as opposed to the previous need to physically pull down data from the substations themselves.

2025 Club World Cup and 2026 World Cup Update

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 noted that following new information on ticket sales and coordination with FIFA, expected ridership during the Club World Cup will not be as intensive as previously anticipated, with crowd expectations trending to being most similar to a typical Sounders or Seahawks game.

Mr. Higuera gave an overview of service plans to accompany the Club World Cup. For Link, service will be enhanced with 8-minute headways from 9 p.m. – 11 p.m. on June 15th, all-day 8-minute headways on June 23rd, and additional trains being placed on standby to manage additional crowding. For ST Express bus, extra trips will be added as needed on select routes operated by King County Metro and Pierce Transit. For Sounder, a special event Sounder will be run on June 21st for the N and S Line. Further special event Sounders will be run for weekday matches, accompanied by additional schedule changes.

Mr. Higuera explained the staffing plans to support the Club World Cup. He noted that staff ambassadors will be placed pre-game at Lynnwood, Westlake, Chinatown/International District, SeaTac, and Angle Lake stations to support riders, with additional contracted ambassadors to support riders at Chinatown/International District and Weller Street before, during, and after the games. King County Metro facilities staff will support Chinatown/International District, Pioneer Square, and Stadium Stations, with Sound Transit facilities staff supporting King Street Station, Union Station, and Weller Street bridge. Vertical Transportation technicians will be roaming the system on weekdays to address issues as they occur. Security and law enforcement will have focuses on Chinatown/International District, Pioneer Square, and Stadium Stations, as well as mobile patrols on board trains between Westlake and SODO Stations.

Mr. Higuera highlighted the 2025 Station Activation Pilot at Chinatown/International District to serve as a trial run for potential projects to support riders during the 2026 World Cup. He noted that there will be numerous activities including neighborhood information booths, DJs and music, a digital passport system and more. He also showcased example strategic signage that will be placed at Chinatown/International District, King Street Station, Westlake Station, and SeaTac Station.

Mr. Higuera stressed the importance of regional coordination as part of 2026 World Cup planning, noting that most of the work is being done through the Local Organizing Committee, which includes monthly meetings to work on regional planning initiatives.

Mr. Higuera gave information on regional fares and work being done to enhance fare access ahead of the World Cup. He noted that riders currently have access to fare via ORCA cards, paper tickets from vending machines, and mobile tickets via TransitGo. An open payment model is in development to allow payment via debit and credit cards. Mr. Higuera also highlighted additional ideas in review, including the development of a multi-day pass, game day regional fares approaches, and potential opportunities for fare sponsorship during World Cup games.

Mr. Higuera detailed work that has been undertaken to enhance service for the 2026 World Cup games, including the procurement of additional charter buses for enhanced capacity, along with the refurbishment of numerous ST Express buses to extend their useful service life through the completion of the World Cup.

Chair Walker asked whether the open payment model is intended to be a temporary or permanent payment model. Mr. Higuera responded that the open payment model will be a permanent fixture and is currently planned to launch in early 2026. Chair Walker asked if the transfer system from ORCA will also apply to the open payment model. Mr. Higuera noted that he was unsure if that will be available, committing to follow up with the committee on that question.

Passenger Impact Program

Kevin Miztua, Link Right-of-Way Access Deputy Director, provided the report.

Mr. Mizuta gave details on the progress of annual rail grinding work. He noted that work in the Mount Baker area experienced multiple difficulties, which will require additional work in July. Other work progressed on schedule in other portions of the alignment. He noted that this later work will require single tracking on some weekdays between 11 p.m. and the close of service. During those periods, headways will be near 20 minutes.

Mr. Mizuta discussed ongoing work for the tie-in of the Federal Way Link Extension. He noted that work will take place on weekdays between 10 p.m. and the close of service, with full closures of Angle Lake Station being required. Service to the station will be given via King County Metro RapidRide A.

Mr. Mizuta discussed 2 Line integration testing, which was deferred from earlier in the year due to poor weather. Final completion of the work will take place starting at 10 p.m. on June 7th through end of service on June 8th. A bus bridge will run between Capitol Hill and SODO Stations to cover the disrupted service.

Mr. Mizuta also gave information on an upcoming WSDOT Bridge Inspection, which will require a close of service in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel on June 28th between the start of service and 10 a.m. During that time, a bus bridge will run from Westlake to SODO stations to cover the disrupted service.

Executive session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, July 3, 2024

1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.

ATTEST:

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, HRR.