

Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting July 10, 2025

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:36 p.m. by Committee Chair Balducci 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) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember | (P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor |

| Board Members | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| (P) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor | (P) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor |
| (P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor | (A) Ryan Mello, Pierce County Executive |
| (A) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor | (A) 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

Regional Safety Task Force

Chair Balducci reported that she, a few Board members, and CEO Constantine attended the second session of the Regional Transit Safety Task Force that was stood up in response to the killing of Metro Operator Shawn Yim last year. This interagency effort is shoring up safety and security recommendations that will be shared with all agencies.

CEO Report

Chief Executive Officer Dow Constantine provided the report.

July 8 Service Disruption – CEO Constantine reported that on Tuesday afternoon, a tree fell on overhead wires between the Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood City Center stations, causing a service disruption that persisted into the evening. A bus bridge replaced service between Shoreline North and Lynnwood City Center stations so that crews could power down the segment and remove the tree. He thanked afternoon commuters for their patience.

Upcoming August 9 Service Disruption – On Saturday August 9, the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel will be closed from the start of service until about 1 pm to conduct testing and commissioning related to barrier relocation work at International District-Chinatown Station. This will be first of several upcoming disruptions necessary to upgrade train control and safety systems prior to running both 1 and 2 Line

trains in the tunnel. During the closure, trains will run every 12 minutes between Lynnwood City Center-Westlake and SODO-Angle Lake. A bus bridge will serve the downtown stations every 10-15 minutes.

ASCE Award – In June, the American Society of Civil Engineers recognized the Lynnwood Link Extensions with its Outstanding Transportation Project award. The award recognizes projects that have improved the quality of life and contributed to the economic development of a local community, area, or region. This brings the total number of awards and honors for the Lynnwood Link Extension project to 17.

Activation Update – CEO Constantine shared that the most recent schedule forecast shows that the Federal Way Link Extension (FWLE) will be ready to open prior to the full East Link Extension (ELE) Cross Lake Connection. This will allow South End communities to take advantage of the project as soon as it is complete, without impacting the Cross Lake Connection's schedule. At the July Board meeting, staff will bring forward an action to add FWLE into the 2025 Service Plan so that coordination between Sound Transit and King County Metro can begin. The ELE Cross Lake Connections remains on schedule to open in early 2026, and the FWLE project will open between November and January of this year.

Chair Balducci thanked CEO Constantine for continuing to prioritize opening projects when they are completed and being nimble in delivering the agency's projects to the region. She likened the opening of the FWLE to the ELE Starter Line in East King County, stating that high quality, high-capacity transit is coming to communities who need this critical service. She expressed excitement to celebrate with the South King County communities.

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:

Brien Chow
Betty Lau

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

Marykate Ryan
Betty Lau
Brien Chow

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

Day-Z Gould-Wong
Joe Kunzler

System Expansion Monthly Status Report update

Capital Delivery Deputy CEO Terri Mestas began the report by noting that the information covered is from May 2025. The presentation will cover Program-level updates, as well as updates on Projects in Planning & Design and Projects in Construction.

Ms. Mestas reported that the capital delivery department has improved on issuing prompt payments to contractors, averaging at the 30-day mark in May 2025. In regard to safety, she noted that an OSHA recordable injury incident occurred on the Federal Way Link Extension project and that corrective actions have been implemented to mitigate future incidents.

Moving to Projects in Planning and Design, Ms. Mestas noted that there are no significant changes this month from last month's report. She noted that staff intend to bring the Ballard Link Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement to the Committee in Q3 2025.

Shifting to Projects in Construction, Ms. Mestas pointed out that the table now includes a change indicator for the progress of construction completion. She added that the Target Revenue Service Date graphic at the bottom of the slide will be adjusted next month to take into account the recent decision to open FWLE before the Crosslake Connection. She noted that there are no notable changes on other projects.

Chair Balducci thanked Ms. Mestas for continuing these monthly updates.

Board member Strauss remarked that any questions he had coming into the meeting were answered by the presentation.

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: June 12, 2025 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Vice Chair Roscoe, seconded by Board member Birney, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the June 12, 2025 System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2025-16: Authorizes 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 West Seattle Link Extension project.

Clint Dameron, Acting Real Property Director, and Rhonda Thomsen, Senior Real Property Project Manager, gave the staff presentation.

Board member Strauss raised his concerns with how Sound Transit treats property acquired before the start of active construction and staging. He inquired into the plans for the residential properties included in the package. Mr. Dameron responded that Sound Transit will secure and maintain the property and conduct bi-weekly security visits, but the current properties are not in condition to be rented or leased. CEO Constantine added that he wants to push agency staff to develop protocols to potentially return future acquired residences to the housing supply, on an interim basis, assuming the properties are in adequate condition.

Chair Balducci thanked staff for being responsive to individual needs and being a good partner to the local community.

It was moved by Vice Chair Roscoe, seconded by Board member Strauss, and carried by unanimous voice vote that Resolution No. R2025-16 be forwarded with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Programmatic and Project-level workplan update

Terri Mestas, Capital Delivery Deputy CEO, began the presentation and introduced Brad Owen, Executive Director, and Daniel Turner, Capital Delivery Workplan lead. Ms. Mestas explained that the presentation will cover programmatic opportunities, look at Station Optimization opportunities, and conclude with project-specific opportunities. She added that there are currently over 585 opportunities

identified. She briefly distinguished between programmatic and project-specific opportunities and noted that Capital Delivery is collaborating with other aspects of the agency as part of the Enterprise Initiative. Approval to implement any opportunities will be conducted at the appropriate level. These opportunities cover not only Link Light Rail extensions, but also all ST3 projects.

Ms. Mestas detailed how validated opportunities are being incorporated into one of four cost savings levers – Project Level, Interdepartmental Collaboration, External Coordination, and Phasing – which move from easier to more challenging to implement. Lever 1 (Project Level) includes opportunities such as design optimizations that represent efficiencies and should maintain or improve operations and/or the passenger experience. Lever 2 (Interdepartmental Collaboration) includes opportunities that would affect agency standards outside of the Capital Delivery department and warrant additional collaboration within the agency to vet before advancing. Lever 3 (External Coordination) may require coordination with the Board and external partners, such as scope reduction. Lever 4 (Phasing) would include discussions on pursuing minimum operable segments and would also require coordination with the Board and external partners. In addition to the opportunities categorized into the levers, staff are assessing programmatic opportunities that will likely total up to a potential additional 4-5% cost reduction. Ms. Mestas explained that of the over 585 measures, 347 are still undergoing feasibility assessment, while 47 are in implementation and 191 have been screened out and closed.

Shifting to programmatic opportunities, Ms. Mestas reiterated that Capital Delivery is targeting a 4-5% cost reduction that can be applied to all projects. She noted that construction requirements and contracting strategies have been assessed, estimated, and moved into implementation in the hopes of shoring up Sound Transit as a regional Owner of Choice to hopefully affect bid prices. Ms. Mestas explained that each opportunity has a unique Opportunity Register code, which aspect of cost savings it seeks to address, and the stage it is in.

Construction Requirements aims to address market conditions and is in implementation, including refining Division 1 specifications (related to the administrative and procedural requirements contractors adhere to during construction) using contractor input and industry standards. The department is currently targeting savings of \$220-260 million across the ST3 Link Expansion projects, but the savings won't be realized until construction bids are received and contracts are awarded.

Contracting Strategies also address market conditions and is in implementation. Ms. Mestas highlighted the use of Multiple Award Task Order Contracts (MATOCs) when contracting with professional services firms to streamline procurement timelines. She also noted that the agency is focused on bringing new delivery methods to projects, such as progressive design-build on the Operations and Maintenance Facility South. Potential ST3 savings over 7 years from changes in Contracting Strategies is estimated at \$360-440 million.

Daniel Turner spoke to the station optimization opportunities. He noted that stations comprise a substantial component of costs for Link Light Rail extensions, particularly for the Ballard Link Extension and West Seattle Link Extension, at 23% and 18% respectively. Addressing design optimization and in feasibility assessment, station optimization will seek to right-size stations for project and ridership needs by applying new station standard typology, including programming, headhouse and entry quantities, and platform widths. Work is underway to identify additional cost efficiencies by applying international best practices and national standards that maintain or improve passenger experience and operations. This may result in re-evaluating agency requirements and engaging with partners on external codes. Mr. Turner used reducing platform width, removing permanent ventilation shafts, and adjusting from two points of egress at each station end as examples of efficient design practice, adjusting internal requirements, and engaging on local codes, respectively.

Mr. Turner moved to opportunities on a few different Light Rail Extension projects. Optimization work is underway on the Westlake Station planned as part of the Ballard Link Extension. This could include widening the station platform from 34 feet to 46 or 60 feet, which would eliminate the need for expensive

mined caverns are both ends of the station box. Widening of the platform box would also accommodate overbuild needed for potential joint development up to a 440 foot tower above the station. The widening to 36 feet and overbuild would potentially result in \$110-130 million in savings. The optimization would also reduce station construction by 9-10 months. Chair Balducci asked if these overbuild considerations are in line with previous recommendations from Urban Land Institute. Mr. Turner responded that the potential tower overbuild is probably more in line with those recommendations and noted that the upfront cost would be incurred by Sound Transit. Chair Balducci asked that when future station concepts are brought, overbuild/joint development opportunities are included.

The West Seattle Link Extension is looking to optimize the aerial guideway and foundations for construction efficiency by reducing the pile cap size and diameter of drilled shafts and replacing some 400-ft long spans with typical 130-ft spans which would allow for more off-site construction activities and potential cost savings of \$120-150 million. He added that the West Seattle Link Extension is further along than the other projects, so the work right now is focused on design refinements and optimization.

The Tacoma Dome Link Extension is exploring removing planned tail tracks from the future Tacoma Dome Station. Doing so would avoid needing to rebuild the newly constructed Amtrak Station and realize cost savings of \$60-80 million. Additional collaboration is needed to address operational considerations before advancing this measure.

Still in the early environmental phase, the Everett Link Extension is looking at increasing the length of at-grade guideway. From an initial assessment, the team estimates converting sections of elevated guideway to at-grade could save \$100-200 million.

Ms. Mestas closed the presentation by highlighting future updates to the Committee and noting her department's collaboration in the Enterprise Initiative work.

Vice Chair Roscoe advised that it would be beneficial to plan for easy cycle access to the stations, especially at egress points. She also confirmed that there is a conscious consideration of luggage-bearing passengers when pondering platform reductions.

Board member Birney thanked the staff for their balance of information presented. She also concurred with Chair Balducci's request on including overbuild/joint development and other opportunities when presenting on future station options and also highlighted potential safety concerns related to at-grade portions of current alignments. Mr. Turner responded that the potential at-grade sections of the Everett Link Extension are focused along Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) right-of-way.

Board member Strauss quickly confirmed that math that from the seven measures highlighted today, the agency could realize up to \$1.2 Billion in savings across ST3 projects. He also asked if the Capitol Hill station is an example of the double-egress requirement from local codes. Mr. Turner explained that he believes Capitol Hill station was modified after initial construction to provide additional public stairs and that current standards on more recent stations, such as those that were part of U-Link, are better examples. He added that there are additional analysis and assessments going into crowd sizes, especially after events.

Board member Strauss asked how the reduction of span lengths on the West Seattle Link Extension generates savings. Mr. Owen responded that having fewer, lighter spans results in smaller foundations and ground improvements needed to support the guideway. He also clarified that there is more validation and design work needed to fully understand what spans can be reduced and which have to be longer; there will most likely be a combination of span lengths in the final design.

Board member Strauss expressed deep concerns with the use of minimum operable segments and asked what those currently are for the major Link Extensions. Mr. Turner responded that for BLE, it is currently Smith Cove and studies are also looking at Seattle Center, while on WSLE it is Delridge. On Everett Link Extension, it is Paine Field. Tacoma Dome Link Extension currently has two: South Federal

Way and Fife. Board member Strauss responded that the names of the projects need to be changed if minimum operable segments are considered in order to be fully transparent. He also raised a concern regarding federal funding for projects that only meet minimum operable segments. Ms. Mestas responded that the work undertaken by the department is to leave no cost-saving opportunity unexplored and highlighted that the levers are meant to be all-encompassing and confirmed against other considerations within the agency. Board member Strauss opined on potential future extensions from the currently planned ST3 termini.

Chair Balducci noted that many of the policy questions raised by Board member Strauss are part of what the Board is asking staff to dig into and parse out in advance of asking the Board for decisions on how to progress. She also asked if future information will be brought as part of individual actions for projects. Ms. Mestas confirmed that some information will come through the regular work of the Committee and Board, but more will come from the Enterprise Initiative. Chair Balducci asked if there was a current timeframe expected for the Enterprise Initiative. Calli Knight, Agency Chief of Staff, responded that phase 1 of the Enterprise Initiative, which covers discussions on the scope of work and the priorities and concerns of the Board, is expected to go through the end of 2025. In early 2026, it is anticipated that more substantive discussions on the full array of options and choices will lead to a decision by the Board on the path forward.

Board member Strauss asked what metrics will guide the Board’s decision-making. He listed ridership, connectivity, completing the spine, and the original ST3 schedule as potential metrics, which other Board members collectively acknowledged are all aspects of future decisions. He noted a desire to have the Board weigh in on the principles and guidance. Chair Balducci responded that Board members Strauss was unintentionally previewing upcoming discussions.

Executive session

None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, August 14, 2025
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room & Virtually via Zoom

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

ATTEST:

Claudia Balducci
System Expansion Committee Chair
APPROVED on _____, AJM.

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator