



Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting October 2, 2025

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 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	(A) 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 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 noted that the committee will not be receiving a REO Metrics report, but that the standard monthly performance report is included in members' packets.

CEO Report

CEO Dow Constantine provided the report, noting that pre-revenue operations had begun on the Federal Way Link Extension, and that system integration testing has begun on the I-90 Floating Bridge.

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.

The following person provided written comments:

Jonathan Nehrbass
Gilliane Grayye
Anna

The following person provided verbal public comment:

Alex Toole

No virtual public comments were given.

Business Items

For Committee final action

September 4, 2025, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Board member Quinn, seconded by Committee Vice Chair Frizzell, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that the minutes of the September 4, 2025, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2025-49: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute an Amendment to extend the existing Commuter Rail Rolling Stock Maintenance Agreement with the National Railroad Passenger Corporation for the continued maintenance of Sounder locomotives and cars, including the cost of fuel, in an amount not to exceed \$29,253,120, including five percent contingency, for a new total authorized agreement amount not to exceed \$416,182,700.

Martin Young, Commuter Rail Operations Deputy Director, provided a presentation on the action.

Board member Quinn asked how the maintenance agreement amendment interfaces with the Sounder car overhaul program. Mr. Young responded that Amtrak would continue to support Sounder maintenance functions as vehicles are removed from service for overhauls, with a hope that Amtrak will soon have staff availability to handle additional car loads for maintenance if needed.

Chair Walker asked how long this agreement would last. Mr. Young responded that this amendment is only for 11 months, and that the next amendment should come to the committee sometime in the Spring of 2026. Chair Walker further asked if the option years for the agreement would require a subsequent vote. Mr. Young responded in the affirmative.

It was moved by Board member Quinn, seconded by Board member George, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2025-49 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

2026 Service Plan Preview

Emily Yasukochi, System and Service Planning Director, provided the report, outlining key features of the proposed 2026 service plan. She highlighted that the plan would be introduced in two phases: Phase 1 would consist of minor adjustments to rail service, which do not require a Board vote, with Phase 2 consisting of various realignments to ST Express bus service, which will require a Board vote in early 2026 to support a change as part of the Fall 2026 service change period.

Ms. Yasukochi noted that minor changes to rail service as part of Phase 1 include the opening of Pinehurst Station on the 1 Line in the Spring of 2026, earlier northbound service on the Sounder N Line at 3:45 p.m., and the extension of one afternoon round trip on the Sounder S Line to provide service to Lakewood, with a new departure time northbound from Lakewood at 3:52 p.m. All changes would occur during the Spring 2026 service change, effective on March 30, 2026.

Ms. Yasukochi outlined the various changes to bus service by corridor. In the north I-5, north I-405, and SR-522 corridor, Route 513 would add new bi-directional service, Route 515 would be permanently discontinued, Route 522 would be rerouted to interface with the Link 1 Line at Shoreline South Station, and Route 535 would see increased frequency to every 30 minutes on Saturday, as well as new service on Sunday. All other routes in the corridor – 510, 512, and 532 – would see no changes.

In the SR-520, I-90, and south I-405 corridor, Route 550 would be permanently discontinued, Route 554 would be permanently discontinued, and Route 556 would be truncated to Bellevue Transit Center, with additional frequency and all-day service. All other routes on the corridor – 542, 545, 560, and 566 – would see no changes.

For the south I-5 and SR-167 corridor, Route 574 would be truncated to Federal Way Downtown Station, with an increased service to every 15 minutes, Route 580 would be permanently discontinued, and Route 586 would be permanently discontinued. All other routes on the corridor – 577, 578, 590, 592, 594, 595, and 596 – would see no changes.

Ms. Yasukochi outlined a new overnight bus service proposal, which would provide evening service along Link light rail lines between the hours of 12 a.m. to 5 a.m., 7 days a week, with headways between 60 and 15 minutes. Three routes would be established: one from Everett to Seattle, one from Lakewood to Seattle via SeaTac airport, and another from Redmond to Seattle. Ms. Yasukochi then provided an overview of the engagement efforts up to this point and the future engagement strategy for Fall 2025.

Board member George asked whether it was accurate that extending the one afternoon S Line trip would provide new service to Lakewood that currently does not exist. Ms. Yasukochi responded in the affirmative. Board member George further asked what community response was received regarding the discontinuation of routes 550 and 554. Ms. Yasukochi responded that this information is part of the Fall 2025 engagement plan, along with all other changes to ST Express bus service.

Board member Frizzell asked if there were any public safety concerns taken into account with the idea of introducing a new night bus service. Ms. Yasukochi responded that the night bus proposal has been done in concert with the agency's operating partners and Sound Transit has received responses that this service should be satisfactory.

Board member Quinn echoed Board member Frizzell's question, and also asked what other strategies are in place to ensure continued ridership on these new night bus routes. Ms. Yasukochi responded that the agency will be closely tracking ridership statistics and other key performance indicators if these new routes are approved, and that that data will be used to inform any potential marketing or other ridership generation strategies. Board member Quinn further asked what thresholds exist for making specific changes, and how are they communicated to the public. Ms. Yasukochi responded that there will be various points for the public to provide feedback after the Fall 2025 engagement period, and that responses from the engagement period will be provided as part of the final proposal to the Board when it makes a decision in 2026. She also noted that members of the public will also be able to provide comment directly to the Board at meetings following any staff decisions on a finalized proposal.

Chair Walker asked for clarification on how travel times were incorporated into the development of these draft bus service proposals. Ms. Yasukochi responded that any time a route is being considered for discontinuation or truncation, travel time modeling is conducted to determine the impacts of a proposed change. She noted that for all routes with proposed reductions in bus service, travel times range from 25 minutes of savings when using Link light rail connections up to 10 minutes of additional travel time, which served as the general cutoff for proposing changes. Chair Walker further asked how information on reductions or increases in travel time will be provided to riders as part of the feedback process. Ms. Yasukochi responded that such information is not currently planned as part of the feedback process, but that staff will reevaluate how that information can be provided to the public as part of staff's engagement strategy.

Unplanned Service Disruptions Update

Shankar Rajaram, acting Core Infrastructure and Asset Management Executive Director, provided the report covering specific service disruptions in response to inquiries from Board members Zahilay, Balducci, Walker, and others. Mr. Rajaram noted that he would cover details specifically on a surge arrestor failure at Marymoor Village, rail fractures in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, and Overhead Catenary System wire damage in Redmond.

Mr. Rajaram provided details on the surge arrestor failure at Marymoor Village, noting that the failures resulted in disruptions that lasted an hour on average. All potential factors for the root cause have been identified and are currently under investigation. For short-term improvements, staff have begun actively monitoring surge arrestors and replacing them as needed. Additionally, for long-term improvements, a development process has begun for the creation of a comprehensive, data-driven plan to address root causes of future failures to ensure a quicker recovery time and greater accountability.

Mr. Rajaram outlined causes of rail fractures in the DSTT. He noted that an increased frequency of fractures have occurred in recent years, which a comprehensive review found was due to the age and wear of the rails in older parts of the alignment, particularly in areas where previous repairs were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff believes that there may have been substandard workmanship conducted during those previous repairs, as well as quality issues with materials during that time. This was corroborated with other agencies who used the same weld kits for repairs during a similar timeframe who also experienced an increase in rail fractures. For short-term improvements, enhanced repair practices have already been implemented, with the completion of a system-wide proactive detection system underway. For long-term improvements, up to four times of additional ultrasonic testing of rails is being pursued.

Mr. Rajaram discussed root causes of OCS wire damage in Redmond, which was found to be due to tensioning issues in the OCS system at a unique configuration, called a midpoint anchor, along the 2 Line alignment. For short-term improvements, a review of tensioning across other unique OCS locations was conducted and increased inspection frequency has been implemented. For long-term improvements, new technological solutions are being explored to better measure and monitor tensioning within the OCS system.

Board member George noted written comments provided from the public regarding Link reliability issues, and highlighted the fact that staff is working hard to address and improve the system to ensure these problems are fixed.

Chair Walker asked for a timeline on when the Board could expect clear cost estimates for the full suite of resiliency projects. Mr. Rajaram noted that work that has been conducted this year has already had the necessary funding allocated, and that future resiliency work will be built into the yearly budget appropriations process. If additional investments are found to be needed, that information will be provided to the Board.

Passenger Impact Program

Kevin Mizuta, Link Right-of-Way Access Deputy Director, provided the report. He noted that Seattle utility work near Northgate Station was completed on September 30, 2025. Electrical service to Northgate Station was shut down, as planned, at 11 p.m., with the station running on generator power during the power period. Shuttles were provided for ADA access.

Mr. Mizuta reported that work scheduled for Q4 2025 included continued construction on the Pinehurst Station stairwell, with single tracking on weekdays from 7 p.m. to the end of service until November 14, 2025; SCADA switch upgrades at Beacon Hill Station on October 26, 2025, which will result in a full day closure of the station with a bus-bridge between SODO and Mt. Baker Stations for impacted riders. A 12 hour closure of UW and Capitol Hill Station will occur on November 8, 2025 for switch upgrades, with a bus bridge being provided during the disruption period.

Mr. Mizuta also highlighted upcoming changes to monthly maintenance windows. For three weeknights, link service will be suspended along a portion of the alignment to allow for additional maintenance for vehicles and other infrastructure. For October, on the nights of October 21, 2025 through October 23, 2025, Link service will end at 11 p.m. between Angle Lake and Rainier Beach stations. DCEO Ed Cobean added that these temporary service reductions are necessary to ensure proper maintenance of agency assets and ensuring stability in resource planning. He further noted that the closures will rotate throughout the system to ensure that specific areas do not experience concentrated impacts.

Board member Birney asked what additional service is being provided to assist in the expected crowds resulting from various large-scale events over the weekend. Benjamin Marx, acting Service Delivery Operations Executive Director, responded that ongoing planning efforts are taking place to provide additional service across all modes. He specifically noted that agency partners at King County Metro have committed to provide additional Link service, and additional Sounder service has been planned in coordination with BNSF. Further conversations with operating partners at Pierce Transit and Community Transit are ongoing to potentially provide additional ST Express bus service.

Executive session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, November 6, 2025
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

ATTEST:

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, HRR.