

Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting December 4, 2025

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:06 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	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember
(P) Christine Frizzell, Lynnwood Mayor	(A) Girmay Zahilay, King County Council Chair
(P) Hunter George, Fircrest Councilmember	

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

Report of the Chair

Chair Walker thanked members of the public who responded to the 2026 Service plan survey she also highlighted that the general passenger experience survey is still available for public response until December 20th.

Chair Walker acknowledged that there was a significant disruption to sounder event service to the seahawks game on Sunday, November 30th. She requested that staff ensure that network reliability is a prioritized area of focus for the agency and its operating partners.

CEO Report

CEO Dow Constantine provided the report, apologizing to riders for the inconvenience experienced on the Sounder special service train. He noted that this experience made it clear that additional cooperation and oversight is needed with the agency's maintenance partners at Amtrak.

CEO Constantine looked to the committee for question on this event before continuing his report.

Chair Walker asked what real time communication to passengers looks like when disruptions occur on Sounder. Ben Marx, acting Service Operations Executive Director, responded that staff is on board each Sounder train, who are able to provide real-time updates to riders as the situation evolves. In this event, the conductor was making announcements approximately every 10 minutes. Additionally, speakers and station agents provided updates to riders on platforms, as well as Passenger Impact Coordinators provide real-time updates via text and other service alerts.

Chair Walker asked for clarification that since the train became stalled between stations, that staff communication was limited. Mr. Marx responded that, in addition to the conductor, there were also Fare Ambassadors and Transit Security Officers on board who assisted in relaying communications from the conductor to riders.

Chair Walker asked if there was sufficient time during the incident to put out rider alerts, noting that it appears that the situation evolved too quickly for that to be a possibility. Mr. Marx responded that that is being analyzed as part of the after-action review, and that steps will be taken to improve processes where possible.

Chair Walker asked for clarification on whether staffing has improved for the Passenger Information Coordinators, noting that during the 2022 Apple Cup evacuation, there were none on duty to provide alerts and other real-time information to riders. Mr. Marx responded in the affirmative, noting that the program now has 24-hour staffing.

Board member George noted that many passengers self-evacuated from the train due to the delay and asked whether the agency plans for those types of events. Andrea Trepadean, Chief Safety Officer, responded in the affirmative, noting that during emergency preparedness exercises, the agency purposefully includes passenger self-evacuations that staff and first responders are not told about, to accurately simulate the type of event. She further noted that once passengers started to self-evacuate, the conductor on the train was able to ensure that the tracks remained clear, track blocks were established to safeguard riders, and additional personnel were mobilized to respond to the incident.

Board member George asked for clarification on which partner group operates the Sounder service. Mr. Marx responded that the trains are operated by BNSF, with maintenance functions controlled by Amtrak. Board member George further asked what accountability looks like for this incident. Mr. Marx responded that the contract oversight functions of the Amtrak maintenance agreement provide the agency with accountability options, and that a full investigation is underway to determine the full extent of responsibility.

Board member George asked if there is a plan for moving Sounder operations and maintenance to in-house staff. CEO Constantine responded that there is a planned Sounder maintenance facility in Lakewood that has been deferred due to financial constraints, but once built, would allow the agency to either directly contract or in-house all Sounder maintenance functions. Mr. Marx responded that transitioning operations to in-house staff would be a complex arrangement due to increased permitting and certification requirements, and that further study would be needed before any decision or plan could be made.

Board member George asked whether the agency can track down and contact the riders involved in this incident to give them some form of credit or other means of goodwill as a means of compensating them for their inconvenience. Mr. Marx responded that 75 riders from the train had already reached out to the agency and were in the process of receiving compensation for the event. CEO Constantine added that staff will look into the agency's ability to determine which riders were impacted by the disruption and reach out to them proactively.

Board member Birney noted that the agency has a good track record of being able to provide additional service for special events and asked what the agency's ability to provide additional support staff looks like for the same. Mr. Marx responded that there are ongoing conversations and work with partners at BNSF and Amtrak to ensure that they can appropriately staff all needed functions when special event service is deployed.

CEO Constantine continued his report, highlighting a disruption at Othello Station due to an officer involved shooting, resulting in the deployment of a bus bridge between Rainier Beach and Columbia City Stations during the subsequent closure. Fare Ambassadors and security staff were also deployed to assist riders in wayfinding.

CEO Constantine provided further remarks on monthly maintenance windows, noting that non-revenue work has increased by up to 150 percent, allowing 39 projects to be completed during the November period. He additionally highlighted the continued progress of the East Link extension, noting continued progress towards the completion of systems integration testing. Four-minute headway exercises are also being conducted to ensure that the network can handle the increased capacity that will come with additional 2 Line trains traveling between International District and Lynnwood City Center Stations.

CEO Constantine reminded the committee and members of the public that the Federal Way Link Extension will open for revenue service on Saturday, December 6. A ribbon cutting celebration will begin at 9:30 A.M., with the first revenue service train leaving Federal Way Downtown Station at 11:00 A.M. All three stations of the extension will host community festivities from 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

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 virtual public comment:

Joe Kunzler

No written or in-person public comments were received.

Business Items

For Committee final action

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

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

Motion No. M2025-65: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute an agreement with the City of Portland to purchase their three Brookville LRVs and sell Tacoma Light Rail's three Skoda LRVs for a total amount of \$16,596,000, with a contingency of 10 percent, for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$18,255,600, plus applicable taxes, contingent upon Board adoption of Resolution No. R2025-30.

Shankar Rajaram, acting Core Infrastructure and Asset Management Executive Director, and Robert Blackburn, Tacoma Light Rail Executive Operations Director, provided a presentation on the action.

Board member George asked for clarification on the benefits for Tri-Met in them receiving Sound Transit's Skoda Tacoma Link vehicles. Mr. Blackburn responded that the Skoda vehicles will serve as a bridge in Tri-Met's current fleet as a new vehicle procurement process is underway, and that the Skoda's have off-wire operation abilities that Tri-Met needs for track realignment work ongoing in Portland.

Board member George asked whether the \$6.6 million cost estimate for the Brookville vehicles Sound Transit will receive as part of the agreement were the current value or a factory new cost estimate. Mr. Rajaram responded that the \$6.6 million figure is the current estimated cost for each of the vehicles as received, nothing that this would represent a 30-40% savings when compared to procuring three new Brookville vehicles from the factory.

Board member George asked what the expected vehicle life would be for the Brookville vehicles Sound Transit will receive. Mr. Blackburn responded that the vehicles have a 30-year design life, and that the agency should expect about 28-29 years of service for the vehicles received.

It was moved by Board member Birney, seconded by Board member George, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2025-65 be approved.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2025-30: Amending the T-Link Trains and Trackway Program by (a) increasing the authorized project allocation by \$24,633,550 from \$5,759,058 to \$30,392,608, (b) increasing the annual project allocation by \$16,422,417 from \$1,169,427 to \$17,591,844 to allow for the execution of a streetcar purchase, sale, and transfer agreement with the City of Portland.

Chair Walker noted that since information on the resolution was included in the presentation on Motion No. M2025-65, the committee would move directly to action.

Chair Walker asked for clarification on why this action needs Board approval compared to the previous action. Mr. Rajaram responded that this action requires full Board approval due to it being a budget amendment.

It was moved by Board member Birney, seconded by Board member George, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-30 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2025-31: Authorizing the chief executive officer to increase Sound Transit staffing levels to transition the operations of the Sound Transit Mobile Security Patrol from contracted staff to full-time employees assigned to the Field Activity Specialist Team 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.

Chair Walker asked how funding related to this action is reflected in the budget. Mr. de Place responded that funding for this action comes from the operating budget, and that funds would be transferred from those allocated to contracted services to internal staff.

It was moved by Board member Birney, seconded by Board member George, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-31 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Resiliency Effort Update

Shankar Rajaram, acting Core Infrastructure and Asset Management Executive Director, and Randi Levin, Chief Information Officer, provided the report, giving details of work completed since September 2025, what current disruption trends look like, and what plans are to complete remaining additional resiliency work.

Mr. Rajaram reported that of the 80 recommendations put forward in the resiliency study, 17 have been completed, with a further 22 planned for completion prior to the FIFA World Cup in the Summer of 2026. He further noted that several projects were completed during the first extended monthly maintenance window in October, which resulted in the ability to complete 160 percent additional work compared to normal non-revenue periods.

Mr. Rajaram discussed unplanned disruptions, noting a significant fall in monthly disruption hours, falling from 18 per month in Q3 to only nine during the month of October. He further detailed the average time to resolve a disruption has fallen significantly from 2024 despite a higher rate of incidents. In 2024, it took an average of 151 minutes to resolve a disruption, dropping to 38 minutes on average so far in 2025.

Mr. Rajaram noted that several state-of-good-repair projects are moving forward, with 22 being currently identified. Of those, three have been completed, with a further 12 in progress. Eight in-progress projects will be completed by the World Cup, with the other four being completed afterwards. An additional seven projects will start after the World Cup concludes, with all projects being completed within the next five years.

Ms. Levin provided additional details on the Network Modernization Plan, which is responsible for all communications in the operation of Sound Transit services. She noted that thus far, the Plan has been fully defined and all documentation for contract work has been completed, and that the project is now moving into the implementation phase. Over the next five years, an updated fiber optic communications backbone will be constructed, and all stations will be standardized with the new network design. Obsolete equipment will continue to be replaced as able, and a new editable information repository will be developed and implemented.

Passenger Impact Program

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

Mr. Mizuta reported that two work events have been completed since the last REO committee meeting on November 6, 2025. He noted that emergency network SCADA switch upgrades were completed during a 12-hour closure between Capitol Hill and UW Stations on November 8, and that repairs to rail near Westlake Station were completed during a full-day tunnel closure on November 16.

Mr. Mizuta reiterated continuing work on the construction of stairwells at the future Pinehurst Station. He reported that work was deferred in October and November, and that single-tracking disruptions on weekdays from 9 P.M. to the end of service would resume on December 8, which will result in 12-minute headways system-wide. He further reported that work will be halted on nights of high-attendance events, and that work is expected to be complete in February.

Mr. Mizuta reported on upcoming signal upgrades work in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel. He noted that there will be extended non-revenue periods, spanning from 11 P.M. to 10 A.M. the next morning on both Friday, December 12, and Saturday, December 20. Additionally, there will be full closures of the tunnel on the weekends of January 2-5, and January 16-19.

Mr. Mizuta gave information on the newly implemented Monthly Maintenance Program. He noted that windows in October, November, and December have been successful, and future windows scheduled for January 13-15 between Mount Baker and Stadium Stations, February 10-12 between Tukwila International Boulevard and Mount Baker Stations, and March 3-5 between Northgate and Lynnwood City Center Stations.

Chair Walker noted that due to a scheduling restriction, that she would like to recognize Board member Frizzell for her work on the committee, and asked her to share a few words.

Board member Frizzell thanked the committee and Board for the opportunity to serve, noting the importance of the work of connecting riders between Snohomish, King, and Pierce Counties. She further highlighted the experiences she's shared with other Board members, saying that it has been an honor to serve and be part of the importance decision-making process as a member of the Board.

REO Metrics

Raj Cheriell, Enterprise Data and Analytics Director, provided the report, giving insights into ridership and service delivery during WSDOT's 'Revive I-5' project.

Mr. Cheriell reported that the agency saw an increase in ridership during 'Revive I-5' construction, with an average of 130,200 daily riders throughout the month of August, representing a 16 percent increase over the previous three months. Mr. Cheriell further reported on weekend ridership during the same

period, highlighting that during ‘Revive I-5’ construction, ridership increased by 26 percent compared to the prior month.

Mr. Cheriell gave information on average passenger loads before, during, and after ‘Revive I-5’ construction to help quantify the impacts of the increase in ridership. Prior to construction, average passenger loads were highest between U district and Westlake from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. During construction, ridership increased in the same stations and periods, with average carloads increasing from 98 to 118 per car. Following construction, general ridership decreased, although maximum carloads continued to increase, with an average of 125 passengers per car at Westlake Station during the 5:00 P.M. hour.

Mr. Cheriell highlighted trip delivery information before, during, and after ‘Revive I-5’ construction, noting that Sound Transit did not see significant changes to revenue service, with stable and predictable service provided, while also noting that additional surge ridership trains were not deployed to accommodate the larger crowds.

Chair Walker asked for clarification on capacity limits and agency policy surrounding passenger loads. Mr. Cheriell responded that the agency defines crowding into four levels: when all seats on a car are filled (approximately 75 riders per car), when standing room on a car is at a level of four people per square meter (approximately 120 riders per car), when standing room is at six people per square meter (approximately 180 riders per car), and when standing room is at eight people per square meter (approximately 240 riders per car) which is when cars reach crush load.

Chair Walker further asked for clarification as to what level is being reached in passenger loads seen during and after ‘Revive I-5’ construction. Mr. Cheriell responded that most of those instances would fall into the second level of crowding, falling between 75-120 riders per car.

Executive session – None

Other business

Next meeting

Thursday, January 15, 2025 ****NOTE DATE****
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

ATTEST:

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, HRR.