



Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting January 15, 2026

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Committee Vice Chair Prince 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
(A) Kristina Walker, Tacoma Councilmember	(P) Ed Prince, Renton Council President

Board Members	
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember
(P) Hunter George, Fircrest Councilmember	(A) 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 - None

CEO Report

CEO Dow Constantine provided the report, giving a status update on the development of new rider rules of conduct for pets, initial information on an overnight ST Express service pilot, special event service that will be in effect to support the Seahawks playoff game on January 17, as well as pre-revenue service updates on the Crosslake Connection.

Public comment

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

The following people provided written public comment:

Port of Seattle
Anita Belcher

The following person provided virtual public comment:

Joe Kunzler

No in-person public comments were received.

Business Items

For Committee final action

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

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

Motion No. M2026-03: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract modification to the Agency Oversight and Controls Office – On-Call Consulting Services contract with KPMG, LLP, for implementing a portfolio management and controls framework that will support Agency project and program delivery and other strategic system expansion and services delivery projects in the amount of \$5,000,000, for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$15,000,000.

Laurel Klein, Agency Controls Executive Director, provided a presentation on the action.

It was moved by Board member George, seconded by Board member Birney, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2026-03 be approved.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2026-04: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute multiple agreements with the Washington State Department of Transportation for operation, maintenance, inspection, and preservation of the East Link Extension within the I-90 corridor.

Chad Brown, East Link Deputy Executive Project Director, and Kerry Pihlstrom, Asset Transition Office Executive Director, provided a presentation on the action.

It was moved by Board member George, seconded by Board member Birney, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2026-04 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

2026 Service Plan Engagement Survey Results

Emily Yasukochi, System and Service Planning Director, and Alex Ko, acting Systems Engagement Director, provided the report.

Mr. Ko provided a brief review of public engagement activities undertaken as part of the development of the 2026 Service Plan proposal. He noted that Phase 1, conducted in the Spring of 2025, included 24 ST Ambassador shifts and over 2300 survey responses from members of the public. Phase 2, conducted in the Summer of 2025, involved 15 outreach events and educational videos to inform the public about upcoming rail service changes. Phase 3, conducted in the Fall of 2025, involved gathering responses for proposed ST Express Bus service changes, through open houses, 26 shifts of ST Ambassador outreach, and nearly 4500 survey responses. Phase 4, slated for the Winter of 2026, will include the reporting of survey findings and the finalization of the proposed service change.

Mr. Ko further noted high-level takeaways from the survey results. Riders were generally supportive of proposed changes to ST Express routes 513, 535, 550, and the addition of new overnight service, whereas changes to routes 515, 554, 556, and 586 were generally opposed. Riders showed mixed feelings on changes to routes 522, 574, and 580, and that most respondents shared common themes of prioritizing travel time and access to destinations.

Ms. Yasukochi provided a route-by-route review of proposed changes and feedback as part of the Survey Engagement process. Route 513 from Lynnwood to Seaway Park and Ride would add bidirectional service and remove a stop at Eastmont Park and Ride, which averaged less than one boarding per trip. Route 515 from Lynnwood to Seattle would be discontinued, as authorized by the Board in Resolution No. R2024-03. Riders who previously rode this route would instead be directed to Light Rail service between Lynnwood City Center Station and Downtown Seattle. Route 522 from Woodinville to Seattle would see its western terminus of U District redirected to Shoreline South Station, with headways improved to 15 minutes for most of the day.

Moving into East King County routes, ST Express route 535 would see increased service on Saturday, and new service added on Sunday. Route 550 from Bellevue to Seattle would be discontinued, with riders directed to new, more frequent Link service on the 2 Line. Route 554 from Issaquah to Seattle would be discontinued. Route 556 from Issaquah to the University of Washington would be truncated at Bellevue Downtown Station but would receive additional service and reduced headways.

For South King and Pierce County routes, ST Express route 574 from Lakewood to SeaTac would be truncated at Federal Way Downtown Station, with riders transferring to Link service at the station. Route 580 from South Hill Park and Ride to Puyallup Sounder Station would be discontinued, with riders being directed to Pierce Transit Route 400. Route 586 from Tacoma to the University of Washington would be discontinued, with riders being directed to other Pierce County ST Express routes connecting to Link Service at various stations.

Ms. Yasukochi reviewed proposed overnight routes, which would add new ST Express service on three corridors – Lakewood to Seattle via SeaTac, Redmond to Seattle via Bellevue, and Everett to Seattle – during times when Link service is not running.

Mr. Ko discussed additional themes seen through survey responses. He noted that there was a desire for a direct route between Issaquah and Seattle, especially from senior riders, as well as concerns about the ability of Link service to meet needs for those impacted by discontinued ST Express service. Riders also expressed concerns about the lack of redundancy when routes are discontinued, while others desired further discontinuation of less utilized routes to see increased service on others.

Board member George noted the similarity between proposed changes to routes 554 and 556 and earlier proposed changes to Pierce County ST Express routes, asking for what distinction existed between these two areas and how the transfer would impact riders. Ms. Yasukochi responded that the primary difference is that routes being truncated or discontinued showed either reductions or minimal increases in overall travel time compared to earlier proposed changes to Pierce County routes. She further noted that changes to routes 554 and 556 are very similar to changes made to route 512, which was truncated from Seattle to Northgate, then to Lynnwood, but with increased service frequency with those truncations.

Passenger Impact Program

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

Mr. Mizuta reported on work completed since the previous REO meeting on December 4, 2025, which included two extended night closures on December 12th and 20th, a full weekend closure of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT) between January 2-5, 2026, and two further extended night closures on January 9th and 10th.

Mr. Mizuta gave updates on the DSTT signal upgrades project, which will have additional closures throughout January. Stations in the DSTT will close early at 10 p.m. on Friday, January 16th, and will open late at noon on Sunday, January 18th. Service will operate normally on Saturday, January 17th to accommodate the Seahawks game. An additional full weekend closure is planned for January 23-26 but may be modified to accommodate another potential Seahawks game on January 24th.

Mr. Mizuta detailed ongoing construction work at Pinehurst Station. He noted that nightly weekday single tracking resumed on December 8, 2025, which result in 12-minute headways systemwide from 7 p.m. to close. Work at the station will be paused to accommodate other priority testing and regional events, including delaying disruptions to 9 p.m. during Lunar New Year between February 14th and March 3rd.

Mr. Mizuta gave additional updates on the Monthly Maintenance Program, which sees portions of the Link system close early at 11 p.m. to provide additional maintenance hours for vehicles. The January maintenance window, between Mt. Baker and Stadium Stations on January 13-15, has been progressing as scheduled. Further maintenance windows are scheduled for February 10-12 between Tukwila International Boulevard and Mt. Baker Stations, March 3-5 between Northgate and Lynnwood City Center Stations, and April 14-16 between Bel Red and Redmond City Center Stations.

REO Metrics

Benjamin Marx, acting Service Operations Executive Director, and Raj Cheriell, Enterprise Data and Analytics Director, provided the report on initial ridership statistics for the 2025 calendar year.

Mr. Cheriell compared total Link light rail boardings between 2024 and 2025, noting that Link had seen its largest monthly ridership figures throughout the year, due to several large-scale events and continued additions of new Link extensions throughout that period. He further detailed specific events that likely drove large ridership in July, including several Mariners games on July 1-6, July 18, and July 22 and 23. Other events in August also drive high ridership, including Seafair weekend from August 1-3, Mariners, Seahawks, and a Lady Gaga concert on August 6-9, Mariners games on August 22-26, as well as the combination of Bumbershoot, UW Football, and Sounders FC games on August 30-31. Mr. Cheriell further detailed events that drove high ridership in September and October, with several UW Football, Sounders FC, Seahawks, and Mariners games throughout the period that continued to push high demand for Link service.

Mr. Marx highlighted that in multiple months throughout 2025, the number of Link trips operated outpaced the scheduled number. This indicates a significant number of event and demand-based trips that were not initially planned for, while also highlighting the agency's ability to respond quickly to increased demand on the system.

Mr. Marx further detailed how the agency coordinates with other agencies and jurisdictions to plan for special events, noting how event service has become normal, rather than the exception for Sound Transit. He highlighted that as the agency continues to grow, as well as with several significant events coming down the pike in 2026, the agency is working to carry lessons forward from 2025 to improve system reliability, customer experience, and operational readiness to deal with continued large crowds.

Board member Birney thanked staff for the detailed report on how the agency is responding to increased demand and what steps are being taken to improve system reliability in 2026.

Board member George recalled a recent conversation he had with a state legislator that had questions about agency ridership and reliability, noting that this kind of data and presentations are useful in allowing him to answer questions to his colleagues and constituents.

Discussion on Draft 2026 Rider Experience and Operations Committee Work Plan

Committee Vice Chair Prince reviewed the draft Work Plan, highlighting the areas of special interest and anticipated items that will come before the committee in 2026. He encouraged other committee members to review the document and provide any feedback or additional topics of interest in advance of the committee's next meeting in February.

Executive session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, February 5, 2026
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, HRR.