



## Summary Minutes

### Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting February 5, 2026

#### Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 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	
(P) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(P) Teresa Mosqueda, King County Councilmember
(P) Steffanie Fain, King County Councilmember	(A) David Parshall, Lynnwood Councilmember
(P) Hunter George, Fircrest Councilmember	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember

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

#### Report of the Chair

Chair Walker provided the report, welcoming Board members Balducci, Fain, Mosqueda, and Parshall to the REO Committee.

#### CEO Report

Chief executive officer Dow Constantine provided updates on the installation of new Automated Train Protection systems in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, ongoing engagement prior to the opening of the Cross Lake Connection on March 28, a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Renton Transit Center, and on the State legislative session.

#### Public comment

Committee Chair Walker announced that public comment would be accepted via email to [emailtheboard@soundtransit.org](mailto:emailtheboard@soundtransit.org), in person, and would also be accepted virtually.

The following person provided written public comment:

Michael Dennis

The following person provided virtual public comment:

Joe Kunzler

No in-person public comments were received.

## **Business Items**

### **For Committee final action**

January 15, 2026, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

**It was moved by Board member Mosqueda, seconded by Board member Balducci, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that the minutes of the January 15, 2026, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.**

Motion No. M2026-07: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract modification with Insight Public Sector, Inc. to provide additional Microsoft software, support, and related maintenance services in the amount of \$8,400,000, for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$18,255,000 plus applicable taxes.

Randi Levin, Chief Information Officer, and Hughey Newsome, Chief Financial Officer, provided a presentation on the action.

Board member Fain asked for clarification on how cost escalation on this contract was spread amongst different factors. Ms. Levin responded that costs are split into thirds between increased staff who need licenses for the software, increases in cloud services, and new products such as Microsoft Copilot.

Board member Fain asked how projected versus actual cloud services use is tracked and whether there are any reporting mechanisms to the Committee. Ms. Levin responded that tools are being developed in tandem with the establishment of new cloud services use, and that those tools will help to inform future reporting systems.

Chair Walker asked whether this contract modification was budgeted for. Mr. Newsome responded that the contract is included in the long-range financial plan and that no new funding is needed for this modification.

Board member Balducci asked for clarification on what the cost trajectory for this type of contract looks like. Ms. Levin responded that costs for these contracts will continue to increase over time as the amount of data usage increases, which is being seen across sectors and industries as new AI tools are developed and the rate of cloud-based data storage increases.

**It was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince, seconded by Board member Balducci, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2026-07 be approved.**

## **Reports to the Committee**

Enterprise Initiative: Scenario Development and Service Delivery Building Blocks

Alex Krieg, Enterprise Planning Deputy Executive Director, and Shankar Rajaram, acting Core Infrastructure and Asset Management Executive Director, provided the report.

Mr. Krieg provided an overview of the key considerations of how various scenarios would be developed and gave a timeline for scenario development, which will culminate in the presentation of plausible, affordable scenarios for the Board at their March retreat.

Mr. Rajaram noted that the Transit Operations department does not have equivalent 'levers' like the Capital Delivery departments to drastically reduce costs, with operating expenses largely tied to the size of the capital program and overall system. Of the opportunities identified, most are not near-term cost savings, but long-term, contingent, and incremental savings that would 'bend the curve' of operating costs. Additionally, certain long-term cost savings opportunities require upfront capital investment.

Board member Mosqueda noted that previous presentations that spoke to resiliency investments included details on timelines for return on investment and asked whether updated return on investment analyses have been completed. Mr. Kreig responded new analyses are being worked on collaboratively between the Transit Operations and Capital Delivery departments, with the goal of presenting the results of those analyses at the March Board retreat.

Mr. Rajaram detailed various example opportunities across four categories: Asset management, operations and maintenance optimization, capital delivery design efficiencies and automation, and governance, revenue, and policy levers. In asset management, Mr. Rajaram noted opportunities for maximizing asset maintenance efficiencies, which can improve reliability and resilience of various assets resulting in long-term savings and extended asset life. He also reported on operations and maintenance optimization opportunities, which include optimizing passenger carrying capacity and maintenance workforce utilization to achieve greater cost efficiency and simplify maintenance. Detailing capital delivery design efficiencies and automation opportunities, Mr. Rajaram discussed how maximizing OMF capacity and futureproofing ST3 extensions for higher future capacity could avoid obsolescence-related disruptions on newly built infrastructure and ease the transition of existing infrastructure following ST3 investments. He then highlighted governance, revenue, and policy levers that the Board could pursue additional revenues and changes to service assumptions to create more efficient delivery of transit operations.

Mr. Rajaram explained how the Resiliency Effort interfaces with the Enterprise Initiative, noting that the 2025 Long-range Financial Plan update included placeholder resiliency investments to account for cost risk. Staff continues to explore different feasibility assessments to inform Enterprise Initiatives, which will be presented at the March Board retreat with potential resiliency investments factored in. He highlighted that the March 2025 Resiliency Report included both near-term state of good repair work that needed to be undertaken, and long-term capital investments, which are being explored through the aforementioned feasibility assessments. These assessments include potential investments in additional crossover tracks, changes to the system's signaling system, and the construction of a unified control center.

Mr. Rajaram detailed specific improvements, such as a new crossover track in downtown Seattle, and retrofitting the system for communication-based train control. The former would provide additional train storage in a high ridership portion of the alignment, while also allowing additional operational flexibility in cases where unplanned disruptions occur. The latter would preempt obsolescence of the current signal system, while also futureproofing Link service for higher ridership and potential changes to automated service.

CEO Constantine added he had recently spoken with Senator Murray, noting that she had secured four million dollars in federal funding to assist with studies into these improvements, and shared his thanks to the state congressional delegation for their efforts in supporting the agency's work.

Mr. Rajaram continued, discussing potentially upgrading the system to a fiber-based network design, which would support higher bandwidth for the system, while reducing long-term costs.

Board member Balducci asked how staff are planning to seek Board input on scenario development. Mr. Kreig responded that briefings at committee meetings, as well as potentially in March committee meetings prior to the Board's March retreat. CEO Constantine added that Board members will also be engaged at Subarea briefings and are also welcome to schedule additional time with staff to provide ideas and feedback. Board member Balducci requested that if draft scenarios are available, to please share them with Board members so that they can provide feedback in advance of the March retreat.

Board member Fain asked for clarification on whether Board members will be able to provide feedback and additional thoughts at the March Board retreat. Mr. Kreig responded in the affirmative. Chair Walker asked for additional detail on how feedback and engagement will take place at February committee meetings versus at the March Board retreat.

Mr. Krieg responded that the February committee briefings will discuss how staff have been collecting information into opportunity registers, which are driving scenario development, and what policy tradeoffs exist between potential changes to capital delivery projects compared to needed investments in systems operations. The March Board retreat will then directly compare those tradeoffs and show the Board how the different cost savings and revenue generation measures flow into potential Board decision-making points.

Board member Mosqueda noted that most of the discussion on engagement appears internally focused and requested additional information on how external partners and local communities are being engaged throughout the Enterprise Initiative. Mr. Krieg responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Krieg continued the report, detailing the service design and planning assumptions of the ST3 plan. He discussed the intention to revisit these assumptions through the Enterprise Initiative to validate rider needs and create new assumptions based on travel patterns, while exploring opportunities to design for future compatibility with potential future service.

Mr. Krieg detailed the current service expansion assumptions under the ST3 plan. In 2032, the West Seattle Link Extension would open, operating between West Seattle and SODO. This would be followed by the Tacoma Dome Link Extension in 2035, which would operate from Lynnwood to Tacoma. In 2037, Phase 1 of the Everett Link Extension would open, extending 1 Line service to Southwest Everett Industrial Station and 2 Line service to Mariner Station. 2039 would see the opening of the Ballard Link Extension and the segmentation of 'the spine,' splitting the 1 and 3 Lines into Ballard to Tacoma and Everett to West Seattle, respectively. Under this system, the 1 Line would run in a new tunnel through downtown Seattle, with the 2 and 3 Lines running through the existing Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel. The full Everett Link Extension would open in 2041, as well as the Tacoma Link extension to Tacoma Community College. The 4 Line, between South Kirkland and Issaquah, would open in 2044.

Mr. Krieg explained that for all Link light rail lines, service would run at 6 minutes during peak hours, and at 10 minutes off-peak. He noted that these service standards were adopted as part of the ST3 plan and have not been updated since 2015. Mr. Krieg further explained that as Capital Delivery scenarios explore changes to project scope and schedule, service assumptions would correspondingly be updated. He also stated that the Board can also consider additional changes that would impact service levels and the termini of each line.

Mr. Krieg discussed the various Sounder projects that have been pre-baselined and delayed through prior realignment work in 2021, totaling \$3.6 billion. He then detailed the changes in Sounder ridership trends since the pandemic, noting that Sounder ridership has stabilized at about 50 percent of pre-pandemic ridership. While commuter patterns have changed since the pandemic, there has been strong ridership on special event service trains, as well as continued public feedback desiring increased service periods for Sounder. Mr. Krieg noted that the Enterprise Initiative would focus on Sounder's maintenance and operating model, a potential shift from commuter-based to all-day service, as well as cost-benefit analysis of current N Line service levels.

Mr. Krieg noted that the Enterprise Initiative's focus on ST Express would be tied to potential changes in the capital program, which would affect service assumptions. This would affect various elements, including fleet size, maintenance base needs, and other ST Express support services.

Board member Fain asked how the agency tracks newer ridership trends on Sounder and how they are being considered when making capital project decisions. Mr. Krieg responded that ridership trends are captured both through rider origin-destination surveys, as well as by automated passenger counters on board vehicles. He noted that previous engagement was conducted directly with Sounder riders to better understand their priorities and needs for Sounder service, and that that information can be provided as part of the March Board retreat. CEO Constantine noted an observation from Vice Chair Mello at the earlier Executive committee meeting that Sounder ridership trends have moved to a more diverse travel pattern that would indicate a greater desire for longer service hours rather than larger commuter trains.

Chair Walker noted her agreement with the idea of moving Sounder away from being a commuter-rail oriented service, highlighting desires from her constituents for longer service hours and more trip availability on Sounder compared to longer trains. She further noted that she does not agree with the notion of possibly discontinuing ST Express bus service, highlighting it as an important part of the services Sound Transit provides.

Chair Walker highlighted that various access improvements projects were noted on the Sounder investments portion of the presentation and requested additional information on what would be included as part of those projects. Mr. Krieg responded that many of the access improvements were included in the ST3 initiative based on expected expansion to Sounder platforms and longer trains, and did not have fully developed details.

#### At Grade Crossing Program Update

John Martin, Capital Delivery Executive Director, and William Chow, Commercial Director, provided the report, giving a refresher on the background of the At Grade Crossing program and the work completed to date. Mr. Chow highlighted that the program is committed to community engagement through messaging campaigns, neighborhood events, and ongoing safety outreach.

Mr. Chow reported on early performance data, noting that preliminary interventions have reduced crossing incidents, with pedestrian and vehicle events dropping by 33 and 3 percent, respectively.

Mr. Chow discussed current program project efforts, which include three projects in planning and design, and an additional project that is currently being implemented. Pedestrian gates at Royal Brougham Way, near Stadium Station, are in the design phase, with an expected completion date of 2028. Automated pedestrian gates in the Rainier Valley, as well as other MLK Way improvements, are currently in planning with an anticipated completion date of 2029. The pilot project for alternating 'wig-wag' headlights on vehicles has been successful, and the Link fleet is currently being retrofitted with an anticipated completion date of 2028.

Mr. Chow described further at-grade crossing initiatives. These include a SMART grant Rainier Valley Safe Project Pilot that is currently in design for completion by the end of the year, T Line standards development in planning for completion 2027, planning in the Sounder Lakewood Subdivision anticipated to complete in 2027, as well as further crossing pre-project outreach that is ongoing across various areas.

Board member Mosqueda noted that some of the prerequisites for certain improvements require heavy cooperation from the Seattle Department of Transportation and asked if a timeline has been established with the new Seattle administration to get answers to those needs. Mr. Chow responded that agency staff have bi-weekly calls with SDOT, noting that there is alignment on these projects between the two groups and that progress is being made on getting the prerequisite data needed for certain projects.

Vice Chair Prince asked for additional clarification on the anticipated completion dates for projects in the Rainier Valley, specifically whether those dates were firm or if they could be accelerated. Mr. Chow noted that the dates provided are the current best estimates for completion and that various interim work is being pursued to mitigate safety challenges as best as possible while larger-scale projects are in development.

Board member George asked for clarification on how many intersections were included in the scope of these projects. Mr. Chow responded that crossings near stations in the Rainier Valley are top priorities and that there are approximately 20 different intersections that fall within the scope of the projects.

Chair Walker asked if the data collected on collisions is broken down by intersection. Mr. Chow responded that the data is still preliminary and is not yet available at that level of detail.

## Fare Engagement Update

Brain de Place, acting Security and Fare Engagement Executive Director, and Tanya Starke, Frontline Passenger Support Deputy Director, provided the report.

Ms. Starke provided an update on program staffing. The program had 34 staff as of January 1st, with an additional six staff starting on January 26th. Active recruitment is underway for an additional 12 staff, along with a further 10 budgeted as part of the 2026 budget process. Provided all positions are filled, the program should have a total end-of-year staffing total of 62.

Ms. Starke detailed fare inspection data for 2025, noting a general rate of fare compliance for those inspected hovering at around 92 percent with approximately two-to-three percent of ridership being inspected on any given month. She caveated this data noting that overall fare media compliance remains below that of inspected compliance, but with both figures trending positively over the latter half of 2025.

Ms. Starke gave updates on the Fare Paid Zone Inspection Pilot, which has shown increase in Fare Ambassador perceptions of safety while allowing for higher rider engagement rates.

Board member Balducci asked for clarification on fare inspection versus fare media compliance. Mr. de Place responded that inspection compliance is the rate at which fare is confirmed amongst riders who are actively inspected by a Fare Ambassador, whereas fare media compliance is the rate at which system payments correlate to the ridership of vehicles as reported by automated passenger counters. Board member Balducci asked about the difference between the two figures. Mr. de Place responded that it appears to be a combination of factors, including that certain passenger categories are counted but do not require fare – such as youth – and that since Fare Ambassadors only inspect between two-to-three percent of ridership, they may not provide a representative data set.

Board member Balducci asked if data is collected on the number of passengers who refuse to have their fare inspected. Mr. Starke responded that staff collects that information and that it can be provided.

Board member Fain noted that the presentation highlighted that Fare Ambassadors are able to identify fare issues prior to boarding and resolve them and asked if any data is being collected on potential barriers to access as part of that work. Ms. Starke responded that each Fare Ambassadors has, on average, 10-15 interactions with riders per shift who take resources or other information on reduced fare programs, and that it is one of the most dispensed resources from the program.

## Discussion on 2026 Rider Experience and Operations Committee Work Plan

Committee Chair Walker reviewed the Work Plan and requested any topics or items of special interest that committee members would like to see added to the work plan.

Board member Fain noted that as more stations are added to the Link system, more riders take transit to and from the airport and asked that the agency evaluate the effectiveness of its wayfinding and signage following the World Cup. Capital Delivery Deputy CEO Terri Mestas responded that the Capital Delivery department is currently evaluating how to most efficiently deliver signage to projects, and that staff will bring back a report on the topic to the committee in the future.

Board member Balducci asked the committee to hear an update at some point on regional safety work being done, including that of the Regional Safety Task Force and partners at King and Snohomish Counties. CEO Constantine responded that staff are happy to provide that presentation to the committee as time permits.

Board member Balducci also requested that passenger restroom access be added as a topic to be reported on to the committee, noting that while the agency cannot afford to build and fully staff restrooms everywhere along the alignment, that the committee should check in on the status of any ongoing work that exists to provide some improvements to riders.

Board member Mosqueda requested the addition of a review of station cleanliness, noting that while the platforms of stations look well-maintained, the areas near stations and getting to the platform could see improvements. CEO Constantine noted that he heavily prioritizes the importance of cleanliness and that there have been significant improvements over the last year, but that additional work needs to be done.

Board member Fain asked whether the agency has explored leasing station space for coffee stands or other uses to help generate new revenues. CEO Constantine noted that this work is already on this topic, and that the newly formed Office of Community Planning and Development will allow additional bandwidth to work on station activation. Board member Mosqueda seconded the idea, noting that staff should also explore the ability to have local businesses who might be displaced by light rail expansion have a first right to lease station space to better engage local communities and receive support from them.

Chair Walker noted that regular reports on vertical conveyances were no longer present on the work plan and asked staff if there was a need for it. Agency Chief of Staff Calli Knight noted that there is good news to share on that front, leading Chair Walker to request its addition to the work plan.

**Executive session – None**

**Other business**

Vice Chair Prince shared with the committee that he is working with staff to develop a motion to direct staff to study and report back on creative ways to deliver parking and access improvements as it relates to the Enterprise Initiative, with the intention of bringing that action to the full Board meeting on February 26.

**Next meeting**

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

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Kristina Walker  
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

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Kathryn Flores  
Board Administrator

APPROVED on \_\_\_\_\_, HRR.