SOUNDTRANSIT

Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting
February 12, 2026

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. by Committee Chair Birney 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) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor

Board Members	
(P) Steffanie Fain, King County Councilmember	(P) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
(A) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor	(P) Dan Strauss, Seattle Councilmember
(P) Ryan Mello, Pierce County Executive	(A) Katie Wilson, Seattle Mayor
	(P) Girmay Zahilay, King County Executive

Alejandro Monzon, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the System Expansion Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Opening Remarks

Chair Birney thanked her fellow Board members for the opportunity to chair the System Expansion Committee and expressed great appreciation to former Chair Balducci for her effective leadership over the years. She noted the important role of the System Expansion Committee in delivering Sound Transit's expansion program, especially the multi-generational investments included in ST3.

Welcome new members

Chair Birney welcomed Board members Fain, Wilson, and Zahilay to their first System Expansion Committee meeting.

CEO Report

Chief Executive Officer Dow Constantine provided the report.

Seahawks Parade success – CEO Constantine thanked Sound Transit staff and the agency's partners, especially King County, for their work to ensure reliable transit service for yesterday's Seahawks victory parade. The system performed impressively in handling record-breaking crowds, despite an early morning disruption from copper theft. Early estimates indicate 200,000 – 250,000 Link boardings, surpassing the previous single day record of ~160,000. Precise data is being validated and will be shared as soon as possible. Sounder trains registered 20,000 boardings while daily ridership averages around 8,000 boardings. He also specifically thanked the security team which helped to reunite a lost child with their parents.

Start of 2 Line simulated service – The 2 Line (Lynnwood-Redmond) will begin simulated service beginning February 14, 2026, in preparation for the March 28, 2026 opening of the Crosslake Connection. 2 Line trains will begin service between Lynnwood and International District stations, bringing peak service to 4-minute headways in the corridor. CEO Constantine stressed that the 2 Line trains will run with 2-car consists so a short train means a short trip. Passengers heading south from downtown Seattle will need to take a 1 Line train to do so.

Overlake TOD groundbreaking – Next Thursday, Chair Birney and Board member Zahilay will join the agency at a groundbreaking event for Prisma, an affordable housing development near Overlake Village Station in Redmond. The six-story, mixed-use development will add 328 units of housing, ground floor business and a community hub within a short distance of the light rail station.

Reliability progress – The Transit Operations team recently shared the latest Link reliability numbers. For Q4 2025, the agency reached a new quarterly low for average hours of unplanned disruptions per month: 12 hours. In January, that number dropped to 6 hours. CEO Constantine has challenged the team to reach an average of fewer that 10 hours per month for all of 2026. The Rider Experience and Operations Committee will hear more on these efforts in March.

Chair Birney thanked Sound Transit for its collaboration with the City of Redmond on the Overlake Housing Development and echoed the excitement from yesterday's victory parade.

Public comment

Chair Birney announced that public comment would be accepted via email to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted verbally.

Written public comments:

Jeff Chapman
Bill Hirt
Brien Chow
Betty Lau

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

Betty Lau
Brien Chow
Alex Tsimerman

Committee Chair Birney announced that Mr. Alex Tsimerman was in violation of the rules for public comment, and based the violation and past violations would be excluded from providing verbal public comment to the Sound Transit Board of Directors and Committees for a period of 180 days. The exclusion was based on Mr. Tsimerman's violation of the Board Rules and Operating Procedures. Under the rules, the Board may overturn the public exclusion at the next Board meeting.

Marykate Ryan
Kyle McCrohan

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

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 December 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 continued its effort to issue prompt payment, with an average of 29 days to pay applicable invoices, meeting the 30-day benchmark. There was one OSHA recordable injury incident in December on the Pinehurst Infill Station project.

Moving to Projects in Planning and Design, Ms. Mestas noted that the publication of the Everett Link Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement is trending toward Q3 2026, with efforts underway to try and accelerate that publication. She also flagged that the Committee and Board will likely be asked to consider an award for a Progressive Design-Build contract for the Operations and Maintenance Facility South project by the end of Q1.

Shifting to Projects in Construction, Ms. Mestas noted that the agency is excited for the March 28 opening of the Crosslake Connection and completion of the East Link Extension. She also highlighted the forecast Q3 opening of Pinehurst station, adding that efforts are being pursued to attempt to accelerate that schedule. She added the garages at Sounder stations in Sumner, Kent, and Auburn continue to advance on schedule toward the baselined service dates in 2027.

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: January 8, 2026 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Vice Chair Roscoe, seconded by Board member Mello, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the January 8, 2026 System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2026-02: Authorizing the chief executive officer to acquire certain real property interests, contingent upon receipt of any necessary federal approvals, 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 Ballard Link Extension project.

Brad Owen, Capital Delivery Executive Director, began the staff presentation. He was joined by Wells Lawson, Real Property Deputy Executive Director, and Hughey Newsome, Chief Financial Officer.

Board member Fain noted that she has a general hesitation to acquire property via condemnation, especially at the onset of the property acquisition process. She noted that these two parcels are in unique situations since conversations with the property owners spurred the timing of these actions. She asked what support Sound Transit offers property owners, both generally and the specific owners in today's actions. Mr. Lawson noted that the real support comes once an offer can be made, which allows the agency to provide relocation services benefits, such as covering expenses related to moving, temporary storage, and re-establishment at a new property. Mr. Lawson added that are differences between residential and commercial owners, and that there is Property Acquisition handbook available online.

Board member Strauss, noting that the agency is in a position of acquiring some parcels before an immediate need for construction, asked what policies/procedures are being looked at to ensure properties are well maintained in the interim. Mr. Lawson noted that he was asked that question on his first day with Sound Transit and has begun the work to identify what needs to change and who needs to

be included. He agreed that there is a need to ensure that the properties acquired stay in good condition and are not a burden/nuisance to the community. His first inclination is to ensure that the current use is maintained, but he is working to create a “vacant property policy” which may require some Board engagement/action. He hopes to be able to conduct that work and return within six months with an update.

Board member Strauss noted that he raised these concerns the last time a similar request was brought to the Board and thanked Mr. Lawson for his commitment to complete that work. He also highlighted that there are non-profits and other organizations that could help in finding potential residents to occupy the residential properties until needed for construction. He asked if any conversations have occurred. Mr. Lawson answered that since he joined, he has met with WELD which could help especially with single-family properties. He added that he would have to ask colleagues about previous work.

Board member Strauss inquired into the current status of the previous property acquired in West Seattle. Mr. Owen answered that the properties are currently vacant and secure in line with Sound Transit policy and would be included in the work that Mr. Lawson pursues. Board member Strauss added that he cannot wait another six months for the policy to be complete before action is taken to activate those properties. He will have serious reservations about future early acquisitions and asked for updates as work is progressed.

Chair Birney added that perhaps tracking this policy update as a Topic of Special Interest in the Committee work plan would be beneficial.

Board member Fain inquired into how many parcels have been acquired early for these projects. Mr. Owen responded that there are just the two residential parcels in West Seattle and the KeyBank parcel near the Dick’s sit-in in Lower Queen Anne.

It was moved by Board member Strauss, seconded by Vice Chair Roscoe, and carried by unanimous voice vote that Resolution No. R2026-02 be forwarded with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2026-03: Authorizing 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.

Information on this action was included in the previous presentation.

It was moved by Board member Strauss, seconded by Vice Chair Roscoe, and carried by unanimous voice vote that Resolution No. R2026-03 be forwarded with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Enterprise Initiative: Scenario Development & Capital Delivery Building Blocks

Alex Krieg, Enterprise Planning Deputy Executive Director, began the presentation and noted that Mr. Owen will speak to examples of Capital Delivery cost-savings opportunities later in the presentation.

Mr. Krieg reviewed the rules and expectations that staff are following, based on Board direction, to develop plausible scenarios for the Board to review who the different elements of the Enterprise Initiative fit together. He stressed that the intent is not to present pre-packaged options for the Board to select from, but rather to show trade-offs and policy considerations. Additionally, staff are focusing on components that can meaningfully move the needle on the affordability gap while keeping the scenarios as simple as possible.

Mr. Krieg explained that today's presentation to the System Expansion Committee will focus on the Capital Delivery workstream, which includes building blocks such as cost-savings opportunities, adjusted phasing and sequencing of project investments, updated cost allocations for shared/system-wide assets, and potential deferral of some projects.

Shifting to the review of the Capital Delivery opportunity register, Mr. Krieg reminded the Committee that the Capital Delivery Department began presenting examples of cost-savings opportunities last year, and that other workstreams in the Enterprise Initiative are undergoing similar practices. He turned the presentation over to Mr. Owen.

Mr. Owen explained that the Capital Delivery opportunity register currently has identified more than 600 cost-savings opportunities and work is ongoing, including discussions with other aspects of the agency, to assess those opportunities in advance of the Board retreat. He added that all projects in active development are included in the cost-savings work and additional opportunities will be identified as projects move through their respective design work. Larger changes, such as deferrals, can unlock additional cost savings beyond the staff-level design work, and Mr. Owen noted that the scale of cost growth in the capital program will require consideration of phasing projects and potentially project deferrals. Additional acceleration of projects through policy changes or procedural efficiencies will be carried forward through the policy workstream overseen by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Owen reminded the Committee that the opportunities are currently tracked as programmatic or project-level, and aim to provide benefits, such as improving passenger experience and lowering operations and maintenance costs. He added that projects in conceptual engineering (Ballard Link Extension, Tacoma Dome Link Extension, Everett Link Extension, Infill Stations, the Sounder Program, and OMF North) as well as projects that are post-preliminary engineering (West Seattle Link Extension and OMF South) have been included in developing these cost-savings opportunities, which are categorized into four levers with increasing degrees of challenge to implement. The next few slides will cover examples from each lever. Before moving to specific examples, Mr. Owen highlighted the current forecast savings across major ST3 light rail extensions currently in active development from utilizing each lever, with Lever 1 reducing cost by up to 10%, Lever 2 reducing cost by 1 - 13%, Lever 3 reducing cost by 10 - 20%, and Lever 4 reducing cost by 42 – 48%. He added that staff are actively working to implement Lever 1 opportunities, but additional action will be needed to unlock greater near-term cost savings in Levers 3 and 4.

Before jumping into specific examples, Mr. Owen noted that staff may need to follow up on some questions as some of the opportunities are for projects outside of his portfolio. The Lever 1 example is station optimization which aims to improve the passenger experience with simpler, more consistent station layouts, reduce construction and operations & maintenance (O&M) costs, and right-size stations for project and ridership needs. In addition to applying new agency stations standards across all ST3 stations, staff are also identifying site-specific design optimization to avoid unique cost drivers. At the future Westlake station, widening to avoid expensive mining and facilitate overbuild has a potential rough-order-of-magnitude (ROM) cost savings of $70-80M. Shifting the platform shape at the Seattle Center station to a slight trapezoidal configuration carries a potential ROM savings of $420-470M as it would allow for a shallower station. At the Ballard station, changes to the west headhouse to a smaller ancillary style structure could realize ROM savings of $110-110M

The Lever 2 example includes eliminating tail tracks at terminus stations, such as at the Tacoma Dome station. Mr. Owen noted that tail tracks support operational decisions, so internal coordination is necessary to implement such a change. Specific to the example at the Tacoma Dome station, eliminating the tail tracks would avoid costly impacts to the Sounder Breezeway, newly built Amtrak Station, and potentially the west end of Freighthouse Square. ROM cost savings on this opportunity are $40-50M.

The Lever 3 example is eliminating the West Seattle Link Extension Avalon station, which could realize ROM cost savings of $375-470M. In addition to the direct savings of not constructing a station, there are follow-on savings from a more direct alignment between other stations and a reduction in property needs. Mr. Owen noted that while there is not notable impact on overall ridership, there would be fewer Transit-oriented Development opportunities. He also reiterated that such a decision would require Board direction.

The Lever 4 example is the phased delivery of the Everett Link Extension, which was included in the previous Realignment. Mr. Owen noted that all the Link Extension projects have engineering and design work that could support this approach. Phased project delivery reduces yearly capital costs, helps to manage cash flows, and delays accrual of O&M costs. Board action would be required to implement additional phased delivery.

Mr. Owen also spoke to cost-savings opportunities on the Graham St. and Boeing Access Road Infill Stations, including maintaining currently existing infrastructure, adjusting geometry to reduce right-of-way costs, and utilizing pre-casting methods for construction.

Shifting to the Operations and Maintenance Facilities (OMF), Mr. Owen explained that there is an effort to pursue cost-saving opportunities by having the OMFs specialize in maintenance duties, which would allow for fewer duplicate assets, improved workforce planning, and decreased overall footprints. He noted that this work also includes current OMFs, not just those in development.

Mr. Krieg added that the ST3 program includes many projects that have not started active project development, were previously delayed through realignment efforts, or otherwise have not been formally baselined. He reviewed these investments which represent more than $18B in future capital costs. The scenarios presented at the Board Retreat are expected to include changes to the size and/or timing of these investments. These include the future 4 Line (South Kirkland to Issaquah via Bellevue), the Tacoma Link Extension to Tacoma Community College, a slate of Sounder projects, Parking & Access projects, and ST Express and bus reliability projects. Mr. Krieg also highlighted that ST3 also included $326 YOE for future planning studies to support the next ballot initiative and other future investments.

Board member Mello stressed that the examples are still currently illustrative and thanked staff for their work in bringing the Committee and public along through these examples. He also highlighted the importance of the ST Express Bus facility that was originally deferred from ST2 and indicated he would like to see that project move forward to support needed service in Pierce County. Additionally, the Tacoma Dome Station Access Improvements project from ST2 should be remembered and hopefully carried forward. He celebrated the recent completions and soon to occur completions of ST2 Sounder projects. Board member Mello also cautioned against full deferral/elimination of the future planning studies.

Board member Fain inquired into whether cost-savings could be presented on stations that haven't begun active development and asked for some clarity on how the example of station optimization can realize such large cost savings. Mr. Kreig responded that it is difficult to present the same cost-savings opportunities for projects covered in the last part of the presentation, since more concrete knowledge would be required to assess those when the projects do get to the point of design optimization and development. Staff do intend to present more conceptual work on those projects, but it will not be at the level of the examples given today. Mr. Owen stressed that each project is unique. As examples, the Everett Link Extension and Tacoma Dome Link Extension are planned as elevated guideways in WSDOT right-of-way. For the examples along the Ballard Link Extension, he stressed that excavation and heavy construction in downtown Seattle is very expensive, so reductions of station size or shape have greater impacts. Additionally, the Avalon station elimination example doesn't carry the same magnitude of cost-savings since it is shallower and construction wouldn't be as expensive.

Board member Strauss noted that receiving this amount of information at public meetings without sufficient prior engagement is not helpful and leaves him feeling unsupported as a Board member. He

focused on the station optimization and tail track concepts for his questions. He asked if the reduction in size of the Ballard station headhouse is in addition to eliminating another headhouse on the north side of the station. Mr. Owen responded that across projects, staff are assessing whether the number of headhouses can be reduced and, if not, whether the size can be modified. Board member Strauss noted that the original concept in 2016 included 4 headhouses, which was previously reduced to three and it feels like these have been continuously shaved off. He recognizes that stations will ultimately have to adapt to the sites but wants to ensure that these cumulative reductions don't impact long-term potential for the system. Mr. Owen added that he would follow up with more information and that the work being done considers best practices and thinking from national and international systems so as to not impact the rider experience.

Board member Strauss asked if the elimination of the tail tracks at Tacoma Dome Station would essentially limit further extensions beyond the current project. Mr. Owen responded that he would need to confer with his colleagues as the project is outside of his portfolio.

Calli Knight, Agency Chief of Staff, noted that sometimes the meeting to review the agenda with Chairs takes place later than usual due to scheduling constraints, so having all materials done fully complete far in advance is sometimes not possible. She also noted that the reduction from four to three headhouses at the Ballard station was made by the Board during the 2021 Realignment.

Board member Strauss flagged his intent to try to work in a future high-capacity transit study for a corridor extending north from Ballard. He thanked Mr. Krieg for previous information on how long it would take to complete such a study. He stressed the importance of ensuring that resolving the agency's current affordability gap, specifically phasing or deferral, doesn't restrict future planning. He would rather see the currently planned studies bumped up and occurring sooner rather than later.

CEO Constantine added that he met with the CEO of Pierce Transit to look at the site of the ST Express maintenance base in Lakewood. Work on several agreements to deliver that project is underway. He also noted that the intent of eliminating the tail track is not to preclude future expansion as the long-range vision clearly indicates future southward expansion.

Chair Birney thanked Board member Strauss for his comments regarding preparing Board members for the public meetings. She also appreciated the framing of phasing and deferrals as near-term savings and flagged the importance of keeping in mind long-term implications. For the public, she also clarified that today's information is specific to the System Expansion program and other committees are receiving updates on the other Enterprise Initiative workstreams.

Discussion on the Draft 2026 System Expansion Committee Workplan

Chair Birney briefly walked the Work Plan and highlighted the Special Topics of Interest to the Committee portion, including some that carried over from 2025. Staff will endeavor to schedule and present those special topics throughout the year. She asked if members have any recommendations for additional special topics.

Board member Strauss noted that while he would like to add the high-capacity transit studies to the workplan, he knows that staff are busy with the Enterprise Initiative which will likely touch on those. Chair Birney recommended that it be included as a soft request and added that she would also like to see the work on developing a vacant property policy added to the Workplan, based on Board member Strauss's earlier comments.

Executive session

None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, March 12, 2026
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room & Virtually via Zoom

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

ATTEST:

_____

Angela Birrney
System Expansion Committee Chair

_____

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, AJM.