



Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting May 7, 2026

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:33 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) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(P) Teresa Mosqueda, King County Councilmember
(P) Steffanie Fain, King County Councilmember	(P) 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, noting that the monthly REO Metrics performance was included in Committee members' packets for their consideration.

CEO Report

Recent and Upcoming Maintenance Work

CEO Constantine reported that maintenance teams have replaced 3,000 feet of overhead contact wire and 500 feet of rail along the Tukwila curve between Rainier Beach and Tukwila International Boulevard Stations. Additionally, maintenance teams completed several inspections and maintenance tasks along the 2 Line during two separate extended maintenance windows in April.

2 Line Ridership

CEO Constantine reported that ridership has increased since the opening of the Crosslake Connection, with Link boardings rising from a daily average of 121,000 to 142,000, a 15 percent increase.

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 submitted written public comment:

An unnamed commenter

The following person provided in-person public comment:

Joe Kunzler

No virtual public comments were received.

Business Items

For Committee final action

April 2, 2026, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Board member Mosqueda, seconded by Board member Fain, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that the minutes of the April 2, 2026, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2026-18: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a 3-year contract, with two optional one-year extensions, with Network Rail Consulting, Inc. to provide asset management standardization, documentation, training, and independent verification services in an amount of \$14,878,851 for the initial term of three years, \$10,678,055 for the two option years, and a contingency fund of 10 percent or \$2,555,691, for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$28,112,597.

Brian Holloway, Deputy Chief Engineer, Joe Gildner, Engineering Executive Director, and Shankar Rajaram, Infrastructure and Asset Management Executive Director, provided a presentation on the action.

Board member Balducci requested that the Committee receive information on how investments in maintenance pay off and asked whether the contract would assist in that. Mr. Gildner responded that the contract is focused on assisting in the transition of time-based to condition-based maintenance, and that the deliverables as part of the contract would assist in providing additional oversight. Mr. Rajaram added that specific information responsive to Board member Balducci's request would be included in future quarterly updates on the resiliency effort.

Board member Balducci drew on prior experience with road maintenance grades and asked what specific information will be given for public and Board consumption to show how state of good repair investments are utilized. Program Management Office Deputy CEO Moises Gutierrez responded that staff is committed to developing deliverables for public and Board consumption once this work is underway over the next few months.

Chair Walker asked when the Committee and public could expect to see those deliverables. DCEO Gutierrez responded that he would follow up with the Chair, but that it should be hopefully within the next three to four months.

Board member Fain asked whether the work covered under the contract would be in-housed following the initial contract period. Mr. Rajaram responded that the full scope of work is anticipated to be completed within the contract period, as work is undertaken to support internal staff efforts. DCEO Gutierrez added that the work in the contract would transition to in-house staff in approximately three to five years.

It was moved by Board member Mosqueda, seconded by Board member Fain, and was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2026-18 be approved.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2026-19: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a Master Research Agreement with the University of Washington on behalf of its Mobility Innovation Center to perform research across a wide variety of areas and topics to support Sound Transit's planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance.

Suzanne Schreck, Capital Innovation Senior Program Manager, provided a presentation on the action.

Board member Balducci noted that the version of the agenda she was referring to did not include the action and asked for an additional summary of the item. Ms. Schreck responded that the action would allow for the execution of an agreement with the University of Washington, to engage in research and innovation projects across the agency's work. Board member Balducci asked if there was a monetary limit to the agreement. Ms. Schreck responded that items would be approved on a task order basis. Mattelyn Tharpe, Senior Legal Counsel, added that each task order would be treated as discreet contracts, subject to the limitations outlined in the agency's adopted delegated authority policy to the CEO.

Board member Balducci asked how this action would not constitute a blank check authorization. Ms. Tharpe responded that the agreement has a term of six years, and that funds for task orders would be subject to Board oversight through the annual budget process.

Chair Walker asked if agency departments have their own research budgets. Ms. Schreck responded that some departments have their own research budgets, and that there is additionally an independent research and innovation fund. Chair Walker asked how much money is currently in the research and innovation fund. Ms. Schreck responded that the fund currently has approximately \$107 million.

Board member Balducci expressed that she would be uncomfortable voting for the action.

Board member George noted that an updated packet was distributed that included the item and its accompanying staff report, which includes limitations on spending based on the delegation of authority to the CEO, as well as through funding being required from each department budget for individual task orders.

Chair Walker asked for clarification that delegation of authority to the CEO is based on each individual contract. CEO Constantine responded in the affirmative.

Chair Walker noted that the presentation stated that there were prior agreements with UW that the agency had executed and asked if there was additional detail on costs that could be shared for those agreements. Ms. Schreck responded that previous agreements ranged from \$7,000 to approximately \$1.9 million.

Board member George noted that this action still needs to be approved by the Board and noted that staff could work with Committee members to clarify any concerns prior to the full Board meeting.

Board member Balducci stated that, following Board member George's previous comment on an updated packet, rechecked her email, found the updated agenda and staff report, and would be withdrawing her objections. She requested, however, that staff work to provide new actions further in advance of the meeting, as the updated agenda was only provided on the day prior to the meeting.

It was moved by Board member Mosqueda and seconded by Board member George.

Board member Fain asked how spending on the action would be tracked over the period of the agreement. Ms. Schreck responded that spending under the agreement could be tracked by purchase orders. Board member Fain shared her approval of the approach, requesting that such reporting be provided to the Board.

Chair Walker asked if Board member Fain would like to have the reporting language added to the action.

Amendment 1 to Motion No. M2026-19 was moved by Boardmember Fain and seconded by Boardmember Balducci.

Amendment 1 – offered by Boardmember Fain

Add language to Motion No. M2026-19 as follows:

Task orders issued under the Master Research Agreement will be tracked and will be reported to the Rider Experience and Operations Committee on an annual basis.

Chair Walker called for a voice vote on Amendment 1.

Amendment 1 to Motion No. M2026-19 was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present.

Chair Walker called for a voice vote on Motion No. M2026-19 as amended.

It was carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2026-19 as amended be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Fare Engagement Quarterly Update

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

Ms. Starke provided an overview of Fare Engagement program staffing in advance of the World Cup. She noted that the program had 49 Fare Ambassadors across AM, Midday, and PM shifts, with start of shift locations at Union Station, joined by Angle Lake and Northgate Stations from May 11th to July 12th.

Ms. Starke summarized program inspections and passenger service interactions, with inspections growing from approximately 897,000 in 2024 to 986,000 in 2025, and passenger service interactions growing from approximately 332,000 to 460,000 in the same period. Of those inspected, approximately 95,000 did not have valid fare in 2024, decreasing to approximately 77,000 in 2025.

Ms. Starke then compared those data with fare media compliance, as measured by boardings associated with ticket purchases or ORCA card taps. Boardings with fare media have grown over time, rising from 56 percent in 2022 to 63 percent in 2025. Ms. Starke noted that this increase has correlated with an increase in Fare Engagement activities across the system.

Mr. de Place reviewed the non-compliance process. He noted that the first and second interactions with a passenger without fare results in a written warning, accompanied with resources and educational materials about fare payment and programs. The third and fourth interactions without fare result in a \$50 or \$75 fine, respectively, which can be resolved through non-monetary means, such as participation in agency engagement activities, enrollment in the ORCA LIFT reduced fare program, among others. Fifth interactions and beyond involve issuance of a \$124 civil infraction.

Mr. de Place summarized compliance actions taken between 2024 and 2025. Those who did not provide identification decreased from approximately 58,000 to 47,000. Warnings decreased from approximately 36,000 to 29,000, with citations dropping from 396 to 337 and from 121 to 99 for the third and fourth violations, respectively. 269 citations were resolved in 2024, and 259 in 2025. Civil infractions also decreased, dropping from 392 to 232. Mr. de Place noted that these drops in compliance actions correlated with an increase of program inspections by approximately 10 percent in the same period.

Mr. de Place provided information on the results of the Fare Paid Zone (FPZ) entrance pilot, which involves Fare Ambassadors inspecting fares at stations rather than on board trains. Results from the

pilot show an increase in inspections by approximately 25 percent over on-board inspections, with observed compliance rates ranging from 92.7 percent in February to 93.8 percent in April. Mr. de Place also highlighted the week-over-week changes in ORCA taps at U District Station during the pilot. He reported that during FPZ inspections, ORCA taps increased by 31 percent, with a lingering increase of three percent following inspections.

Board member Balducci noted that she has experienced numerous instances of confusion from riders on how the Fare Paid Zone works and pondered whether engaging in a rider education campaign would be helpful in increasing compliance. She also noted that fare media compliance does not take into account youth ridership and wondered what that figure would reflect if that was incorporated into the calculation.

Board member Balducci also noted that there has been significant community interest in implementing fare gates, while emphasizing the importance of ensuring that there is a realistic return on investment should the option be explored. Mr. de Place responded that staff will be providing information on fare gates at the June Executive Committee meeting, which will include information on return on investment and an overall cost-benefit analysis.

Board member Parshall noted his previous experience with Fare Ambassadors at a station and noted that it appeared to provide an increase in fare compliance compared to behaviors he usually observed.

Board member Fain shared her agreement with pursuing a social media or other marketing campaign to assist in educating riders about fare payment, noting the lack of uniformity across the system for payment locations. She also expressed her interest in the cost-benefit analysis to be provided as part of the fare gates discussion, as well as a desire to better activate stations with additional retail opportunities.

Executive session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, June 4, 2026

1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

ATTEST:

Kristina Walker
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, HRR.