Summary Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting
June 4, 2026

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Committee Chair Somers 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) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive	(P) Ryan Mello, Pierce County Executive (P) Girmay Zahilay, King County Executive

Board Members	
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor (A) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor (P) Thomas McLeod, Tukwila Mayor	(P) Cordelia Crockett, Washington State Secretary of Transportation Alternate (A) Kristina Walker, Tacoma City Councilmember (P) Katie Wilson, Seattle Mayor

Katie Flores, Board Administrator, announced that a quorum of the Committee was present at roll call.

Board members Steffanie Fain and Teresa Mosqueda attended to participate in committee discussion as non-voting members.

Report of the Chair

Chair Somers provided the report, thanking agency staff for their work throughout the Enterprise Initiative.

CEO Report

Chief executive officer Dow Constantine provided the report, thanking the Board and Chair Somers for their leadership and approving the Updated ST3 System Plan. He noted the importance of the updated plan, highlighted the presentation on Fare Gates that will be given to the committee, and reported on the results of a vehicle entering the trackway near Mount Baker Station.

Public comment

Chair Somers announced that public comment would be accepted via email to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted in-person and virtually.

The following people provided written public comment:

Joe Kunzler
Maya Rubeo
Slayman Appandolo
Kit Burns
Unnamed Commenter

The following people provided in-person public comment:

Kit Burns
David Haines

The following people provided virtual public comment:

Will Knedlik
Joe Kunzler

Business items

Final Committee Action

May 7, 2026, Executive Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Board member Wilson, seconded by Committee Vice Chair Mello, and carried by the unanimous vote of all Board members present that the minutes of the May 7, 2026, Executive Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2026-20: Appointing Heather Kurtenbach as the Labor Liaison to the Sound Transit Board of Directors for the remainder of the unexpired labor liaison term beginning July 1, 2026, and expiring December 31, 2027.

It was moved by Board member Birney, seconded by Committee Vice Chair Mello, and carried by the unanimous vote of all Board members present that Motion No. M2026-20 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Presentation on Fare Gates Retrofit Study

Brian de Place, Security and Fare Engagement Executive Director, began the presentation and introduced Gavin Schaefer, Ballard Link Extension Design Director and Fare Gates Report project manager. Mr. de Place explained that the Board directed staff to conduct a fare gate retrofit study and report back in Q2 2026.

Mr. de Place explained the history of Sound Transit's fare compliance program, noting that when the initial Link segment opened, the system was intentionally set to be a barrier-free/open system with a fare enforcement approach carried out by contracted security. After a decade, an internal study found inequitable impacts on riders and the agency began a redesign of fare compliance to shift toward a fare engagement/education model. The agency took actions to remove the "barrier-free" requirement, install fare-paid zones within currently existing infrastructure, and began to explore fare gate implementation. Last month's vote to update the ST3 System Plan also directed staff to recommend whether, how, and when to implement fare gates on Link. Mr. de Place added that fare gates are a way to use the station environment to ensure fare compliance, avoiding the disparate impacts from the fare enforcement approach while also boosting fare revenue without directly raising fares.

Similar to other North American transit agencies, Sound Transit has struggled to recover back to pre-pandemic levels of fare compliance, even as ridership has significantly increased and the system has expanded. As shared at the Ridership Experience and Operations Committee in May, the agency was able to deploy a critical mass of fare ambassadors by 2023, and the compliance rate began to trend upward in 2024 and 2025 while still below pre-pandemic rates even while accounting for free youth ridership implemented in 2022.

Mr. de Place explained that other North American transit systems have implemented fare gates and seen a number of both direct and indirect benefits, such as better fare recovery, increased perceptions of safety, and lower maintenance costs. Importantly, fare gates also limit compliance-related actions that could put transit staff at risk. Additionally, constructing stations with fare gates assumed is significantly more cost-effective than retrofitting stations.

Mr. Schaefer explained that the report evaluated all stations across the current system to understand the return on investment for a pilot project. The report considers ridership (both origin and destination impacts), operational considerations such as special events and intermodal transfers, station complexity and estimated implementation costs, and the effects on fare engagement operations. The study identified an initial set of stations for potential fare gates that maximize system benefit by balancing ridership against cost. First, stations were examined for ridership. Eighty-five percent of riders are focused around 10 stations, and terminus stations are major mode transfer hubs. Second, the design feasibility of putting in fare gates at those stations was assessed. At this point, weather protection and safety for riders was flagged as a common challenge for at-grade stations. Finally, ridership was compared to the cost to install fare gates at stations, keeping in mind key infrastructure considerations.

The study found that the Link system has grown to a point where fare gates make financial sense, when balancing ridership and cost considerations. The report recommended a pilot project that focuses on up to 14 stations and uses bi-directional fare gates, where riders would have to tap off the system. The recommended stations include the three termini stations (Lynnwood City Center, Downtown Redmond, and Federal Way Downton), key transfer stations (SeaTac Airport and Bellevue Downtown), and the remaining nine highest ridership stations (International District/Chinatown through, and including, Northgate). Other stations would see a diminished return on investment but would still offer a short payback period. He reiterated that incorporating fare gates into ST3 station designs would be more cost-effective than planning to retrofit later. Further development of the pilot project would include further equity, safety, and cost conversations.

On the financial considerations, the study found: fare gates can improve revenue system-wide, incorporation of ST3 station designs can be included with little to no risk, and after consideration of capital and maintenance costs, there's a 2–3-year payback period, depending on which fare gate scenario is implemented. After the initial payback period, the agency would see $32 million or more of net annual revenue when compared to current compliance rates when checked against low ridership estimates. The total construction costs of the pilot are estimated to be approximately $79.3M - $88.2M. Next steps from the study would be to continue to refine design requirements, issue a design-build request for proposals, install the fare gates and necessary infrastructure, and utilize the existing fare ambassador program to provide fare gate assistance or station ambassadorships. The agency also expects further engagement with the Racial Equity Toolkit, fare media integration, youth fares, staffing strategies, and evaluation frameworks.

Mr. Schaefer demonstrated how a rider would interact with fare gates as they navigate the system. He noted that when exiting a fare-gated station, riders would need to tap off the system using the same fare media that the rider tapped-on the system with. Fares will only be charged on the way out if there is no tap-in recorded. For that reason, ticket vending machines (TVMs) will also be available within the fare paid zone. Mr. Schaefer flagged that free-exit options are also feasible, which can be further evaluated as part of the pilot design, but would result in a lower return on investment.

Mr. de Place explained that a number of critically important considerations, identified in the study, would require further analysis, should the Board authorize the implementation of the pilot project. He listed the staffing model (including fare ambassadors), community engagement (including ensuring ADA accessibility), supporting ORCA Lift and Reduced Fare enrollments as appropriate, appropriate fare media upgrades, and supporting youth fare media. Mr. de Place stated that fare ambassadors could be leveraged to conduct passenger service, which aligns with roughly a third of their current work.

Mr. Schaefer noted that systems around the country have accommodated ADA/accessibility concerns and noted that each set of fare gates will include at least one wide-access gate. Specifically, SeaTac station is envisioned to have all wide-access gates to support luggage-carrying riders. Other support systems include signage, tactile wayfinding, customer service staff, and assistance phones. In-depth collaboration with local accessibility expertise and incorporation of best practices from peer agencies will be included as design progresses.

Mr. de Place explained that all youth under 19 currently ride all ORCA transit systems for free. Additionally, while it is recommended that youth have a free youth ORCA card, there is no requirement on Sound Transit systems. Fare gates would present a change, and the youth ORCA cards would become a primary fare medium for youth riders. This would prompt additional engagement with other institutions to better facilitate distribution of those cards. Shifting to ORCA Lift, ORCA Lift cards will function the same as full fare ORCA cards with fare gates.

The study identified necessary smart upgrades to TVMs so that paper tickets can be compatible with the fare gate infrastructure. Mr. Schaefer explained that there are three mitigation options: fare gates are designed to read QR codes on printed tickets, TVMs print disposable smart card media, or make ORCA cards free from TVMs during the pilot program. Further analysis is required.

Leading up to pilot implementation, the agency would perform community outreach, consult with local institutions and technical experts on accessibility and inclusion opportunities and concerns, and incorporate feedback into the final design. He also listed several criteria that could be used to measure the pilot’s effect.

Mr. de Place walked through the current schedule assumed for a pilot project and noted that at years 1, 3, and 5 of the pilot project there would be touchpoints with the Board on the performance of the pilot and recommendations on whether to maintain, expand, adjust, or end the pilot. The target for launching the pilot is 2029-2030. Mr. de Place also laid out immediate next steps should the Board wish to move forward with a pilot program.

Chair Somers asked about the feasibility of a six-month timeline for fare gate construction. Mr. Schaefer responded that the Bay Area Rapid Transit was able to complete a comparable deployment in a similar timeframe.

Board member Wilson asked for clarification on the difference between measured fare compliance from the Fare Ambassador Program versus Fare Media Compliance. Mr. de Place responded that Fare Ambassadors inspect 2-3 percent of ridership, with an observed compliance rate of 90-93 percent. Meanwhile, Fare Media Compliance is a mathematical model that extrapolates fare compliance based on boardings and point of sale transactions. Board member Wilson asked for additional clarification on the rationale for the difference between the figures. Mr. de Place responded that the difference comes from the small sample size of Fare Ambassador inspections, paired with large scale events that make fare compliance difficult in the current environment.

Vice Chair Mello asked why Stadium Station isn’t included in the current proposal for the pilot program. Mr. Schaefer responded that Stadium Station was not included due to safety concerns with it being an at-grade station, as well as potential concerns with training and crowd management for large-scale events. Vice Chair Mello noted that all terminus stations will have fare gates installed and asked whether new terminus stations on ST3 extensions will include fare gates. Mr. Schaefer responded that current design standards for stations include space for fare gates while not including their installation, but the Board could direct staff to include fare gate installation into all new stations going forward.

Board member McLeod noted that SeaTac station is included as part of the pilot, asked what revenues may be generated from Angle Lake and Tukwila International Boulevard Stations due to their proximity to SeaTac, and whether it would be prudent to potentially include those stations in the pilot. Mr. Schaefer responded that he didn’t have revenue figures readily available for those stations but noted that there was additional capacity for additional analysis if the Board requested it. Board member McLeod asked that staff evaluate TIBS and Angle Lake Station for potential inclusion.

Board member Zahilay asked if staff will have evaluation criteria for potential unintended consequences as part of the pilot. Mr. de Place responded that staff would include significant engagement and evaluation development as part of the design and initial run-up to pilot implementation.

Board member Wilson asked if staff had an estimate as to what level surge events impact systemwide fare compliance. Mr. de Place responded that he did not currently have an estimate on that impact but noted anecdotal instances of large-scale events having increased non-payment. Board member Wilson expressed concern about potential access and ridership impacts by installing fare gates for large events, specifically noting the physical limitation it would impose on being able to access stations. Mr. de Place responded that staff currently undertake efforts to meter ridership into stations during large events to prevent overcrowding on platforms and noted that fare gates would be able to assist with this work and enhance safety for riders during events.

Board member Wilson noted that youth constituted six percent of ridership in 2022, and that most do not currently use Free Youth Transit Passes to access the system. She asked whether it would be accurate to say that current fare media compliance is underestimating true fare compliance due to youth ridership. Mr. de Place responded in the affirmative and noted that the return on investment calculations within the Fare Gate Retrofit Study take youth ridership into account.

Board member Wilson asked what level of fare compliance would be expected following fare gate installation, noting issues the New York metro system has with fare evasion even with fare gates being installed. Mr. Schaefer responded that the study assumes a 95 percent compliance rate at gated stations. Board member Wilson asked what the fare compliance threshold would be before fare gates no longer had a reasonable return on investment. Mr. de Place responded that he did not have figures currently but would follow up after the meeting.

Board member Wilson noted that there are multiple other indirect expenses involved with fare gate installation and asked whether those costs were included in the return on investments calculation. Mr. Schaefer responded that augmented station staff, ADA design work, and fare media upgrade costs are included in the calculation, but other youth and reduced fare program enrollment efforts, community engagement, and equity evaluation frameworks were not. Board member Wilson highlighted the costs and work being done by King County and other groups that administer reduced fare programs and noted that it would be good to know whether future expansion costs would be absorbed by Sound Transit or other groups.

Board member Wilson asked if staff has an estimation for what portion of non-paying riders are non-compliant due to a lack of resources. Mr. de Place responded that staff does not currently have a measurement of what portion of ridership falls into that category, but that Fare Ambassadors do actively provide reduced fare program information to those who are non-compliant. Board member Wilson noted that she would like to see what that dataset would be, especially considering that those riders may then divert to using other agencies such as King County Metro, noting the importance of knowing what knock-on impacts would ensue.

Board member Zahilay asked what information staff had on comparable efforts from peer agencies and whether staff expect to see similar outcomes to what other agencies, such as BART, have seen. Mr. Schaefer responded that staff did a review of other efforts across the nation and found that grade-separated systems generally have fare gates. He further noted that there was anecdotal evidence of improvements in maintenance and safety, although they were hard to quantify. Mr. de Place added that there was ongoing work to identify unintended consequences as part of other agencies' implementation of fare gates, while noting the return on investment calculations do not include any reductions in security and maintenance as a result of installation.

Board member Fain reiterated Board member Wilson's question on the fare compliance threshold that would result in a poor return on investment for fare gates, while also asking for information on whether that threshold would be achievable under current methods. She also asked what assumptions went into the varying return on investment scenarios included in the report. Mr. Schaefer responded that the scenarios were based on bi-directional gates with high and low ridership estimates, as well as a low ridership with uni-directional gates, all starting with a 2030 start of revenue service date. Board member Fain asked whether the report would include a full explanation of assumptions on the return on investment calculations. Mr. Schaefer responded in the affirmative.

Chair Somers asked whether the Board would have a say in the usage of bi-directional versus uni-directional gates. Mr. Schaefer responded that there are upfront costs that are required to preserve the option to have bi-directional gates, but the Board could always choose which option is preferred.

Annual Transit Oriented Development Report

Marshall Foster, Chief Planning and Development Officer, Mara D'Angelo, acting Community Development Office Director, and Kristin Hoffman, Joint Development Deputy Director, provided the report on the agency's 2025 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) program.

Ms. D'Angelo summarized the TOD Program and its goals, with goals supporting local and regional growth at Sound Transit Stations, advancing real estate projects on agency property, and partnering to achieve TOD policy objectives. She also highlighted the priorities laid out in the Board's adopted Equitable TOD Policy, to act with intention, increase ridership, engage community, build affordable housing, support growth, and improve access.

Ms. D'Angelo described the different types of TOD developments: Adjacent, where TOD projects are next to agency facilities; Air Rights, where TOD is constructed on top of agency facilities without being structurally connected; and Integrated, where TOD is developed as part of the structure of the agency's facilities. She also provided highlights from the program, noting that the agency has 3,869 homes either built or in progress, with 2,874 of them being affordable. She also reported that six stations are currently being designed to incorporate joint development, with 14 stations overall having complete or planned TOD.

Ms. D'Angelo reported on the agency's compliance with Washington State's 80/80/80 TOD statute, noting that Sound Transit has offered 96 percent of property suitable for housing to qualified entities, and that 100 percent of units created by qualified entities have been affordable housing, exceeding the state's requirements.

Ms. D'Angelo highlighted two recently completed TOD projects: Four new homes have been built in partnership with Habitat for Humanity at Columbia City Station, and 130 homes have been developed as part of the Mercy Housing NW development at Angle Lake Station. She also noted that development partners have been selected for Sites One and Two of the Federal Way Downtown Station TOD project, which will lead to the creation of 230 new homes. Furthermore, two new groundbreakings have occurred, at Spring District and Rainier Valley Stations, which will result in the creation of an additional 237 homes.

Ms. D'Angelo reported that design has continued to advance at six stations for future joint development, with the first term sheet having been executed related to integrated joint development on the Ballard Link Extension.

Mr. Foster previewed recent work in 2026, which includes two groundbreakings at Overlake Village and Kent Des Moines Stations, which will result in the creation of 561 new housing units and 55 thousand square feet of leasable commercial and office space. He also highlighted staff's ongoing work on updating the agency's Equitable TOD policy.

Board member Wilson asked whether any decisions made as part of the Enterprise Initiative would have an impact on TOD work. Mr. Foster responded that staff are working on two different workstreams that could enhance revenues and expand TOD work: Tax Increment Financing which would enable further TOD work that what is currently possible, and value creation through the holding and development of real estate to act as a new revenue source to assist in the agency's ongoing operational costs.

Executive Session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, July 2, 2026
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and virtually via Zoom

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Dave Somers	Kathryn Flores
Executive Committee Chair	Board Administrator

APPROVED on _______, 2026, HRR