

Motion No. M2025-36

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority adopting principles and a process to help guide the Board on how best to achieve the planned outcomes of the Enterprise Initiative work, including an update to the current system plan (Sound Transit 3) and long-range finance plan.

Background

Since the last updates to the Long-Range Plan (2014) and System Plan (2016), much has changed for Sound Transit and other large public agencies due to lower-than-expected revenues, rising costs across capital and service delivery, post-pandemic ridership patterns, and ongoing uncertainty around tariffs and federal funding commitments. Board action is needed to address ST3 affordability challenges and operate a dependable, resilient, and safe system.

As the region faces new challenges and uncertainty, the fundamental benefits of the Sound Transit system remain clear—the region's population has continued to grow along with the need for high-capacity transit to meet this growth.

In times of economic stress, Sound Transit's projects serve as a critical engine for regional stability—creating family-wage jobs, stimulating economic activity, and keeping the region moving forward.

Sound Transit services link people to jobs, schools, healthcare, and essential services. With reliable, congestion-free travel times, light rail gives riders more predictability and freedom from the gridlock that clogs our roads.

Strengthening connections between cities and counties, Sound Transit drives economic growth, expands opportunity, and supports a cleaner, more resilient Puget Sound region.

At the Board Retreat on May 29, 2025, the Board discussed the importance of an agencywide, comprehensive approach that goes beyond capital delivery. The Enterprise Initiative will be a comprehensive effort touching planning, capital, operations, maintenance, and finance to ensure Sound Transit is meeting both current and future regional mobility needs.

If the agency does not take proactive measures via this Enterprise Initiative, the ST3 program will become unaffordable, and we risk our ability to operate a dependable, resilient, and safe system.

Motion

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that:

Section 1: The chief executive officer is directed to develop a comprehensive framework to evaluate opportunities and actions across the areas of Planning & Policy, Capital Delivery, Service Delivery, and Finance with the goal of achieving a balanced and affordable long-range finance plan and a clear path to deliver the benefits of Sound Transit projects and services as quickly as possible.

Section 2: The framework and its implementation will comply with the ST3 voter-approved ballot measure (Resolution 2016-17) and should plan for the following outputs: an updated System Plan, with modified capital and operating plans; an updated Long-Range Plan that looks beyond ST3; and a balanced and affordable long-range finance plan. The proposed framework should outline a new process to proactively and iteratively manage affordability, service delivery, and related issues. The framework should be presented to the Board at the next scheduled Board retreat.

Section 3: The framework should be inclusive of the following process elements to help inform the Board on how to best achieve the planned outcomes of the Enterprise Initiative work:

- **Engage Communities Through Inclusive Collaboration** – We are a collaborative region full of subtle differences and diverse populations. We should rely on a fair process and will depend on each Board member working as collaboratively as possible. We must listen to and engage with communities in the region to ensure we understand the many nuances of our decisions. And as challenges arise, we must also be adaptive and creative—willing to explore new approaches that keep us moving toward our regional goals.
- **Build Trust Through Transparent Governance** – To maintain public trust in our work, we must be transparent. The public trust is eroded when information is not shared openly. As we advance the Enterprise Initiative, we will clearly communicate the reasons behind our decisions, including the benefits and risks, and ensure information is shared in a timely manner with both the Board and the public.
- **Drive Decisions with Data and Insight** – The Sound Transit Board, to the maximum extent possible, will ground its decisions in data and the best available information. While uncertainty is inherent in major infrastructure projects, we will rely on third-party expertise when appropriate to support objective review and ensure informed decision-making at every stage.

Section 4: The framework should build on ST3 performance characteristics and project-specific evaluation measures to be inclusive of the following principles to help inform the Board on how to best achieve the planned outcomes of the Enterprise Initiative work:

- **Advance Regional Connectivity** – Our region's voters have had the long-range vision to build a safe, dependable, and resilient mass transit system to serve our population and job centers. Completing the regional transit spine is central to that vision of connecting communities with high-capacity transit. As we look toward building an affordable system, our decisions should be grounded on what benefits the whole region and best achieve the objectives of the ST3 Plan. We are at our best when we think and act as one region.
- **Prioritize the Passenger Experience** – Passengers must be at the center of our decision making. We must make decisions that will prioritize the riders' experience, maximize opportunities for connections and ridership, keep everyone safe, and ensure our system is dependable. Our decisions must allow the riders to have facilities that meet their needs, easy transfers, hassle free payment of fares, and minimal disruptions.
- **Protect Public Investments with Fiscal Integrity** – Taxpayers work hard for their money, and we must be careful stewards of public resources. That means actively seeking cost savings and efficiencies wherever possible, maintaining strong oversight and accountability, understanding the trade-offs behind every decision, and spending responsibly to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our regional transit system.

The above principles will guide the Board in its work to deliver an affordable, dependable, resilient, and safe high-capacity transit system that puts riders first.

Section 5: Details of the framework will be considered by the Board in Fall 2025 that will include deliverables and timelines for each Enterprise Initiative output with the goal of making updates to the System Plan by the end Q2 2026, an adopted Long Range Plan by Q3 2026, and an updated Long Range Financial Plan by Q4 2026.

Section 6: Motion No. M2024-59 is superseded by this action as the programmatic, financial and project level workplan will be incorporated into this comprehensive effort.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on _____.

Dave Somers
Board Chair

Attest:

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator