



Motion No. M2021-33

Approving the Northgate Service and Fare Equity Analysis

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Rider Experience & Operations Committee	05/06/2021	Recommend	Jonté Robinson, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer
Board of Directors	05/26/2021	Final action	Mitzi McMahan, Manager of Civil Rights Equity and Inclusion Compliance

Proposed action

Approving the Northgate Service and Fare Equity report for inclusion in Sound Transit's 2022 Title VI Program.

Key features summary

- As a recipient of federal financial assistance on an ongoing basis, primarily from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Sound Transit must comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in any program receiving federal funds.
- According to FTA guidelines, the opening of the Northgate Link Light Rail Extension project requires a Service and Fare Equity (SAFE) analysis to ensure the associated changes prove beneficial and were selected without regard to race, color or national origin.
- As a part of its Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must submit a Title VI Program for FTA approval every three years. One component of this program is the inclusion of equity analyses that have occurred in the three years between submittal, which require board approval. The Northgate SAFE is one such analysis and will be included in the next Title VI Program.
- The Northgate SAFE considerations include changes to service as part of opening Northgate Link including parallel or connecting service for partner agencies. This involved:
 - Partner agency analyses for coordinated changes including review of Northgate Link related major service changes as outlined in operating partners' 2021 service changes.
 - Identifying changes in fares riders will experience resulting from service changes.
 - Assessment of potential adverse effects to minority and low-income communities.
 - Steps to avoid, minimize or mitigate any adverse effects
 - Public outreach process to inform the decision making process.
- The SAFE analysis concluded changes to transit service and the existing fare structure are consistent with Title VI policies and prove beneficial and were selected without regard to race, color or national origin.

Background

The Northgate Link Extension project offered a significant opportunity to restructure existing bus service to provide more connections for transit riders and minimize redundant services to ensure efficient use of transit operating resources. This is a planning effort that required extensive coordination among partners to leverage the benefits of truncating a substantial portion of their bus services at new Link stations and reinvesting the saving of operating shorter routes with improved frequencies and span. The partners worked to ensure the network works collaboratively and that customer engagement helped inform planning.

Sound Transit coordinated with Community Transit and King County Metro (Metro) on their service changes related to the project opening. The Northgate SAFE includes an overview of the operating partner analyses for the coordinated changes that support the network necessary for the project opening. This includes a review of the major service changes related to the Project, adverse effects, reasoning for the proposed service changes, and the consideration of steps to avoid, minimize or mitigate any adverse effects.

The 2021 proposed service changes were developed through a process that included public comment and were approved by the Sound Transit Board in late 2020. The process for the development of service changes for partner agencies Metro and Community Transit included public comment and approval by respective board/councils. Metro's service changes are pending, with anticipated adoption in May 2021. Throughout the process, robust and equitable public participation helped inform decision-making.

Partner agencies individually identified adverse effects that resulted from the variety of service changes needed to bring the project online and minimize redundancies. Each partner analyzed the adverse effects with consideration of the restructure for the project (as highlighted in the document), and the Northgate SAFE then looked at the network and associated changes collectively as a whole.

For fares, Sound Transit assessed potential effects and determined an adverse effect for the small number of customers who pay with cash and will need to transfer between Metro and Community Transit bus and Link after the service change take place. Sound Transit, Metro and Community Transit will mitigate by conducting extensive public outreach and campaign to inform riders of the need to use an ORCA card, including ORCA LIFT, to ensure they can continue riding for a single fare for any transfer trips. If conditions allow, street teams will distribute ORCA Cards and provide flyers about reduced fare programs.

Overall, the adverse effects were mitigated by the substantial improvements to transit service capacity and access for both the project area and region. Connecting both local and express bus service to the Project provides access to improved speed, reliability and capacity. The restructure of service is consistent with established long-term plans and balances the financial impacts of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional operating costs of delivering increased high-capacity transit.

Fiscal information

The SAFE analysis concluded that changes to transit service and the resulting fare changes experienced by riders are consistent with Title VI policies. As such fares will remain unchanged and there is no financial impact to the agency

Title VI compliance

Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states:

No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Sound Transit receives federal financial assistance to design and build the regional transit system through grants primarily awarded and administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation. As an FTA grant recipient, Sound Transit cannot, on the basis of race, color or national origin, either directly or through contractual means:

- Deny an individual any service, financial aid or benefit provided under the program to which he or she might otherwise be entitled;
- Make distinctions in the quality, quantity or manner in which the service or benefit is provided; or
- Segregate or separately treat individuals in any matter related to the receipt of any service or benefit.

As a part of its ongoing Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must continue to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in any program receiving federal funds.

Included among the Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must submit a Title VI Program for FTA approval, every three years, which requires the performance of this Service and Fare Equity analysis for the opening of Northgate Link.

Public involvement

Public involvement has been an integral part of the Northgate link light rail extension project. The public outreach process to inform the decision making process began during project planning and has continued through to the 2021 service plan work for Sound Transit and partner agencies and fare outreach was also conducted. The Northgate SAFE summarizes the public involvement work for the project and includes the public outreach for the draft Northgate SAFE.

The draft Northgate SAFE was published on Soundtransit.org for public review and comment. A survey accompanied the document which was translated into Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Russian, and Korean. The comment period for the Northgate SAFE was open between Thursday, March 25 and Thursday, April 8.

To promote the comment period for the Northgate SAFE document, a press release was issued by Sound Transit. More than 200 news outlets received a copy of this press release, which includes almost 70 publications who target diverse community members. Finally, we sent out stakeholder emails to community groups who we previously engaged during the Northgate Link Connection bus restructure process. The survey received four respondents and two comments about flat fare structure that were forwarded to the Finance Department and the Fares Committee.

Time constraints

This document requires Board review prior to the Northgate light rail extension revenue service date of October 2, 2021.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2020-18: Approved the 2021 Service Plan.

Motion No. M2016-92: Approved the submittal of Sound Transit's 2016 Title VI Program to the Federal Transit Administration.

Motion No. M2014-20: Adopted the Sound Transit Service Standards and Performance Measures–2014 Edition as guidelines for the on-going evaluation of Sound Transit’s express bus, commuter rail and light rail services, and replaced the Sound Transit Service Standards and Performance Measures–2010 Edition.

Resolution No. R2013-18: Established policies for conducting equity analyses of Major Service Changes impacting minority and low income populations, in accordance with Title VI requirements and guidelines for Federal Transit Administration recipients.

Environmental review – KH 4/22/21

Legal review – MT 4/30/21



Motion No. M2021-33

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority Approving the Northgate Service and Fare Equity report for inclusion in Sound Transit's 2022 Title VI Program.

Background

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Motion

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the Northgate Service and Fare Equity report for inclusion in Sound Transit’s 2022 Title VI Program is approved.

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

Kent Keel
Board Chair

Attest:

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator