

Motion No. M2025-54

2026 State Legislative Program

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Executive Committee Board	11/06/2025 11/20/2025	Recommend to Board Final action	Penny Lipsou, Strategic Initiatives Director Alex Soldano, State and Federal Relations Director

Proposed action

Adopts the Sound Transit 2026 State Legislative Program and directs staff to evaluate and engage in issues that impact the agency as it continues to implement a regional high-capacity transit system.

Key features summary

- This action would authorize Sound Transit staff and consultants in Olympia to advocate and/or pursue the following positions during the upcoming state legislative session:
 - Seek state funding to support delivery of Sound Transit projects and services.
 - Adopt policies that enable Sound Transit to move toward the leading edge of contracting and finance methods nationwide.
 - Streamline permitting for some Sound Transit projects in state right-of-way.
 - Develop and expand availability of affordable housing and support Sound Transit's transit-oriented development program.
 - Develop and retain a strong, vibrant workforce in Washington State.
 - Collaborate with partner agencies and others on efforts that enhance access to Sound Transit services.
 - Support partner efforts to ensure the safe and cost-effective delivery of transit projects.
 - Oppose legislation that increases the costs of transit improvements and services or otherwise impairs the agency's ability to deliver the voter-approved regional high-capacity transit program.

Background

The Board annually considers a State Legislative Program. The program captures agency priorities for Board members engagement in Olympia on behalf of the agency as well as policy guidance to staff and contract lobbyists to assist them in representing the agency's interests during the legislative session.

This action would authorize Sound Transit Board members, staff, and consultants to advocate and/or pursue the following positions during the upcoming state legislative session:

- **Seek state support in development and delivery of Sound Transit projects and services.**
As Washington State invests in transportation infrastructure with a focus on equity and combating climate change, we acknowledge that the leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions is the transportation sector.

Building out Sound Transit's light rail system and improving reliability not only reduces emissions but also strengthens our regional economy and creates thousands of living-wage jobs. Consistent with the Sound Transit Board of Director's Enterprise Initiative, the Board requests that the Legislature partner with Sound Transit on creative solutions to support delivery of the agency's capital program, including through approaches that accelerate project delivery or expand Sound Transit's financial capacity, including through innovative financing tools and the expansion of Sound Transit eligibility for state transit funding.

- **Adopt policies that enable Sound Transit to move toward the leading edge of contracting and finance methods nationwide.**

As Sound Transit delivers its capital program, the agency must remain a leader in innovative delivery methods, contracting models, and financial management. As creative solutions and best practices constantly change, the Sound Transit Board will be asking in 2026 and into the future for authorization to modernize contracting methods and financial management.

- **Streamline permitting for some Sound Transit projects in state right-of-way.**

When constructing projects in state right-of-way, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is not subject to certain local permit requirements, a policy that saves taxpayers money through streamlined processes. The Sound Transit Board of Directors asks that the Legislature expand this policy to apply to Sound Transit while constructing transit infrastructure within WSDOT right-of-way. This change would expedite planning and development of light rail, bus rapid transit, and fish passage barrier corrections.

- **Develop and expand availability of affordable housing and support Sound Transit's transit-oriented development program.**

The Puget Sound is facing a shortage of available, affordable housing creating an obstacle for residents to access jobs, education, and essential services. To date, Sound Transit has nearly 3,500 housing units, including almost 2,700 units as affordable, in various stages of creation with its development partners. Sound Transit supports legislative efforts to support transit-oriented development through zoning and parking reforms, expanding affordable housing resources like Washington State's Housing Trust Fund and the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, resourcing building local infrastructure to support redevelopment, and other solutions to support efforts to meet the Puget Sound region's housing and community development needs.

- **Develop and retain a strong, vibrant workforce in Washington State.**

As Sound Transit continues to implement the most ambitious transit expansion in the United States, there is a need for a trained workforce to sustain the development, operations, and maintenance of the agency's infrastructure and service through both workforce development and retention. Sound Transit will work alongside our labor partners to support protection and expansion of funding for pre-apprentice and apprenticeship programs.

- **Collaborate with partner agencies and others on efforts that enhance access to Sound Transit services.**

Sound Transit supports legislative efforts to grow access to regional transit, including support for greater availability of reduced fare programs including ORCA Lift and programs for local jurisdictions to improve infrastructure and services around transit stations.

- **Support partner efforts to ensure the safe and cost-effective delivery of transit service and projects.**

Sound Transit has historically supported efforts that facilitate the efficient, safe, and cost-effective delivery of transit projects and services. Sound Transit will work in collaboration on efforts aimed at improving the transit system, including proposals impacting transit operations and proposals which would either increase funding or reduce costs for transit agencies.

- **Oppose legislation that increases the costs of transit improvements and services or otherwise impairs the agency's ability to deliver the voter-approved regional high-capacity transit program.**

The Sound Transit Board opposes legislation that would negatively alter the oversight, planning, financing, construction, delivery and operation of Sound Transit projects and services.

Fiscal information

This proposed action does not have a budget or financial impact to the agency or any of its programs. Advocacy of the State Legislative Program is fully funded through the annual Executive Department budget.

Disadvantaged and small business participation

Not applicable to this action.

Public involvement

Not applicable for this action.

Time constraints

Sound Transit's interests are better served at the State Legislature if the Board of Directors adopts a State Legislative Program as early as possible in advance of the 2026 legislative session that begins January 13th, 2026. Delaying adoption would harm effective advocacy by eliminating opportunities offered by pre-session meetings and work sessions.

Environmental review – KH 10/22/25

Legal review – AJP 11/4/25

Motion No. M2025-54

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority adopting the Sound Transit 2026 State Legislative Program and directing staff to evaluate and engage in issues that impact the agency as it continues to implement a regional high-capacity transit system.

Background

This action would authorize Sound Transit Board members, staff, and consultants to advocate and/or pursue the following positions during the upcoming state legislative session:

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Motion

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the Sound Transit 2026 State Legislative Program is adopted, and staff is directed to evaluate and engage in issues that impact the agency as it continues to implement a regional high-capacity transit system.

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