



Resolution No. R2026-04

2026 Service Plan Part Two

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:
Rider Experience and Operations Committee	03/05/2026	Recommend to Board
Board	03/26/2026	Final Action

Staff name:	Staff title:
Ed Cobean	Transit Operations Deputy CEO
Marie Olson	Passenger Experience Executive Director
Emily Yasukochi	System and Service Planning Director

Proposed action

Adopts Part Two of the 2026 Service Plan and approves major service changes to ST Express routes.

Key features summary

- Part Two of the 2026 Service Plan proposes the following elements:

Add new overnight service on three routes in Pierce, Snohomish, and King counties:

- Everett to downtown Seattle via I-5 (subject to operator availability)
- Redmond to downtown Seattle via Bellevue and I-90
- Lakewood to downtown Seattle via I-5

Add reverse peak direction service to Route 513 and discontinue service to Eastmont Park & Ride.

Reroute the western end of Route 522 to Shoreline South Station instead of Roosevelt Station.

Improve frequency on Saturdays and add Sunday service to Route 535.

Discontinue Route 550 and replace with 2 Line.

Discontinue Route 554 and replace with frequent Route 556 connection to 2 Line.

Shorten Route 556 to Bellevue Downtown Station, increase service frequency to every 15 minutes for most of the day, and add Saturday and Sunday service.

Shorten Route 574 to Federal Way Downtown Station and increase the frequency to every 15 minutes for most of the day.

Discontinue Route 580 and replace with new parking at Puyallup Station and existing Pierce Transit local service.

Discontinue Route 586 and replace with existing ST Express service between Tacoma or Federal Way and Seattle and 1 Line or 2 Line.

- Sound Transit intends to implement changes in Fall 2026 to support system resiliency during the FIFA Men's World Cup events this summer.
- The 2026 Service Plan also includes a proposal to discontinue Route 515 and replace with more frequent Link service on the 1 Line and 2 Line between Lynnwood City Center Station and downtown Seattle. This action was authorized by the Board in Resolution No. R2024-03.
- Following Board adoption of the service plan, staff will work to finalize schedules with Sound Transit's operating partners. The Sound Transit passenger experience team will then develop strategies in coordination with partner agencies with related service changes to communicate with riders, including targeted social media advertisements, in-person outreach, rider alerts onboard and at stops, open houses, and media releases.

Background

The Service Plan is Sound Transit's annual planning process for managing our regional transit network that informs the operating budget. The Service Plan evaluates and proposes changes to coordinate with the opening of high-capacity transit projects, improve performance, respond to ridership trends, and optimize operating resources. The Service Plan is also the vehicle for the Sound Transit Board of Directors to approve any major service changes as defined by Sound Transit Board-adopted policy.

The 2026 Service Plan has two parts:

- Part one, the Rail Service Plan, proposed minor service changes for Link light rail and Sounder commuter rail. The Rider Experience and Operations Committee of the Board reviewed this portion in October 2025; Board action is not required for these minor rail changes.
- Part two, the Bus Service Plan and the subject of this action, proposes minor and major ST Express bus service changes. Major service changes proposed in the plan require Board approval.

In 2026, two major light rail expansion projects will be open for revenue service: the 1 Line extension to Federal Way Downtown and the 2 Line extension to Lynnwood City Center, otherwise known as the Crosslake Connection. These light rail expansions will transform regional mobility, increasing frequent, high-capacity transit service on the Eastside and in South King County and improve access to destinations across the central Puget Sound region. With these investments comes the need to evaluate the transit options operating in the same corridors to determine whether those resources can be redeployed to other areas of the system or should remain in place.

In past planning efforts related to these openings, staff shared service concepts that proposed new transfers from bus routes to new Link stations, some of which would have resulted in much longer travel times. These concepts assumed that we would reduce or remove ST Express routes that operate in the same travel corridors as light rail.

Whether as part of our own engagement activities, such as outreach conducted in April 2025 and October 2025, or from participating in King County Metro's South Link Connections and East Link Connections processes, riders expressed concern about these assumptions, with questions about the new transfers, effects on travel time, and network resiliency.

In response to this feedback, and with guidance from the Sound Transit Board, new proposals were developed for the 2026 Service Plan. The proposals in this plan introduce more modest changes to the network. They also acknowledge the need for holistic network planning to ensure long-term network functionality and affordability.

Benefits of this approach include:

- Giving riders an opportunity to explore new trip options while still having familiar routes available,
- Providing time to understand how people choose to change their trips, and
- Offering some resiliency across our services, providing riders with options to avoid freeway congestion or unexpected delays on Link.

Future planning efforts will review future high-capacity transit projects, like Link extensions and Stride. This review will consider how riders use our system and how the network should change in response.

Sound Transit intends to implement changes in Fall 2026 to support system resiliency during the FIFA Men’s World Cup events this summer.

Using existing authority delegated to the CEO to enact temporary service changes, staff plans to discontinue service to the Eastmont Park and Ride in June if the facility cannot be maintained.

Fiscal information

The 2026 Service Plan is funded through the transit mode budgets for each operating service: Link, Sounder, ST Express, and the Tacoma Line. These modal budgets are included in the 2026 Budget approved under Resolution No. R2025-29.

The approved 2026 budgets for each mode are summarized below (in thousands):

Modal budget	2026 Approved Budget (\$000)*
Link	545,048
Sounder	118,343
ST Express	201,915
Tacoma Line	25,327
Total	890,633

**2026 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan - October 2025 (page 19-27)*

**Changes to the 2026 approved budget will be reconciled in the 2026 Adopted budget document.*

Changes to the 2026 Service Plan are reflected in the 2026 Approved budget and do not affect the long-range financial plan.

Disadvantaged and small business participation

Not applicable to this action.

Title VI compliance

Sound Transit conducts a Title VI service equity analysis to ensure that changes to transit service are consistent with Title VI policies defined by the FTA and by the Sound Transit Board. The FTA requires equity analyses of disparate impacts on minority populations and disproportionate burdens on low-income populations. Sound Transit Board policy defines two levels of analysis, an individual route analysis and a systemwide analysis. The following tables summarize the Title VI service equity analysis for individual major service proposed both individual changes and all systemwide changes in 2026.

Route 515 is not included in the 2026 Title VI analysis, as it was completed as part of the 2024 Title VI analysis. Per R2024-03 adopting the 2024 Service Plan Phase 2, route 515 was identified as a temporary service until the 2 Line was operational to Lynnwood.

Individual (Route-Level) Analysis

Route	Major Service Change	Title VI Protected Populations	Adverse Effects	Mitigations
513	Increase service, eliminate stops at Eastmont P&R	<p>Minority District Average: 42.6% Existing Route 513: 43.8% New Route 513: 43.8%</p> <p>Low Income District Average: 19.5% Existing Route 513: 14.7% New Route 513: 14.7%</p> <p>Limited English Proficiency (LEP) District Average: 10.6% Existing Route 513: 13.9% New Route 513: 13.9%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse Effects • No disparate impact • No disproportionate burden 	N/A
522	Reroute to Shoreline South Station	<p>Minority District Average: 42.6% Existing Route 522: 32.3% New Route 522: 35.4%</p> <p>Low Income District Average: 19.5% Existing Route 522: 14% New Route 522: 15.6%</p> <p>LEP District Average: 10.6% Existing Route 522: 7.5% New Route 522: 8.8%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse Effects • No disparate impact • No disproportionate burden 	N/A
535	Increase service on Weekends	<p>Minority District Average: 42.6% Route 535: 41.0%</p> <p>Low Income District Average: 19.5% Route 535: 15.0%</p> <p>LEP District Average: 10.6% Route 535: 11.4%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No adverse effects • No disparate impact • No disproportionate burden 	N/A

550	Eliminate service	<p>Minority District Average: 42.6% Route 550: 50.5%</p> <p>Low Income District Average: 19.5% Route 550: 17.4%</p> <p>LEP District Average: 10.6% Route 550: 12.5%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse Effects • Disparate impact • No disproportionate burden 	New 2 Line service would be available, as would increased service levels on Route 556, which would connect riders along South Bellevue Way to 2 Line service at South Bellevue or Bellevue Downtown Stations
554	Eliminate service	<p>Minority District Average: 42.6% Route 554: 49.5%</p> <p>Low Income District Average: 19.5% Route 554: 14.5%</p> <p>LEP District Average: 10.6% Route 554: 11.6%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse Effects • Disparate impact • No disproportionate burden 	New 2 Line service would be available, as would increased service levels on Route 556, which would connect riders from Issaquah to 2 Line service at South Bellevue or Bellevue Downtown Stations.
556	Shorten to Bellevue Downtown Station, increase service levels, add stops in Issaquah	<p>Minority District Average: 42.6% Existing Route 556: 47.3% New Route 556: 49.4%</p> <p>Low Income District Average: 19.5% Existing Route 556: 13.9% New Route 556: 11.5%</p> <p>LEP District Average: 10.6% Existing Route 556: 11.5% New Route 556: 12.6%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse Effects • No disparate impact • No disproportionate burden 	New 2 Line service would be available, as would increased service levels on Route 556, which would connect riders from Issaquah to 2 Line service at South Bellevue or Bellevue Downtown Stations.

Systemwide Analysis Results

The systemwide analysis evaluates service reductions and service additions separately. The analysis shows that the distribution of benefits to protected populations exceeds 80% for protected populations and the reduction of service to protected populations does not exceed 20% of the distribution. Therefore, the systemwide analysis did not identify any adverse effects on protected populations from September 2023 to September 2026.

Public involvement

Staff conducted engagement for the 2026 Service Plan ST Express bus service proposals in fall 2025. On October 6, 2025, the System Engagement team launched the 2026 Service Plan website and ST Express survey. The website contained detailed information about the ST Express service proposals. The website and survey were available in seven languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Russian, Korean, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese.

Staff invited the public to respond to the ST Express survey and share their feedback on the ten ST Express routes with proposed changes and three new overnight bus routes. The engagement period closed on November 11. The ST Express survey received an impressive 4,512 responses, and 50 individuals submitted email comments.

Engagement overview

Staff used a variety of engagement tactics to reach ST Express riders throughout the Sound Transit service area and gather feedback through the survey. Staff published a press release on October 26, delivered four SMS/email Passenger Notices during the engagement period to those who were subscribed to ST Express and Service Planning Alerts, and placed both organic content and paid ads on Facebook and Instagram during the engagement period.

Staff gave presentations to multiple partner organizations during the engagement period, including Hopelink, Port of Seattle/SEA Airport, Community Health Worker Coalition, City of Bellevue, Federal Way Kiwanis Club, and King County Metro's South Link Connections project meetings. Staff also presented to over 75 students and youth at Sound Transit's first annual Youth Summit, which took place during the engagement period.

The team handed out a flyer at all in-person engagement events, including open houses and Ambassador shifts. The flyer contained a summary of the 2026 Service Plan and a large QR code that linked to the website and survey online. Messaging was available on the reverse side in all seven languages.

Additionally, the video team created a 2-minute explainer video featuring team members. The video explains the service planning process and was featured on Sound Transit social media channels and on the Service Planning website.

Open houses with CBO partners

Staff held three in-person Open Houses in October 2025 for the public to learn about the proposed bus changes, share feedback, and ask questions directly to the service planning team. The meetings were held at different locations and fully open to the public.

El Centro Cultural Mexicano and Hopelink co-hosted the first Open House on October 22 in Redmond. The Latino Educational Training Institute hosted the second open house in Everett on October 27. Both Hopelink and Mother Africa co-hosted the third open house in Kent on October 29. We promoted the open houses with a multicultural media campaign, featuring print and social media ads in nine languages and a media toolkit for organizations to share our messaging. Each toolkit contained sample social media posts, captions, and other content to promote the survey and engagement events.

Staff ambassadors

Additionally, over 50 staff Ambassadors went to fourteen locations across the region during the engagement period, focusing on areas where proposed changes could be most impactful. Ambassadors were tasked with informing about the ST Express service proposals and the opportunity for the public to share feedback on the survey.

Changes to Service Plan proposals resulting from public feedback

During the first phase of engagement in Spring 2025, members of the public shared serious concerns about new transfers that could introduce substantial travel time increases. In response to this feedback, the draft proposals presented in Fall 2025 included far fewer changes than had been presented during previous engagement efforts. Proposals for routes 515, 554, 556, and 586 received more feedback in opposition than in support during outreach in Fall 2025. However, the staff recommendation is to move forward with the proposals because the changes are well-mitigated by additional Link and bus service in the corridors where ST Express service is proposed for elimination.

Time constraints

Delaying approval of the 2026 Service Plan Part Two past April 2, 2026, may delay the anticipated start date of bus service changes.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2025-17: Amended the 2025 Service Plan to include the major service change of extending the 1 Line to Federal Way Downtown Station and changed the order of Link light rail openings to allow the 1 Line Federal Way Link Extension to open for revenue service prior to the 2 Line Crosslake connection.

Resolution No. R2025-12: Amended the 2025 Service Plan to include the major service change of extending the 2 Line to Lynnwood City Center Station.

Resolution No. R2024-03: Adopted the second phase of the 2024 Service Plan, which includes major service changes to ST Express routes serving Snohomish County when the 1 Line service extends to Lynnwood in Fall 2024.

Environmental review – KH 2/18/26

Legal review – MT 3/4/26



Resolution No. R2026-04

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority adopting Part Two of the 2026 Service Plan and approving major service changes to ST Express routes.

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, commonly known as Sound Transit, was formed under chapters 81.104 and 81.112 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties region by action of their respective county councils pursuant to RCW 81.112.030; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is authorized to plan, construct, and permanently operate a high-capacity system of transportation infrastructure and services to meet regional public transportation needs in the Central Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, in general elections held within the Sound Transit district on November 5, 1996, November 4, 2008, and November 8, 2016, voters approved local funding to implement a regional high-capacity transportation system for the Central Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, express bus, commuter rail and light rail service will be implemented in phases, providing a program for route implementation and service increases over time which meet the commitments in Sound Move, Sound Transit 2, and Sound Transit 3; and

WHEREAS, the discontinuation of ST Express Route 515 was authorized by the Board of Directors in Resolution No. R2024-03; and

WHEREAS, the proposed service changes included in the 2026 Service Plan are consistent with the adopted 2026 Agency Budget and Long-Range Financial Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that Part Two of the 2026 Service Plan is adopted, and major service changes to ST Express routes are approved as described below:

August 2026 service change:

ST Express Bus

New Overnight Service will be established on three routes in Pierce, Snohomish, and King counties: Everett to downtown Seattle via I-5 (*subject to deferral due to operator availability*), Redmond to downtown Seattle via Bellevue and I-90, and Lakewood to downtown Seattle via I-5. If overnight service between Everett and downtown Seattle is not able to be implemented due to operator availability, staff will return to notify the Rider Experience and Operations Committee.

Route 513 (Seaway – Lynnwood) will add reverse peak direction service and discontinue service to Eastmont Park and Ride.

Route 522 (Woodinville – Roosevelt) will reroute the western terminus to Shoreline South Station instead of Roosevelt Station.

Route 535 (Lynnwood – Bellevue) will improve frequency on Saturdays and add Sunday service.

Route 550 (Bellevue – Seattle) will be discontinued and replaced with 2 Line Link light rail service.

Route 554 (Issaquah – Seattle) will be discontinued and replaced with frequent connections to 2 Line Link light rail service via Route 556.

Route 556 (Issaquah – University District) will be shortened to Bellevue Downtown Station, increased in frequency to every 15 minutes for most of the day, and Saturday and Sunday service will be added.

Route 574 (Lakewood – Sea-Tac Airport) will be shortened to Federal Way Downtown Station and increased in frequency to every 15 minutes for most of the day.

Route 580 (South Hill – Puyallup) will be discontinued and replaced with new parking at Puyallup Station and existing Pierce Transit local service.

Route 586 (Tacoma – University District) will be discontinued and replaced with existing ST Express service between Tacoma or Federal Way and Seattle and Link light rail 1 Line and 2 Line service.

ADOPTED 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