



Resolution No. R2025-29

Proposed 2026 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Finance and Audit Committee	11/20/2025	Recommend to Board	Hughey Newsome, Chief Financial Officer
Board	11/20/2025	Final action	Ryan Fisher, Executive Director, Finance

Proposed action

Adopts an annual budget for the period from January 1 through December 31, 2026 and adopts the 2026 Transit Improvement Plan (TIP).

Key features summary

- The Proposed 2026 Budget requests funding authorization of \$3.5 billion. This request is comprised of:
 - \$890.6 million for Transit Operations; and
 - \$2.2 billion for Projects; and
 - \$359.8 million for Other (including debt service and agency contingency).
- The Proposed 2026 TIP totals \$26.8 billion in authorized project allocations.
- The Proposed 2026 Budget would be funded by an estimated \$3.3 billion in revenues and other financing sources and an estimated \$160.8 million in unrestricted cash.
- The Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 TIP are fully affordable within the agency's current financial projections.
- This action also repurposes \$40 million through a budget phase transfer from the right-of-way phase of the existing West Seattle Link Extension authorized allocation to fund engineering and cost-savings work in support of the Enterprise Initiative. The following contract actions are authorized for use of the funds:
 - Execution of an amendment to the Jacobs Engineering contract approved by Motion No. M2025-17 for \$27.6 million;
 - Execution of a new task order with the City of Seattle under the Project Administration Agreement approved by Motion No. M2018-52 for \$3.6 million;
 - Issuance of task order with a firm selected under the Design MATOC for Systems Engineering Design Services, not to exceed \$2 million; and
 - Procurement of a new contract for geotechnical bi-directional load testing, not to exceed \$5 million.

Background

The Sound Transit Board adopts the Sound Transit annual budget, which contains the agency's budget for revenue and financing, administrative expenses, transit operating expenses, projects, and debt

service. The Sound Transit Board adopts the TIP, a cumulative total of authorized project allocations for all active projects. Sound Transit's annual budget and TIP are organized by six primary program areas: Transit Operating Budget, System Expansion Project Budget, Service Delivery Project Budget, Other Operating and Non-Operating Budget, Debt Service Budget, and Agency Contingency Budget.

The resolution approves the following revenues and expenditures for 2026:

Revenues – \$3.3 billion of estimated revenues and other financing sources includes:

- \$1,841.6 million from Retail Sales and Use Tax
- \$418.1 million from Motor Vehicle Excise and Rental Car Taxes
- \$183.0 million from Property Tax
- \$84.6 million from Passenger Fare Revenues
- \$212.4 million from Federal Grants
- \$20.0 million from Local & State Contributions
- \$260.9 million in Investment Income
- \$21.0 million in Miscellaneous Revenues
- \$233.4 million in Bond & TIFIA loan proceeds

Transit Operating Budget – \$890.6 million includes:

- \$545.0 million for Link Light Rail
- \$118.3 million for Sounder Commuter Rail
- \$201.9 million for ST Express
- \$25.3 million for Tacoma Line

System Expansion Project Budget – \$1.9 billion:

- \$912.1 million for Link
- \$109.5 million for Sounder
- \$1.6 million for ST Express
- \$709.8 million for Stride
- \$4.8 million for Tacoma Line
- \$45.3 million for Other
- \$141.4 million for System Expansion Indirect

Service Delivery Project Budget – \$281.6 million.

Other Operating and Non-Operating Expenses Budget – \$98.2 million:

- \$27.7 million for General and Administrative
- \$17.3 million for Fare and Regional Planning
- \$26.0 million for Tax Collection and Fees
- \$26.6 million for Leases & SBITA Amortization and Interest
- \$0.7 million for Other Non-Operating Expenses

Debt Service Budget – \$230.4 million.

Agency Contingency Budget – \$31.2 million.

Reserves – The resolution also provides for the agency to reserve funds for the following purposes:

- Operations & Maintenance Reserve: Balance is projected to be \$171.2 million at the end of 2025. A contribution of \$23.1 million is budgeted for 2026.
- Emergency/Loss Reserve: Balance is projected to be \$67.3 million at the end of 2025. A contribution of \$5.5 million is budgeted for 2026.
- Capital Replacement Reserve: Balance is projected to be \$387.7 million at the end of 2025. No contribution is budgeted for 2026.

The resolution also authorizes changes to the authorized project allocation for existing projects, establishment of new projects, and closure of completed projects with an authorized project allocation net increase of \$318.1 million (Attachment B).

Fiscal information

The Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 TIP are fully affordable within the agency's current financial projections. This continues to meet the intent of the realignment schedule set out in Resolution No. R2021-05.

Disadvantaged and small business participation

Not applicable to this action.

Public involvement

The Sound Transit Board reviewed the Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 Transit Improvement Plan at a public meeting that took place on October 23, 2025, and reviewed revisions to both (if any) on November 20, 2025. On October 9, 2025, a public hearing was held to provide an opportunity for testimony from interested members of the public.

Time constraints

A two-month delay would postpone adoption of the Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 Transit Improvement Plan into the 2026 fiscal year and the agency would have no spending authority beginning January 1, 2026. Budget adoption is required prior to the commencement of the fiscal year to provide authorization to expend funds.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2025-22: Adopted a budget policy and superseded Resolution No. R2020-24.

Motion No. M2025-36: Adopted 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.

Motion No. M2025-17: Authorized the chief executive officer to execute a contract with Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc for Phase 1 Civil Engineering Design Services for the West Seattle Link Extension in the amount of \$24,791,877, with a 10 percent contingency of \$2,479,188 for a total authorized amount not to exceed \$27,271,065, contingent upon adoption of Resolution No. R2025-10

Motion No. M2018-52: Authorized the chief executive officer to execute (1) an Agreement with the City of Seattle for project administration services for the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Project that established a task order process for Sound Transit to reimburse the City for certain costs essential to meeting Project objectives and schedules; and (2) Task Order One, which established the scope, schedule and budget for services to be provided by the City for the alternatives development phase of the Project, in the amount of \$1,101,050, with a 10% contingency of \$110,105, for a total authorized amount not to exceed \$1,211,155

Resolution No. R2018-44: Adopted an annual budget for the period from January 1 through December 31, 2019, adopting the 2019 Transit Improvement Plan, and permitting systemwide allocation of financial benefits of certain grants.

Resolution No. R2016-16: Adopted the Sound Transit 3 Regional Transit System Plan.

Environmental review – KH 11/10/25

Legal review – MT 11/14/25



Resolution No. R2025-29

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority adopting an annual budget for the period from January 1 through December 31, 2026, and adopting the 2026 Transit Improvement Plan.

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, hereinafter referred to as Sound Transit, has been created 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 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, Sound Transit is successfully building and operating the first, second and third phases of the regional transit system plan that were approved by voters in 1996, 2008 and 2016; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is meeting a high standard of public accountability through effective monthly progress reports and quarterly financial reporting; and

WHEREAS, the Sound Transit Board adopted financial policies to govern the financing and implementation of the regional transit system and to specify budgetary guidelines for providing subarea equity in accomplishing the same; and

WHEREAS, permitting the designation of reimbursements from Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grant program and FTA Formula funding grants not necessary to complete a subarea's projects as system-wide grant funds available to complete the voter-approved system plans is consistent with the financial policies adopted as part of the voter-approved plans and could (1) allow the Board to roll back taxes at the earliest possible date, and (2) permit all projects, including rail segments connecting the subareas, to be completed on schedule based on current financial projections. To the extent the funds legally available to a subarea are sufficient to complete the subarea projects as scheduled, reimbursements from those FTA grants not necessary to meet the subarea's project's baseline cost budget as set by the Board, can be designated a system-wide grant fund so long as the designation does not violate the grant requirements; and

WHEREAS, the chief executive officer submitted a Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 Transit Improvement Plan (TIP) for Board consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 TIP are consistent with and affordable under Sound Transit Financial Policies as adopted by Resolution No. R2016-16 and comply with the Budget Policies as adopted by Resolution No. R2025-22; and

WHEREAS, to timely continue the engineering cost savings work approved in Motion No. M2025-36 to identify engineering and construction alternatives to reduce the West Seattle Light-Rail Extension estimated cost, the chief executive officer is authorized to amend existing contracts with Jacobs Engineering, the City of Seattle, and a firm selected through the Design MATOC and to procure services for geotechnical load testing, which amount will be funded by a herein approved phase budget transfer of \$40,000,000 from the West Seattle Link-Extension right-of-way budget phase.

WHEREAS, in 2018 the Sound Transit Board designated the Rider Experience and Operations Committee, Executive Committee, System Expansion Committee, and the Finance and Audit Committee as permanent committees with specific responsibilities, including reviewing proposed annual budgets, and authorized project allocations to date included in the TIP and providing recommendations to the Board; and

WHEREAS a public hearing was held on October 9, 2025, to take public testimony on the Proposed 2026 Budget, TIP, and Property Tax Levy; and

WHEREAS, at its November 6, 2025, meeting, the Executive Committee approved Motion No. M2025-53 recommending the System Expansion Programs-Systemwide and Debt Service portions of the Proposed 2026 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan to the Finance and Audit Committee; and

WHEREAS, at its November 6, 2025 meeting, the Rider Experience and Operations Committee approved Motion No. M2025-55 recommending the the Service Delivery Programs, Transit Operating, Other Operating and Non-Operating Expenses, and Agency Contingency portions of the Proposed 2026 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan to the Finance and Audit Committee; and

WHEREAS, at its November 13, 2025, meeting, the System Expansion Committee approved Motion No. M2025-57 recommending the System Expansion Programs, excluding System Expansion-Systemwide, portions of the Proposed 2026 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan to the Finance and Audit Committee; and

WHEREAS, a two-thirds affirmative vote of the entire membership of the Sound Transit Board is required to adopt the Proposed 2026 Budget and Proposed 2026 TIP.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that:

Section 1a – Revenues and Other Financing Sources. The Proposed 2026 Budget projects the collection of \$3,275,084,157 in total revenues and financing sources including, \$1,841,621,036 for Sales and Use Tax, \$413,599,058 for Motor Vehicle Excise Tax, \$4,546,089 for Rental Car Tax, \$183,000,000 for Property Tax, \$212,389,479 for federal grants, \$84,625,658 for passenger fare revenues, \$260,938,700 for investment income, \$19,970,000 for local and state contributions, \$20,990,731 for miscellaneous revenues, and \$233,403,407 for Bond & TIFIA loan proceeds.

Section 1b – Transit Operating Budget. Sound Transit is authorized to incur \$890,633,913 in transit operating expenses.

- \$545,048,159 for Link light rail expenses;
- \$118,342,793 for Sounder commuter rail expenses;
- \$201,914,716 for ST Express bus expenses;
- \$25,327,344 for Tacoma Line light rail expenses.

Section 1c – System Expansion Project Budget. Sound Transit is authorized to incur a total of \$1,924,444,322 for system expansion project outlays, and/or such amounts as are contained in revisions to the Proposed 2026 Budget as adopted by the Board. \$(1,569,413) in system expansion expense projects and indirect expense projects is budgeted to be charged to transit operating, capital projects, general and administrative, and/or fare and regional planning. To timely continue engineering and cost savings work approved in Motion No. M2025-36, the chief executive officer is authorized to expend up to \$40,000,000 to fund additional engineering and third-party services under existing contracts with Jacobs engineering (M2025-17), the City of Seattle (M2018-52), and a firm selected through the Design MATOC and a procurement for services for geotechnical load testing. This \$40,000,000 will be funded by an phase budget transfer from the West Seattle Link Extension right-of-way phase in the existing authorized allocation.

Section 1d – Service Delivery Project Budget. Sound Transit is authorized to incur a total of \$281,565,138 for service delivery project outlays and/or such amounts as are contained in revisions to the Proposed 2026 Budget as adopted by the Board. \$(47,640,208) in service delivery expense projects and indirect expense projects is budgeted to be charged to transit operating, capital projects, general and administrative, and/or fare and regional planning.

Section 1e – Other Operating and Non-Operating Expenses. Sound Transit is authorized to incur \$98,154,613 in other operating and non-operating expenses.

- \$27,664,263 for general and administrative;
- \$17,272,762 for fare and regional planning;
- \$25,959,663 for tax collections and fees;
- \$26,577,982 for amortization and interest expenses on leases and subscription-based information technology arrangements;
- \$679,943 for non-operating expenses.

Section 1f – Debt Service. Sound Transit is authorized to incur \$230,441,901 for debt service which includes principal repayments, fixed and variable rate interest and fees on outstanding bonds and loans.

Section 1g – Agency Contingency. Sound Transit is authorized to incur \$31,200,000 in agency contingency.

Section 1h – Reserves. Sound Transit is authorized to place in reserve the following amounts: \$5,500,000 for Emergency/Loss and \$23,113,934 for Operations and Maintenance.

Section 2. The Proposed 2026 TIP includes changes previously approved via Board actions since the 2025 Adopted TIP in the amount of \$657,745,090 and proposed authorized project allocation changes in the amount of \$318,127,016: \$349,279,536 decrease for closed projects, \$430,985,885 increase for existing projects, and \$236,420,667 increase for new projects. The specific projects impacted are referenced in Attachment B – Changes to Authorized Project Allocations in the Proposed 2026 TIP. These changes result in the Proposed 2025 TIP authorized project allocation of \$26,815,614,091.

Section 3. The budget for the period January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026 as set forth in Attachment A (2026 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan), and the changes authorized by the Board's Budget Policy including technical and conforming changes and shifts to annual project budgets between the prior year and upcoming fiscal years, together constitute the Adopted 2026 Budget and Adopted 2026 TIP as adopted by this Resolution.

Section 4. The Adopted 2026 Budget and Adopted 2026 TIP are not an exclusive authorization of expenses or capital outlays, except as specified in Section 1f – Debt Service. Authorization of expenditures must comply with Sound Transit's Procurement, Agreements and Delegated Authority Policy, Resolution No. R2023-30 and R2025-05.

Section 5. The Board further authorizes the chief executive officer to take any actions necessary to implement the policies and determinations of the Board pursuant to this Resolution.

ADOPTED by no less than a two-thirds affirmative vote of the entire membership of the Sound Transit Board at a regular meeting thereof held on _____.

ATTEST:

Dave Somers
Board Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator



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Attachment A – Proposed 2026 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan

Link to Proposed 2026 Budget on Soundtransit.org:

[Proposed 2026 Budget and Transit Improvement Plan](#)
