Resolution No. R2026-31

Amending the Sound Transit Fare Policy to Include the T Line in Tacoma

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:
Rider Experience and Operations Committee	12/03/2026	Recommend to Board
Board	12/17/2026	Final Action

Staff name:	Staff title:
Marshall Foster	Chief Planning and Development Officer
Chad Davis	Fares Director
Chuck Sawyer	**Fares Administrator**

Proposed action

Amends the Sound Transit Fare Policy to establish a farebox recovery minimum and target for Tacoma's T Line service.

Key features summary

- The proposed action would update the Fare Policy by establishing a farebox recovery minimum of three percent and a farebox recovery target of five percent for the T Line.
- The Board's Fare Policy, which was last adopted by the Board in 2024 through Resolution No. R2024-08, established new farebox recovery minimums and targets for both the regional system and for individual modes of service.
- Resolution No. R2024-08 also established the expectation that the Board would set farebox recovery minimums and targets for new modes of service three years after these services begin operating with a fare or when existing modes of service begin charging a fare. Fare collection has now been in place for the T Line for three years.

Background

The Board's Fare Policy addresses farebox revenue and fare structure for all modes of Sound Transit service. The Fare Policy was adopted by the Board in 2010, with a minor amendment in 2014 to add the low-income adult passenger fare category. The Fare Policy was updated again in 2024 to reflect the fact that actual and projected farebox recovery had declined significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing new farebox recovery minimums and targets at both the modal and system levels.

In September 2023, the Tacoma Hilltop Link Extension was opened, adding 2.4 miles of new track and six new stations to the T Line, bringing the total length of the line to 4 miles with 12 stations. With this expansion of service, Sound Transit implemented new rates of fare and began collecting fares, with a flat fare structure consistent with Pierce Transit fares ($2.00 Adult fare and $1.00 fare for Seniors and Riders with Disabilities) as established by Resolution No. R2022-29.

At the time of the 2024 Fare Policy update, the recently expanded T Line service had only been collecting fares for eight months after operating many years of free fare service on the shorter line from the Tacoma Dome to downtown Tacoma. At that time, it therefore did not meet the criteria for the establishment of a farebox recovery target under the policy

T Line's 2025 farebox recovery rate was 1.6 percent. Youth ridership is relatively high for the T Line at 50%, compared to roughly 10% for ST's light rail system. While this level of youth ridership is positive overall, it results in less use of fare media and hence lower fare recovery. Comparable 2025 farebox recovery rates were 3.1 percent for the Portland Streetcar, 6.1 percent for the Seattle Streetcar, and 5 percent for Pierce Transit bus services. The weighted average of farebox recovery for eight Streetcar systems in the U.S. that charge fares was 2.76 percent in 2025.

Pursuant to the Fare Policy, the proposed action would establish a farebox recovery minimum of three percent and a farebox recovery target of five percent for Tacoma Link.

To increase Tacoma Link's farebox recovery rate, Sound Transit will emphasize communications promoting fare payment options for the T-Line, and schedule periodic emphasis patrols by Sound Transit's Fare Ambassadors to encourage fare compliance, as well as more marketing / communication to emphasize the importance of using fare media. Should farebox recovery not meet the minimum in two consecutive calendar years, the Board will need to consider a fare change proposal as mandated in Resolution No. R2024-08.

Fiscal information

The updated policy has no budget or financial impact.

Participation by small businesses and disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs)

Not applicable to this action.

Title VI compliance

Not applicable to this action.

Public involvement

Not applicable to this action.

Time constraints

A one-month delay would not create a significant impact to the policy update schedule.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2024-08: Adopted an updated Fare Policy and superseded Resolution No. R2014-27 and Resolution No. R2010-10.

Resolution No. R2023-34: Adopted a policy on public comment on fare changes and major service changes and superseded the public engagement portion of the current fare policy, Resolution No. R2010-10 as amended by Resolution No. R2014-27.

Resolution No. R2022-07: Adopted an updated Fare Compliance Policy and superseded Resolution No. R2009-02.

Resolution No. R2014-27: Amended Resolution No. R2010-10 Attachment A—Fare Policy to establish "Low Income Adult" as a new Reduced Fare category.

Resolution No. R2010-10: Adopted a Fare Policy and superseded Resolution No. R99-2-2, Resolution No. R2005-05, Resolution No. R2007-06, and Motion No. M2004-53.

Environmental review – LS 11/24/2026

Legal review – AJP 11/24/2026

SOUNDTRANSIT

Resolution No. R2026-31

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority amending the Sound Transit Fare Policy to establish a farebox recovery minimum and target for Tacoma Link.

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, Sound Transit is committed to wisely managing public funds in accordance with state law while fulfilling its mission; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit charges fares for access to transit services pursuant to RCW 81.112.080 to generate revenue to cover a portion of operating expenses as part of the agency's long term financial plan; and

WHEREAS, regional fare forums comprised of elected officials convened in 1997, 2007, 2016 and 2025 and recommended policies for regional transit fare integration in the Central Puget Sound region, which guided the development of interlocal agreements establishing a regional fare integration framework to provide seamless fare payment for regional transit customers; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. R2024-08 established the expectation that the Board would set farebox recovery minimums and targets for new modes of service three years after these services begin operating with a fare or when existing modes of service begin charging a fare and it has been three years since Tacoma Link service began charging a fare.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that Resolution No. R2024-08 is amended to establish minimum and target farebox recovery ratios for Tacoma Link, reflected in the updated Sound Transit Fare policy as follows:

3.1 Farebox recovery

3.1.1 Sound Transit seeks farebox recovery to support transit service as identified in the agency's long-range financial plan. The Board establishes minimum and target farebox recovery ratios for all modes within three years of the start of operation or fare collection.

3.1.2 Consistent with the agency's financial plan, the systemwide farebox recovery ratio is a minimum of 15 percent, with a target of 20 percent for all modes.

3.1.3 The following modal minimum and target farebox recovery ratios apply to modes that charge fares:

3.1.3.a Sounder commuter rail – 13 percent minimum to 18 percent target.

3.1.3.b ST Express bus – seven percent minimum to 12 percent target.

3.1.3.c Link light rail – 17 percent minimum to 22 percent target.

3.1.3.d Tacoma Link light rail – three percent minimum to five percent target.

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