

**SOUND TRANSIT  
STAFF REPORT**

**MOTION NO. M2001-110**

**Route 574 Service Change**

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Type of Action:</b>	<b>Staff Contact:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>
Executive Committee	10/19/01	Discussion/Possible Action to Recommend	Agnes Govern, Director, Regional Express	(206) 398-5037
Board	10/25/01	Board Approval Action	Gloria Overgaard, Deputy Director, Regional Express Mike Bergman, Project Manager, Regional Bus	(206) 689-4909 (206) 398-5358

**OBJECTIVE OF ACTION**

- Respond to Board amendment calling for a funding partnership to support the operation of three early morning trips added to Route 574 in February 2001.

**ACTION**

- Determine if the three early morning trips added to Route 574 in February 2001 will be continued.

**KEY FEATURES**

**Highlights of Action:**

- The Board added three early morning trips In February 2001 for Route 574 with the condition that additional funding be identified to continue the service. The service was outside the normal ST Express Bus service hours of 5:00 am to 11:00 pm.
- The service standards included in the "Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express" approved by the Board in 1999 allow for flexibility in adjusting service levels to meet market demand at specific activity centers.
- A Board amendment to the 2001 Service Implementation Plan (SIP) directed staff to seek a funding partnership with the Port of Seattle since it was the airport construction that was creating the majority of the need for the increased service. Staff was directed to return in October 2001 with alternatives for the Board to consider in determining whether or not to continue funding the three early morning trips past the February 2002 service change.
- Efforts to develop a funding partnership with the Port of Seattle have been unsuccessful.
- Staff has developed three potential alternatives for Board consideration.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

**Impact on Current Year Budget:** Route 574 service, including the three early morning trips added in February 2001, is fully funded in the current year budget ending December 31, 2001.

**Impact on Sound Move Budget:** Route 574 service, including the three early morning trips added in February 2001, is fully funded through 2006, based on the multi-year financial plan prepared for the 2001 SIP. If the three early morning trips are deleted, it would shift \$900,000 to the schedule maintenance budgets for the Pierce and South King County subareas through 2006.

**Impact on Subarea(s) Budget(s):** Route 574 service is jointly funded by the South King County subarea (56%) and the Pierce County subarea (44%). During 2001, Route 574 funding was augmented by a state operating assistance grant and a portion of the Regional Mobility Fund. The South King County subarea's share of the cost of the three morning trips during 2001 is \$83,463, of which \$75,000 is covered by the grant and the remainder by the Regional Mobility Fund. Deletion of the three early morning trips starting in February 2002 would shift \$500,000 to the schedule maintenance budget for the South King subarea and \$400,000 to the schedule maintenance budget for the Pierce subarea through 2006.

**Impact on Cost-to-Complete:** NA

## **HISTORY OF PROJECT**

In September 1999, Sound Transit introduced Route 574 ST Express service between Lakewood and SeaTac Airport, which is jointly funded by the Pierce and South King subareas. In 2000, the Port of Seattle began construction at SeaTac Airport that resulted in reduced employee parking and increased demand for early morning service.

Staff reviewed information received from Pierce Transit, King County Metro, and the SeaTac Transportation Partnership about the increased need for service to accommodate early morning airport commuters. Based on this information and the flexibility allowed in the service standards to adjust service levels to meet market demand at specific activity centers, staff recommended that the Board approve three additional early morning trips. Because of limited funds available from the South King County subarea, staff proposed that this improvement be funded by deferring increases in Route 574 midday service.

The Board approved the additional trips effective with the February 2001 service change, but with an amendment not to defer midday service improvements and directing staff to propose alternative funding approaches in the draft 2001 SIP. These alternatives were to include a potential funding partnership with the customers requesting the early morning service. Subsequently, staff worked with King County Metro to secure a state grant that provided one-time assistance of \$75,000 for the operation of Route 574. A working relationship was also established between Sound Transit staff, King County Metro, and the Port of Seattle in anticipation of funding partnership discussions.

The draft 2001 SIP recommended that the near-term costs of the early morning Route 574 trips be funded from the state grant and a portion of the Regional Mobility Fund, and that staff continue to look for potential outside funding sources. The Board determined that:

1. The trips were outside the normal service hours as defined in the Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express;
2. It was critical to create a funding partnership with the beneficiaries of the service which in this case was the Port of Seattle and its airport tenants; and
3. It was important that the proposal for the funding of the three early morning trips not add costs to the South King budget.

Thus, the Board's amendment directed staff to negotiate a more long-term funding arrangement with those most directly benefiting from the service and to bring a funding proposal to the Board in October 2001 for discussion and possible action.

Airport employees are the chief beneficiaries of early morning Route 574 service, based on a passenger survey conducted in May 2001. In recent communications with Port of Seattle management and the chair of the Port Commission, the Port indicated that they would be unwilling to provide operational funding for Route 574.

Staff has developed three potential alternative actions for the Board to consider (see "Alternatives" section).

#### **Prior Board or Committee Actions and Relevant Board Policies**

<b>Motion or Resolution Number</b>	<b>Summary of Action</b>	<b>Date of Action</b>
R2001-04	Approval of 2001 SIP, with amendment calling for early morning Route 574 trips to be funded by partners benefiting from the service.	May 10, 2001
M2000-128	Authorizing the Executive Director to implement three additional early morning Route 574 trips effective February 2001, with amendment that staff recommend an appropriate funding approach for this improvement and bring it to the Board for consideration as part of the 2001 SIP.	Dec. 14, 2000
R99-15	Approval of 1999 SIP, including Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express bus.	July 8, 1999

#### **CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY**

- Direction is required by October 29, 2001 in order to implement service changes in February 2002. After October 29, the next opportunity to implement service changes will be June 2002 in accordance with applicable provisions of the service agreement with Pierce Transit, which operates Route 574 on behalf of Sound Transit.

## **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION**

- King County Metro assisted in securing the state grant for Route 574 operations, and provided valuable information and data regarding the Flexpass program and the County's Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program in the SeaTac area.
- Pierce Transit operates Route 574 for Sound Transit and has provided operating data and assisted in developing and implementing surveys of Route 574 passengers.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

- Since 1998, the SeaTac Transportation Partnership (STTP) has requested that both King County Metro and Sound Transit provide trips to serve airport-area employees with early morning work start times. STTP is a networking group of SeaTac-area employers who are affected by the CTR and members share information and ideas about increasing non-drive-alone commuting.

## **DESCRIPTION OF POLICY**

- The "Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express," adopted by the Board as part of the 1999 SIP, includes these guidelines for the service span of individual ST Express routes:

"The service span, or the hours of operation of an individual route, should be based on demand and relate to the operating times of the transit center being served, and of the local system in the vicinity. The maximum span of service would be from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on weekdays, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Sundays."

Currently, the first morning trip of Route 574 arrives at the airport daily at 4:05 a.m.

- The 2001 SIP was approved by the Board on May 10, 2001 with the following amendment:

"At this time, the Board will continue to fund the three early trips on the Route 574, Lakewood/SeaTac, until the February 2002 service change. During October 2001, the staff will bring their proposal to fund these trips to the Board for their discussion/decision. The Board is directing staff to negotiate funding for this route per the following policy:

'Where the partner for increased service/park-and-ride stalls provided outside of normal service hours can be discretely identified, the partner must provide funding for the increase.'

## **FACTORS TO CONSIDER**

- Farebox counts conducted in August 2001 showed that the three early morning trips added in February were carrying a total of about 45 passengers, or an average of 15 per trip. The heaviest trip carried 20 passengers and the lowest-ridership trip carried 8 passengers.
- A manual count using survey personnel was conducted during the week of October 8, 2001. Due to the events of September 11th, this count may not be representative of route performance due to temporary restrictions on airport operations.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Delete the first three northbound trips implemented in February 2001, based on the policy outlined in the 2001 SIP amendment calling for financial support from stakeholders. The reductions would be implemented in February 2002. This change would shift approximately \$900,000 to the schedule maintenance budget for the South King and Pierce County subareas through 2006 (South King- \$500,000; Pierce- \$400,000).
2. Delete the pre-5:00 a.m. trips with the lowest ridership and productivity, based on the definition of "unsatisfactory" performing routes outlined in Sound Transit's Service Standards. The service reductions would take place in February 2002. Based on August 2001 counts, the first northbound trip is performing unsatisfactorily. If this trip was deleted, approximately \$135,000 would be shifted to the South King schedule maintenance budget and \$106,000 would be shifted to the Pierce schedule maintenance budget through 2006. Staff will collect additional data during October 2001 to make sure potential trip reductions are based on the latest available counts.
3. Delay the decision on Route 574 service reductions until after the ST Express Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) is completed in Spring 2002, evaluating Route 574 service at the same time as other ST Express routes and allowing time for conditions at the airport to return to normal. Target September 2002 for implementation. The budget impact would depend on the extent of the service reductions implemented.

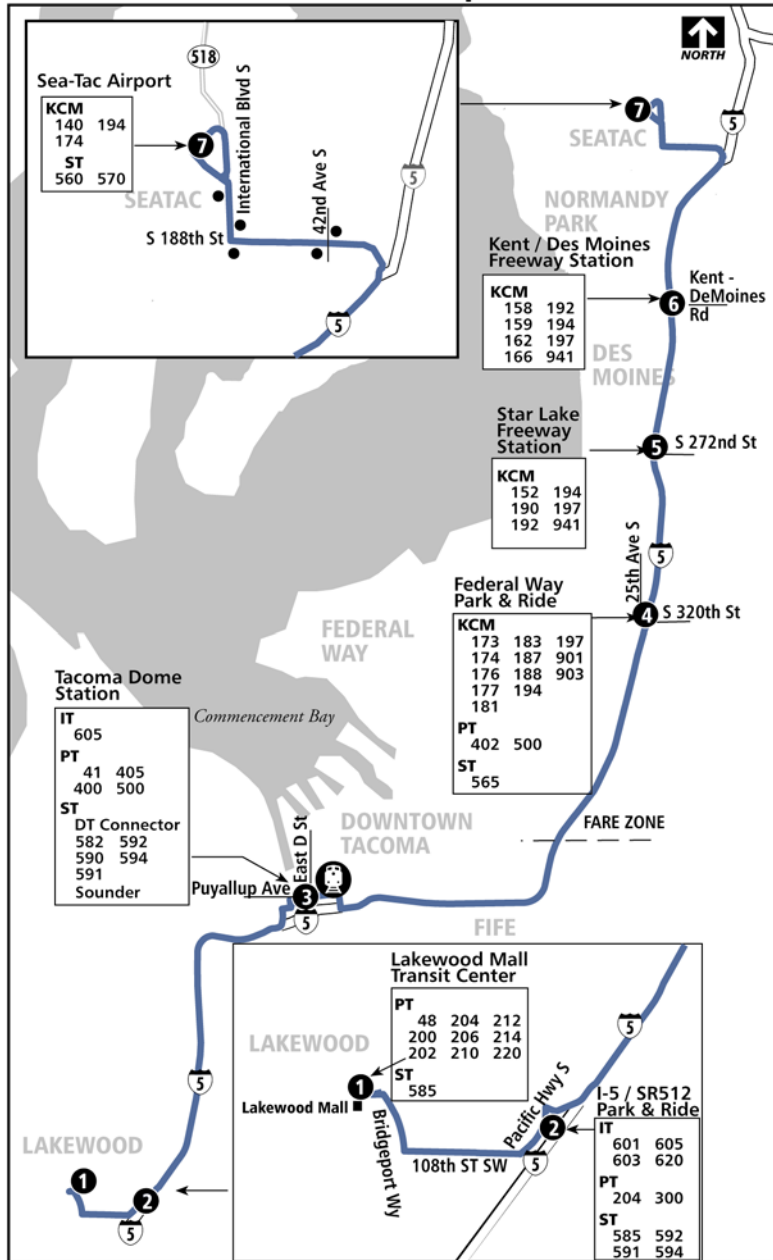
## **RECOMMENDATION (S)**

If the Board wishes to follow the policy outlined in Resolution R2001-04 as amended, then Alternative 1 is recommended. If the Board wishes to rescind the requirements for a financial partnership to support the three early Route 574 trips and make adjustments in service levels based on current ST Express Service Standards and Performance Measures, then Alternative 2 is recommended. If the Board wishes to delay a decision on Route 574 until the COA is completed, then Alternative 3 is recommended. Reductions in service could still take place based on the policy outlined in Resolution R2001-04, as amended.

## **LEGAL REVIEW**

JW 10/8/01

# Route 574 Lakewood - Sea-Tac Express



## SOUND TRANSIT

### MOTION NO. M2001-110

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority directing the Executive Director to pursue funding agreement with the airlines serving Sea-Tac airport to finance Regional Express Route 574 trips that are outside the Sound Move service hours of 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. with the decision on Route 574 being part of Board action on the 2002 Service Implementation Plan.

#### Background:

In February 2001, three new Route 574 trips were added during the early morning hours (before 5:00 a.m.) in response to increasing commuter ridership at SeaTac Airport. Based on Sound Transit's "Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express Bus," approved by the Board in 1999, the normal ST Express Bus service hours are 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. However, the Service Standards also allow some flexibility in adjusting service levels to meet market demand at specific activity centers. Currently, the three trips added in February 2001 are carrying a total of approximately 45 passengers daily.

The Board directed staff to seek a funding partnership for the added trips, since they were implemented outside normal service hours and because of limited funds available for service in the South King subarea. A one-time state grant has covered most of the South King subarea's portion of the trip's cost during 2001. Efforts to develop a funding partnership with the Port of Seattle, operator of the airport, have been unsuccessful. As a result, a decision is needed on the long-term operation of these trips.

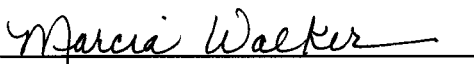
#### Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the Executive Director is directed to pursue funding agreement with the airlines serving Sea-Tac airport to finance Regional Express Route 574 trips that are outside the Sound Move service hours of 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. with the decision on Route 574 being part of Board action on the 2002 Service Implementation Plan.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on the 25th day of October 2001.

  
David Earling  
Board Chair

ATTEST:

  
Marcia Walker  
Board Administrator