

**SOUND TRANSIT
STAFF REPORT**

MOTION NO. M2001-97

Changes to ST Express Routes 545 and 546

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Board	9/13/01	Discussion/Possible Action	Agnes Govern, Director, Regional Express Gloria Overgaard, Deputy Director, Regional Express Mike Bergman, Project Manager, Regional Bus	206-398-5037 206-689-4909 206-398-5358

OBJECTIVE OF ACTION

- Implement service in Redmond consistent with Board-adopted policies for ST Express bus routes.
- Follow through with Board Resolution No. R2000-06, as amended, calling for discontinuance of interim Route 546 when the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center opens.
- Extend ST Express service to developing activity centers in downtown Redmond and East Redmond areas.

ACTION

Board approval of the following proposed ST Express service changes in the Redmond area:

- Discontinuance of Route 546.
- Implementation of two-way peak, midday and evening service on Route 545.
- Addition of two Routes 545 stops at the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center.
- Extension of Route 545 from the Redmond Park and Ride Lot to the Redmond Town Center and the Bear Creek Park and Ride Lot.

Changes would be effective with the opening of the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center, currently scheduled for February 2002. If the transit center opening is delayed, the service changes would occur when the transit center opens.

KEY FEATURES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discontinuance of Route 546: Route 546 currently operates between Seattle and Redmond and provides local collection and distribution of passengers in the Overlake area, a neighborhood that includes the Microsoft Central Campus, Group Health Eastside Hospital, and other major employers. The Board adopted Route 546 as an interim route to service the area directly due to delays in the construction of the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center. |
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- **Extension/Expansion of Route 545:** If this proposed action is adopted by the Board, interim Route 546 would be discontinued and replaced by two-way, all-day service on Route 545, which uses the more direct SR-520 freeway routing through Overlake. Bus stops would be added to Route 545 at the new NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center. Employer shuttles and King County Metro local routes would connect with Route 545 at the transit center and provide coverage to the areas that would no longer be served by Route 546. In addition, Route 545 would be extended from the Redmond Park and Ride Lot to Redmond Town Center and the Bear Creek Park and Ride Lot in East Redmond. Both stops on the extension would serve large and growing activity centers, including Microsoft's Millenium Campus in East Redmond. Operating savings from the discontinuance of Route 546 would make this extension possible at no additional cost. Route 545 would operate every 15 minutes during peak periods and every 30 minutes during the midday and evenings. Service would be provided from approximately 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. on weekdays.

BUDGET

The 2001 Service Implementation Plan (SIP) budget was prepared assuming the proposed changes to Routes 545/546 would take place in February 2002; thus there is no change to the adopted 2001 SIP budget approved by the Board in May 2001.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Impact on Current Year Budget: N/A

Impact on Sound Move Budget: N/A

Impact on Cost-to-Complete: N/A

Impact on Subarea(s) Budget(s): N/A

HISTORY OF PROJECT

- The proposed changes to Routes 545 and 546 were included in the 2001 SIP presented to the Board on May 10, 2001 (Resolution No. R2001-04). At that time, the Board adopted an amendment delaying action on the Route 545/546 changes until additional outreach could be conducted with the City of Redmond, major Redmond-area employers, and other stakeholders (see Public Involvement section).
- The Board authorized the implementation of Routes 545 and 546 in their current form with their approval of the 2000 SIP on June 8, 2000 (Resolution No. R2000-06). The Board also adopted the following amendment to the resolution at that time:

“WHEREAS, Sound Transit has continued to seek input from the public and to work with its regional transit partners to develop service that meets regional transportation needs, and, in that regard, has amended its proposed Service Implementation Plan for Route 546 to provide interim routing that services high-capacity destinations as detailed in Attachment A, and with the understanding that Route 546 will be discontinued when the Overlake Transit Center is completed.” (There is no attachment.)

At the time this action was taken, it was recognized that Interim Route 546 represented a departure from the Board's adopted Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express. These standards, adopted by the Board in 1999, established operating characteristics for ST Express designed to set it apart from local transit service and ensure that it adhered to the criteria established by state statute for regional high capacity transit service (see Description of Policy section).

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

Motion or Resolution Number	Summary of Action	Date of Action
R2001-04	Approval of 2001 SIP, with amendment delaying proposed changes to Routes 545/546.	May 10, 2001
R2000-06	Approval of 2000 SIP, including startup of Routes 545/546 and amendment calling for discontinuation of Route 546 when Overlake Transit Center is completed.	June 8, 2000
R99-15	Approval of 1999 SIP, including Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express	July 8, 1999

CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY

- Direction is required by September 20, 2001 in order to implement the proposed service changes by February 2002, the projected opening date of the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center. After September 20, the next opportunity to implement service changes will be June 8, 2002 in accordance with applicable provisions of the service agreement with King County Metro.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION

The NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center and the transit services associated with it represents a significant regional partnership between the following parties:

- Sound Transit is funding construction of the transit center, and will provide frequent ST Express bus service between the center and downtown Seattle.
- The Microsoft Corporation donated land for the construction of the transit center, and will operate employer shuttle van service connecting public transit routes at the transit center with its central campus.
- King County Metro operates the ST Express routes serving Redmond under contract with Sound Transit, and will utilize the center as a terminal for several Metro Eastside routes.
- The City of Redmond will operate a field station for police officers patrolling the Overlake area, using a building to be constructed as part of the transit center project.

- The Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association (GRTMA) will lease space in a separate transit center building so they can assist commuters and help employers market public transit services to their employees.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- During January and February of 2001, the Regional Bus Division conducted a public outreach campaign that included the proposed changes to Routes 545 and 546. Six open houses and public meetings took place in the East King County subarea, including two in Redmond. Sound Transit printed 30,000 copies of Regional Transit News describing the changes and distributed them via mail, through employee transportation coordinators, the City of Redmond, and the Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association. Copies of the Regional Transit News were also handed out to riders on Route 546 buses.
- Following the May 10, 2001 Board action delaying approval of the Route 545/546 changes, Regional Express staff met with King County Metro, the City of Redmond, Microsoft, and the Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association (GRTMA) on several occasions to discuss the proposed service changes. Staff have also worked closely with employers and King County Metro to identify in detail those transit riders who would be impacted by the changes and the potential alternative services available.

DESCRIPTION OF POLICY

The Sound Move Plan envisioned ST Express as a long-distance, high-speed bus system serving major urban centers and connecting with local bus routes and other transportation services at a limited number of key locations throughout the region (Sound Move, Appendix D, Page D-4). Guidelines for implementing this vision are outlined in the Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express, adopted by the Board as part of the 1999 SIP. The Service Standards list a number of characteristics that set ST Express apart from local transit service, including direct routing, limited stops, maximum use of HOV facilities, and high average speeds. Such service characteristics are critical in developing a system that can meet the needs of our large region with its dispersed population and employment.

When Route 546 was implemented, it was done so on an interim basis and with recognition that the type of service it provided represented a departure from the Board's adopted Service Standards and Performance Measures. With this action, staff is proposing to make service consistent with the guidelines for ST Express outlined in the Service Standards and to carry through with the Board's 2000 amendment calling for Route 546 to be discontinued with the opening of the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

King County Metro is considering extending an existing local route (Route 256) from the vicinity of Eastside Group Health Hospital to the Microsoft main campus and the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center. Metro Route 256 would operate directly from downtown Seattle to Overlake during the morning peak period and from Overlake to downtown Seattle during the afternoon peak period. If this service is implemented, it would complement the Sound Transit proposal by providing coverage to areas no longer served by ST Express Route 546, and would reduce the need for Seattle customers to make multiple bus route transfers to reach Overlake-area destinations. Implementation of the Metro change would require approval of the King County Council.

ALTERNATIVES

- **No action:** Under this alternative, Routes 545 and 546 would continue to operate as they do currently, and the proposed route extension to Redmond Town Center and Bear Creek would not take place. The route extension is contingent on the discontinuance of Route 546 in order to have a sufficient number of buses and service hours to operate the extension.
- **Retain partial Route 546 service:** Convert Route 546 service to Route 545 service except for westbound trips to Redmond during the morning peak period and eastbound trips to Seattle during the afternoon peak period. As with the No Action alternative, the proposed route extension to Bear Creek would not occur, as it is contingent on the discontinuance of Route 546 in order to have a sufficient number of buses and service hours to operate the extension.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Staff recommends the proposed changes to Routes 545 and 546 as described herein. If the proposed changes are adopted, staff will work closely with Microsoft, King County Metro, and other stakeholders to coordinate ST Express service with local transit routes and employer shuttles at the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

N/A

LEGAL REVIEW

MLB 8-28-01

**SOUND TRANSIT
MOTION NO. M2001-97**

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority Authorizes the Executive Director to implement changes to ST Express Routes 545 and 546 effective February 2002.

Background:

The Sound Transit Board approved the implementation of Routes 545 and 546 in June 2000. It was recognized at that time that Route 546 represented a departure from the Board's adopted Service Standards and Performance Measures for ST Express by providing local collection and distribution of passengers in the Overlake area. Accordingly, the Board approved the implementation with an amendment that designated Route 546 as an interim service, to be discontinued when the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center is completed.

These changes were included in the draft 2001 Service Implementation Plan (SIP), which was presented to the Board on May 10, 2001. The Board approved the SIP with an amendment that delayed action on the Route 545/546 changes until additional outreach could be conducted with major Redmond-area stakeholders. Since that time, Regional Express staff has met with King County Metro, the City of Redmond, Microsoft, and the Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association (GRTMA), representing all major employers in the Redmond area. Staff have also worked closely with employers and King County Metro to identify in detail those transit riders who would be impacted by the changes and the potential alternative services available.

The discontinuance of Route 546 would release service hours and buses that would allow Route 545 to be extended from the Redmond Park and Ride Lot to the Bear Creek Park and Ride Lot in East Redmond, an improvement long requested by Microsoft and the City of Redmond. The NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center is now under construction and is scheduled to be opened by February 2002. If the transit center opening is delayed, the proposed service changes would take place when the transit center opens.

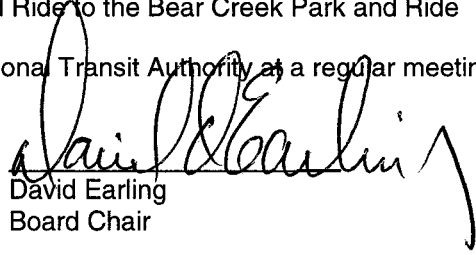
The 2001 SIP budget was prepared assuming the proposed changes would take place in February 2002; thus there is no change to the adopted 2001 SIP budget approved by the Board in May 2001.

Motion:


It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the Executive Director is authorized to implement the following ST Express service changes:

- Discontinue Route 546
- Implementation of two-way peak, midday and evening service on Route 545
- Addition of two Route 545 stops at the NE 40th/Overlake Transit Center
- Extension of Route 545 from the Redmond Park and Ride to the Bear Creek Park and Ride

Approved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof on the 13 day of September 2001.


David Earling
Board Chair

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator