



## Summary Minutes

### Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting January 16, 2020

#### Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Committee Chair Paul Roberts, in the Ruth Fisher Boardroom, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington.

#### Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Paul Roberts, Everett Councilmember	(A) Joe McDermott, King County Councilmember

Board Members	
(P) David Baker, Kenmore Mayor	(A) Debora Juarez, Seattle City Councilmember
(P) Kent Keel, University Place Mayor	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor
	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember

Chair Roberts, announced that a quorum of the Committee was present at roll call.

#### Report of the Chair

Chair Roberts announced that the committee would be working from a revised agenda. The briefing on the Sounder South Strategic Development and Implementation Plan was removed from the Reports to the Committee portion of the meeting.

He also announced that the monthly contracts report was included in Boardmembers' meeting packets.

Finally, he announced that the business items due for consideration would be moved forward in the motion in order to account for quorum concerns. Any public comment on the items and the actions themselves would take place immediately following the CEO Report and before the standard public comment section.

#### CEO Report

Chief executive officer Peter Rogoff gave the CEO Report.

##### Incllement Weather Response

Mr. Rogoff acknowledged that the region experienced inclement winter weather earlier the week of the meeting. Sound Transit worked closely with its partner agencies to ensure that it provided safe service, with all modes prioritizing safe operations over schedule adherence.

He expressed his appreciation to staff who adjusted their schedules and started their day at 4:00 a.m. allowing time for snow and ice removal prior to the morning commute. Link and Tacoma Link trains were operated during non-revenue hours to keep the track and overhead catenary system clear of snow and ice.

The Sounder group worked with agency partner BNSF to arrange lodging for train crews who live and commute from areas where snow levels were higher and travel was not advised. Mr. Rogoff thanked Sound Transit's partner agencies for the strong collaboration that was visible during the inclement weather response.

### Sounder South Incident and Delay

A train tragically struck and killed a pedestrian at 6:00am on Wednesday, January 15 just north of Sumner. The incident was under investigation by the Sumner Police Department.

The track was closed during an investigation which impacted Sound Transit customers. While train operations were shifted and several buses were deployed in order to reduce delays for some riders, others were delayed by up to 2-1/2 hours.

Changes to the rider alert system were recently made, which left many riders with outdated notification settings. The agency was trying to make the alerts more targeted to specific trains at specific times, but that meant that riders did not receive alerts about alternative trains at alternative times. The agency will perform an after action report to learn how to improve responses in the future.

## **Business Items**

Chair Roberts noted that there were no individuals signed up for public comment on action items, so public comment would be taken after business items were completed due to quorum concerns.

### Items for Committee final action

December 5, 2019, Rider Experience and Operations Committee minutes

**It was moved by Boardmember Baker, seconded by Boardmember Roscoe, and carried by unanimous vote that the minutes of the December 5, 2019, Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting be approved as presented.**

### Items for Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2020-04: Renaming University Street Station in coordination with the Northgate Link Extension opening.

Alex Ko, Outreach Specialist, and Harold Demarest, Director of Operations Engineering and Technology, provided the staff report. Mr. Ko advised that three new stations would be opening in 2021, and three separate stations would formally or colloquially include to the word "University". Those stations included University Street Station, University of Washington Station, and University-District, or U-District Station.

The station naming policy adopted by the Board of Directors in 2012 laid out the criteria and process for naming a new station or renaming an existing station. Staff proceeded through three phases, which were completed over the course of 2019: The internal committee phase, the public participation phase, and the decision and approval by the Board of Directors. Implementation would take place in 2021 in alignment with the opening of the Northgate Link Extension in order to avoid duplicative costs. In April, 2019 staff used the board adopted station naming criteria to develop six potential names: Arts District, Benaroya Hall, Downtown Arts District, Midtown, Seneca Street, and Symphony.

Public feedback was received in September, 2019 through online and in-person methods. An online survey was open from September 9, 2019 through September 30, 2019. Four in-person voting sessions took place over that period. Over 250 social media comments were received, more than 800 in person responses, and more than 14,000 total survey responses, including over 9,000 individual comments through the online survey. Symphony Station received a plurality of the survey votes with 24.9 percent. Benaroya Hall Station closely followed with 24.5 percent. Seneca Street took third place with 19 percent and the final six options split the remaining votes. The agency also received letters of support from local

stakeholders. The Seattle Symphony and Benaroya hall jointly offered a letter in support of Symphony Station or Benaroya Hall Station. The University of Washington, Wright Runstad, Unico Properties, and Fairmont Olympic Hotel submitted a letter in support of Midtown Station. The Seattle Art Museum did not advocate for a specific name, but supported an inclusive art name.

Mr. Demarest commented on the costs associated with changing University Street Station's name. Following the survey for the names, the implementation group began assessing the cost associated with the action. It was determined that the two most publicly supported names, Symphony and Benaroya Hall, would not sync with the established back of house acronym for the station, USS. The acronym appeared in all of the agency's safety, train control, fire control, emergency ventilation, and building management systems. In the case of an emergency, the new station name not aligning with the station's acronym could cause confusion and lead to mistakes. The cost for changing the acronym in those systems and the associated documentation and training required was more than \$4 million above the base cost for changing the name but keeping the USS acronym.

Mr. Ko presented station name options which conformed to the existing back of house acronym but were also informed by the public feedback. The name were Union Street/Symphony Station, Union/Seneca Street Station, and Union/Seneca/Symphony Station. Because Symphony Station won the most support from the public and because Union Street was adjacent to station entrances, staff recommended Union Street/Symphony Station as the new name.

Mr. Rogoff added that in total, costs for renaming the station and adjusting back of house acronym could reach \$5.3 million. Staff would not recommend that the Board of Directors authorize that amount to be spent simply on renaming a station. Leaving the back of house acronym unchanged would cost approximately one fifth of that total.

Boardmember Baker asked if tourists could be poorly served by the name, in that they did not know where they were. Mr. Rogoff pointed out that the situation Boardmember Baker asked about was already occurring, due to the similarity of the University of Washington Station and University Street Station. The rename was an effort to mitigate that confusion. Additionally, inclusion of Union Street in the name was a form of wayfinding.

**It was moved by Boardmember Baker, seconded by Boardmember Keel, and carried by unanimous vote that Motion No. M2020-04 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.**

## **Public comment**

King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay  
Rebecca Muniz

## **Reports to the committee**

Chair Roberts announced that due to the many public comments related to the fare enforcement process, the Fare Enforcement Process Update presentation would precede the Connect 2020 Update presentation.

### Fare Enforcement Policy Update

Rhonda Carter, Chief of Staff, and Carrie Avila-Mooney, Director of Regional Government and Community Relations, provided the presentation. Ms. Carter reviewed the internal process steps for review of the agency's fare enforcement procedures. The work group was comprised of representatives from 11 different departments in order to allow for a diverse set of voices. The group developed an outreach and data collection plan and identified initial policy and program options. In mid-to-late 2019, the workgroup oversaw the administration of an online survey and onboard surveys, conducted listening sessions, and engaged fare enforcement officers. From late 2019 through early 2020, the work group

would analyze the data, develop recommendations, engage external stakeholders, determine and implement administrative actions, and advance potential Board action and budget amendments if necessary.

Ms. Carter reviewed the work group's vision, mission, and objectives. Ms. Avila-Mooney reviewed the outreach process. A large amount of data was received, so the results will be presented at a future meeting to allow more time for the data to be analyzed. She explained that the engagement effort was conducted to evaluate perceptions and outcomes of fare enforcement approaches as they related to the agency's values; including customer focus, integrity, inclusion, and respect. An onboard survey yielded more than 1,000 completed responses. The online survey yielded more than 8,000 surveys. Six listening sessions were also conducted in Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties.

The onboard survey was a major component of the data collection effort, capturing riders' real time experience of the fare enforcement process. A third-party vendor was hired to shadow fare enforcement officers on Sounder and Link services. The intent was to determine the primary reasons why customers did not, or were unable to provide proof of payment when requested, to measure the quality of the experiences customers had when asked for proof of payment, and to identify what, if any, differences existed in the customer experience across demographic groups. If a rider did not show proof of payment, the fare enforcement officer introduced the third-party surveyor to the rider and no warnings or citations were given. If all riders on the train provided proof of payment, interviewers randomly approached riders. More than 1,000 responses were gathered using the methodology.

The online survey's objectives were to determine the primary reasons why customers did not pay or were unable to pay, to learn about their attitudes and preferences toward Sound Transit fare payment and policies and proposed changes, and to identify what, if any, differences existed in the attitudes and preferences across demographic groups. The survey was available online beginning November 13, 2019 through December 6, 2019 and was translated into eight languages. It was promoted via email, Facebook, Twitter, and specialized media. More than 8,000 completed surveys were gathered through this methodology.

Six listening sessions held throughout the Sound Transit district were intended to get feedback from those who were usually marginalized in conversations about fare enforcement, to seek community input to ensure that Sound Transit's decision-making was informed, and to identify what, if any, differences existed in the attitudes and preferences across demographic groups. The Equity and Inclusion office partnered with Tacoma Urban League, Casa Latina, Station Coffee Shop, Phinney Neighborhood Association and Edmonds Library to reach communities of color and individuals in proximity to poverty. The Equity and Inclusion office will also host a meeting on February 19, 2020 at El Centro De La Raza in Beacon Hill to report to the community on the findings and next steps.

Ms. Carter explained that the current fare enforcement policy was adopted by the Board in 2009. The system was designed to be barrier-free, so fare enforcement officers are used to ensure proof of payment. The Board established consequences for repeat offenders which is a \$124 fine paid directly to the court system. The Board also authorized the chief executive officer to establish, monitor, and update enforcement procedures.

Ms. Carter reviewed the Sounder and Link inspection procedures. Fare enforcement officers enter the trains on both ends, proceeding to the very end of each car, and working toward the center of the car, checking every rider for proof of payment. The practice was cited by publications like *Transit Center* as a good practice for reducing potential discrimination and profiling in fare enforcement interactions. Within any rolling 12 month period, the first interaction in which a person could not produce proof of payment would result in a warning and the fare enforcement officer would record the interaction into the agency's database. Any subsequent interaction within the rolling 12 month period would result in issuance of a civil citation. Sound Transit suspended referrals for criminal charges for fare evasion following the fourth citation during its fare enforcement process review.

Ms. Avila-Mooney noted that the agency was considering a number of proposals. The criteria for proposal evaluation included cost efficient, timely and feasible implementation, racial equity, customer-focused experience, rider safety and security, impact on fare evasion rates, and community support. The proposals under consideration emerged from best practices identified in other agencies, feedback from Sound Transit's Diversity Oversight Committee, and from community and other stakeholder feedback and engagement in early 2019.

The proposals under consideration include: expansion of opportunities for access to ORCA LIFT and other programs; participation in the Very Low Income Fare program which King County was developing; and to expanding and targeting communications and marketing about how to access and use valid fare media.

Proposals which would require Board action include: reducing the shelf life of warnings from 12 months to six months; reducing the amount of fines; creating an option to resolve fines by crediting the citation dollar amount to the rider's ORCA card; creating an option to resolve a fine if a qualified rider enrolls in ORCA Lift; and creating an option to resolve citations through community service.

With respect to fare enforcement officers, some proposals include: reviewing the role of fare enforcement officers to make customer service the top priority; changing fare enforcement uniforms to project a customer relations focus; reviewing the current training modules and protocols to prioritize training in customer service, de-escalation, and anti-bias training; bringing fare enforcement officers in-house as Sound Transit employees; defining parameters for times to suspend inspections during special circumstances such as severe weather and the first day of school; and moving fare enforcement activity from the train to the platform.

Ms. Avila-Mooney outlined new proposals for consideration which came to light during the engagement sessions in late 2019. Those proposals include: developing a youth-focused program with separate procedures, consequences, and resolution pathways for young or student non-paying riders aged six to eighteen; improving transfers by extending the amount of time transfers were valid and accepting paper transfers from all regional partners; and review of the procedure that engages law enforcement on matters solely related to fare enforcement.

Some proposals are not being considered. Since the Sound Transit system was planned and designed barrier-free, building or installing new physical barriers at Link and Sounder stations was not considered as a proposal. Similarly, fare elimination was not considered. Fare revenues were a crucial part of the operations of the regional system. Without fare revenues additional revenues through taxes, federal grants, bonds, and interest revenues would be required to retain the agency's expansion and existing services. Because of the importance of fares, and the Board established farebox recovery targets, elimination of fare enforcement would also not be considered.

Next steps were reviewed, the committees would receive an update on the survey results in February as well as more details from responses received from listening sessions and the work group's evaluation of proposals based on the criteria reviewed earlier in the presentation. In March, the committees and the full Board of Directors would review and potentially decide on actions and updates to the fare enforcement policy, and budget, if needed.

Chair Roberts informed the committee of the questions posed by Boardmembers during the presentation on Fare Enforcement received at the Executive Committee meeting.

### Connect 2020 Update

Mike Bell, Senior Executive Director of the East Link Extension, and Marie Olson, Executive Operations Director of Transit Expansion, provided the presentation. Mr. Bell explained that Connect 2020 describes the work around connecting the operating Link line to the soon-to-be opened East Link Extension. This work has more of an operating impact than an end of line extension because it requires a splice into the existing system, as opposed to continuing along that system. A fundamental decision was whether to shut down

service completely and complete the work in a shorter amount of time or to alter service in some way to accommodate. Sound Transit determined that altering service for a 10-week period was a better approach than a five-week complete shut-down.

The schedule for the project consists of two five-week periods in which all rail traffic operates on one rail alignment in order to allow construction on the other alignment. Work is currently underway on the southbound track. In the second five week period, traffic will switch to the northbound track.

During the first five week period, a pocket track, a turn-back track, and a connection to the East Link track is being created along the northbound alignment. When that work is completed, similar construction will begin on the southbound track. The project is complex because of the connections, transitions and crossings as well as the close proximity to active rail lines. Safety precautions include a large fence, which separates the construction zone from the track. A large noise barrier was installed surrounding the work to limit the disruptive noise of an active construction zone for neighboring businesses and Link customers.

During construction, substantial pieces of concrete were removed in order to install the additional track. Following the completion of the track installation, a certification process will take place including approximately 33 different tests and inspections.

Ms. Olson explained that complex construction project taking place also created a complex operational project. To accommodate the construction, a crossover to the single track occurs just before the Stadium Station and Westlake Station. Then, a simultaneous arrival occurs in Pioneer Station to facilitate a mass transfer between trains, at which point the cars depart back in the same direction they arrived. Mr. Rogoff informed the committee that the transfer period at Pioneer Square Station was the reason time between trains was 14 minutes instead of the originally planned 12 minutes. Ms. Olson added that despite the cushion built into the original 12 minute prediction, in reality, the coordination involved in the transfer extended the time by one to three minutes. Upon realization, riders were alerted to the new schedule.

Public safety personnel are responsible for the movement of the passengers during this project and assisting passengers with train movement information so they could be confident that they were boarding the correct train. During peak times, officers are providing real time updates regarding which trains were arriving, when they were arriving, and wait time.

Another important factor of operational success was signage. The primary principles of the Connect 2020 signage was to remain simple, focus on circulation, and to adjust to meet customer needs. In the first week, adjustments were made, including the addition of floor decals on the center platform in Pioneer Square, communicating the direction of the trains on which the riders were boarding.

Another piece of the frontline effort was the ambassador program. 705 Sound Transit employees have participated so far, totaling more than 6,000 staff hours of outreach. Ambassadors also acted as the eyes and ears of the project, forwarding feedback which resulted in positive adjustments in signage, announcements, staffing locations, and nuanced messaging based on specific stations. Complaints received by customers ranged from general delays, to the voice and volume of announcements, to the timing of the work. Positive feedback, especially on Twitter, praised the assistance of the ambassadors. The volume of tweets relating to Connect 2020 dropped dramatically since beginning the project, peaking on January 7, 2020 and steadily decreasing afterward.

Cooperation with Sound Transit's partner agencies was also a great help. Frequent partner communication allowed staff to monitor the health of the commute and assess whether riders were choosing other modes of transportation. Seattle Department of Transportation and Washington State Department of Transportation provided glimpses of activity on surface streets, King County Metro's supplemental bus service on parallel routes provided alternatives to Link, and Seattle Police Department's street management was key to the bus bridge operations on the weekend closures.

Mr. Rogoff reported that construction was on schedule. He predicted that the next challenge would be re-educating riders when the second half of construction occurred and all trains operated along the northbound

tracks. Public fatigue was likely to increase as the project continued into February and March. Mr. Bell added that this effort was worked on and planned for over three years, and intensively so for a full year.

**Executive session**

None

**Other business**


None

**Next meeting**

Thursday, February 6, 2020  
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.  
Ruth Fisher Boardroom

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

  
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Paul Roberts  
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

ATTEST:

  
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Kathryn Flores  
Board Administrator

APPROVED on February 6, 2020, AM.