

Sound Transit Capital Program Realignment The Path Forward

The Sound Transit Board of Directors must respond to the economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it should do so in a manner that is methodical and informed by the most up-to-date projections on the impact of the recession as well as up-to-date information on the likelihood for further assistance from other Federal and State sources. As such, the Board should embark on the following plan of action to make measured progress on near-term actions while not over-committing resources or over-correcting the program before the ramifications of the recession and possible government responses come into clearer focus.

THE PATH FORWARD – timeline and actions

- The Board will not develop and adopt a comprehensive realignment plan and schedule until July 2021 -- in time to inform development of the annual Transportation Improvement Plan for 2022.
- By December 2020, the Board will identify which projects to baseline (prepare for construction) in 2021 and authorize continued work to ready them for that action.
- The Board will use ST3 and other criteria as a framework for discussion to assist in making both near-term and long-term decisions relating to the system expansion plan to ensure that projects moving forward best meet the objectives of the plan within adopted financial policies.
- In developing its annual budget for 2021, the Board will continue to fund environmental, and early design and right-of-way activities for all projects to keep them “shovel ready” for earlier delivery, if the recession is milder and/or additional funding becomes available, even if they are not being baselined in 2021.
- In developing its annual Transportation Improvement Plan for 2021, the Board would effectively include “placeholder assumptions” that treat all projects that are not in or entering construction in 2021 identically. The delivery dates for those projects will be assumed to be delayed by an equal amount of time – whatever period of time is needed to balance the plan (~5 years) until the July 2021 comprehensive realignment plan provides better dates.
- Sound Transit will use the upcoming months to engage contractors, consultants, and project stakeholders to help identify cost savings opportunities

This path provides time for the financial impacts of the recession to become clearer while additional funding opportunities are pursued. It also establishes clear expectations about project delivery timelines by mid-2021.

Importantly, it also provides clear direction about which projects to baseline and advance into construction while the longer-term plan develops, maintaining program momentum and schedule in a fiscally prudent manner.

It would allow time for Sound Transit to collaboratively involve stakeholders in helping the agency find ways to more efficiently deliver projects, potentially enabling more projects to be delivered sooner.