



Motion No. M2022-83

Approving the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension Service and Fare Equity Analysis

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Rider Experience & Operations Committee	10/19/2022	Recommend to Board	Nicole Hill, Deputy Director – Equity & Social Responsibility
Board	10/27/2022	Final action	Adrian Mejia, Title VI & Equity Program Manager

Proposed action

Approves the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension Service and Fare Equity report.

Key features summary

- According to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines, Sound Transit is required to conduct service and fare equity (SAFE) analyses prior to implementing major service and/or fare changes to ensure planned changes will not disproportionately affect members of a group identified by race, color, or national origin.
- The Hilltop Tacoma Link expansion SAFE included analysis of the following:
 - Service Changes
 - Implementation of new fare structure
 - Assessment of potential adverse effects to minority and low-income populations
 - Steps to avoid, minimize or mitigate any adverse effects; and
 - Public outreach to inform the decision-making process.
- The service equity analysis concluded that Tacoma Link expansion benefits the entire population in the service area, of which the minority and low-income populations are above the system average. Therefore, there are no disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens.
- The fare equity analysis concluded that implementation of a Tacoma Link fare will result in a disproportionate burden on low-income customers. Sound Transit will mitigate adverse effects by identifying affected riders and with the help of human service agencies, enroll qualifying passengers into the reduced fare ORCA LIFT program. Sound Transit will also make free ORCA cards available at outreach events during the first weeks of implementing the new fare structure.
- The SAFE analysis concluded the proposed changes to transit service and change to existing fare structure comply with Title VI regulations and Sound Transit policy.
- Because the work for the HTLE SAFE analysis was performed before the adoption of Resolution No. R2022-19, the new Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy, the analysis was performed in accordance with Resolutions No. R2013-18 (Major Service Change Policy) and R2013-19 (Fare Change Policy).

Background

The Tacoma Link Expansion project was developed to increase services and connectivity in the Hilltop area of Pierce County. The Hilltop Link extension, included as a major service change in the annual 2022 Service Plan, doubles the length of the T Line and adds six new stations that provide new connections to the Stadium District, medical facilities, and the Hilltop neighborhood. Greater frequency of service and connection to local destinations will provide riders access to employment, housing, entertainment venues, and other opportunities. The Hilltop Link extension was developed through a process that included public engagement and public comment. The major service change to open the Hilltop extension was approved by the Sound Transit Board of Directors as part of a regular Service Plan process on November 18, 2021.

In respect to fares, Sound Transit assessed two different options. The agency determined that a fare increase will affect riders who only use the fare free Tacoma Link service and presents a disproportionate burden on low-income riders. Sound Transit defines its service area based on a radial distance from each transit stop that ranges from half a mile to five miles depending on the facility type and presence of parking options. When using the largest service area definition, to account for riders who may make use of the Tacoma Dome parking facility, the radial distance and service area extends to neighborhoods beyond the extended Tacoma Link line and results in a disparate impact on minority riders. With passenger survey data, Sound Transit determined that approximately a third of existing Tacoma Link riders will not see a fare increase and that most respondents could potentially see no increase in fares. This is because these existing riders use employer provided ORCA cards, or because they transfer from other services. To mitigate the impact of a fare implementation Sound Transit will work with human service agencies to identify and enroll eligible low-income riders into the ORCA LIFT program. The agency will also distribute free ORCA cards at outreach events in the Tacoma Link area during the first weeks of expanded Tacoma Link service.

Overall, Tacoma Link Service expansion represents a substantial improvement to transit services and increases access to pivotal connections within the project area. The restructure of service and fares is also consistent with established long-term plans and serves to address additional operating costs commensurate with delivering increased high-capacity transit.

The SAFE analysis concluded that changes to transit service and the resulting fare changes experienced by riders are consistent with Title VI policies. In 1999, the Sound Transit Board adopted Resolution No. R99-2, establishing fare free service on the initial segment of the Tacoma Link line. In 2013, the Board adopted Resolution No. R2013-24 establishing Tacoma Link fares. It subsequently adopted Motion No. M2014-36 in 2014, which resulted in the Tacoma Business and Industry Association agreeing to compensate Sound Transit \$29,000 per year in exchange for fare free service on Tacoma Link. The monetary consideration represented the revenue expected to be collected at the fare levels established for 2014. In 2016, the agency adopted Resolution No. R2016-10 which maintained the 2014 fare structure, allowed for the City of Tacoma or other designee to continue to compensate Sound Transit for free service on Tacoma Link, and directed agency staff to propose a new action to the Sound Transit Board to establish fare levels prior to the opening of Tacoma Link expansion. The agency expects the compensation it receives in exchange for fare free service on Tacoma Link to be discontinued once fares are collected.

Fiscal information

There is no direct fiscal action associated with this action and does not have an impact on the budget or affordability of the long-range financial plan.

Title VI compliance

Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states: No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Sound Transit receives federal financial assistance to design and build the regional transit system through grants primarily awarded and administered by the FTA of the U.S. Department of Transportation. As an FTA grant recipient, Sound Transit cannot, on the basis of race, color or national origin, either directly or through contractual means:

- Deny an individual any service, financial aid or benefit provided under the program to which he or she might otherwise be entitled;
- Make distinctions in the quality, quantity, or manner in which the service or benefit is provided; or
- Segregate or separately treat individuals in any matter related to the receipt of any service or benefit.

As a part of its ongoing Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must continue to ensure that it complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in any program receiving federal funds.

Included among the Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must submit a Title VI Program for FTA approval, every three years, which requires inclusion of equity analyses done by Sound Transit.

Public involvement

Public involvement for Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension began with Sound Transit conducting outreach concerning the extension during project planning in 2013-2014. Early outreach for the 2022 Service Plan, which includes Hilltop Tacoma expansion, took place in the spring of 2021 with engagement of passengers who continued to use Sound Transit services while the region responded to the COVID19 pandemic. Sound Transit collected feedback on service change proposals in a July online open house and virtual information sessions. Additional time built into the planning process allowed planners to refine service concepts in response to the priorities voiced by passengers. The Hilltop Tacoma SAFE summarizes the public involvement work for the project.

Time constraints

This document requires Board review prior to the Tacoma Hilltop Link extension revenue service date of Q1 2023.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2022-19: Adopted a Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy and superseding Resolution Nos. R2013-18 and R2013-19.

Resolution No. R2021-19: Adopted the 2022 Service Plan, and authorizing the chief executive officer to implement recommended service changes in 2022.

Resolution No. R2016-10: (1) Amended Resolution No. R2013-24 to maintain a fare structure for Tacoma Link light rail of \$1.00 for the Adult fare category, \$0.75 for the Youth fare category, and \$0.50 for the Senior/Disabled fare category until the start of service for the Tacoma Link Expansion project, and (2) authorized an agreement with the City of Tacoma or designee for compensation of the net fare revenue of \$29,000 each year until Tacoma Link Expansion service begins to allow Tacoma Link service to continue to operate as fare-free.

Resolution No. R2013-24: established a fare structure for Tacoma Link light rail of \$1.00 for the Adult fare category, \$0.75 for the Youth fare category, and \$0.50 for the Senior/Disabled fare category to be implemented in September 2014; and \$1.50 for the Adult fare category, and \$0.75 for the Youth fare category, \$0.75 for the Senior/Disabled fare category to be implemented in September 2016.

Resolution No. R2013-18: Established policies for conducting equity analyses of Major Service Changes impacting minority and low income populations, in accordance with Title VI requirements and guidelines for Federal Transit Administration recipients.

Resolution No. R2013-19: Established policies for conducting equity analyses of Fare Changes impacting minority and low income populations, in accordance with Title VI requirements and guidelines for Federal Transit Administration recipients

Environmental review – KH 10/13/22

Legal review – MT 10/14/22



Motion No. M2022-83

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority approving the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension Service and Fare Equity report.

Background

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Motion

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority approving the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension Service and Fare Equity report.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on October 27, 2022.



Kent Keel
Board Chair

Attest:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator