

Overview of current operating challenges

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Sound Transit Board

02/24/22



Why we're here

Current operating challenges & our response (no Board action today)

- **Staff shortages**
 - Ongoing operator shortages reducing service on ST Express.
 - General shortage of key staff reducing our capacity to secure, maintain and clean our stations and vehicles.
- **Current passenger experience challenges**
 - Most riders during the day are having a safe and reliable experience.
 - Yet, safety, security, sanitation issues are increasing and require attention.
 - Problems are acute at times of lower ridership and when support staffing is lower.
 - ST is currently planning for impending ridership increases.

Staff shortages

Operator shortages

- Sustained shortage of bus operators at partner agencies, particularly at Pierce Transit and Community Transit.
- This has resulted in ST Express service cuts
 - Inability to provide budgeted service levels.
 - Inability to expand service as planned in S. King and Pierce counties.
 - Further cuts may be necessary if shortages continue.
- Rail service levels (1, N, S, and T lines) are currently stable.

Addressing operator shortages

Recent and upcoming actions

Service changes

- Moved one ST Express route (566) from PT to KCM to retain service and reduce equity impacts.
- Accelerated trip restoration on Sounder South (S) commuter line in March, where labor force is steadier.

Service design

- Continuing to move toward a connections-based system that maximizes limited capacity.
- Gathering lessons learned from peer agencies and assessing whether we can use those ideas to apply to our service.

Support staff shortages

Security and Security Operations Center (SOC)

- Insufficient staffing and underperforming contractor leading to inadequate coverage, higher response times, and inadequate follow-up.

Cleaning and maintenance staff

- Insufficient staffing leading to less daily and overnight cleaning and less ability to respond to emergent cleanliness issues.
- Cleanliness issues increasing this winter, up to 20+ reports per month on 1 Line trains.

Fare Ambassadors

- Staffing declining with both recruitment and retention challenges.
- Ambassadors facing harassment and occasional threats.

Addressing support staff shortages

Recent and upcoming actions

Security and Security Operations Center (SOC)

- Added two additional security contractors to help fill shifts, increase coverage, reduce response times, increase follow up.
- Planning to bring SOC in-house in 2022.

Cleaning and maintenance staff

- Reviewing ability to add vehicle cleaning during revenue hours.
- Implementing remote controlled access to restrooms via intercom.

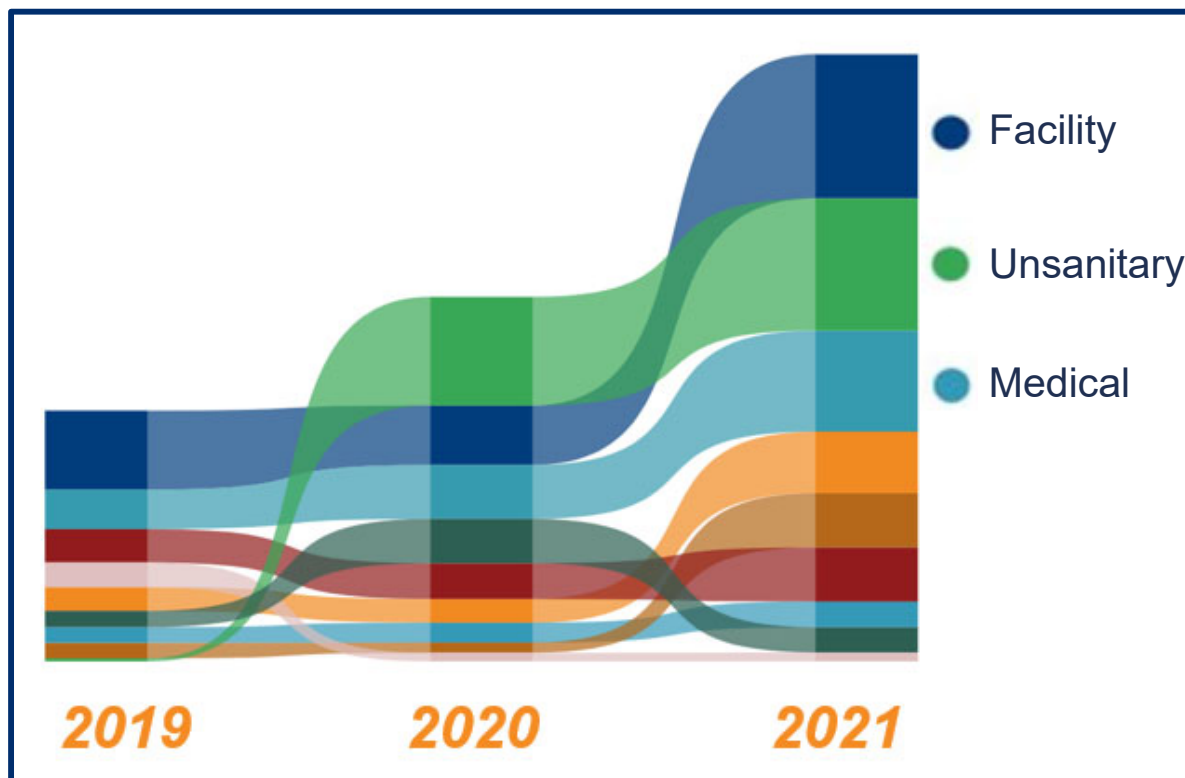
Fare Ambassadors shortage

- Ongoing efforts to maintain current staffing.

Passenger experience

Increase in sanitation, safety, security issues

- Most riders during the day are having a safe and reliable experience.
- Problems acute at times of lower ridership and when support staffing is lower.
- Recent increase in open drug use onboard.
- Difficulty keeping restrooms clean and available.



Addressing passenger experience issues

- Fully staffed security, maintenance, and cleaning functions would go a long way toward improving conditions.
- Revisiting Restroom Policy, including increased funding.
- Procuring a specialized contractor using case workers and mental health professionals to better understand the needs of people without housing and/or in crisis.
- Centering compassion while ensuring the transit environment is physically and psychologically safe for all people and meets our standards for passenger experience.

Thank you.



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