Station Codes: Pictogram Replacement

Rider Experience and Operations Committee
11/3/22
Why we are here

Purpose
• Informational briefing on replacing pictograms with station codes to better assist Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations, visitors, and passengers with disabilities.

How we got here
• RCW requires non-Roman alphabet-based station identifier
• Opportunity to integrate with new line names & best practice
• Opportunity to roll out with Link Light Rail expansion
Agenda

- Current pictograms & peer review
- Station code development & testing
- Next steps
Current pictograms & peer review
Pictograms have learned meaning

- **Pictograms** = specific, learned meaning, scalability challenges
- **Universal** = general universal meaning, same system to system
Station codes could assist with wayfinding

Take the 1 line to Beacon Hill

Which direction? How many stops?

Take the 1 line to station 47

3 stops This direction

1  55  54  53  52  51  50  49  48  47  46  45

Sound Transit
Station codes could integrate with line names

A simple regional strategy is:

- Integrated, e.g.
  1 Ballard–Tacoma
  3 Everett—West Seattle

- Best practice
- Prioritizes wayfinding & how passengers use our system
- Scalable with our system growth
International best practice is station codes

Use numeric codes

- Likely 3 digit, relate to line name
- Language agnostic, Arabic numerals globally understood
- Test both station codes & stop codes

Diagrams for Dubai, Seoul, and Tokyo show station codes and station names.
Signage program utilizes expansion

System-wide signage updates are tied to extension openings

- Develops standards & maintains customer signage / standards
- Standard kit-of-parts applied across all modes
- Leverage expansion work & resources to update and improve visual / tactile signage
- Provide consistency between new & old stations
- Station codes would be rolled out with next light rail expansion
Station code development & testing
Diverse user testing is key to success

Testing objective

• Test potential station codes to assess ease of use for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations and passengers with disabilities to interpret and navigate

Milestones

• 6 LEP Focus groups in 5 languages
• 1 ADA Townhall Workshop – 4 breakout groups: vision & cognitive
• 2 Blind & Deaf/Blind Workshops
• Sounding Board: English survey
• Public survey translated to 8 languages w/ paid social
• Community engagement thru community liaisons
Comparing our 3 options

Unique 3-digit codes for each station

Study 1: Station Code

### + Station Name

- Westlake 053
- Capitol Hill 054
- Denny 154

Study 2a & 2b: Stop Codes

### 1## 2## 3## + Station Name

- Westlake 153 253 353
- Capitol Hill 253 353
- Denny 153

- Westlake 3 2 1 53
- Capitol Hill 3 2 54
- Denny 1 54
Same travel scenarios used across testing

- Questions about current pictograms
- Trip 1: Rainier Beach to IDS
- Trip 2: Bellevue Downtown to Seattle Center, transfer at IDS required
- How would you describe getting to the airport to a friend?
- Comparative questions
Preferred option 2b: stop codes
Passengers with disabilities

Observations

- Station codes to identify stations was a new concept
- Not a clear preference
- Desire for explicit explanations about what numbers represent
- Concerns that people could mistake codes for bus lines
- Feedback on braille format
- Lots of general wayfinding feedback given
**LEP focus groups**

**Observations**

- 5 languages: Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Somali
- Stop codes were favored with option 2B preferred
- Quickly picked up on how to read map
- Line colors often used for reference
- Not all saw a need for codes, but they did not struggle to comprehend them
- Familiarity with other transit systems provided a frame of reference
- Transfer was successfully identified
Sounding board: survey results

Pictograms vs Station Codes

- Pictograms were not widely used <20%
- 80% of respondents recognized pictograms
- 58% did not find current pictograms helpful
- Overall, majority of respondents found station codes helpful (58%)
- Station code option 2b scored the highest across all metrics except for “simple”: Helpful (90%), Intuitive (80%), Easy (75%), Attractive 71%, Simple (59%)
LEP: Survey Results were Similar

Pictograms vs Station Codes

• Pictograms were not widely used <10%
• Less than half of LEP respondents recognized the pictograms
• Nearly three-quarters did not find current pictograms helpful

• Overall, majority of respondents found station codes helpful (58%)
• Station code option 2b scored the highest across metrics: Helpful (78%), Intuitive (75%), Easy (75%), Attractive 63%, Simple (61%)
Key takeaways – station code testing

Station codes will replace pictograms

- Pictograms were not widely used
- Station code option 2b was preferred, and will replace pictograms
- Station codes may not be used by all passengers, but for those who do, they are a useful tool to supplement wayfinding information
Key takeaways – station code testing

Design considerations
• Some info conveyed visually does not translate well tactiley
• Additional context/attractions is desired
• Universal icons are well received

Transit experience
• Digital assistance technology – has strong demand
• Tactile signage – further standardization desired
• Safety & cleanliness – major concerns
Next steps
Next steps

• **Nov** – Station Codes to REO

• **Q4 2022 - Q1 2023** – Incorporate into updated Customer Signage Design Manual

• **Q2 2023** – Begin incorporating into East Link and/or Lynnwood Link signage packages / scope retrofit projects

• **2023-2024** Link Light RailExpansion opens utilizing station codes
Thank you.