



Resolution No. R2022-28

2023 Service Plan

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Rider Experience and Operations Committee	10/19/2022	Recommend to Board	Don Billen, PEPD Executive Director
Board	10/27/2022	Final action	Brian de Place, Director of System and Service Planning, PEPD Michael Couvrette, Deputy Director Service Planning, PEPD

Proposed action

Adopts the 2023 Service Plan, which retroactively formalizes emergency major service changes implemented in November 2021 due to the severe operator shortage impacting Sound Transit services.

Key features summary

- The 2023 Service Plan formalizes emergency service reductions that occurred on Pierce Transit and King County Metro-operated ST Express in November 2021 due to significant operator shortages. The shortages impacted the agency's ability to implement service levels approved by the Board in 2021.
- Formalizing emergency major service changes that last more than a year is a requirement by both FTA and Sound Transit Board adopted Major Service Change definition in the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy via Resolution No. R2022-19.
- Sound Transit completed a Title VI service equity analysis consistent with Board adopted policy which identified equity findings. Sound Transit evaluated alternatives to determine the recommended changes are the least discriminatory alternative and implemented mitigations.
- The operator shortage in the Puget Sound region, and nationwide, resulted in the need to reduce scheduled service levels to ensure schedules remain reliable for passengers despite fewer number of daily trips, which are resulting in approximately 10 percent less service than the budgeted 2022 Service Plan.
- While operator shortages are impacting ST Express routes across the region, the impacts are primarily on Pierce Transit-operated ST Express routes serving South King County and Pierce County. Additional reductions on Community Transit and King County Metro-operated ST Express may be required in the future and Sound Transit staff is actively monitoring the situation.
- Several mitigation efforts have been implemented to soften the impacts of reduced service levels, including: transferring Route 566 (Auburn-Overlake) operations to King County Metro to avoid further reductions on other Pierce Transit-operated routes, coordinating schedules with parallel Pierce Transit and King County Metro routes on shared corridors, and early restoration of Sounder S Line trips to pre-pandemic service levels (and the maximum number of trips allowed under Sound Transit's agreement with BNSF).

- Reductions primarily came from peak periods to avoid canceling trips during periods when service is less frequent and to avoid changing span of service. Weekend service remains unchanged. This follows trends of weekend ridership returning faster to pre-pandemic levels and new demand spread throughout the weekday.
- A draft Service Plan was presented for public comment from July 26, 2022 through August 16, 2022. A significant portion of the public outreach focused on how the operator shortage has impacted riders and priorities for service restoration as operators become available.

2023 Service Plan Major Service Changes

- While all ST Express routes are being impacted by operator availability, the following routes meet the definition of a major service change, as defined by the Sound Transit Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy (Resolution No. R2022-19):
- Route 566 (Auburn-Overlake): operating every 20-40 minutes to be timed with Sounder trains at Kent, until operator availability improves.
- Route 580 (Puyallup-South Hill Sounder Connector): most trips between Puyallup and South Hill replaced by Pierce Transit Route 400. Elimination of the Lakewood-Puyallup variant that previously operated with limited trips. This variant had very low ridership and allows deployment operators to routes serving more riders. An additional two trips on Sounder S Line were added, and 574, 592, and 594 continue to provide service at discontinued stops with higher frequency.
- Route 590 (Tacoma-Seattle): operating every 10-12 minutes during peak periods until operator availability improves.
- Route 592 (DuPont/Lakewood-Seattle): operating every 30 minutes until operator availability improves.
- Route 592 (DuPont/Lakewood-Seattle): operating every 30 minutes until operator availability improves.
- Note: The major service change to begin service on the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension was approved in the 2022 Service Plan via Resolution No. R2021-19.

Background

Sound Transit evaluates service every year and proposes changes to improve performance, responds to ridership trends, and focuses on optimizing our existing resources. The Service Plan typically outlines the following year's proposals on how ST Express, Sounder, and Link will operate given changes in ridership, operating conditions, and any major route restructures of service coordinated with high-capacity transit openings. The Service Plan is also used to approve any "major service changes" as defined by Sound Transit Board-adopted policy and informs Sound Transit's operating budget.

The 2023 Service Plan formalizes emergency service reductions that have occurred in the last year due to a nationwide transit operator shortage that is affecting delivery of both current service levels as well as the proposed service increases adopted in the 2022 service plan.

In the 2022 Service Plan, service increases on a number of key routes were approved, including Tacoma-Seattle and Federal Way-Tacoma to match the service levels offered on other key regional routes, as well as improvement of midday and weekend service on routes throughout the region. However, persistent pandemic challenges and operator shortages have delayed those improvements. The current operator shortage has required necessary reductions on several routes, including on the routes with planned service increases.

In October 2021, Pierce Transit, the operator for several South King and Pierce County ST Express bus routes, notified Sound Transit that an emergency reduction would be necessary due to the staffing shortages. This emergency reduction was implemented on November 7, 2021. Operator shortages have been most severe on Pierce Transit-operated routes, which has a significantly higher concentration of Title VI routes than the other two operators, Community Transit, and King County Metro.

In March 2022, Route 566 was transferred from Pierce Transit to King County Metro operations to avoid further reductions on other Pierce and South King County routes.

Sound Transit continues to work with operating partners to implement the improvements outlined in the 2022 Service Plan. However, as widespread workforce challenges continue, the 2023 Service Plan formalizes the current service levels until operator availability improves.

Formalizing the service changes outlined in the 2023 Service Plan:

- Complies with Sound Transit Board-adopted policy and FTA requirements surrounding a major service change that will last more than a year.
- Recognizes the long-term impacts of the operator shortage, which could last several years before we can regain the staff required to provide the desired levels of service.
- Provides riders with a schedule that can be reliably delivered based on current staffing levels, reducing unplanned trip cancelations.

The draft plan was released to the public in July 2022, and feedback was collected through both online and in-person surveys that asked for people’s priorities for future service restorations as operators staffing levels improve in the future.

Fiscal information

The 2023 Service Plan is funded by the transit mode budgets for each operating service – Link, Sounder, ST Express, and Tacoma Link. Those budgets are included in the Proposed 2023 Budget scheduled for Board consideration in October. Budget authority will be granted with the adoption of the 2023 Budget, subject to any changes made by the Board.

The Proposed Budget for each mode is shown below (in thousands).

Modal Budget	2023 Proposed Budget (\$000)
Link	\$239,889
Sounder	89,966
ST Express	153,116
Tacoma Link	17,134
Total	\$500,104

Changes to the 2023 Service Plan are reflected in the 2023 proposed budget and do not impact the long-range financial plan.

Disadvantaged and small business participation

Not applicable to this action.

Title VI Compliance

A Title VI analysis was performed on all major service changes requiring formalization on both a route-by-route basis as well as on a systemwide level per Sound Transit policy (Resolution No. R2022-19). Sound Transit’s operating model where three operating partners serve different regions in the ST

service district has resulted in varying levels of service for riders. As Pierce Transit-operated ST Express has had the most severe impacts of the operator shortages, with many of the routes serving Title VI populations, all major changes requiring formalization have either a disparate impact or disproportionate burden. A summary of the Title VI analysis can be found in the subsequent table as well including mitigations to these impacts.

Individual Change Analysis

The following summarizes the results of the Title VI equity analysis of proposed major service included in the 2023 Service Plan.

Routes	Service Change requiring formalization	Title VI Populations	Adverse Effects	Mitigations
566	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating every 20 - 40 min, timed with Sounder trains at Kent, until operator availability improves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minority Population: ST District average: 41.7% Route 566 service area: 55.4% Low Income: ST District average: 20.7% Route 566 service area: 23.3% Limited English Proficiency: ST District average: 10.3% Route 566 service area: 16.7% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disparate impact No disproportionate burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer of operations to King County Metro to avoid further reductions on Route 566. Early Restoration of Sounder S Line trips
580	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most trips between Puyallup and South Hill replaced by Pierce Transit Route 400. Elimination of the Lakewood-Puyallup variant that previously operated with limited trips. This variant had very low ridership and allows deployment operators to routes serving more riders. An additional two trips on Sounder S Line were added 574, 592, and 594 continue to provide service at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minority Population: ST District average: 41.7% Route 580 service area: 41.4% before the change in routing, 25.9% after the change in routing Low Income: ST District average: 20.7% Route 580 service area: 28.4% before the change in routing, 17.9% after the change in routing. Limited English Proficiency: ST District average: 10.3% Route 580 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No disparate impact Disproportionate burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of trips by PT Route 400 where nearly all Sounder trains continue to have an on-going connection. An additional two trips on Sounder S Line were added Re-allocation of operators to other routes serving the areas.

Routes	Service Change requiring formalization	Title VI Populations	Adverse Effects	Mitigations
	discontinued stops with higher frequency	service area: 7.9% before the route change, 4.7% after.		
590	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating every 10-12 min during peak periods until operator availability improves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minority Population: ST District average: 41.7% Route 590 service area: 44.4% Low Income: ST District average: 20.7% Route 590 service area: 29% Limited English Proficiency: ST District average: 10.3% Route 566 service area: 7.9% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No disparate impact. Disproportionate burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early restoration of S Line trips
592	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating every 30 min until operator availability improves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minority Population: ST District average: 41.7% Route 566 service area: 51.7% Low Income: ST District average: 20.7% Route 566 service area: 31.6% Limited English Proficiency: ST District average: 10.3% Route 566 service area: 9.3% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disparate impact. Disproportionate burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early restoration of S Line trips.

Systemwide Analysis

The systemwide analysis compares benefits and impacts to Title VI protected & non-protected populations on all routes with changes over multiple years. This marks the first time Sound Transit completed a systemwide analysis based on the new Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy (Resolution No. R2022-19), adopted by the Board of Directors in August 2022. The results of the systemwide analysis did not identify any findings.

The analysis results show that the distribution of benefits for service additions exceeds 80% for protected populations and the distribution of impacts of service reductions do not exceed 20% for protected populations. Therefore, the systemwide analysis does not identify any disparate impacts or

disproportionate burdens based on the cumulative service changes implemented between September 2020 and March 2023.

Mitigations

Operator shortages were initially most severe on ST Express routes operated by Pierce Transit, which has a significantly higher concentration of Title VI routes than Sound Transit's other operating partners, Community Transit and King County Metro.

Several mitigation efforts have been implemented to soften the impacts of reduced service levels, including: transferring Route 566 (Auburn-Overlake) operations to King County Metro to avoid further reductions on other Pierce Transit-operated routes, coordinating schedules with parallel Pierce Transit and King County Metro routes on shared corridors, and early restoration of Sounder S Line trips to pre-pandemic service levels (and the maximum number of trips allowed under Sound Transit's agreement with BNSF).

Public involvement

In July and August 2022, an online open house and survey collected input to understand how the operator shortage has impacted riders and people's priorities for future service restorations as operators staffing levels improve in the future. Four in-person events distributed information and engaged current riders at major transit hubs served by routes most severely impacted by the operator shortage. The online open house and survey were translated into seven languages.

The survey was open from July 26 to August 16, 2022. The survey received 319 responses. The online open house provided information about the on-going operator shortage. The survey asked about riders' current travel patterns, including the time of day and days of week they travel.

The survey also asked about how current operator shortages have impacted people's rides, with many respondents experiencing longer wait and travel times. Several commenters as well as people engaged at transit centers, mentioned the need for better trip cancellation information on signage, real-time information and trip planning applications.

In addition, riders were able to provide their priorities for future service restoration when operators become available, including where to add service first. Interest in increasing midday service to accommodate workers with more flexible hours remains consistent with broader changes in travel with 54 percent prioritizing expansion of midday, evening, and weekend service. Interest in more service during morning and evening commutes continues to increase, with about 46 percent of ST Express respondents seeking for peak hour service to be prioritized.

The survey asked respondents to identify demographic information, which was used to understand impacts to Title VI populations and inform the final equity analysis.

A public hearing on the 2023 Service Plan was scheduled for October 20, 2022.

Time constraints

A one-month delay would result in the agency being out of compliance with Sound Transit Board adopted policy and FTA policy surrounding a Major Service Change.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2022-19: Updating Sound Transit's Major Service Change and Fare Change Policies. This resolution also adopted a new Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy.

Resolution No. R2021-19: Adopted the 2022 Service Plan with major service change for implementation in March and September 2022, which included the major service changes to increase frequency on key South Sound routes.

Environmental review – KH 10/13/22

Legal review – AJP 10/13/22



Resolution No. R2022-28

A RESOLUTION of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority adopting the 2023 Service Plan, formalizing emergency service reductions due to operator availability.

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, commonly known as Sound Transit, was formed under chapters 81.104 and 81.112 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties region by action of their respective county councils pursuant to RCW 81.112.030; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is authorized to plan, construct, and permanently operate a high-capacity system of transportation infrastructure and services to meet regional public transportation needs in the Central Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, in general elections held within the Sound Transit district on November 5, 1996, November 4, 2008, and November 8, 2016, voters approved local funding to implement a regional high-capacity transportation system for the Central Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, express bus, commuter rail and light rail service will be implemented in phases, providing a program for route implementation and service increases over time which meet the commitments in Sound Move, Sound Transit 2, and Sound Transit 3; and

WHEREAS, the current operator shortage has impacted the equity-focused service improvements adopted in last year's 2022 Service Plan;

WHEREAS, FTA and Sound Transit Board-adopted policy on Major Service Changes (Resolution No. R2022-19) requires that emergency service changes to be formalized and retroactively approved after one year; and

WHEREAS, emergency reductions due to the operator shortage were implemented in November 2021, and that most impacted routes had proposed and adopted service improvements; and

WHEREAS, the service changes included in the 2023 Service Plan are consistent with the proposed 2023 Agency Budget and Long-Range Financial Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the 2023 Service Plan is adopted, and the following service changes are formalized:

Route 566 (Auburn-Overlake): operating every 20-40 minutes until operator availability improves.

Route 580 (Puyallup-South Hill Sounder Connector): Elimination of the Lakewood-Puyallup variant that previously operated with limited trips. Most trips between Puyallup and South Hill replaced by Pierce Transit Route 400.

Route 590 (Tacoma-Seattle): operating every 10-12 minutes during peak periods until operator availability improves.

Route 592 (DuPont/Lakewood-Seattle): operating every 30 minutes until operator availability improves.

Route 592 (DuPont/Lakewood-Seattle): operating every 30 minutes until operator availability improves.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the chief executive officer is authorized to restore service to the service levels outlined in last year's adopted 2022 Service Plan (Resolution No. R2021-19) once operator availability improves and when service can operate reliably.

ADOPTED 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